

LETTERS FROM KEITH CAMPBELL MACGOWAN

131st Battalion & Later 47th Battalion of New Westminster Regiment

April 30 1916 - Victoria B.C. - (Postcard)

Dear Mother,  
All OK here, Located in barracks at Work Point. Class looks like a big one but can't tell yet. Ask father to alter dates of cheques I gave him if necessary. Keith

June 25th 1916 - Vernon, B.C. - (postcard)

Dear Mother,  
Everything fine. Weather has been cool and showery. Our heat will come later I guess. At times dust is very bad and it is hard to keep it out of things. Have written Gertrude today who will likely hand the letter over to you for family digestion. Keith

August 23 1916 - Vernon B.C. - (letter)

Dearest Mother,

This will not be long as my candle is nearly gone and I'm tired besides.

Got here Monday at noon and found that I had been transferred to "C" Company which is Trapp's command. I was on parade Monday afternoon and we are now getting work.

Capt. Swan and Capt. Ramsay were appointed Majors Monday and Ramsay was put in command of "D" Company as Reid apparently failed his equitation examination and a head had to be chopped and that was sufficient excuse as a mounted officer must have a certificate. I may later get with Ramsay but am not saying anything for the time being as I understand my transfer is temporary only. I can't see anything for Richardson except reduction to the Sub.rank as he was 2nd in "D" Co. and now Reid is.

We are on parade at 67am and at 4;30 when the men are dismissed the officers go on until 5:30 for instruction in machine gun work.

I have been at the range all day practically and get home at 6pm. We have mess at 5:30 so you see we are now down to work if it will only keep up. Tell father that I only pulled down 29 out of 35 at 200 and at 500 couldn't find where I was going as the wind was very tricky. I didn't fire 600 as I want some instruction before I do much more. Got an issue of revolver ammunition this morning so will get some work in with the .455 before long.

Tattoo is just sounding and lights will be out in 15 minutes. The weather here is good and hot and I am getting a real tan as I am in the open work now which beats the inside stuff to death.

Ingraham left today for Ottawa to take musketry. He was warned for it last week

I believe that Jimmie Scott was all broken up about having to leave the battalion. He went overseas with the bunch of six that left while I was home.

Am feeling fine and hope the hot weather keeps up for a little while. Received your parcel today containing socks, handkerchiefs and soap. I have lots of soap ahead now as I had a cake of palm olive on hand.

As a result of the recent change of course Ramsay and I both had to move and we are now in two different tents by ourselves. I do not know how long I shall be in this one but I only had to move across the lane into "C" Company lines and am now facing our old tent.

There is nothing much more to tell you. We have no news as to going overseas. My letters will be fewer and short I shall endeavour to get a line off to someone in the house every few days but long letter writing is nearly impossible. We are duty battalion for the camp this week and as I expect I will get soaked with it on the week end.

How is the little kid's cough and is Bunker keeping up her physical jerks? "She can do it so easy"

Lights have just sounded so I think I shall get to bed as 5:30 springs round pretty quickly. Give my love to the various households and take care of yourself. Did you feel any ill effects from the Pantages trip and supper? I hope not. Tell Helen that I didn't half thank her for the supper.

With love to all am your affectionate son,  
Keith

September 2 1916 - Vernon Camp (letter)

Dearest Mother:

This as usual will only be a note. Nothing of very much interest has been happening. So many of the officers are on special duty that we get soaked with orderly duty pretty often. I got it last Saturday and again this Sat. so I have missed two country club dances and the two before that I was at the coast so I haven't seen many people since my return. We are working a little now but can still go stronger.

Ramsay leaves for the coast with the C.O. tomorrow for a week's leave. Jack Knight has returned and I am sharing my tent with him.

I today received your box with your note. Thanks muchly. Ramsay has promised not to eat much supper at the dance and when he returns we are going to have a chicken supper.

As this is just after payday some of the boys will be drunk and I have been fairly busy since dinner handling one case that came in early. We have no battalion jail accommodation so had to rush round and get him admitted to Brigade Detention cells contrary to regulations. The Provost marshal is Capt. Miller who used to be Chief of Police in Westminster.

Reverting to your parcel. The trip up jarred the lid loose and a little of the jelly oozed out and got on the outside of the paper. Contents however were all in fine shape. One of the boys came up to me later and asked me if I had received my mail because there was a tin of jam for me.

Have just had a letter from Margaret McNiven. She returned to Vancouver the day following my arrival here so I failed to see her.

The jitneys are beginning to arrive and they are pretty noisy fellows this evening although not bad for after payday and besides a great many of them are not our men.

