

August 5, 1919 - Clermont - en - Argonne, France.

Dear Folks:-

When I last wrote I had just spent one day in the St. Mihiel salient. The next day we took a long auto trip to Verdun, passing thru Hattonchatel, where the 26th Div. coming from the west, met the 42nd Div. from the south and forced the Germans to evacuate the St. Mihiel salient. From Verdun we went out to see Forts Donauumont and de Vaux, that you have heard so much about. Verdun is not much destroyed by shell-fire, but the hills around and the villages on them are churned up so much that No Man's Land is no name for it. We made another trip to the line north of Le Mort Homme and Hill 304, where the 79th Div. jumped off Sept. 26, 1918. They captured Montfaucon. Here we found the concrete tower in a ruined house where the Crown Prince had his huge periscope. It is on a high hill so that he could survey operations for miles around, almost to Verdun. The periscope has been sent to West Point. Near Hattonchatel we saw a big German munitions dump concealed in the woods. The Germans had made a large red cross on the ground near it to protect it from aerial bombing. We are spending about 4 days here in the region of the great American Meuse - Argonne offensive, which forced the Germans to make peace. Starting from the old French trenches, which have remained practically unchanged here for 4 years, the whole American army practically jumped off on Sept. 26, 1918. They immediately changed it into open warfare along the Meuse and in the Argonne and by Nov. 11th had reached Sedan. At the Argonne cemetery here at Romagne 20,000 Americans are buried. It was by far the biggest operation of our Army. So we are being taken all thru this region. We have seen where the Engineers lost so many men crossing the Meuse and have had many battles explained on the ground by some of the officers who fought them. Yesterday we saw the Luxurious "dug-outs" occupied by Crown Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria for about 4 years in the Argonne. Their Germans had dugouts for use as theatres, clubs and every purpose imaginable there. Today we saw the place where Major Whittlesay's battalion was lost. We heard the true story of the incident. I haven't time to tell it now but everything about it was much to the credit of the Major. Then at Chatel-Chehery we saw where Sgt. York captured 4 officers and 128 men. That story is true also. We have heard some surprising stories about the discipline of some of the divisions who took part in this operation. You will be interested to hear them when I get back.

We go to Metz tomorrow night and then to Coblenz and Cologne. After that comes our trip to Belgium. You see the 1st Div. leaves Germany the 15th of this month and so we have to go there as soon as possible to see the maneuvers they are going to show us. It is said that when we arrive at Brest about the 20th we will be put at once on the boat and shipped home. So you can expect to see me by the 1st of Sept. or a few days later. This is a wonderful trip we are having and I wouldn't have missed it for anything. It practically amounts to an automobile tour of France, personally conducted at that. Well, I don't believe I shall write to you again while here as it takes about 12 days for a letter to reach you and I will be home by the time my next letter could reach you. I received a letter from you here and it certainly was welcome. I'm glad my boxes have come and you have unpacked them. I suppose Ernest will be gone when I get back but if I have a long enough leave I could go to Pittsford and see him. I'm glad Barbara is getting on so well at her camp. This is enough for now I guess. When I get home there will be a big story for you.

With love,

Maurice.

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