

Aug. 19, 1896

A. A. Merrill, Esq.

Dear Sir.

Upon referring to my letter of 17 I see that I did not give you a very intelligible account of my theory as to how the accident occurred to Lilienthal.

I believe that he must have gone up in a gusty wind, placing himself well to the front to produce forward motion; that the gust increasing just as he rose, and striking the upper surfaces, stopped the headway; that the gust then suddenly ceased, and the machine, loaded to far forward, pitched to the front. That Lilienthal tried to throw himself back, but was not quick enough, and that the machine capsized fore and aft and turned over like a falling card. I suspect that either the tail, or the connection between the upper and lower surfaces were racked and out of order, and I do not believe that there was a descending trend of wind sufficient to have amused the accident, if the machine had been in perfect order.

I may be quite wrong in my surmises, but I thought I had better give them to you more accurately.

Resply

O. Chanute