Hope father had some luck on his trip. It will do him good anyway. I am so glad to hear that the little kid is better. I suppose everything is good for something although I never knew what garlic could do beyond stink "Hip stink." Am very sorry to hear that Billie has been miserable and hope he is better by the time you get this. He should join the army for his health. Also Gran, has been sick. What was the trouble and how is she now? Give her my love and tell her that I will write if I am able to get a letter off.

Saw of Capt. Peele's death in the Province and was much surprised as "I didn't even know that he was sick".

The weather has been pretty warm ranging about 100 in the shade but of course we cannot work in the shade because there isn't any. It is hot on the range parade and it has gone as high as 112 here. The record is in the medical tent which is one of the coolest tents in the bunch. As a matter of fact I have enjoyed the heat as I stand it well up here and have not felt it too hot to work so far.

You saw Plumridge had been made a lance corporal. That is another chap. My man is Plumbridge, and a batman must be a full fledged private only. I have another man at present as I am in "C" Company and Plumbridge was D. So I asked Ramsay to hang on to him until we saw what was going to happen to me.

Tell father that we had a first class 15 round light weight fight here last night. Joe Bailey -light weight champion of Canada from Victoria and Jimmie Clark of 158th Battalion Vancouver. went 15 rounds to a draw and they both worked like the deuce and owing to a little hard feeling they went at it pretty hot.

As I have still a little frog in my throat I wonder if Father could ask Rothwell what it was he gave me before when a cold in the head settled down. he might send me the prescription.

With love to all and a big kiss for yourself I am,  
Your Affectionate son,  
Keith

p.s. Yes, I saw Art B. and also Tom Gifford. KCM  
(postscript noted on top of first page 'received a box of home made maple fudge from Doris McLagan. Kind of her wasn't it)

September 2 1916 - Vernon- (letter to sister Helen)

Dear Helen:

Have just finished a short letter to mother so you will receive what little news I have through her, so I shall devote this to the question of the snaps. I left you the 2 rolls and 2 films. You sent me 15 pictures and 16 films for same. The only one that didn't turn out was one I took of Billie in his office. The one of Billie and Elsie and of Father and Mother are both good and the two groups both good. They were on a film which I didn't complete exposing until I got up here. I am just sending you the films and all my military snaps which please put with my others. You will see from the

films the various pictures and any you want copies of get done and let me know the cost.

Taylor saw the one of Elsie and Billie and thought it a very good one and quite a characteristic pose for Billie but corrected himself as he didn't think it usual to see him with his hand in his own pocket.

Have had a couple of letters from Gertrude and have just written her. You might be interested to know that we decided to cancel and call off all our understandings owing to the uncertainty of everything, when I was at the coast. She is a mighty fine little brick however.

Have just been out for about half an hour making my rounds after lights out. Have about 38 men still absent at 10pm although I suppose several of them have by now reported in through the guard. Payday and booze is a troublesome combination. Several in the lines are more or less half shot but I do not trouble them as long as they mind their business. Have yet to make my report so will not write long. I hope that some crazy son of a gun doesn't come home late and start something as we don't come off duty until 5:30 am and that means trouble in the night as they don't give us any accommodation here for handling the bad ones when they crop up and the Brigade joint will be closed I presume. It is raining quite hard now. Has been showery all day which is quite a change.

Monday being Labour Day we have Brigade Sports all day. I am asked to act as our battalion inspector on the track which sounds like something but I haven't the slightest idea as to what it really is. Ten to one it consists in wearing a badge and standing round all day looking wise and hoping no one will refer any matter to you. I believe I am to run in our officers relay race team which means that one has to tear off 220 yards as hard as one can go handing a stick to a team mate who tears along another 220 and so on. I am much interested in it all because so much is accomplished. If there was a \$20 bill at the end of the chase I might work up a little speed but all one gets is this stick and it is given away to the next man and is eventually thrown away or lost by the last. Rather thrilling I call it all.

Give Hennie my love and tell her that I took a picture of some men doing the jerks, some of "C" Co. It is among the snaps enclosed. They are standing with arms stretched up. I suppose she will be surprised that they are not working their feet or down flat on the ground.

Must stop now as it is getting late. be sure and get what prints you want and put the films with the rest.

Keith

September 17 1916 - Vernon Camp - (letter)

Dearest Mother,

I have been trying for ages to get a line off home but simply haven't had time. last Monday the second bombing or grenade school commenced here under Sergt. Major Ryder of the 16th Battalion. He is a Grenadier Warrant Officer back from the front so he knows something about grenades. Everyone is now supposed to have a knowledge of this work and I am taking this course. We had 4 officers and 4 NCO's in the first school and the same in this one. It will last for two weeks more. We are at it from 8:30 until 4pm and have a long walk to the bombing area. We take a great many notes which have to be rewritten after hours so by the time I get them up to date I have had all the writing I want.

