

TONGE WAR MEMORIAL.

UNVEILING AND DEDICATION.

On Sunday afternoon last, the memorial tablet to the men of Tonge who fell in the Great War, was unveiled and dedicated in the Church by the Rural Dean, the Rev. J. G. Easton, Rector of Murston, in the presence of a numerous congregation.

Evensong to the end of the 3rd Collect was said by the Vicar, the Rev. J. M. Apperly, the special lessons being read by Mr. W. F. Wood. Mrs. Apperly accompanied the singing, which was led by the combined choirs of Tonge and Bapchild, Mr. W. Stewart Wood having kindly brought over some Bapchild choristers. The opening hymn was, "Through the night of doubt and sorrow;" that after the 3rd Collect was "The Son of God goes forth to war."

During the singing of this hymn the Rural Dean and the Vicar, led by two choir boys, proceeded to the memorial tablet. The Rural Dean then unveiled the tablet, previously declaring, "In the Faith of Jesus Christ we unveil and dedicate this memorial tablet to the glory of God and in memory of the men of this parish, who gave their lives in the cause of liberty and righteousness, in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." He then offered up the Dedicatory Prayer, "O Lord God Almighty, be pleased, we pray Thee, to accept this memorial to Thy honour and glory and in sacred remembrance of the men of this parish who fell in the Great War. We beseech Thee that their deaths and sufferings may not have been in vain. Grant that by such sacrifice as they made, tyranny and wickedness may pass away from the earth and that Thy kingdom of right and honour, peace and brotherhood may be established among men. Hear us, we pray Thee, for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

This ended, the Vicar read the names of the fallen, as follows:—

- "1 Lieut. Basil Lang Marling Apperly, R.W.K.
 - "2 Capt. Alan John Bowles, Berks Regt.
 - "3 Stoker Sydney Fearn, R.N.
 - "4 Private Stephen H. Hook, R.W.K. Rgt.
 - "5 Private John E. H. Mauser, Canadians.
 - "6 Gunner S. George Pilcher, R.F.A.
 - "7 Private John George Pope, Buffs.
 - "8 Trooper Martin T. Prett, E.K.M.R.
 - "9 Private Edgar Percy Randle, Fusiliers.
 - "10 Private William Reeves.
 - "11 Lance-Corpl. Christopher Wicks, M.A.C."
- "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
John xv. 13."

The memorial tablet is of solid bronze. It bears a wreath of bay leaves in relief, with a cross in the centre, and two angels, in relief, are on either side at the base. The tablet, which is affixed to the first pillar in the nave, bears the following inscription:—

"To the Glory of God and in honoured and loving memory of the men of this parish, who gave their lives for King and Country in the great world war, 1914-19."

The hymn, "On the resurrection morning" having been sung,

The Rural Dean ascended the pulpit and preached from the text, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation ii. 10.) Their thoughts, he said, centred about two points, Glory to God and loving memory of those who had laid down their lives. The preacher referred to the early optimism when they thought the war would be over in a few months, and the cry was "Business as usual." Then came the long weary waiting followed by the dreadful crisis in the spring of 1918. Why England did not suffer the horrors that Belgium and France endured was because the men at the front were faithful unto death. Of them the poet's words were true.

O valiant hearts, who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict, and through battle-flame
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the Land you loved.
Proudly you gathered, rank on rank to war,
As who had heard God's message from afar,
All you hoped for, all you had you gave,
To save mankind—yourselves you scorned to save.

Splendid you passed, the great surrender made,
Into the light that never more shall fade,
Deep your contentment in that blest abode,
Who wait the last clear trumpet-call of God.

So they engraved their names on marble or brass, as a permanent memorial, to be an example and encouragement to future ages. Their bodies lay in foreign soil, or at the bottom of the sea, but their souls lived on. The preacher referred to the brilliant young Cambridge poet, Rupert Brooke, Fellow of King's College, who died in the Aegean in 1915, before he was 28 years old. He wrote:

If I should die, think only this of me
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed,
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware
Gave once her flowers to love, her ways to roam,

A body of England's, breathing English air
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

The message of their dead heroes to them was, "Be faithful unto death as we were." Our Captain's message to us was the same: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," not merely perpetuity of existence, but a life that was a crown of honour and glory. For death was not the end, but the beginning, of a higher and better existence.

After the service the hymn, "How bright these glorious spirits shine!" was sung, during which a collection was made, which amounted to £3/0/6. At the close of the service "O rest in the Lord" was beautifully sung by Miss Apperly, the Vicar's sister. The church was crowded with an attentive congregation, who joined heartily in the very impressive service.

WEEK DATE

SUNDAYS