

Death of Military Nurse Rothery.

A MILITARY FUNERAL.

REMARKABLE DEMONSTRATION OF ADMIRATION AND GRIEF.

That the nobility of the nursing profession is popularly elevated almost to divinity in the military nurses was shown by a truly remarkable demonstration by the people of Beechworth on Sunday afternoon last. On the previous day Military Nurse Elizabeth Rothery, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Rothery, former residents of Beechworth, succumbed to appendicitis and peritonitis, after a brief illness, while on a visit to Miss Wilson, of Last-street, Beechworth, with whom she had spent many a delightful holiday. Trained as a nurse at the Ovens District Hospital, from which she obtained her certificate in 1912, Nurse Rothery volunteered for war service when the war broke out, and was appointed to the hospital on St. Kilda road, and next accompanied a transport to Bombay, doing hospital duty there for six months prior to her transfer to a military hospital in Nottingham, and later to the Fairfield Hospital, London. Recalled to Australia, she resumed, at Christmas time, the work amongst the sick and wounded soldiers, in which she was so greatly interested, at Caulfield Hospital, and since then had been to Capetown and Cairo and back on hospital ships. The work in an almost stifling atmosphere on the lower deck in tropical weather on the voyage from Cairo was very trying and, upon landing in Australia, Nurse Rothery was very much in need of rest. Obtaining the necessary leave she first visited her parents, and then came on to her well-loved Beechworth, where her earlier years were happily spent and which she always regarded as home. She was the guest of Miss Wilson, but this happy re-union of kindred souls had just been consummated when

souls had just been consummated when Miss Wilson was alarmed by the sudden illness of Miss Rothery. Dr. Skinner was immediately summoned and diagnosed appendicitis as the trouble. Then Nurse Clemens, who trained with Nurse Rothery, also came to her assistance. Owing to the patient's heart condition, operation was impossible, but every other known means of combating the trouble was employed, but all to no good purpose, and early on Saturday morning the case was seen to be hopeless. To the very last the patient's thoughts were with her soldier patients, and she passed away on Saturday afternoon. The announcement of her death caused a most profound and painful sensation, as few of Nurse Rothery's friends were even aware of her illness. Everyone knew her as a most beautiful character in every sense of the word, and her devotion to the work of alleviation of the sufferings of soldiers had not only earned the gratitude of the soldiers and their friends but the admiration of all. There was no means of public announcement, but news spread of the intention of the returned soldiers to pay their deceased sister the highest military honour in their power in the form of a military funeral. This was everywhere approved as most fitting, and on Sunday afternoon there occurred one of the most touching and remarkable demonstrations of public grief and admiration in the annals of the town. There were crowds of people along the route which the funeral would take to the Beechworth cemetery, and also wherever a view of the procession could be obtained. There was also a great concourse of sorrowing people in the cemetery. When the cortege reached the cemetery the coffin, wrapped in the Union Jack, on which was laid the military uniform of the deceased nurse, was taken from the hearse and placed on the shoulders of six returned soldiers, viz., Sgt. A. Turner, Lance Corporal C. Roper, and Privates A. Hoffmann, A. Paull, W. Sargeant and Armstrong and borne shoulder high. Other returned sol.

shoulder high. Other returned soldiers and members of the Rifle Club with arms reversed and the Beechworth Town Band and many others, prominent among whom were the relatives of men on active service, followed. The depth to which public feeling had been stirred by this sad death was demonstrated in several most respectful actions by the assembled people. When the coffin bearers were still afar off, every man uncovered and by intuition, for there was none to direct them, the people, in assembling near the open grave, left a large space for the relatives of de-

ceased and the returned soldiers, an instinctive act of courtesy and respect. The burial service of the Anglican Church was impressively read by Ven. Archdeacon Potter. The Beechworth Town Band played "Abide with Me." A party, in charge of Sergeant Turner, comprising Lance-corporal C. Roper and Privates L. Bennett, A. Hoffmann, A. Harrison, A. Paull and W. Asbury fired three volleys over the grave and, being dismissed, marched in single file around the open grave and each deposited a handful of earth on the coffin as he passed. Mr. A. Pearce (bandmaster) and Mr. T. Fiddes then sounded "The Last Post," and after friends had taken a last look at the coffin the earth closed over the last mortal remains of one who was honoured and respected in life and revered in death.