

## MEMORIAL SERVICE AT MAFFRA

### PLAQUE UNVEILED TO LATE SISTER IRENE SINGLETON.

A service which will be long remembered for its patriotism, poignancy and dignity was that held outside the Memorial Hall at Maffra on Sunday afternoon, the occasion being the unveiling and dedication of a memorial plaque of opus sectile mosaic in honor of the late Sister Irene Singleton (A.A.N.S.), daughter of Mr. R. G. D. and the late Mrs. Singleton, of Riverslea.

The inscription reads:—

"Irene A. Singleton (A.A.N.S.), who gave her life on service at Muntok, Bangka Island, Sumatra, 20th February, 1945.—We will remember."

Mr. C. A. Cameron (President of the Maffra and District Patriotic Committee) was chairman, while Mr. M. H. McMahon (President of the Maffra Sub-branch of the Servicemen's League) was in charge of the guard.

Four sentries, in uniform, representing the three fighting services, were stationed at the entrance to the Memorial Hall. They were Messrs. J. Neale and J. Clement (Army), R. Anketell (Navy), and N. Shaw (Air Force). Members of the R.S.L., including local and visiting returned Sisters of the A.A.N.S., formed a guard of honor on each side of the entrance.

Upon the arrival of Colonel A. M. Sage, matron-in-chief of the Australian Army Nursing Services, an inspection of the guard of honor took place.

The proceedings in the Memorial Hall opened with an address by Mr.

THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE MEMORIAL Hall opened with an address by Mr. C. A. Cameron, President of the Patriotic Committee, after which Cr. J. A. Johns, M.L.A., said:

"To-day in this friendly atmosphere of mingled sympathy, pride, honor and respect we, the citizens of Maffra and district, are met to pay tribute to the life and work and sacrifice of one of our number, Sister Irene Singleton.

"By sympathy we mean that which we feel, have felt, and desire to express to her family. They have suffered grievously.

"The impact of war upon this quiet, unassuming, very honorable family is known to most, if not all, present. Its character is worthy of the honor of public recital.

"Irene rests in the East, Ken and Doug on the arid African shores of the Mediterranean. It seems appropriate, at this stage to mention, too, the service of the husband of Valerie, Major Fell, whom we are honored and happy to have present with us to-day. As the result of the rapid conquest of Greece, Major Fell languished for a number of years, anxious ones for him and his, as a prisoner of war in German hands. Seldom in the annals of Australian history will it be found that the exigencies of war have exacted so heavy toll from any one Australian household. Our pride to-day lies in the fact that during their lifetime those we recall lived and moved among us as one of ourselves. They lived too as we shall hoped to have lived—sincere, temperate, courteous, charitable, industrious, loyal to their Church and State in every way shewing examples of all that is best in British citizenship.

"In this I am reminded of the advice of Viscount Montgomery to Australia on the occasion of his recent visit. In this he laid special emphasis on the building of a strong national character as the first step to national

character as the first step to national defence. How worthily do the lives of those we think of to-day fulfil this requirement.

"Regarding the honor due them. I must confess some difficulty in framing a definition adequate to the occasion. Shall we say it is the existence in our heart of a deep sense of debt, coupled with a frustrated or repressed desire to say thank you personally to those who were prepared to serve—did serve—and, a'as, to the point of supreme sacrifice.

"Respect to-day in general terms is for the name of Singleton. In more precise application it will be for the memory of a noble woman, member of a noble profession, martyr to a noble cause.

"Mr. Chairman, in circumstances like these one could say, and do, much extolling virtue, duty, sacrifice and the like, but then we know there is no material equivalent for the kind of sacrifice we are present to pay homage to to-day.

"I trust, therefore, that what I have endeavored to convey concisely, contritely, will be accepted in the spirit in which it is conceived, and that in turn our presence here, what we may have said, and what we will have done, will be interpreted by the father, brother, sisters and relatives of the splendid character whose name is about to be perpetuated as a symbol and a symbol only of that esteem and goodwill which we, of this town and district, feel and shall always feel towards them and theirs.

"In the inevitable poignancy which

must be associated with such an occasion like this there will happily be sensed the presence of a spirit of inspiration, joy, even exhilaration. By that we mean that the name on the plaque which is about to be unveiled

that we mean that the name on the plaque which is about to be unveiled by our distinguished guest, Colonel Sage, will be for us who have survived by the deeds and sacrifice, a standard by which we may from time to time measure up our own public worthiness. In this I suggest, Mr. Cameron, we shall have done well if, perhaps, we have as yet just failed thus high in our regard for the name of this gracious lady of revered, fragrant, grateful, affectionate remembrance—Sister Irene Singleton."

The hymn, "O, God, Our Help in Ages Past," was sung by the assemblage to the accompaniment of Mrs. S. Shaw at the piano.

During the course of her stirring and appropriate address, Colonel Sage said she felt it a very great honor to be asked to be present at the ceremony. She felt that nurses of the profession—especially members of the Services—had done a tremendous job. Nobody knew what they had gone through on the various fields of operations, but, wherever they went, they did their part. It was their privilege to do for others what they could not do for themselves. "The more you put into life," continued the speaker, "the more you take out of it." Those nurses went through a terrible ordeal, one which no other woman considered could be done, and which she devoutly hoped would never have to be done again. As a prisoner of war Sister Singleton showed splendid courage and was an example to others. It meant she had given all that one woman could give. Because of the great gift she gave she fulfilled her mission on earth, while others had got to go on. Through her memory we should not lose sense of values and forget the deeds of those who passed on.

Matron Sage then unveiled the tablet which is placed alongside a similar memorial to the late Sister Louie

lar memorial to the late Sister Louie B. Riggall, of the 1914-18 war.

The observance of one minute's silence was followed by the sounding of The Last Post and Reveille by Mr. Viv Kruger.

The tablet was then dedicated by the Ven. Archdeacon Benn, after which the hymn, "O, Valiant Hearts," was sung.

The response on behalf of the Singleton family was given by the Ven. Archdeacon Birch.

The National Anthem concluded proceedings.

Apologies for non-attendance at the ceremony were received from Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. Black (Tarwin Valley), Mrs. C. A. Cameron, Messrs. A. McLean and W. O. Fulton, Rev. J. J. Callanan, Rev. Graham Nathan, and the Rev. D. J. Allen.

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