I today received the towel, socks and cigarettes all of which were much appreciated. I also got a prescription from Hill which I filled and rather thought that it was my old tonic more than my cough stuff. I think my cough stuff was pink. However I remember this mixture very well. a day or so ago I received another from Davies with a note from Rothwell saying he was sending it at your request so I guess it is the right one. As the other cost me \$1. I am going to drink it anyway, first.

Ramsay and I had some dinner party off that chicken. It was as tender as could be. The whole supper was very good and fully appreciated.

What does Billie think of the elections I suppose the soldier vote may make a difference yet.

There are a great many little things that I could tell you about but it would take months to write them.

Yesterday, the whole Brigade marched through Vernon out to the race course where field work was to be done but after fooling around for awhile it was time to come home. Our battalion had to climb half way up a small mountain to defend an irrigation ditch and as we came right down again without doing anything we call the parade "The Good Old Duke of York's". It made quite a long column of men going through the streets however.

I will send you down postcards and snap shots from time to time all of which please keep for me as they will be interesting.

Art Lloyd is in the trenches. Len d'Easum wrote that they had come in beside them.

Will also send a photo of the battalion taken some time ago.- one of these long pictures.

I got 3 more photos from Wadds and will send you 2 of them. One for yourself and the other you can give to Gertrude if she wants it. I gave the 3rd one to Ramsay.

Am glad to hear father is better and the Grandmother is OK. I hope they both take care of themselves.

Give my love to all the McQuarries and Gowan's also the kids. Would like to hear from Helen again sometime soon. Suppose that the little kid has quite recovered ere this.

We do not know when we go. Two more officers Vine and Berry leave for England tomorrow. We hope to pull out about October 1st but the Lord alone knows. If we don't I would not be surprised to see us return to the coast.

With love to all,  
Keith

p.s. Am going to motor out to Shuswap Falls this afternoon with some friends, weather lovely, some nights pretty darn cold. KCM

October 1 1916 - Vernon Camp -(letter)

Dearest Mother:

I get practically no time for writing at present. Am just finishing course in bombing and our exams are early this week.

Received Elsie's socks also your two pairs with the cigarettes etc. also the box of apples which are splendid and remind me of home.

We hope to leave here for the East before the 15th inst. and will be glad to get away from here as it is getting darn good and cold on this hill. We had 1/4 inch of ice on our water buckets this morning. We have had wind storms lately with dust. It doesn't matter how tight the tents are pegged you can't keep it out and the stuff comes off the parade ground in blinding clouds. One can't see ten feet. The last was the worst and blew down several of the tents in camp. My tent was all closed but everything was covered with a thick layer and it even got into my overseas box which was closed and locked.

Mrs Pyne sent me a fine box of good eats the other day. She is a dear.

Will you ask Helen to run through my films and send me two that are there of the boys doing trench digging. One of the men wants to get some of them struck off. Also ask her to dig up a couple there of myself which I sent down recently and ask her to send me a dozen prints off the best of them and I shall remit the amount of them. I think I have a print of the trench ones there from which she will be able to recognize the films.

Before we go I think I shall pack the apple box with the clothes I have here which I do not want and express them down. Some time you might mail me what woolen socks and helmet I have there which I shall take along.

Am feeling fine and yesterday I weighed in at 145 which is about ten pounds better than I used to carry round with me.

Had a letter from Farrer, Aunt Tweebie and Mary Loomie. Farrer sent me a small snap of Eliot.

Will send some socks down soon, there is a hole in the heel of the green pair. It is the first hole I have had in the home made ones.

As they want this table to set for lunch must stop. My pen is dry as well so will call it off. The mess tent is about the only stove around.

Love to all at home and the outside families,

Your affectionate son,  
Keith

p.s. Steve Knights brother who was a colonel I believe has just been killed at the front, Steve was counting on joining him.

October 6 1916 - Vernon Camp - (postcard)

Dear Mother,

Our bombing class (photo on card) -excuse silly laugh somebody "made de joke". We have just finished the course and had a three hour paper on which I got a 'possible'. Quite well. Am writing Helen. Keith

October 7 1916 - Vernon Camp - (letter to Helen)

Dear Helen;

I enjoyed your letter very much indeed and am very glad to hear that the kids are coming along so well. Hennie is certainly some kid.

