

(Letter No.
Hugh)

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Palmer House
North Terrace
St Peter's 14th Sep 1919
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My dear Son

Your welcome letters of 11th & 20th July reached us on 2nd & 8th inst. respectively.

So much has happened during the past few weeks, that the time seems more like months than weeks. Dear Eric's death, ~~too~~ of which you will have received full particulars ~~at~~ before this reaches you, as we wrote you and Reg. by a mail coming a few days after the sad event, has been a severe blow to us, as we know it will be to you and Reg. Even as I write of it now it is difficult to realize it as a fact, for we all he must have suffered he was bright and cheerful ^{up} to the day on which he died though during the ^{preceding} night he had had a bad time. On the morning of that day a was customary with him, he and little Neil cleaned their boots and their best together, and notwithstanding his suffering of the previous night he bade them a usual, a cheerful farewell. That the condition of his health was causing his

It will not be necessary for you to pass this letter on to Reg. as we are doing nothing for him by same mail.

Such grave concern and anxiety none of us had the remotest thought. The fact is, he was too brave with it all. That he contemplated, for more than a day or two, his end in the manner in which it came is quite improbable in view of the active preparation he had made and was making in connection with his business arrangements — as you know, even, Guy Bros waits at the Port had closed down, and Eric was still on his own account as a mercantile broker in the metal trade — regarding which he spoke so confidently of success. Only a few weeks previously he had been over to Sydney and Mr Charnock was with the object of securing agencies, and was highly satisfied with his success there.

From what I have heard since Eric's death, I have reason to believe that he did not anticipate that he was long of this world in any case. I was told the ~~day~~ ^{Saturday at Jamaica} after Eric died I think it was I was too distressed then to take much note of time or anything else then, or

have fasten much note of details) that Eric had been informed that he might live for three months or three years, when his reply was "Then I am out to make as much as I can in the time". Meaning of course, that he was out to make it for Lean and the little ones who were so dear to him and dependent upon him. Thus was his brave decision. As though he had said "My life, while I have it, shall be lived for those whom I love". Then there forced itself upon him the conviction that his failing health was going to make that ambition impossible to him. And now, my dear Son, you know the rest. His letters are precious to us. One great regret we have and it is that we were not permitted to share the burden of his great anxiety but that he bore it alone.

We have received many letters from Eric's and our friends conveying messages of sympathy & encouragement. One I have before me now, written by Mr F. D. Kendall, who, like dear Eric, is

a lover of flowers. He refers in his letter to a board on "Carnation Culture" which Eric had lent him and says "I should be glad to have it in memory of his friendship". This however, is not chiefly why I refer to the letter, but to give you a remembrance he made therein which is indicative of the state of poor Eric's health. He says "The news his demise came as a great shock to me as only on the previous Saturday I travelled from Port Adelaide to the ocean with him. He had to run for the train on that occasion, and when he sat down in the carriage he was very much upset, and remarked he would suffer at night for his folly in exerting himself." —

Mr Kendall was a student of mine some time ago.

Another of my students, Mr J. M. Cook, a returned Soldier, writes — "I trust that your grief may be lightened by the knowledge that this is the price of a sacrifice made in the cause of liberty and justice for which so many have given their all, even though this is paid away from the fever of action and after the glamour of victory is passed."

Richard Sutton (Charlie knew Eric intimately and regarded him as one of the finest of his friends, and says that all those who know him so well admire and respected and loved him) gives express to the same thought in the following words: - "He gave his life for his Com just as truly as if he had lost it on a battlefield, and the work he has done since his return will never be forgotten by those who know."

You may be disposed to ask the question - "How, if Eric had suffered so much from ill-health were we not told before?" The question is easily answered. His intense suffering is quite recent development, and may be dated from his very severe attack of influenza in June last, though, as you probably know, his kidney trouble seemed to be a permanent thing. But owing to his reticence on the subject of his health we were in ignorance that he was regarded it so seriously. During his attack of influenza he had severe haemorrhage

one thing that would have added to our happiness and rejoicing, and that is that you had been able to intimate at the same time that you were accompanying Reg. However, my dear son, no good purpose could be served by your making any sacrifice of your opportunities of study & advancement in connection with your profession, and we are not selfless enough to desire that you should do so. Daily for the first week or so after we had cabled to you we had been on the look out for a reply from you, but as nothing came through, and we had cabled on Saturday 1st Aug, we at last came pretty well to the conclusion that as Aunt Kate had cabled a message of sympathy almost immediately following ours, that this was regarded as covering your reply as well. In the circumstances, therefore, your cable at the later date was doubly welcome. Since acknowledging your letters of July 11 & 20 another welcome one, dated 28th July has reached us. At the time of writing you were anticipating a visit from Reg. on embarkation leave, and I don't doubt

that you had a good time together. I am sure Reg would much appreciate the change from Camp life as you would the pleasure of having him with you.

Thanks for the photos. What a merry-faced young lady your friend Miss Smith is! I don't consider you have any cause to regard your photographs as having flattered you in what he has produced as your alleged interests. I have seen a fair number of better presentations of the original than this one. Anyway it is not fair to be too critical, is it?

Judging from one of the Snap. I should think the scenery along the river banks must be very pretty. I suppose that at the time you wrote you were enjoying the very best of English weather. I understand that June, July and August are about the best of the months of the year. By this time you will have ~~the~~ intimation of the approach of winter, when to an Australian, at any rate, England will be a good place to be out of.

