

A British Flier Writes His Mother

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Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, June 21—The Times of London publishes the following letter taken from the personal belongings of a young R. A. F. pilot in a bomber squadron who was recently reported missing, believed killed.

It is a letter to his mother, evidently intended to be sent to her if he were killed, and left open for the commanding officer's approval in the usual way so that he might be certain that no prohibited information was disclosed.

The commanding officer sent the letter to the bereaved mother and asked her whether he might publish it without giving the name of the writer, feeling that its contents might bring comfort to some other mothers and believing that the boy's countrymen would be proud to see the spirit in which their airmen are going about their task.

Felt No Premonition

Dearest Mother:

Though I feel no premonition at all, events are moving rapidly and I have instructed that this letter be forwarded to you should I fail to return from one of the raids which I shall shortly be called upon to undertake. You must hope on for a month, but at the end of that time you must accept the fact that I have handed over my task to extremely capable hands—my comrades of the Royal Air Force, as so many splendid fellows have already done.

At first it will comfort you to know that my role in this war has been of the greatest importance. Our patrols far out over the North Sea have helped to keep the trade routes clear for our convoys and supply ships, and on one occasion our information was instrumental in saving the lives of men in crippled lighthouse relief ships. Though it will be difficult for you, you will disappoint me if you do not at least try to accept the facts dispassionately, for I shall have done my duty to the utmost of my ability. No man can do more, and no one calling himself a man could do less.

I have always admired your amazing courage in the face of continual setbacks, in the way you have given me as good an education and background as any one in the country and always kept up appearances without ever losing faith in the future. My death would not mean that your struggle has been in vain. Far from it. It means that your sacrifice is as great as mine. Those who serve England must expect nothing from her; we debase ourselves if we regard our country

as merely a place in which to eat and sleep.

History resounds with the illustrious names of those who have given all; yet their sacrifices resulted in the British Empire, where there is a measure of peace and justice and freedom for all and where a higher standard of civilization was evolved and is still evolving than anywhere else.

Challenge to Christianity

But this is not only concerning our own land. Today we are faced with the greatest organized challenge to Christianity and to civilization the world has ever seen, and I count myself lucky and honored to be of the right age and fully trained to throw my full weight into the scale. For this I have to thank you. Yet there is more work for you to do. The home front will still have to stand united for years after the war is won.

For all that can be said to the contrary, I still maintain that this war is a very good thing; every individual is having a chance to give and to dare all for his principle, like the martyrs of old. However long the time may be, one thing can never be altered—I shall have lived and died an Englishman. Nothing else matters one jot, nor can anything ever change it.

You must not grieve for me, for if you really believe in religion and all that it entails, that would be hypocrisy. I have no fear of death, only a queer elation. I would have it no other way. The universe is so vast, so ageless, that the life of one man can only be justified by the measure of his sacrifice. We are sent to this world to acquire the personality and character to take with us. Those who just eat, sleep, prosper and procreate are no better than animals if all their lives they are at peace.

I firmly and absolutely believe that evil things are sent into the world to try us; they are sent deliberately by our Creator to test our mettle, because He knows what is good for us. The Bible is full of cases where the easy way out has been discarded for moral principles.

I count myself fortunate that I have seen the whole country and know men of every calling. But with the final test of war I consider my character fully developed. Thus at my early age, with my earthly mission already fulfilled, I am prepared to die with just one regret, and one only—that I could not devote myself to making your declining years more happy by being with you; but you will live in peace and freedom, and I shall have directly contributed to that, so here again my life will not have been in vain. Your loving son.