

The Wilson Information Sheet



Edward Wilson's penultimate letter to his wife, Oriana

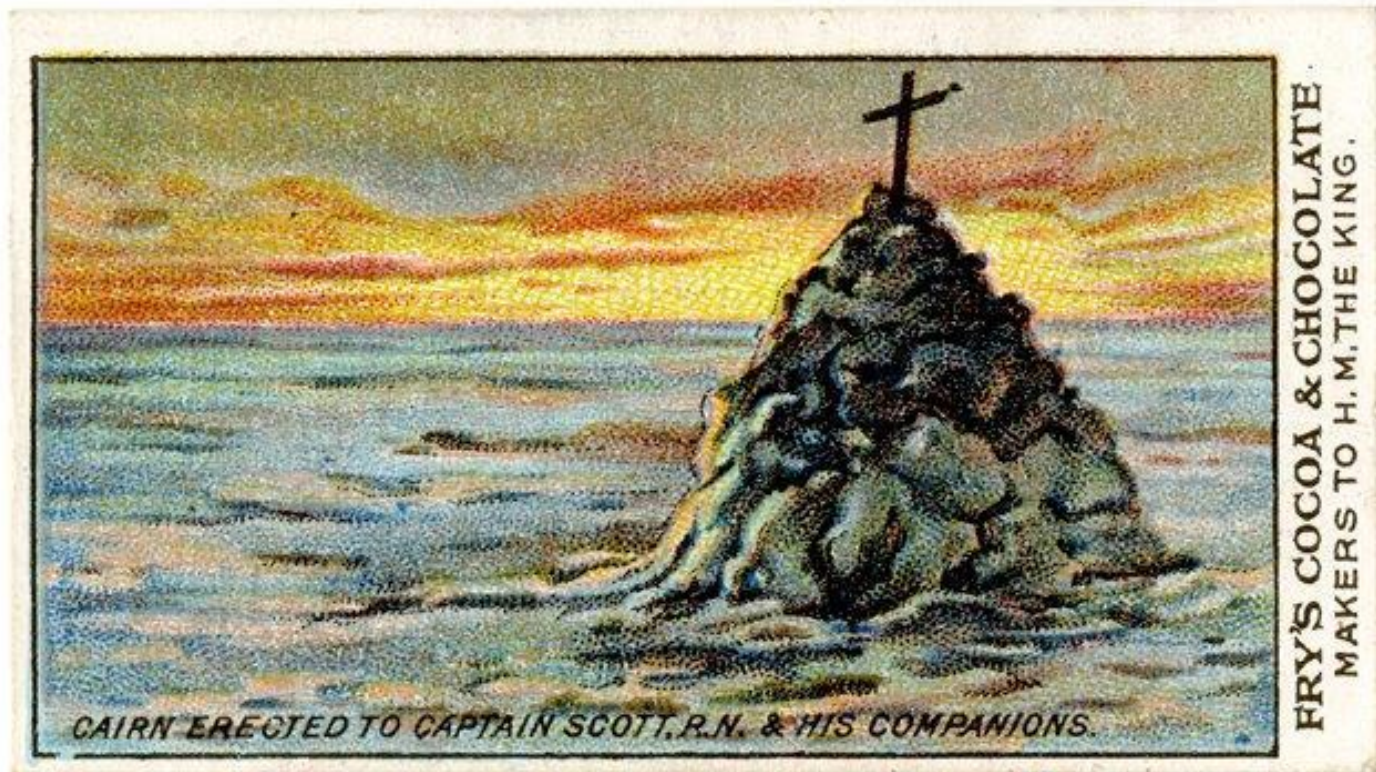


Edward and Oriana on their wedding day 1901

This letter is an original copy made by a member of the Wilson family shortly after Edward Wilson's death. It is important because Oriana destroyed the original along with other personal documents in the 1930s after the publication of her late husband's biography. This is a more complete transcript than the one she allowed to be published. It is the penultimate letter Edward Wilson wrote to Oriana and tells of the last days of his life

Wilson stopped writing his diary on Tuesday 27 February 1912. This letter was written in late March 1912 during his return journey from the South Pole with Scott, Bowers, Evans, and Oates. It tells how Wilson and Bowers ('Birdie') were hoping to reach the major food supply cache at One Ton Depot, 11 miles away, and return to help Scott, who had severe frostbite on his foot. The letter reports that two members of the party, Evans and Oates, had already died and shows that Wilson had accepted that he himself only had days left to live.

A nine day blizzard prevented the two men from carrying out their plan and they died during the last days of March 1912. Their bodies were discovered eight months later, on 12 November 1912.



A series of commemorative cocoa cards were released after the expedition, including this example dedicated to their memory.

To my beloved wife ...

Life has been a struggle for some weeks now on this return journey from the Pole. So much so that I have not been able to keep my diary going. Today may be the last effort. Birdie and I are going to try and reach the depot 11 miles North of us and return to this tent where Capt Scott is lying with a frozen foot.

We have been short oil and short food for so long and such low temperatures and bad weather that we are all done up. Evans and Oates are dead. Our effort today is rather a forlorn hope but I hope this will reach youI look forward to meeting you after this life is over. I shall simply fall and go to sleep in the snow and I have your little books with me in my breast pocket

God will bring us together again

Don't be unhappy darling – all is for the best. We are playing a good part in a great scheme arranged by God himself and all is well. I find absolutely no terror in the thought that this is my last day of life. Yet it almost certainly is I think dear. I am only sorry I couldn't have seen your loving letters and Mother's and Dad's and the Smiths' and all the happy news I had hoped to see, but all these things are easily seen later I expect when we are with Christ which is far better – God be with you

I would like to have written to Mother and Dad and all at home but it has been impossible. We will all meet after death and death has no terrors. God keep you in this disappointment. We have done what we thought was best

Goodbye for the present.

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