

Astronomer R. L. J. Ellery.

A MAN OF MANY PARTS.

INTERRED AT WILLIAMSTOWN.

"THEY have it pretty well all here," remarked Captain Watson, the veteran ex-skipper of Williamstown's premier passenger boat Gem, on being interviewed last Wednesday morning with respect to the antecedents of the late Government astronomer, Mr. R. L. J. Ellery. At the time Captain Watson had in his hand a Melbourne "daily."

"Thought perhaps you might recollect some local incidents worth noting" ventured the "Chronicle's" reporter.

"No; got no dates. In fact I'd rather not say anything. Of course when I first knew him he resided at the top of Bourke street. That was in 1853—before he came to Williamstown. He had a brass plate on his door—Dr Ellery—at that time. He was a wonderful man. He was a carpenter, joiner, could act as a doctor—turn his hand to anything."

"It seemed that about that time a very large section of brainy English men emigrated to various parts, and stamped their individuality where they located themselves," interpolated the pressman.

"I honestly believe we had a finer class of men then than we have now—men with more grit in them. These men, after leaving England, seem to have emigrated to America, Australia and elsewhere, and there diffused their ideas," earnestly rejoined the old navigator. "No, there's nothing I can tell you fresh about Mr. Ellery. Poor fellow, used to suffer from his back a great deal. I had promised myself to pay him a visit a day or two ago, but what with the hot weather and one thing and another I was kept back, and was reminded of it by his death."

Turning to colonial historical record, we find that Robert Lewis John Ellery, C.M.G., F.R.S., F.R.A.S., was born at Cranleigh, Surrey, England, in July 1827. His father was Dr. John Ellery. He likewise was educated for the medical profession. Tempted to come to Australia by the discovery of gold he landed here in 1851. During that year he came under the notice of Governor La Trobe. It appears that the deceased astronomer had, before leaving England, made the acquaintance of the officials at Greenwich Observatory. At that institution he had learned a skilful use of the instruments. While practising his medical profession he wrote to the newspapers

ments. While practising his medical profession he wrote to the newspapers on the necessity of establishing a small nautical observatory at Williamstown. At that time Hobson's Bay became rapidly crowded with shipping. So crowded, indeed, did it become that the masters of vessels could not even "get a horizon." Thus navigation was hampered in the fact that proper provision had not been made for the precise determination of time. His suggestions bore fruit, Governor La Trobe commissioned him to establish the observatory. Its relics are to be seen in the Point Gellibrand lighthouse at the shore end of the local Breakwater, by the fall of whose time ball at 1 p.m. daily (regulated from the Melbourne Observatory since 1863) Captain Watson and a score of old identities invariably regulated their watches. In 1853 Mr. Ellery was appointed Government astronomer. A geodetic and trigonometrical survey of Victoria was initiated by him (assisted by Surveyor-General Laing) in 1858, Williamstown being the starting-point. In 1863 the Observatory was removed to Melbourne. With it was amalgamated a meteorological and magnetic observatory, with which a Dr. Neumeyer, of Bavaria, was associated. This was in 1858. In its original form the Williamstown Observatory was possessed of only a few small instruments for the determination of time, the distribution of time signals; and the rating of chronometers. At that time Mr. Ellery combined his Government astronomy with that of local marine depot storekeeper. As his first official work progressed he gained a scientific reputation, and in 1856 established the Royal Society of Victoria, of which he remained president until 1884. The geodetic survey above referred to lasted from 1856 to 1874. For many years he was a member of the Melbourne University Council, a trustee of the Public Library, the lieutenant-colonel of the Submarine Mining Engineers (a corps which he had formed), and his interest in military matters never flagged. In the Observatory in the Botanical Gardens he labored for 32 years, making a total of 42 years in the Government service. The Melbourne Observatory will compare favorably with any of the observatories of the world, and excels them in the feature that up to a certain date it possessed the largest telescope in the world, to procure which the Legislature granted the sum of £10,000. Mr. Ellery retired from its active control in 1895. He died on Tuesday

control in 1895. He died on Tuesday forenoon at the ripe old age of 81, full of years and colonial honors.

Deceased was twice married. His first wife and two children were buried at Williamstown. His present wife survives. His daughter is the wife of Mr. C. W. Maclean, of the Strand.

The remains were interred on Wednesday afternoon in the Williamstown Cemetery. Despite the heat, a considerable number of mourners attended. Chief mourners among those who followed the hearse in the funeral procession from the North Williamstown railway station to the cemetery were Mr. C. W. Maclean (engineer for ports and harbors), son-in-law of deceased; Mr. C. A. Topp (public service commissioner), brother-in-law; Mr. W. Shields, brother-in-law; and Messrs Arthur and Stanley Shields, nephews. Among the others who attended the burial were Messrs P. Baracchi (Government astronomer), H. Gyles Turner, E. J. White, Calder Oliver, Lort Smith, R. Barton, John Thompson, and William Johnston, who acted as pall-bearers, and the following:— Professor Kernot, Professor Lyle, Major Wilkinson, Captain Watson, Messrs F. Kent, C. M. Otto, J. Howe, A. Paton, J. Goff, John Morgan, A. E. Annis, J. J. Mannix, J. Byrno, W. J. Swan, H. P. Bechervalse, J. W. Payten, H. Shaw, W. Grant (president of the Surveyors' Institute), O. Davies, De Jersey Grut, J. A. Thompson, R. T. Vaughan, T. Smith, F. Smith, J. E. Gilbert, G. Robinson, R. Butler, H. A. Hunt (federal meteorologist), and G. Torry. The burial service (Church of England) was conducted by the Rev. Alfred Wheeler, M.A. Mr Thos. Loasdale had charge of the funeral arrangements.

Loafers' and children's shoes at 2s 11d.
See these New Year's bargains at T. J. Watt's, 15 Douglas-parade.