

garded as a certainty. In order, however, that an active interest may be taken in the matter, Mr D. Greig, who is acting as honorary secretary, requests a large attendance at the meeting on Tuesday evening, at 8 o'clock.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES' GRANT.—A conference of delegates from the committees of various country public libraries, convened by circular by the Beechworth Library committee, was held on Tuesday afternoon at the Grand Hotel, Melbourne. Mr Tuthill, M.L.A., occupied the chair, and Mr A. Kyle, of Beechworth, was appointed secretary. It was decided to ask the Chief Secretary to increase the amount of the grant to public libraries from £15,000 to £25,000, and that the amount should be expended by the committees as they thought fit. A deputation comprising some fifty gentlemen waited upon the Chief Secretary in the matter on Wednesday morning, and represented the views of the conference. Mr Deakin's reply was favorable, in so far as he stated his belief that he would be able to meet the wishes of the deputation in a general way, and that he believed Parliament would grant £1 for every £1 raised, and would be willing to gradually increase the grant to the amount asked for.

FORGOTTEN SERVICES. — One of our representatives, who knows the district long and well, writes as follows:—I confess I was surprised that so little has been said in any of the district papers about the curious history and services of Mrs Clarke, of Wangaratta, recently deceased, widow of the late William Clarke, more familiarly and generally known as "Old Bill Clarke" in the early days. Mrs Clarke, who was born in England, and came to Australia in her earliest youth, arrived in Wangaratta with her husband as far back as 1839, she being then little more than 15 years of age. One solitary hut then represented the present township, and Clarke built a

the present township, and Clarke built a second one on the site of the present Sydney Hotel, now the property of Mr Painter, but facing towards the old cutting leading to the primitive punt which was also built and "run" by him. This was of slab and bark, but he subsequently added a brick building to the hotel, facing, as Painter's does now, towards the present market. Here, when the Ovens rush took place, Mr Clarke, between the punt and the public-house, figuratively speaking, coined money, which he invested in property, and in building—after the bridge was finished—the Commercial Hotel, in Murphy-street, which is now a much more pretentious establishment. The writer of this was in those golden days a cadet in the police force—the troopers, as they were then called—and as the gold and prisoners' escorts always stopped at Mrs Clarke's, he had plenty of opportunities of knowing that lady and her kindly ways, and of hearing from others of the earlier part of her career in the district. It is of this latter I desire chiefly to speak: When Mrs Clarke settled in Wangaratta, there was not another woman in any direction within twenty miles; but she used to travel that distance on horseback on occasions, to comfort the sick or to help to bring little native Australians into the world, her own first child—she had twelve altogether—being the very first ever born in Wangaratta. All this was authenticated to me at a later date, although few now remain who witnessed it. But there are very many still living who stand to her almost in the light of foster-children, owing to her kind and charitable attention to their mothers in their need. I can speak personally of Mrs Clarke's friendly and pleasant ways when her family was growing more and more numerous, and I know that she made us fellows feel not only comfortable, but as if we were at home again. I write this because Mrs Clarke's many good qualities and great services—when

good qualities and great services—when such services were invaluable, and indeed, but for her, unprocurable—seem to be either unknown or forgotten.

THE ELECTORAL BILL.—The division on the second reading of the Electoral Districts Alteration Bill was taken in the Assembly on Tuesday evening. Mr M'Intyre proposed an amendment in the direction of giving increased representation to Moira, Wimmera, and Gippsland, and postponing the general redistribution of the seats until after the next census. After further speaking, four divisions were taken. On the first, Mr M'Intyre's amendment was negatived by 52 votes to 30. The Speaker and chairman of committees did not vote. Mr Carter is in England, and Mr Ferguson was at home indisposed. That accounted for the full strength of the House. A division was then taken on the amendment to refer the bill to a select committee, which was negatived by 51 to 31, Mr Laurens crossing from the Government to the Opposition, and thus making the difference. The other amendment, moved by Mr Shiels, declaring that the present proportion of representation between the metropolis and country should not be disturbed, was negatived by 54 to 27, Mr Laurens and Dr Rose and Mr Fink voting with the Government, instead of with the Opposition as on the precedings division, and Mr Lalor having walked out of the House. On the final division, the second reading was agreed to by 50 to 31, Mr Laurens, Dr Rose, Mr Pierce, and Mr Fink crossing the floor. The bill was then committed, and progress immediately reported, after which the House adjourned.

THE BEECHWORTH AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.—At the annual meeting of the above society on Wednesday afternoon Mr Richard Warren was unanimously elected president, Dr Skinner and Mr Thomas Atkinson were re-elected vice-presidents, and Mr E. Tennant was