

MEMORIAL TO PRIVATE SAM OLIVER AT MILAWA.

The Library Hall, Milawa, was filled by a very representative audience to witness the unveiling of the marble tablet to the memory of Private Sam Oliver of the Third Bushmen's Contingent, who was killed at Rustenburg during one of the engagements of the South African war, and who behaved with great gallantry on that occasion.

Mr. J. F. Brown, president of the Oxley Shire, occupied the chair, and in front of the platform was an excellent portrait of Private Oliver taken from a photograph.

The CHAIRMAN said the committee of the memorial found a very ready response to the proposal to perpetuate the memory of the brave conduct of Private Oliver, and he was pleased to see so good an attendance. He then called upon

Mr. J. BOWSER, M.L.A., who said they had met to honor the memory of a brave man. In doing so they followed the custom of our nation to make a lasting memorial of valor and of obedience unto death. No higher tribute could be made to the memory of any man than to have his name so cherished amongst his own people in the place where, boy and man, he had lived and played and worked. Private Sam Oliver was well known to them all. It would be presumption for him to speak of his personal qualities in the presence of many of his dearest friends, but this he could say, he was a good son and a blithe spirit, quick and faithful to the call of duty. These qualities had distinguished him in the field when he was put to the fiery test of battle at Rustenburg. The words of his commanding officer in his letter to the bereaved parents were:—"Your son behaved with much gallantry, but was surrounded by the enemy and shot down. He was very popular with us all." Another letter from a comrade showed that the Bushmen had been surrounded by the enemy in very strong force—some 900 Boers to 300 Australians—and Private Oliver and two others were placed in charge of the led horses—a dangerous post for which only cool and steady men are chosen, since the main fire of the Boers is directed at the horses. They stood there for several hours seeing the horses shot around them. At last the sergeant and Private Oliver and another made a rush at the fiery circle to save some of the horses—200 horses had been shot down at this stage. When they moved out the fire of their enemies was concentrated

upon them. Death was a certainty. They gave their lives for their comrades. To die was to die greatly, and although it was no more than hundreds of our brave troops have done with a light heart in this protracted but necessary war, it was a deed worthy to be perpetuated in the form which had been chosen here, worthy to be remembered by his comrades with a kindling sense of possession and to be an example of heroic conduct to future generations in this place. What did this gallant act teach us? It reminded us that in the valor of the single soldier lies the safety of our nation. Brave acts like that of Private Oliver multiplied in thousands of our men had made our country great among the nations of the world—great in war as she was in peace. From Waterloo to the South African war this intrepid spirit had distinguished our soldiers in the field. The shadow of this loss would fall most heavily upon the home of Private Oliver. His parents and sisters had the entire sympathy of their many friends in this sad bereavement. No words that he might utter could assuage their sense of loss, but in time to come when they looked upon this tablet placed in our midst to the memory of their son, the pride of race might be a balm to grief. They would feel more strongly than was now possible the honor which their gallant son had won in his death. The speaker then drew the cord and unveiled the marble tablet, saying: It is now my privilege to unveil this tablet to the memory of Private Sam Oliver, to be in your midst a lasting memorial of his valor.

The tablet which is of white marble, on a ground of grey marble, is set in the wall of the Library Hall near the platform. Over the inscription is sculptured the design of a rifle and headress of the Bushmen's Contingent, and the following words in black letters:—

"To the memory of Private Sam Oliver, member of the Victorian Bushmen's Corps, who was killed while fighting for Queen and Empire at Rustenburg, South Africa, July 22nd, 1900."

Mr. J. WOLSTENHOLME, J.P., said he took the melancholy pleasure of contributing a few remarks of respect to the memory of the late Private Sam Oliver. That he was brave and courageous he knew, although he would not add that he was fearless (because all men were subject to fear under certain conditions). But a proof that he would adhere to his duty in trying circumstances came under

duty in trying circumstances came under his (the speaker's) own observation. His father and he were burning a kiln of bricks for him when Sam was only 15 years of age. It was the last day that the kiln had to be fired, consequently it was red hot. There was a fierce hot wind blowing a perfect sirocco from the north. Mr. Oliver collapsed or was struck down by a blast from the fire-hole of the kiln. Sam got his father under cover and attended to him, and then went back to do his father's work and his own. When he (the speaker) returned from Beechworth in the evening, he found that Sam had also been struck down with the combined effects of a fierce sun, hot wind and a red hot kiln. He had fought the timber into those smelting fire-holes as long as he could stand upon his feet. This proved to him that a boy of 15 who could do that had true grit in him, and that "the boy was father to the man." The tablet was of more importance, more significance, and should be of more interest to the public generally than all the tombstones in the Milawa Cemetery. They saw by the inscription that he fought and died for the British Empire—the British people. We were a portion of those people, therefore he fought and died for us, and as long as that tablet remained on that wall Sam Oliver's name would be handed down to posterity with honor and respect. He hoped that that reflection would console his sorrowing parents, along with the fact that they had the sympathy and respect of all who were acquainted with them.

