

I

To the familiaries, relations, friends, of the fallen.

Human pity and gratefulness feelings guide me to you, our Allies, in this war against any form of fascist tyranny, for whom I gathered these carving memories of the sacrifice of your relations. Still I think that human pity and gratefulness feelings would not be nobly accomplished, if I would forget to remember and to make more conspicuous, among such a riches particulars, the Duty that the fallen in the present conflict enjoin to any European to do, in order to their martyrdom do not remain sterile.

This Duty, Englishmen, arises from the sorrow of your fallen, from the grief of their bodies, cruelly hurted in their shining youth, springs from the groan of their last prayer which from the bloody wood ascends still towards the heaven propitiating for you, for Italy, for the world. If by chance anybody might have been near the dyings, and might have gathered their extreme sighs, he would perhaps had heard that Duty translated in such a prayer : -

No, no ! It was not a vision when in the evening, when we were still babies, asleep in our mother's bosom, a star appeared in our dreams, showing us a far land strewed with shore shining in the sun, lashed by the waves of three seas; land which was a presage of our misfortune and on which a day the flower of our youth should be cut off.

Oh God, Thou desired that the old vision of ours babies dreams were verified; and we here, on this Italian land, in this terrible night, we are dying. That Thou hast desired; we thine obedient creatures sacrifice our blood in holocaust of Italy and of the world.

But our sacrifice will be useless, if " Fascismus " and his " Monarchist accomplices ", both cause " of our death and destruction ", will not cease for ever to torture the tired, exhausted Italian people and the world in mourning; sterile sacrifice if " Liberty " and the " Quotidian Bread " not become again the reason of life and means of maintenance.

Know the quick gather the fruit of our sacrifice.

Very soon, Lord, we will be in thy powerful arms, by reason of the virtues which have pushed us to the death in order " to destroy thy enemies " and " to give back the spiritual and material goods " since very long torn away from thine creatures by violent and wicked men.

We, elected by Thou for the supreme sacrifice, we thank Thou, for having conferred to it a moral signification.

God, that our sacrifice may save and perfect the humanity!
Amen . -

III

Cronic historical diary of an English plane, fallen near
Polverara, Spezia Province, during the second worldy war 1939- 1945.

November 24th 1943.

On November, in the evening, during a violent storm, the Polve-
rara countrymen had been many times attracted by an accented rum-
bling of planes, sailing in the rain, wind and thunders.

At 21,30 hrs. about, some countrymen of Torre (Polverara) still
awak, advised a roaring coming not far way. They observed and they
saw flashes of light in direction of Monte Croce.

A few minutes afterwards, a group of Torre's countrymen, went
towards that direction, in order to succour if eventually anybody
wanted it.

As soon as they arrived near the flashes of light, they saw
clearly that a plane had fallen. They could scarcely proceed, in a
straitened manner in account of the explosion of the projectiles,
of the violence of the storm, of the pitch dark, of the heat, caused
by fire, the flames of which with their reverberation augmented the
horror of the scene.

On the same night at 20,30 hrs., one hour before the happened, on the
chain of the mountains at Polverara west, near Bovecchio, Ricco del
Golfo's fraction, an other fire was noted.

November 25th 1943.

At the break of day, in a space of a hundred square meters
about, rather irregular and woody, fragments, broken pieces of a pla-
ne appeared dispersed here and there, curled up for the shock and
for the explosion. I take some snap shots of the scene, but in ac-
count of the thick fog the films are not marked.

From the board books it was easy to know that the plane, fal-
len in locality " Venturello " at north east of Polverara, on the
path, going to Monte Croce, was of English Nationality.

Under a narrow path called "De l'aeta di fanti", three aviators,
dead, at a short distance one from another, over a bush, lied down in
pitiful conditions. Among these three fallen, one had a banded hand with
gauze: that means that he was wounded before falling.

Above the path the dead body of a forth aviator lied down in
pitiful conditions also for a gash in a flank.

A fifth dead body has been found in the carling: he lied
resting his head: the addomen, a leg and an arm were carbonized; a
hand was high raised.

Among books, magazines, and a map of the Liguria, a card has been
found of W.H. Smith's family or relatives address:

Mrs. W.H. Smith Pelton Cottage
Manley Grove

(H) K L E I Gen Rhydding Yorne
E N G L A N D.

A great crowd started to arrive from the neighbouring villages.
The Ricco del Golfo carabinieri were a few hours afterwards informed
and they arrived a 1 o'clock in the afternoon to take care of the
fallen.

November 26th 1943.

During all the day as a procession continued the afflux of the people from Vara, Foce, Chiappa, Spezia: from any side run up boys, young men, women, old. Everybody had for the fallen words and expressions of human pity; everybody had in his soul the sense of love for those who die to make a better world arise.

During all the day, no disposition arrived by the German authorities to identify and inhume the dead bodies. For three nights still the stars, pouring out their gracious light on the cold bodies of the sky's heroes, will substitute the extreme cares.