Tell mother not to worry about the cold weather as the last few days have been much warmer and Jack Knight is on leave just now so I have taken both beds and made one good one out of it.

Am very sorry to hear that Grandmother is not up to the mark and I hope that she is herself again in a day or so.

As to the battalion going away there is nothing definite and we may not be the first to go either which is a slap as the first to go will rub it in to the other. We don't know just how hard the C.O. is trying to have us go. If they take us back to the coast half the battalion will desert I believe and the junior officers will all quit if possible.

Mary wrote me that she liked the photos very much and the sitting one particularly. I dropped her a line a day or two ago. A also wrote Aunt Tweebie and one or two others so I am fairly well caught up on my writing.

Tell mother that I received her letter with the two prints enclosed this afternoon. I also received a fine basket of grapes from Mildred DeBeck from Penticton which was awfully good of her. They are from their own orchard.

There is a dance tonight at the country club but I do not think I shall go. Major Ramsay and I went riding this afternoon and it was fine. He just came from Kamloops today.

Atkin got leave to precede the battalion east and as our departure is so uncertain he will have a fine long holiday in the east.

I have completed my bombing course and made a possible on the examination paper. I lost 4 points on the throwing examination, so my total was 96. I have not heard as to whether it is high score or not but the instructor told me that it was the first perfect paper he had received.

Will drop a line from time to time but can't promise any long ones. Am still in "C" Co. and Rich is still a Captain but is only drawing subs. pay I believe.

With love to all,  
Keith

October 9 1916 - Vernon Camp -(letter)

Dear Mother,

Am expressing down this afternoon suitcase containing stuff I do not intend to take over to the old country and you might kindly repack with such woolen stuff as may be there and also my best blue serge suit with one good shirt. I have decided to take a suit of civvies but will buy collars, hats, etc. over there. You can express back at my expense. I will try and send down my tennis racquet by Billie.

There is no definite word as to our departure so far. The weather lately has been fine. Have to rush onto parade now as the company is falling

in. This is a pretty quiet town and everyone is getting dead anxious to pull out.

Your affectionate son,  
Keith

p.s. I enclose key for suitcase. KCM

October 15 1916 - Vernon Camp -(letter)

Dearest Mother:

I received your letter enclosing the key to my suitcase but so far have not heard of the case. Presume I shall get a notice tomorrow.

Have been very busy since Thursday as Motherwell is at the coast and I am adjutant. We are duty battalion for camp this week and are also trying to rush training before leaving so i really have been a fairly busy kid. This place is very quiet now and we shall all be glad to move. Expect to pull out next Saturday unless something prevents but one can never tell.

On Tuesday I am best man for Tuck. he marries Marion Martin (Nora's double). Not much trouble in the way of clothes but will cost me a ten or so I guess, however, I am glad to be able to have a little fun now and again.

There is really nothing to tell you except that the weather lately has been lovely and much warmer. Jack Knight sleeps in town and I expect to be able to have my good bed until we go away.

Tomorrow morning all the companies are off to the rifle ranges and I have been arranging for a six am breakfast for them...we have had several night marches or sham fights lately and some trench work by night. In fact for a week I wasn't down town once unless on a parade. I only saw Billie once or twice and didn't even get a chance to find out how you all were. He was to take my tennis racquet home for me. I sent it to his hotel but do not know whether he got it or not.

I am feeling fine and fit. Got out this afternoon for two or three hours on horseback all by my lonesome as our horses have been sent away and we only have two left. Just as I was about to go an escort arrived from the coast with a deserter and I had to take care of him before I could make a get away. This office is

pretty busy now as so many things have to be arranged before an institution of this kind takes the train

With love to everyone and yourself,  
Affectionately yours  
Keith

p.s. Let me know how Grandmother is. KCM

October 20 1916 - Vernon Camp -(letter # 1)

Dearest Mother:



Your letter of the 26th received and I have received everything as I have already written. Have just written a line to Gertrude. We leave Tuesday 24th. Do not know where we sail from and we can't tell when we find out. Address to Farrer. Also would like to know who I should let know in Calgary, Winnipeg etc. as our trip across will be slow and we shall be off at various places for exercise. The 158th leave here on the 31st and they are a sore bunch at being the last to go.

I enjoyed the Australian letter and I shall return it under separate cover.

Tell Helen I had a letter from Peggy Morison some days ago and am going to try and drop her a line tonight.

Tuck was married on Tuesday and they are at Penticton I think. It was a very pretty little wedding and our sergeants acted as a guard of honour.

