

TRUE STORIES OF THE GREAT WAR

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An Anguished British Soldier Writes to the Mother of the German Pilot He Has Killed:

“It’s your son. I know you can’t forgive me for I killed him. But I want you to know he didn’t suffer. The end came quickly. He was very brave. He must also have been very good. He had your picture in his pocket. I am sending it back, though I should like to keep it. I suppose I am his enemy, yet I don’t feel so at all. I’d give my life to have him back. I didn’t think of him or you when I shot at his machine. He was an enemy spying out our men. I couldn’t let him get back to tell his news. It meant death to our men. It was a plucky deed. We were covered up with brush. He had to come quite low to see us and he came bravely. He nearly escaped me. He handled his machine magnificently. I thought how I should like to fly with him. But he was the enemy and had to be destroyed. I fired. It was over in a second. Just a blow on the head as the machine crashed to earth. His face shows no suffering, only excitement. His eyes are bright and fearless. I know you must have loved him. My mother died when I was quite a little boy. But I know what she would have felt if I had been killed. War isn’t fair to women. God! how I wish it were over. It is a nightmare. I feel if I just touched your boy, he’d wake and we’d be friends. I know his body must be dear to you. I will take care of it and mark his grave with a little cross. After the war you may want to take him home.

“For the first time, I’m almost glad my mother isn’t living. She could not have borne what I have done. My own heart is heavy. I felt it was my duty. Yet now when I see your son lifeless before me and hold your picture in my hand, it all seems wrong. The world is dark. O Mother, be my mother just a little too, and tell me what to do.—HUGH.”

The German Mother’s Response to the British Soldier Who Killed Her Son:

“DEAR LAD: There is nothing to forgive. I see you as you are—your troubled goodness. I feel you coming to me like a little boy astounded at having done ill when you meant well. You seem my son. I am glad your hands cared for my other boy. I had rather you than any other touched his earthly body. He was my youngest. I think you saw his fineness. I know the torture of your heart since you have slain him. To women brotherhood is a reality. For all men are our sons. That makes war a monster that brother must slay brother. Yet perhaps women more than men have been to blame for this world war. We did not think of the world’s children, our children. The baby hands that clutched our breast were so sweet, we forgot the hundred other baby hands stretched out to us. But the Earth does not forget, she mothers all. And now my heart aches with repentance. I long to take you in my arms and lay your head upon my breast to make you feel through me your kinship with all the earth. Help me, my son, I need you. Be your vision, my vision. Spread the dream of oneness and love throughout the land. When the war is over come to me. I am waiting for you.—DEINE MUTTER.”