

## Letters from The Great War

*(EDITOR'S NOTE) This letter was written home by Corporal Gorge Maginel, in which he praises the kindness of the nurses as he tries to heal a leg wound. His letter was originally published in the Rolette Record on September 20th, 1918.*

Dear Parents:

I will drop you these few lines, to let you know that I am getting along better every day. I hope that my letter will reach you all in the best of health.

I was in bed fifteen days, unable to walk. It was sure a treat when I got out of bed. I can not walk much but I can get around and that helps some. We have the best doctors in France here. We also got some very good nurses here in the hospital. They are so kind that it makes me feel like home.

My leg is almost well. It will not be long before I will go back again and get some more boches. I will tell you that I have seen a good deal of this country. The crops are very good especially the wheat crop. I have never seen such big heads. The grape crop is also good.

Write often and tell me all the news; about the crops also.

I must close as this is all I ha[ve] to say for this time. Give me be[st] consolations to all my friends, L(et) [sic] me hear from you often.

Your loving son, and brother,

Corp. George Maginel

(Volume 1 page 51)

Researched and transcribed by University of Mary history student Jackson Grad ('19).

Letters from the Great War is a project conducted by students of Dr. Joseph T. Stuart, associate professor of history at the University of Mary in Bismarck. Students researched at the North Dakota State Archives to provide transcripts of letters for use by the North Dakota Newspaper Association and the North Dakota World War I Centennial Committee.

## Rolette County Letter 2

### **Letters from The Great War**

*(EDITOR'S NOTE) This letter was written by Corporal George Manigel, in Toul, France on November 23, 1918. It was published in the Rolette Record on January 2nd, 1919.*

My Dear Father:

Being as this is Father's Day, I will drop you a few lines and tell you a few of my experiences since I have been in France.

I landed in Liverpool, England, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1917. We got off the boat and got on the train and went to an English rest camp at Winchester. We remained there seven days. While there we did not have much time to visit the city, but got out a few times and walked over part of it. England is a very beautiful country and I liked the city quite well.

We then went to south Hamden where we took the boat across the channel for France. While I was crossing the channel, O! but I did get sick. The channel is sure some rough water. There are waves over fifty feet high. We were five hours coming and we landed at LeHavre on New Year's morning, at 5 o'clock. I sure can remember how cold it was, after being sick all night. We remained here for three nights, after which we entrained for LaCourtine in box cars, and you can imagine how cold it was. The box cars here are nothing like as good as what we have at home and the trains travel very slow. It took us 48 hours to make the journey. All we had to eat was eorn-ville [sic] and hardtack. However, we were sometimes relieved on the long journey by getting coffee from the Red Cross, and, believe me, it sure tasted good. We drilled at this place for two weeks in snow and mud up to our knees, besides we had no stoves or fire of any kind to dry our clothing by, which made it hard on us, but we were very well clothed which kept us from suffering much. During all this time we were all very anxious to get at the Bosh. At this place our regiment was finally split up and sent in as a replacement regiment and I was left behind which made me very sore as I was just as egar [sic] to get at the Bosh as any of them.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January I left, with the remainder of our original regiment, all of which were non-commissioned officers, for St. Aignan. There we struck a very fine country. The weather was nice and there was no snow, which relieved us a great deal. Furthermore, the people were very good to us. At this point our regiment was filled in with drafted boys from the states and we had to train them, which took considerable time. We drilled eight hours a day for five months and it was very pleasant, as the boys all took interest in their work to accomplish the task which we had undertaken, which didn't take long to accomplish as you see by the newspapers t

the present time. At St. Aignan I made many friends among the civilian population and I felt very much at home there.

On June the 21<sup>st</sup> of June we were sent to Bouree, which is a small town about six miles from St. Aignan. There we rested for ten days.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of June a call came for a replacement of non-commissioned officers for the front and I was one of the lucky ones to be selected. I was much pleased to get to go. We again loaded into box cars and shipped to Moux, which is 47 kilometres from Paris. It took us three days to make the journey. The weather was excellent and the journey was very pleasant. On the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> when we alighted from the box cars we could hear the big guns. On the next morning, we loaded into big trucks and traveled thirty kilometers. We came to an opening on the Paris road and at once started to unloading [*sic*] which time the Bosh started bombarding us, which was our first experience in real warfare and we were very angry because we could not retaliate as we were too far. Finally, we scattered out through the wheat fields and reached our destination which was the Second Division Headquarters in a large woods nearby. That night we were assigned to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry and the men scattered out in different companies of this division. At two o'clock the next morning we were called to fill our places in the trenches and then we were given the opportunity of retaliating back at the Bosh, which we did with much zeal.

When daybreak came it was a very sad looking sight to the poor old men, women and children leaving their homes and going to the rear. Some of the old men had wheelbarrows with a few of their belongings upon them; women with children on their arms weeping; some leading goats and cows while others had carts; all of which were leaving their home behind doing the best they could to reach a safe place in the rear. This line looked to be about thirty miles long; and no [*sic*] pressed the American soldiers a great deal. There was nothing we could do to stop such barbarous work as the Hun was doing at this time. For the next eight or ten days everything was quiet on the front, although we were in the trenches all the time.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June our artillery and other provisions had caught up with us, so we let them know we were there with a very heavy barrage from the artillery. At daybreak the next morning we went over and straightened out our lines, which was not much trouble, as the Hun found out that the Americans were some fighters. We had only a few casualties at this time, and things were quiet for about one week.