By an youngman of a village near Polverara, (Beverino) a sheet of paper was found on which was written the name, the rank, of the five aviators, the cipher and the derivation of the plane.

I transcribe exactly and entirely:

SQUADRON Q. T. A/c NUMBER H. Z. 694 Lett. F- 18 - 19/11.43/.

CAPTAIN S. G. T. BETTS - NAVIGATOR S. G. T. PHORNELL.

CREW- W/ O. P.-S. C. T. BOWMAN -S. C. T. SMITH-S. C. T. BARTON.

-BASE BASTIA MADDALENA-

November 27th 1943.

On November 27th, about 10 o'clock in the night, German military authorities arrived on the place. This first German patrol was commanded by a marechal. Among the four Germans, one performed the functions of interpreter. The patrol left the place at about 12 o'clock in the night after a summary reconnoitring and after having warned the presents of the possible danger of some bombs not exploded pouring out here and there in consequence of the shock and unbinding of the plane.

Doctor Giuseppe Ratti, phisucian of Follo, (Spezia) after a visit to the mortal remains, affirmed that each aviator found his death immediately, because in the terrible shock falling down the brains came out of the skull.

November 28th 1943.

A group of Germans came in service of vigilance. A German officer, helped by specialized men, identified the mortal remains, through the documents in the uniform.

Under the path called " De l'aeta di fanti ", lied, near a bomb not exploded, the mortal remains of Capt. Betts. At his neck a small plate of acknowledgment was appended with the number I.318.431. He had a hand banded with gauze; he was perhaps wounded before the disaster.

Quite closed to the said path, were between themselves the mortal remains of the navigator Phornell and of s;c.t. Bowman, both placed upon a bush, in pitiful conditions.

Over the same path lied the mortal remains of s.c.t. Smith, of big sizes. In the low part of the abdomen, a lage and deep wound was noted.

The s.c.t. Barton mortal remains were in the carling: a leg and an arm were carbonized; he lied resting his head; a hand was high raised.

In the pocketbook of some aviators, Italian banknotes have been found.

The interpreter, a German thirty years old about, tall, flaxen haired, kind way of dealing, born in Cairo from an English mother, resident with his family in Holland, loving the Italian music, guest during the piece of Count Sforza in Milan, engineer, of refined learning, showed a photo of s.c.t. Smith. He posed erect in the middle of an alley in his sergent uniform; he looked tall, good-looking, face brightened by a smile of interior joy; in the back of the stage was a green park of trees. The interpreter showed another photo, for identification card, half-length portrait.

A very good looking girl posed, delicate features of the face, nice mouth, wavy hair, perhaps dark-haired, mild and intelligent look, look full of sad smile: she was the fiancée of s.c.t. Smith.

The interpreter with sorrowfulness replaced the two photos in ~~his~~ pocketbook of the fallen, one near the other with the promise to send them to Smith's family as soon as the war will be over.

The German authorities said that every personal document which is found, will be sent to the International Red Cross.

The magazines, the board's books, a Liguria map, the card with the address written on of Smith were consigned to the marechal of carabinieri of Riccò del Golfo.

During the day we were told that on November 24th at about 8,15' in the evening, another English plane had fallen down in the mountains at Polverara's west, near Bovecchio (Riccò del Golfo).

As soon as the bodies had been identified, at night-fall the Germans left the place of the mishap.

November 29th 1943.

In that dark autumn morning, some men ascended the Polverara's hills; each brought on his shoulders a bier; they looked very sad bending their steps to "Venturello" to recompose the mortal remains of the fallen, each in his own coffin.

The German officer of the day before and the local authorities, assisted the remotion of those members, consacred by the sublime martyr.

The Capt. Betts matricular plate was nailed up his coffin.

At 10 o'clock in the afternoon, the five coffins were set in a line in the Polverara's oratory, expecting the funeral honours.

They have been fixed for the following day: the religious ones, in catholic rite, at 10 o'clock; the military ones, at 11 o'clock about.

The mortal remains will be buried in the Polverara's communal cemetery, one near the other in a area properly chosen.

November 30th 1943.

In the morning the coffins had been transferred from the oratory to Polverara's Church. Near the high altar was the tumulus of the coffins wrapped in black cloth. 10,15' hrs: women and boys put continuously flowers of innumerable and vivid hues on the coffins; burned wax-candles and incences; columns of smoke rolled up the lights in small clouds, diffusing around acrid perfume, whilst a song vibrated through the sad air; the emotion by degrees arised in everybody's soul.

A instant before the transport of the coffins from the church to the cemetery, I asked the German interpreter, who was not the same of the day before:- Do you allow me, sir, to photograph the coffins during the transferring? - Quite astonished he looked at me and coldly and roughly answered:- No! -

A nazi-fascist military representation was out the church, impatiently wait near the cemetery's gate. Impatient perhaps to subtract very soon the fallen from the ceremony paid homage from the population?