Would you have another photo, the same as the last I mailed to you finished and mail it to Mildred DeBeck Penticton c/o H.L. DeBeck. I shall remit you the amount.

The C.O. left for the east on Tuesday and Ramsay left for Winnipeg Wednesday. We will pick them up en route. I suppose we shall be in Ottawa a day.

After addressing to Jarrer, mail to Halifax as I presume we shall sail from there. Might tell Farrer to forward to that place if I should miss him. Just address to 131st Battalion C.E.F.

I had dinner with the Ramsays on Tuesday night and with the B.of M. boys Thursday. It tastes good to have a real dinner now and again although we shall get lots worse than we are having now. The weather is getting cold again but Jack Knight sleeps at home and I have two beds still so am good and warm.

Please do not worry about me. I am a pretty good hand at taking care of myself and should anything happen to me it would be an easy way to go so until I let you know that matters are serious with me for goodness sake don't begin to imagine all kinds of things. I don't think there is much chance of getting to the front before the spring so we are still a long way from trouble.

I shall not have time to write to any at home but yourself I fear so please tell the others how it is and tell them that my letters are for all.

Believe that I was high man in the grenade course with 96%.

Give my love to the Gowan's, McQuarries and to all the members of our own house. You might include Hogan's Alley generally. Saw a film of Marguerite Clarke last night and in one she looked just like Bunker.

Lovingly,  
Keith

p.s. Number your letters after this.

October 25 1916 - En Route - (letter #2) Field B.C.

Dearest Mother;

Here we are and everybody OK. Left Vernon last night in good order at 8pm and 8:45 entrained in a light rain the first we have had for a long time. This morning it is raining and the clouds are very low in the mountains but we went through a lot of that division by night. It is just 13 years since I came through the other way.

Have just sent a wire to Mrs. MacDonald at Calgary. I do not know how many of the family is in Calgary but took a chance. We should strike there this afternoon. In Vernon I had a lot of friends to see me away. They have really been awfully good to me.

The Mickleboroughs, in particular Mrs M. brought down a box for me containing a great big chocolate cake covered with nuts and also some small cakes and they are all well cooked too. Mr M. had a box of apples packed and the case put on board for me. They have also had me up to dinner several Sunday evenings so perhaps it would show that I appreciated their kindness if you dropped a line of thanks. In case you do address Mrs. George Mickleborough Vernon B.C

I believe a C.P.R. strike goes today but will not effect troops, munitions or mails. (we have gone ahead an hour in time since we hit Field)

I am on the second section of the train and have a platoon for once. Was orderly officer on the section from the time I got on until 5:30 this morning but I went today about 1am as I had been to a farewell dance at the country club the night before. Am sleeping in an upper but knew I had no chance for anything else. I am young and light and a sub. so that spells Upper.

I got a box from Gertrude the day before yesterday just in time to get it into my suitcase. Will drop her a line. We are just pulling out of here and it is hard to write. The sleeping car we have is a very old one and lacks the little conveniences the new ones have but then anything is always good enough for the troops. The CPR is feeding us so our meals are good. We put on a diner and commissariat car at Revelstoke. My men had no complaints as to breakfast so I guess the grub will be OK. I make it a point to be on the job at meal times to see that the boys get what is coming to them because believe me they are not traveling under the best of conditions.

Will drop cards along the way,  
Love to all,  
Keith

p.s. Expect it to be a long time before we see England - perhaps a month.

October 26 1916 - En Route -Broadview

Dear Mother,

All OK. Good trip, Saw Calgary people and Walter Hasard. Had a 20 minute march at Calgary. Winnipeg tonight. Was asleep when we hit Regina.  
Keith

October 26 1916 - En Route - Winnipeg

Dear Mother;

Arrive in Winnipeg in about 1 1/2 hours. Had short marches in Calgary, Broadview and Brandon. Am feeling fine and enjoying the trip. Past Camp Hughes (Sewell) today. It is almost deserted. Can't write train is rocking so. Will write a letter when we get to end of line. Love to all, Keith

October 27 1916 - En Route - Fort William

Dear Mother;

Still going strong. Lots of snow here but only about a foot in depth. Wired Leise Laird and saw her and her husband last night in Winnipeg about 9:30 for a few minutes only as I was on a short march we had there. Also paraded in Brandon. Hard to write on train. Should arrive Ottawa 2:15 am Sunday. Weather has been overcast all the way.

