

Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt, 5 November 1914. Image 011400159.

Excerpt of a German letter

Our friend and reader, farmer C. A. Brösel, in Giddings received a long letter from his long-standing friend Alwin Brösel living in Schönbach of which we will print the following excerpt:

Schönbach, 28 September 1914

Dear Friend:

We have experienced difficult times since your last letter here in Germany. We are threatened from every direction. But our brave soldiers have swept clean our fatherland once more. None of the enemies are on German ground. Our troops are 50 to 60 km from Paris, France. By the time you receive this letter we don't know what the situation there will be. The Russians have been pushed back. In East Prussia 90,000 Russian soldiers have been captured. 150,000 have lost their lives by drowning in the marshes and about 50,000 died. All who were not killed by our bullets were killed by the Cossacks, their own people. Until today we have captured 300,000 prisoners and more than 2000 guns, etc. Belgium is under German government except for a small portion of it with trains and mail services under German control. Belgium has done much wrong as it attacked our German troops from behind. Inhabitants shot ammunition from their windows at the German soldiers. A good friend of mine lost two of his horses. It should not surprise anybody if our warriors occasionally become angry and shoot at the people of the villages where they are being attacked. Now the world wants to condemn us. The Belgian soldiers have done much harm to us, right?! They killed soldiers while sleeping, locked them in barns and then set them on fire, cut the eyes out of their heads, chopped off their hands and feet, cut off both hands of a sister of the Red Cross. In Luxembourg all went well while our soldiers had to march through it to get to France. The same was true in France except for a few cases. How can the world believe that our troops would be so cruel? Whoever had a chance to observe our soldiers marching had to shed a tear and be proud of our army. In Bautzen I saw the 103rd march and it was a special moment for me. Our time today is more important than that of 100 years ago. 2 ½ million soldiers volunteered for service, most of them students and some professors with grey hair. They together with about 3 million trained soldiers are ready to march into war against the enemy in early October. There is a war loan of 5 milliards. In every town hands are busy sewing and knitting. Trains leave the train station in Dresden every week with gifts of love for the soldiers, twice a week with 40 cars each to help relieve the pain of the soldiers fighting for us in foreign lands. I have been drafted twice but my doctor only allowed me to serve at the garrison level. Presently I work on military backpacks. We have only lost one soldier in Schönbach. He was the only son of weaving master Leberecht Wünsche. He lives with carrier Brösel, he is born and raised in Schönbach. About 20 to 25 men are wounded but not dangerously. About 120 men of our village serve in the military, most of them in France, some in Russia. All manufacturing companies are working on items needed in the military. Sometimes the laborers work till 12 am. In the large cities you experience shortage of laborers. The government orders trains to be built and any building essential for the war period. Nobody should be going hungry. We had a good harvest, now it is time for the potatoes. Oh, if this mean war would be over and let us hope it will turn out in our favor. It was forced on us. The enemy shall have it and live with its consequences. There is no more party here, the social democrats serve right beside the noblemen as good comrades. We are one German people who stand as one and prays to one God whom we had forgotten since childhood but now find him again in our daily lives. We fear the Lord, nothing else in the world! Germany, Germany above all, above all in the world! Adults are singing it and we will win this war. Live well over there in your new home and think about us over here fighting for our country. Cordial regards from your mother and your friend,

Alwin Brösel

Translated by Margot Hendricks