

Letters from a Farmer to His Wife (October 1914)

Abstract

These letters from a farmer and reserve infantryman to his wife in October 1914 describe the terrifying experiences of the front and his fervent desire for an end to the war. Stefan Schimmer was a farmer from Öllingen in the Swabian Jura who served in a Bavarian reserve infantry (*Landwehr*) battalion.

Source

From Senones, October 13, 1914:

I am very hungry. I also wrote to ask for gloves. I don't know, did you receive the card or not? It is very cold to lie out all night. Write me how long it took you to get the card. I am still healthy. I have had enough. Aren't you hearing anything about peace negotiations?

From Senones, October 14, 1914:

Aren't you hearing anything about whether the war is about to end? Pray diligently for me. Also urge the children to pray for me so that I may return.

Where we are it does not look nice, because there was a battle. Many soldiers' graves can be seen there. [...]

From Senones, October 17, 1914:

[...] Go ahead and sow 2-3 acres of wheat. Write 2 letters every week. I don't need bread. One is not sure of one's life for even a single hour. [...] The photograph made me cry!

From Senones, October 18, 1914:

[...] We are on duty almost day and night, 2 days in the trenches, 1 or 2 days on guard duty. We must hold the position firmly. If the French try to break through, we must throw them back, which we had to do on Thursday, October 15. We also had artillery fire, which was terrible. 2 dead and 3 wounded. Don't send me a newspaper, I don't have time to read. We spent 2 days and 2 nights in the trenches in the Vosges, and the other 2 days on guard duty. I often don't even sleep 2 hours the whole day because of fear for my life. If only I don't have to fall by the bullet, only because of you and your children.

Sow another 3-4 acres of wheat and pray hard. I pray in the trenches and on guard duty. Send me 2 packages of sausage every week, nothing more.

The area where we are had already been a battlefield. It is an abomination of desolation. Shooting goes on day and night. I can't ever get out of my uniform. [...]

Source of original German text: Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München / Abt. IV (Kriegsarchiv) Amtsbibliothek 9584. Excerpted/reprinted in Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, *Frontalltag im Ersten Weltkrieg. Wahn und Wirklichkeit*. Berlin, 1995, p. 45–47.

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