We have had some splendid rains during this month which were indeed sorely needed, for the earlier winter months were particularly dry, and but for these good later rains the harvest outlook

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would have indeed been poor. The rains have
now given place to glorious weather such
as you would revel in if you were here.
In a few weeks more summer will be with
us. Already the peach and apricot
blossom are heralding the approach of
good old solo genial - and sometimes
other than genial - warmth. Anyhow we
Australians love the Sun, don't we? How
you boys have longed for it during these
past three years - three years ago it
will be next month since mother and I
journeyed to Melbourne to bid our dear
Sons farewell. What a feeling of terrible
loneliness was with me as I stood by
myself watching the troopships moving
away and carrying my dear boys from me.
Who are ultimately responsible for this
awful world-wide upheaval and trouble,
bringing in its train so much sorrow
and suffering to innocent ones we
perhaps do not yet know. To whom
the immediate blame belongs we are
in no doubt. Germany has a big
contract before her to rehabilitate herself
in the eyes of the world, and to render
herself worthy to have a place among
civilized nations in view of all the
atrocities of which she has been guilty.

during these long weary and cruel years of war.

I have just been again reading your last letter in which you speak of the peace day ~~celebrations~~ celebrations; your experience in the office of Mr Sykes; industrial matters in England, and the trouble between the Collieries and the Coalowners — how altogether out of joint it seems that the very thing upon which the people of England are so utterly dependent i.e. the Coal of the country should not be owned by the people of the country. But there, how many other things are out of joint!

Yes, my son, I think there is good reason to fear that unless some wise counsels prevail there is a very grave prospect of great internal trouble, particularly in the other countries of the world. What is going to be the final outcome of it all we cannot think, much less ~~say~~ say, but if those who have held their hard-working fellows, upon whom we are so entirely dependant for every comfort in life, in cruel subjection for so long, regardless of how they lived, or whether they lived at all; are not very careful there will come for them a day of terrible reckoning at the hands of those whom they have so shamefully wronged.

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The most interesting passage in your letter is one towards the end in which you say "October is gradually drawing near, Home is nearer to my sight. Although I am sure I have not done unwisely I shall be glad to get home once again." My dear son this is little sweet music to me. How glad and thankful I am that we have been successful in making home so attractive a place to you.

Now my dear boy in concluding my letter I feel that I must have another word regarding your and our dear Eric. I don't think, my son, that I would like to say to you and to myself, don't let us get unduly to grief, for if he can know it it would pain and grieve him. I fear the had he lived his kidney trouble would have meant for him great suffering, perhaps more intense than we can imagine. What he must have gone through during the three months following his attack of influenza none but himself knew. I have an idea that the effect of the influenza was to arouse that in his kidney disease, which was for the time being dormant, into activity. From what he said in his letter to Leonard, the great trouble followed the attack of influenza.

For he speaks there of what he had suffered for the past three months. Let us be proud of him that he was so brave & uncomplaining

Only today in looking up office records I ascertained that it was only on 14th August that he was charged up on the books with his table for his office at Grosvenor St., just a week before the day on which he died. So that you can clearly see that notwithstanding his ill health and, as I think, the knowledge he had that life was not going to be long for him, he intended to brave battle as for Jean and the dear little ones with the object of making as good a provision for them as it was possible for him to do.

Jean comes along to Dalin House bringing the little ones with her. Little Neil is a dear little chap - just over two years of ~~his~~ age. Already he has discovered ~~the~~ how persistent I am as an artist, and his insistent demand that I shall draw him a 'cockley' has to be complied with. When you get home you will find him a big contract for he is as active as a grasshopper.

Poor Jean is bearing her trouble well and bravely and we are glad that she comes to see us so frequently - and further that she likes to come -

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Now it is just about on the stroke of
midnight, and I will leave the concluding
lines of my letter till the morning, when
the mail closes.

Friday morning (26/9/19) I postponed the
closing of my letter till this morning so that
I could give you the latest bulletin regarding
Mother's attacks of her old trouble with
which trouble you have been so familiarly and
from which she suffered so frequently before
you went away. You will be pleased
that she is much improved this morning
and was even talking of getting up. Anyway,
there was no occasion for her to do this as
Mumet is here, having stayed over night,
as they occasionally do on Hugh's leave
nights.

This is a beautiful morning, and
may be taken as the heralding of the
approach of summer, which by the time
you reach Australia will be well with
us. I have written year by year of our
peach crop. Well it does not promise to
be so abundant this year, though there is
promise of a decent lot & probably if we
do not get the quantity it will be made
up in the quality. Anyhow the presence

of our dead boys, for whom our hearts have yearned for these long, long years of war, to assist in gathering (and partaking of) the crop will make it a good crop, and will much more than compensate for any paucity.

How my son I must away to breakfast and to the office where I am still busy with the work in connection with my balance. How well I realize now that I should have got away from this fifteen, or even more, years ago. Well, there is no use crying over spilt milk, is it?

My word, son, I can give you a good job with my law classes when you get back, and have completed your studies. I wonder how we should get on together in partnership.

God bless you my dear boy, and keep you and bring you back to us in safety and in health. I pray.

With fondest love
Father