

CHRISTMAS HILLS.

UNVEILING OF SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

The weather, which had been so unsettled during the past week, underwent a complete change on Saturday last, the 10th inst. ; it seemed the sun could not shine bright enough for this day of days for the people of Christmas Hills, to pay their tribute to their dead. The ground of the memorial site looked wonderfully picturesque among its setting of bush and hill, and the white walls of the marquee (tent very kindly lent by Mr Bert Lithgow, of Yarra Glen), the seats and benches scattered about, lent a brightness which drew the attention of passers-by ; but the flag-draped memorial stone, and the flag that fluttered at half-mast at the flag pole, told their own sad, but proud story. At 3.30 p.m. a large gathering from all parts of the district assembled, and at about a few minutes later, Captain S. M. Bruce, M.C., V.H.R., drove up in his car, accompanied by Mrs Bruce. When the usual greetings were over, Captain Bruce, together with Mr J Smedley (Shire President), Mr Glaysher (Church of England minister), and Mr Honiball (Presbyterian minister) mounted the platform ; in this case it was a lorry kindly lent by Mr A. E. Birch, and which had been draped with a Union Jack.

Mr Glaysher took the chair, and in a short, well-chosen speech, introduced Captain Bruce to the people.

Captain Bruce then rising, made a speech that will live in the minds of his hearers for as long as memory lasts. What with his fine presence, his careful and well weighed words—words that came from his heart, surely there are not many of us who will forget what he said. It was a privilege, he said, to be asked to perform these ceremonies ; for it was the only tribute we could give to those who counted life

could give to those who counted life well lost if they could, by laying them down, do it for their country's sake. He spoke of the indomitable British courage—courage that knew nothing of being "beaten." He gave a message to those who had lost their sons, or other loved ones, in the late great world upheaval, that they must regard their loss with pride rather than with sorrow, for sorrow was the last thing the boys, whom he (Capt Bruce) had so often seen dying on the battlefields, would wish us to feel ; and then, slowly drawing the tricolored ribbon which fastened the great Union Jack round the memorial, he dedicated it to the memory of our heroes.

The granite tablet, surmounted by the rising sun, bears the following inscription:— 'In memory of the men of Christmas Hills, who laid down their lives for King and Country in the Great War, 1914-1919. Greater love hath no man.' A silence of a few minutes ensued, during which the thoughts of many of us flew to spots sacred in our hearts—wee, small God's acres marked by a wooden cross. Then, clear and heart-rendering in the sadness of its finality, rang out the "Last Post" the clear bugle notes ringing over gully and hill, "Gone West, Good Night." Pride gave place to sorrow once more, and we felt the bleak blankness again that had so often filled our lives during the war, when the dread cables came from over the seas, like shots from an assassin, to tell us that one of our own had "gone west." But once more the bugle notes rang out ; this time it was the reveille—the Resurrection morn, or, as so many of us believe, the birth into a higher life.

This brought the unveiling ceremony to an end ; and then Captain Bruce commented in terms of the highest praise of Mr Irvine on his wonderful achievement in building the memorial single-handed, and for the great honor he had bestowed on the district by

he had bestowed on the district by building it "free of all charge." Capt. Bruce laid particular stress on the patriotism of Mr Irvine in erecting this memorial to those who fell in the great cause. Then, calling upon Mr Irvine to come up to the platform, he presented him with a handsome gold medal, which bore the initials "C. D. I." on the shield, and had the following inscription engraved at the back:—"Presented to C. D. Irvine in grateful recognition of services rendered by building the memorial to soldiers free of charge, Christmas Hills. Dec., 1921."

A great cheering greeted this presentation, and well it is for the district that such unselfish patriotism lives with us in the heart of this son of Australia, and Mr Irvine's name will ever be remembered in the history of the Hills with gratitude.

The children of the State school, led by the Head Master (Mr Rolls), then sang Kipling's Recessional, their sweet young voices sounded clear and musical in the clear, sunny atmosphere.

Messrs Glaysher Honniball and Smedley each spoke in his own good style, and then with a vote of thanks to Captain Bruce for the honour he had conferred on us by unveiling the memorial, the National Anthem was sung to the accompaniment of the bugle notes, and then the large party partook of a sumptuous afternoon tea. Our thanks are due to the ladies of the Hills, who spared no pains to make the event such a success, and among these we are especially indebted to Mrs C. Young and her daughters, Mrs and Miss P. Williams, Mrs Muir and the Misses Muir and Miss Burleigh. Also the President of the Christmas Hills Memorial (Mrs Birch) is to be congratulated on the successful manner in which she and her committee worked in getting the memorial erected. One other gentleman we have to thank for his services, and that is Mr J. M'Leod, who spared no

trouble in photographing the memorial, many of the copies of which have been sold; and we also thank the Shire President for kindly lending the Shire flag for the unveiling. The last tribute of praise is to those who brought flowers to be laid on our "Stone of Sacrifice." There were red flowers for glory and white for peace, and the purple of the pansies told of love for our "Glorious Dead."

On Boxing night, the 26th inst, a ball and presentation will be held in the Christmas Hills hall.