

The Weir Memorial.

THE ceremony of unveiling the monument or cenotaph erected to the memory of the late Robert Weir, one of the Kiama volunteers who joined the Sudan contingent, was performed on Saturday last. At 2 p.m. the Kiama Volunteer company assembled in full uniform at the volunteer office, and under the command of Captain T. Honey, marched four deep, the band playing *The Storm*, a selection from *Sankey and Moody*. Immediately following the volunteers came a number of vehicles, the first being the buggy occupied by Mr. D. Weir and two of his daughters; next came about one hundred horsemen and a number of persons on foot. There was a marked want of order in the mounted portion of the procession, several of the horsemen so far forgetting the rules of etiquette as to quit the procession after getting through King's cutting hurrying on to the cemetery in front of it.

The company having been halted in line, facing the monument, Captain Honey addressed the assemblage now numbering between two and three hundred. Captain Honey remarked that it afforded him great pleasure to see so many persons present on the occasion. He took it for granted that their presence indicated not only a desire to see the unveiling of the monument, but also respect to the memory of their late lamented comrade and friend. The monument as they would see was not of a very pretentious size or design, but he thought they would agree that it was a very fitting one to be erected to the memory of Robert Weir, who was a quiet, inoffensive, honest young man, ever ready to do his duty, and willing to do all in his power to help or oblige anyone who might require his aid or services. The large number of friends assembled there that day must be very consolatory to Robert Weir's parents and relatives showing as it did that the community sympathized with them in their great bereavement, intensified as it was by the fact that he fell a victim to the pestilential land to which he went; not in struggling with the foe, but struck down by a disease peculiar to the Sudan. He would now refer to the origin of this movement to provide a memorial. As soon as reliable news was received that it was our Robert Weir who died, his old comrades (the volunteers) decided to show some mark of their respect for him. Some of the general public hearing of their intention desired to join in the movement and to enlist general sympathy. This was agreed to and subscriptions were limited to 2s 6d each, with the result that without much exertion the monument was erected at a cost of £30 of which £20 2s 6d was in hand leaving only a small balance of 17s 6d which the committee were quite willing to make good. He might state that only in three instances had the half crown subscription been refused, and by men of the most wealthy class in the district. In one case he believed the refusal did not arise from either niggardliness or want of sympathy with the movement. If the other two withho'd their assistance for the purpose

withho'd their assistance for the purpose of increasing their already large bank account, he would say let them do so. The committee had been careful not to incur any unnecessary intermediate expenses, thinking it only a privilege and pleasure to render the assistance required. £30 was the amount paid to Mr. Taylor for the monument. Without further trespassing on their attention he would now call on Corporal Walker, Privates Armstrong, Jarvis, and Newing (comrades of the late Robert Weir in the Sudan) to unveil the monument.

The monument was then unveiled, the band playing "Safe in the Arms of Jesus."

Mr. Samuel Marks addressed the assemblage, observing that although unconsciously opposed at the time to the sending of the Australian contingent to the Sudan he was in thorough sympathy with the present movement. He felt that the whole district had reason to be proud of the memory of our first patriot Robert Weir, who when he volunteered to go to the Sudan firmly believed that he was going forth to do his duty to his country, to fight and perchance to fall for that grand old land of his ancestors, the land which had given us our liberties and which he believed was destined under the providence of God to extend true liberty to universal manhood. Their departed friend did what he believed to be his duty as a man, a citizen, and a patriot in fighting on behalf of his Queen and for the honour of her Australian dominions, and he hoped and believed that in the future of the world Australians would prove themselves no mean or degenerate descendants from the old stock. Robert Weir was our first patriot, and he was quite convinced that had he been privileged to meet the foe in native fight he would have displayed the courage of the old Briton—English, Irish, and Scotch, with the enthusiasm of the Australian superadded. Justly had it been remarked by the poet—

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own my native land?
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd
From wandering on a foreign strand?

This young man was animated with the true patriotic spirit which wins universal admiration and esteem. All honour then to Robert Weir. Sympathy for his parents and relatives was a natural feeling on the present occasion. If he had taken his advice the present sad ceremony would not have taken place. Young Weir thought otherwise, and went forth to fight what he believed to be his country's battles, and his action would render the name of Weir immortal in Illawarra and set an example the effect of which it was impossible fully to estimate. There was something after all in the beautiful sentiment of patriotism. Was it not true that from the earliest times of history up to the present the only men who lived immortal in the hearts and affections of the people were those who did their duty in a self-sacrificing spirit? They had all known men who had lived to the age of seventy-one and yet had never been

ago of seventy-one and yet had never been known to do a generous action—had never made the smallest sacrifice for their fellow man. To day they assembled to do honour to a young man, moving in an humble sphere, who had sacrificed his life to patriotism. Of the man who was never moved by such noble impulses it might truly be said—

The wretch encountered all in all,
Living shall forlorn fair remember;
And a wily dying shall go down
To the vile dirt, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unang.

The praises of Robert Weir were sung there that day, and it was but the spontaneous expression of his own heart when he said he took off his hat in loving and loving memory of the brave, heroic, and self-sacrificing Robert Weir, whose dear old mother would feel when she read the account of this ceremony that she had reared a hero, whose death, sorrowful though it were to his parents, was a national gain, and for all time to come his noble and heroic example would stimulate us to do our duty. The memorial that day unveiled would ever be a pleasing reminder that one of the noblest young men had been cradled in the district of Illawarra.

(Chorus)
Mr. George Somerville (Mayor of Kiama) said he thoroughly coincided with all that

had been said in favour of their dear departed friend Robert Weir. He had had the pleasure of knowing him for some considerable time, and always found him just what he had been represented—a simple unostentatious young man who never shrank from duty. He (the speaker) sincerely sympathised with the bereaved parents, and heartily approved of the memorial.

The band then played "Will you meet me at the Fountain," after which the volunteers re-formed and marched back to town, the band playing various selections and the spectators gradually dispersing.

The cenotaph is an ordinary head-stone, enclosed by an iron railing and bearing the following inscription:—

IN MEMORY

OF

Robert Weir,

OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES CONTINGENT,

WHO DIED AT SUAKIM, 1st MAY, 1885.

ERECTED AS A MARK OF RESPECT BY HIS

COMRADES AND FRIENDS.