Keith

Menu on back of post card  
Canadian Expeditionary Forces

OFFICERS MESS

Breakfast  
Sliced Bananas  
Oatmeal Cornflakes  
Goldeyes  
Ham, Eggs Bacon Eggs  
Small Steaks  
Hashed Brown Potatoes  
Orange Marmalade  
Toast Rolls  
Tea Coffee Milk

October 31 1916 - En Route - Maritimes

Dear Mother,

Expect to arrive Halifax about 6 pm. At Moncton saw the Dodges, Margaret Taylor, and Mr. Williams. Will write a letter When I get a chance. Trip from Montreal has been very slow. Nova Scotia is very pretty but children appear ill nourished. Love to all. Keith  
p.s. Nearly everyone is trying to get a final line or two written to mail this evening.

Keith

November 29 1916 - England -Postcard

Dearest Mother,

Off for France this morning. Very short notice and large number of our subs going. Expect to be at a base for some time. Sorry to leave Ramsay who is going to attend to my affairs and forward mail. Don't worry. Ran to London yesterday to finish my shopping. Will write you a long letter if I have a minute, if not I wish all Merry Xmas and Happy New Year. I shall be with you all in thought. Will send new address when I can.

Keith

December 12 1916 - France -(letter # 11)

Dearest Mother,

Nothing new to tell you. We are still in the same place and same billets. We expect to have a good bath in a few minutes down at the mines. The weather was fine yesterday but today cold and a slushy snow falling. Gertrude's dated Nov.14th arrived last night. Tell the bunch that if they have any time to drop a line by all means to do so as letters surely look good.

On our way across Canada, we met girls at almost every stop and consequently gathered a lot of addresses. I only sent a card to one however and received an awfully nice letter from her. I met two of them together at Montreal and they afforded me an hours very pleasant conversation while a breakdown was being fixed. One I believe is the daughter of the Supt. of one of the roads thereabouts.

I dropped a line to Art Lloyd to see if I could get in touch with him but so far I have been out of luck in that respect.

I will try and arrange to have the kit left in England either sent to the Officer's Storage Base at Cheriton near Folkestone or to Thos. Cook and Son, Ludgate Circus, London E.C. I believe the latter is the handiest in case one wants to get into a box once a year or so.

Well the old war seems to be dragging on and I hope before long that it takes a decided turn because the law business is daily sliding right out of the back of my head so that I guess I will not be worth much to Billy by the time I come home.

Let me know how everything is going. I often think of the five kids and wonder how they are all coming on.

Give my love to the whole family.  
Lovingly your son,

Keith

p.s. Lately I have been able to write fairly regularly but should the battalion move I would not be able to quite so often so do not worry if several days elapse without hearing from me.

KCM

(The Major just asked an orderly if he knew anything good for bugs and the chap said "I have tried nearly everything but the best thing is just to keep picking them off to keep the average down, Sir.

December 20 1916 - France -(letter # 14)

Dearest Mother:

Just a few minutes to spare so here goes for a note. Am in a nice dugout near the front line and there is a war on, but unless they decide to start something by way of a Xmas gift to Fritz there is not much danger. Of course the artillery is always working and the big boys cross overhead whistling like express trains. I came into the line on the 18th quite a birthday present. I got your box with the socks, dates, figs, nits, oxo, chocolates etc. Just before we left billets and it looked good to me. We had a small company mess at the time and it all made a hit. I brought such things as the oxo in with me as it is mighty good to have here. Can hardly write as Bailey is sitting on the bunk trying to struggle into a pair of gum boots. The mud is bad and the rats are plentiful, but the weather has been fairly good. Getting cold, snow storm yesterday and cold wind blowing at night.

I saw a Bosche plane brought down about noon today. The British flew faster and let him have it with machine gun. The flying is very pretty especially when trying to avoid anti air guns. This afternoon there was a strafe between the artillery to our flank and for a time they jumped right to it. The whole life is most unnatural and as I am not a fighting man would be willing to see a speedy end but I'm in the army now.

Your box with the cake has not arrived yet and I am glad it didn't because I couldn't have carried it.

Tell father I have seen Billie Sloan. He is our QM Sergeant. He was on leave in Blighty when I struck the battalion. He asked to be remembered to Dad.

Got a letter from Billie Mc Quarrie last night enclosing a money order for a Xmas box. It was awfully good and will come in handy when I get to a place where I can spend something. The only thing we can spend here is time and no one is anxious to do that.

Got in touch with Art Lloyd by letter but failed to see him. I believe he is a stretcher bearer now.

Thank Grandmother for the socks. Both pairs were splendid and I got her card inside her 89th year ones. Tell her I have used both her pairs of heavy P.E.I. wool also her scarf and they are all good yet and mighty serviceable. I have plenty of socks at present, Have also used the helmet Amelia gave me. Bought myself a sheep skin vest which has been a world of comfort.

