

TRAGIC NEWS FOR LUTON.

Lieut. Alec Wernher Killed.

When haste like a cloud hung over the land,
For the faith that his fathers knew
He took to the hills, the sword in his hand,
To fight for the good and true.

Simple lines written of a famous old Covenant of Scotland, one of the many who fought for the liberties of his race. They may be quoted to-day with a eloquent truth and timeliness as in these days, for the sword is ever the last resort of the Briton. Foremost among nations in the art of peace she has achieved that eminence, and there is the ring of perfect truth in the claim that not one of her sons would now be mobilized in the bosom of France but for imperilled liberty. The sacrifice has been made just as freely in mansion and cottage. In every walk of life have houses experienced the desolation of death and the anguish of suspense. Just twelve months ago both classes of society in Luton and district were swept with the same sorrow. Again this week, through the music of victory have come two plaintive notes which have shaken the town and district.

not the least will be that spontaneous offering from the people of Bedfordshire, whom she has come to know so well. Not less than the humblest working woman of Luton, she has given to the country her all, and the elder son, Harold, is now serving in France only five miles from the spot where his brother fell. As a matter of fact he saw his brother only about a week before his death. To him also will it be a heavy blow for there was a bond of affection between the two. Lieut. Harold Wernher is with the 12th Lancers, and in January last was mentioned in despatches for gallantry in the field.

Lady Wernher has been the recipient of shoals of messages of condolence and sympathy both at Bath House, Luton, Hoo, and at Berwick. Among them is one from the Mayor of Luton (Alderman J. H. Staddon) on behalf of the Corporation and the town generally. Those who remember the coming-of-age celebrations of Lieut. Harold Wernher will probably recollect that Alderman H. O. Williams, proposing the health of the youngest son, referred to the part played in national life by younger sons. The hopes then expressed may not have been brought to the fulness of fruition desired and anticipated by Alderman Williams and those who honoured the toast, but though his career has been abbreviated he has served his country well and has died as he would have desired to die, whether early or late in life.

The gallant young officer was only in his



LATE SEC.-LIEUT. ALEC WERNHER.

In the first place came the staggering news that Second-Lieutenant Alexander Pigott Wernher, youngest son of the late Sir Julius Wernher, Bart., and of Lady Wernher, of Luton Hoo, and Bath House, Piccadilly, London, had fallen on the battlefield in France.

Still a stripling he was at Eton when war broke out, and he promptly responded to the call to arms, being granted a commission in the 21st Royal Bucks Hussars on November 18, 1914, and gassed in the following April. His abilities were speedily recognized, and in September last year he was attached to the staff of General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, and when the dashingly warrior was entrusted with the command of the troops in East Africa, he went out there. When the General fell ill and returned home, Lieut. Wernher accompanied him, and on April 11th last, such was his anxiety for active service that he got his transfer to the Welsh Guards, with whom he went to the Front on July 17th.

There he has given unfailing proof of his characteristic thoroughness and the qualities which won him recognition from a soldier of such a temperament as Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien. Brave to the last degree, willing to share discomfort and danger with his men, he won their confidence and goodwill during the seven weeks he was with them in France.

We are forbidden to give the exact place of his death, but it was one of those fortuitous circumstances which are incidental to warfare. On September 10th he was first wounded in the leg, and it was while he was being borne from the field that he received a mortal wound, and was laid to rest in a soldier's grave behind the firing line.

Lady Wernher was staying at Berwick when the news came. Only those fully acquainted with the capacity for sympathy with which the Lady of the Manor is imbued will be able to appreciate the full extent of the blow, but one may safely assume that whatever consolation she may find in the condolences of her friends,

twentieth year, but the future was bright in every sense, and whether he had made the Army his life work or preferred to return to civil pursuits, his loss is regretted as far as can be that of any among the many who have laid down the greatest of all sacrifices for their country and the noblest cause for which men or nations may strive.

COUNCIL'S CONDOLENCES.

At Tuesday's meeting of the Luton Town Council, after referring to the Premier's bereavement.

His Worship the Mayor (Alderman J. H. Staddon) said: "Then we come nearer home, and have to mourn with our outseemed Lady of the Manor, Lady Wernher, in the loss of her youngest son. It is with the greatest regret we learn that in this time—when her ladyship is overwhelmed with charitable works in all directions—in God's good providence, this great sorrow has fallen upon her as upon so many others. The deceased officer was a young man of great promise who, had he lived, would have had great responsibilities, and I am sure you and the whole town will sympathize with Lady Wernher and family in the severe loss she has sustained. I propose:

"That this Council express its deepest sympathy and condolences with Lady Wernher in the great loss of her youngest son, Lieut. Alec Wernher, who has made the supreme sacrifice of his life on the battlefield on behalf of his country in a most just and righteous cause."

ask you to pass the vote of condolence, standing.

The resolution was then carried in silence.

Immediately preceding the organ recital at the Parish Church last (Wednesday) evening, the congregation solemnly stood while Mr. F. Gostelow, the organist, played Chopin's impressive "Funeral March." The church was well filled, and the token of respect in memory of Alexander Pigott Wernher, Lieut., Welsh Guards, and in sincere sympathy with Lady Wernher, was very marked.