Mr. W. R. DOIG remarked that while they all regretted the loss of Private Oliver, and sympathised with Mr. and Mrs. Oliver in their sorrow, they were glad to know that one of themselves had acquitted himself so well in the field. Sam Oliver showed the kind of man he was by making over almost the whole of his pay to his mother before he left Melbourne. That was an act which he thought worthy to be remembered equally with his bravery in defence of the Empire.

Mr. G. H. BROWN said he was very pleased to be present at this interesting commemorative ceremony. He thought it a fit and becoming thing that they should provide for the keeping green in our memories the deeds of that brave man who, with that modesty that becometh a hero, went forth from amongst us without show or parade to give his services to his Queen and country in their hour of need—prepared to undergo and endure all the hardships and privations inseparable from the life of a soldier on active service, and to do his duty to the very death.

the life of a soldier on active service, and to do his duty to the very death. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" and surely no further proof of a man's patriotism was required than the laying down of his life for his country, as did he in honor of whose memory they were assembled and this indelible memorial erected. He trusted it would continue to tell its sad and simple story for many generations yet to come. His might not have been the deed that wins an empire, but Private Oliver was one of that noble and gallant band of Australians who by their daring deeds of valour did more perhaps than aught else during the past century to add fresh lustre and prestige to that mighty empire

to which it is our proud boast and privilege to belong. But a short time ago it was said of this fair and favored land of ours that it was a country without a history, but the deeds of those brave fellows alone would furnish material for as bright a page in our history as any nation could boast, and their gallant services in exceptionally trying circumstances would, he believed, have done more to cement the units of this vast empire than could have been accomplished by any other means during the past 50 years. He was sure that they all deeply sympathised with the parents and other relatives and friends of the late Private Oliver, and although nothing could ever compensate them for the loss of their brave son, brother and friend, he hoped that they would at least derive some consolation from the fact that he died like a true soldier, at his post, and that his services to his Queen and country had been duly appreciated by a grateful people, and that his memory would be perpetuated by the indelible record which now adorns the walls of the Milawa Free Library.

Mr. C. W. LLOYD, J.P. (whose son Arthur is now serving in South Africa) said Sam Oliver was just the kind of young fellow to make a soldier. The letters received by Mr. Oliver from South Africa testified to the heroism of their son in the field in a very trying time. They showed that when the Boers had him and Sergeant Goodman practically under their rifles they called upon them to surrender. The answer was "No surrender," and they galloped forward to their death. It was a brave act and one

...and they galloped forward to their death. It was a brave act and one worthy to be treasured in the hearts of his countrymen. Mr. Lloyd concluded with the following appropriate verses composed for the occasion :—

He like a soldier fell
On Afric's distant shore,
Fighting for his Queen
Against the subtle Boer.

He like a soldier fell
On Afric's sunny field,
He scorned the word "Surrender"
Or to the foe to yield.

Intent on duty's call—
The horses of his squad—
His life blood flowed, to earth he fell,
His spirit soared to God.

Rev. Mr. WADE, Church of England, said he desired to express on behalf of that body the sympathy which they felt for Mr. and Mrs. Oliver and their family in the great loss which they had sustained.

Lieut. AHERN said the conduct of the Australians in South Africa had dispelled the idea held by many people in Great Britain that the Australians could not equal their forebears in bravery. They had shown that they had all the courage and a knowledge of bush warfare as well. On behalf of J. Company he tendered the sympathy of the company to the bereaved parents, and apologised for not being in uniform. He had not received sufficient notice to be able to get permission from head-quarters, which was necessary in such cases.

Mr. G. H. BROWN proposed that this meeting express its deep sympathy with Mr. and Mrs. Oliver in their bereavement.—Seconded by Mr. R. OULPH and carried.

Mr. BOWSER moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Fred. Stewart, the hon. secretary, who had suggested the tablet, to the committee who had carried out the movement, and to the chairman for the able way in which he had discharged the duties of the chair.—Carried with acclamation.

The audience then rose and sang "God Save the King." led by Mr. F. Simpson, and the proceedings terminated.

During the evening appropriate songs were rendered by Messrs. T. Simpson, R. Marks, and Miss Mabel Brown played the accompaniments.—

— "Chronicle." —