So not know when we shall be relieved but it may be Xmas day. It is a sort of an in and out business as too much in a stretch is more than men can stand. Sort of a 'more than I expected' affair.

Must stop now as I have work to do between now 7 pm and 4 am. Oh this is the life. Honestly I'm not a fighting man.

Love to all the family and the kids,  
Keith

December 26 1916 - France - (letter not numbered)

Dearest Mother;

We are out in billets again - a small village but our shabby old rooms and bed rolls look mighty good after the line. Our relief came in Xmas day and I left the line about 3pm. Some Xmas. I spent the eve out in No-mans land on listening duty and in spite of clothes lying in a wet shell hole was a cold proposition. I heard planes overhead and search lights were trying to find them. About three in the morning I saw a bombing show away to our left and it was spectacular while it lasted. Fritz was evidently nervous because he sent up various signal flares and lit up the whole front with 'very lights'. The trenches were very muddy up to the knees in spots and we got in and had a good ration of rum. I only had a little sleep so that yesterdays hike was a pretty hard one. I got into billets and managed to get to bed about 9:30. Today is just cleaning up and if I could get a bath would be OK.

I thought of you all having dinner and of the kids competing and doing stunts afterwards. Do you remember the one Hennie could 'do easy' and then couldn't manage. Well Baillie and I had no place to mess last night so we got into the back of a shop and had the people make us tea. Sardines, bread, butter, tea and two quart bottles of Champagne. Some Xmas dinner mother dear.

Got Elsie's letter in the line and the box I got in (censored) last billets may have been hers as she mentioned putting in a pair of Gran's socks and I got them with a card attached. I have not yet received the Birthday cake but suppose that it will turn up in good time.

As I was coming out of the line yesterday I met Jimmie McGregor. I was tickled to death to see him and we had a few minutes chat. Art is well and had gone into the trenches the day before. Do not know how long I shall be here but perhaps a week. Had a letter from Billie and replied to it. Have also herd two or three times from Ramsay. Swan and Hornby are going with a railway construction battalion. I hear that Tom Trapp is going to return home rather than revert one grade or rather rank. Have heard Stan Trapp was accidentally killed.

Art Mills is again back with us and has done very well. The men all speak well of him.

I see peace talk is on but terms apparently not go enough for us yet. Any time Germany wants to admit she is licked will suit me. Never again in the Infantry for me.

One of these days this affair will be called off and me for the high spots at the earliest moment possible. I don't dislike the life but war has always been a rotten thing in my mind.

I am going to send some postcards home which please keep for me. We are not supposed to write on picture postcards of French places I believe so will send them blank.

Would like to write to the bunch but it is pretty hard to write to many but I like to hear from all. Had a letter from Farrer and Aunt Tweebie was in Ottawa. It is a good thing she didn't try to see me in Halifax as we were not there anytime. Straight from train to boat.

It is wonderful the soft jobs some chaps over here get. Some haven't even been to the front yet. After a fellow has put in some time there don't blame him for taking a job behind the lines on staff or something similar. Guess I shall have to pull a wire through McBride for something but the trouble is I don't even know the gent consequently I see nothing for me but front line mud for duration. However, that is what I came for.

Am feeling OK except a cold in head and that is only to be expected, I shall lose it before long.

The line where we have been and will likely be is fairly quiet and one has only to keep low in certain spots to avoid the snipers.

Give my love to all, each one separately, with lots of love for yourself I am,

Your affectionate son,  
Keith

January 1 1917 - France -(letter not numbered)

Dearest Mother;

A Happy New Year to all. I have not my number list so cannot number this but will allow for it. I have only a minute to write. We are in brigade support and the S.O.S. has gone up to our left front but I guess we won't have to stand to as whatever the trouble is it is off our divisional front. Two or three of the boys are joshing and I can't think.

Expect to go into the line in a few weeks before we get out of this area. If all goes well I shall then be out for another month as they plan to have more time out this winter than last. We moved from hut Phyllis Dare on the night 29/30 and had rather a long march to this place. We are now in a dugout (Canadian make) 32 steps down and we have a bit of a stove so are fairly comfortable. I have two big boils on the left leg and the CO was thinking of leaving me at the Transport Lines but I told him I could carry on all right. The M.O. has them in good shape now, all lanced and cleaned out but he has again burnt a place on my leg which was not bad at all so I have a three inch water blister which has to be dried up. He is the same man which made a mess of my leg last July and I warned him before hand this trip but all in vain. I surely made a howl and he knows I am not pleased. I today asked the C.O. to allow me to congratulate him on having the poorest M.O. in France. I don't think it will prove nearly as bad as last time however. I refused to go to the T.lines but told them that if the M.O. was going to make a mess of a

chap that I wouldn't try to carry on and would insist on being evacuated where I could have my foot fixed up for keeps. But I guess that I'll make it stick all right.