We were delivered on the ninth of July by the 26<sup>th</sup> Division, who are some fighters. We then went to the rear for four days on support for the 26<sup>th</sup> Division. On the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> about 500 French trucks came into our camp and we loaded on them and were told we were going to Paris for a rest. At two o'clock in the morning orders had changed. We then turned-west and unloaded from the trucks at nine o'clock on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> in a large forest, where we rested for two hours. We were then called with our packs on our backs and hiked until six o'clock that night. Finding water we camped for the night and part of the next day. We then hiked again until dark and had supper, after which we were told to remove our heavy packs, that we were going to march all night, and were to go over the top at four o'clock the next morning. This was the memorable morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, which was the turning point of the war.

At four o'clock that morning, 500 batteries consisting of 2000 cannons started the heaviest barrage that I ever heard and probably the heavies [*sic*] one that was ever known. At 4:35 o'clock the infantry went over the top following the barrage keeping 150 yards in the rear. The Germans also started a barrage, which placed up the fire of our enemy and our own guns. However, the firing of the Germans' heavy units only lasted about twenty-five minutes, excepting now and then an intermittent fire, which did not cause us very much loss. By six

o'clock we had advanced about five kilometers and there was not much to it because the Bosh was on the run. Of course, we soon advanced so far that we were out of reach of our own artillery in a hurry and it was sure a great sight to see the horses at a dead gallop bringing the artillery across the fields. The French officers that were with us said that it was one of the greatest sights they had been since the fall of 1814. They said it was great help we were giving them at that time when the Germans were making the drive on Paris. They did not hesitate to express themselves relative to the merits of the American soldiers. At four o'clock in the morning we went over the top without any artillery barrage to speak of, but we sure had a great many machine guns that were of great assistance to us. The Huns put up some stiff fight omn [sic] this night as we had to dig them out of the underbrush in a large ravine. Sometimes we would get an opportunity to tickle one with the points of our bayonets. The hand to hand fighting lasted about thirty-five minutes and the Huns discovered that they were beaten and began to give themselves up and the way we took prisoners was not slow. We took our objective before dark and things were very quiet during the remainder of the night. I was then detailed with my squad to carry the wounded off of the field. We worked all night. The next morning I was told that I had better help the Red Cross men carry the wounded infantry was ordered forward again and we followed the infantry right up, removing the wounded as we went.

As I went forward I was forced to cross an open place on a hill where I came in full view of the Germans. The snipers at once opened fire on myself and squad and then they turned a three inch cannon on us. After the first shot irom [sic] the cannon we all lay down flat on the ground and started to crawl for shelter. The fourth shot struck about three feet in front of my head and exploded and a piece of the shrapnel stguck [sic] my steel helmet and tore off about three inches of the brim, but did not hurt me in the least. About three minutes afterwards a German aeroplane came over us and turned its machine guns on us and the sucker got me through the leg. Then, of course, we had reached safety in a wheat field. I then crawled quite away through the wheat field and then hobbled the best I could back to the first aid station, where I got my wound dressed. The wound bled considerably but was not so very painful, but it was impossible for me to straighten my leg. I was then sent to the field hospital where my wound was redressed and then to the evacuation station. Here they loaded me with other American wounded on a large American Red Cross train which took us to Paris. We arrived there at three o'clock on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> of July. The Red Cross was there to meet us with everything that we wished. I wish to say that the Red Cross is one of the finest organizations that ever existed in time of war.

From there they took us to Base Hospital No. 1 where I got a nice bed with nice white lined on it. This seemed like heaven to me, as I had not seen a good bed since I left home. The treatment we got in this hospital was excellent. On the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> I was operated upon, and it was sure some queer sensation to come out of the effects of ether. I was completely out of my head, and, I guess, I talked all sorts of nonsense for about two hours. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July I was sent from this hospital to Base Hospital No. 26 at AHere [sic]. It took us 24 hours to make this trip and it wasquite [sic] painful to me as my head was very sore at this time. Here again I was put under the influence of ether while they sewed up the wound as they only cut it open at the other place. It took forty stitches to sew it up. At this place I was in bed 21 days without leaving the bed at any time. After this I started to walk a little and after four or five days I went to a convalescent camp where I remain for two and one half months, after which I was sent back to rejoin my regiment. I got as far as the replacement camp at Toul, where they transferred me into

the second army stationed at this place. I was then placed into the office of the Town Major of Toul as an interpreter where I have been ever since.

There is a young lady in this city from the village where we came from. She made a visit to that village a few days ago and saw all our relatives there and told them help! for me. They instructed her to inform me to come and see them as soon as possible that they would be glad to see me. So far, however, I have not been able to get a furlough. I hope I will be able to do so before I turn to the states.

This letter leaves me in the best of health and I sincerely hope it will find every one at home the same way. Hoping that I may be able to see you soon, I am, as ever,  
Your son, George Maginel.

Researched and transcribed by University of Mary history student Jackson Grad.

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