Between two lines of crowd, defile the coffins; in every glance, in every gesture, in every attitude, an expression of sadness is marked.

I uphold a coffin from one side and I think:- if my hands might have shake the young aviator's hand, when he was to librate towards the blue sky, instead of this piece of wood; if my arms might have embrace the shining body of the hero while he was going towards the extreme sacrifice, instead of these wood slabs. -

I walked and upheld that sacred weight; I would defend it for a sense of pride that made me fervent, for a sense of sorrow which tormented myself.

The coffins had been deposited on the edge of a large ditch in the center of the cemetery. The name of the fallen was written with a pencil, on the cover of each coffin, the speciality to which the aviator belonged, was joined after in chalk, and then a progressive number. As the German officer was in a hurry, I had no time to copy the name and the surname; I could only copy the speciality and the number as follows:

Capitano	1
Pilota	2
Oberfelcom	3
Funcher	4
Mitragliere	5

As you see, the specialityes have been written in Italian and in German; the writing of the word "Oberfelcom" is mistaken; the word "Funcher" means radiotelegraphist.

The German officer calls with his name every fallen; the fascist militiamen at every appeal, answer with a guns volley; the Germans salute lifting up the arm.

The Capt. Betts matricule plate is more strictly fixed on his coffin's cover.

At 11,35' the inhumation, last human pity, is nearly finished.

From the fields which surrounded the cemetery, hundreds of persons, came from the valley of the Vara, from Spezia, looked with commotion; the little boys make them support by their parents, in order to can better see; the younger climb up the walls.

One after another the coffins were let down in the common grave, wrapped and warmed by the autumnal sunshine, which shines for the glory of the heroes. (I)

At last Italian land falls on the coffins, making dull noise.

Everything is done; the crowd goes back home. The fascist militia and the Germans, whilst they go way, express their trouble for the gorgeous ceremony and for "the great quantity of flowers offered to the heroes.

End of the cronic historical, follows supplement.

(I) The last coffin entering from the cemetery gate, is the coffin of the Capt. Betts.

Supplement.

In the future, when peace will blossom in the world, you, relatives and friends of the five fallen, in "Venturello", will perhaps walk, as pilgrims toward the clods dyed purpled of the blood of your dearest.

Then, if you will read again this supplement, you will find a geographic information of the place, which will be useful on your walk.

Polverara lies on a chain of mountains at Spezia north-east, it is far from Spezia nine kilometers and half about.

It is 400 meters about on sea level, it has 460 inhabitants about; this number of countrymen arised a good deal during the present war in account of the sfollati.

Itinerary.

One arrives here from Spezia coming through La Chiappa and through La Foce on Aurelia road.

One comes down passing Aurelia road as far as Benedetto and precisely AS FAR AS the Sprugola bridge.

Here arrived, one leaves the Aurelia road and one turns to the right towards a secondary road, practicable for carriages, called Graveglia.

After a walk of thirty minutes, one arrives to a tavern; one leaves the Graveglia road and one follows a rough road. Fifty minutes about after one arrives at Polverara.

This village is divided in three groups of houses: Fornello-Valle, the low part; Olivo, most populous; Torre, the high part.

Going from the Torre, along a path conducting to Monte Croce, one arrives, ten minutes after, at "Venturello".

The cemetery is near the church in the neighbourhood of Olivo; the jurisdiction belongs to Riccò del Golfo Municipality; this chief place is on Aurelia road, after S. Benedetto (I have it above mentioned) and Caresana.

Riccò del Golfo is far from Spezia ten kilometers.

Normally good auto services are made on Aurelia road.

Plane's materials.

It seems to me necessary to give some news about the employ of the plane's material.

First it seemed that the Germans wanted take the whole material; then only some pneumatics. Instead, the inhumation of the victims, the Germans renounced to everything, perhaps in account of the difficulties of the transport.

That is why some Polverara's countrymen, and some of the neighbourhood, cleaned the place of the desaster of the broken pieces, and someone, selling them, gained some money.

But all this has no importance at all; I will say something about a fact that is important for his moral and material meaning.

Soon after the falling of the plane, some countrymen, who after enlisted themselves with the partisans, in a moment that the carabinieri were absent, took off, in the night, three mitrailleuses in very good conditions.

So the English aviators arms passed in the hands of men of different nationality, but of the same faith. Very seldom the destiny wants that the arms of the fallen continue to be used at the same aim desired by the dyings. These mitrailleuses will employed, on account of favourable circumstances at the same aim, and at any shot, the mortal remains of the five English aviators will shudde of pride; because from

from their coffins they might see that other heroes fight
with their arms against the same enemy.

This memorial has been gathered, with accurate fidelity,
by MANFREDI TRALDO, resident in La SPEZIA, Via GARIBOLDI, N. 6.
teacher at POLVERARA .

The end.

Teacher: Manfredo Traldo

Spezia, October 6, 1945.