Today I took a ramble with the Padre up over the old 'triangle' battlefield to see if we could identify some graves but no luck.

Last night I got a memo saying that the Corps and Divisional Commanders would be around the lines today so I had everything ready. This morning I said to the sentry "Take up a post a few bays further to your left and if you see a party of generals coming let me know so I can meet them". Half an hour later Carmichael and Major O'Donahue who is a Brigade Major and wears red came in to wish me a Happy New Year. They had the laugh on me saying that they had caught my man red handed. he caught sight of them and started for my dugout but they overtook him and Carmichael asked him what he was doing. He said "Well Captain Macgowan told me to watch and if I saw the Brigadier coming I was to tell him" Next question "Did you think the Major was the Brigadier?" Answer "No Sir, but I thought maybe he was right behind" Such is life in the army.

I am enclosing a menu of a Xmas Dinner we had at the Transport lines, also a copy of the recommendation for which I got the M.C. (they sent me this a day or two ago) also a letter from Lt. Col. Francis our late C.O.

Tonight I received a cable from Billie as to his victory - please give him my congratulations. I will tell him some funny things some days to my 'passing the word'. Also a letter from him and one from Helen. The photo of the kids arrived safely and I am in love with it. They are certainly both prize winners. Guess I shall have to take it off the mount in order to carry it but Helen is a stunner and Joan following in her footsteps. All the boys think they are great and all mentioned Helens eyes. I would give anything to be able to see them all.

Must stop now. Tell Gertrude I really have not time to write. Tomorrow I have to go up the line to reconnoiter my next lines. Fritz is still dropping over the odd Minnie as he did before we left. We had an American Officer with us today. Our new C.O. is a blooming good man but a fellow has to produce the goods for him.

With much love I am ,  
Your loving son,  
Keith

p.s. Baxter is at Transport Lines running a class, I am sending his photo also one I have of the guilty M.O.

January 16 1917 - France -(letter # 18)

Dearest Mother:

The birthday letter arrived last night, Helen's #3 followed and this evening I got a letter from Billie with Cassady's address and a box from the Rand girls. I have got a Canadian letter for the last four nights - a card also from Alma. I have enjoyed them all very much. The last I saw of Davidson and Jack Knight they were waiting in France to be sent to a unit but don't know whether they have been in the line yet or not. I wish Davidson was here as he and I were great chums.



Am quite well but the nights are pretty cold now and I shall be glad when summer comes. We should be relieved in a day or so now and I hope that we don't come to this particular place again as our front is too limited. Helen asked what system kept some in England so long and shunted others into the line. Tell her I gave it a little thought myself and came to the conclusion that it was not the fault of a system but rather the absence of one. Was very sorry to hear Mary Dorsey had a relapse and hope she is well again.

Give everyone a kiss for me in reply to their birthday good wishes. I wish I could just drop in and see you all but perhaps before long I shall be able to. So here's hoping.

Helen's #3 letter (corrected number) arrived and I enjoyed the Hennie Ballow items. I will write the little kiddies just as soon as I get a chance. They have altered the establishment and have authorized a scout section attached to Headquarters but only allow 8 men and a batman whereas I had 32 all told on my roll. All the rest are attached to companies for platoon scouts so is a complete unit. The boys are feeling very disappointed about the section being broken and so am I as I had a mighty good bunch. However it may cut down on my patrolling duties as soon as it goes into effect. My chief work will be intelligence unless special patrol work is to be done when I could obtain what odd men I wanted for the job.

This afternoon a show was put on away over on our left just before dusk. Some large raid I guess. The Artillery barrage was good though a ridge hid the most of the bursting shells from view. Heine was up in the air in a minute throwing flares and shooting his S.O.S. all along the line. His artillery of course then answered the signal and the scrap was on. All the machine guns in the country added their little rattle to the noise so it was quite interesting but some poor devils were going through some hard stuff about that time. If they would cancel all artillery and let us scrap this out it would be a pretty good war. It has been a nice war around here for the last couple of days and nights.

Peace proposals look good to us all but I guess there will be a good big scrap yet before it is called off still I believe that the peace business is under way when it begins to appear in the papers.

I write as regularly as I can but I fear my letters arrive in a batch and then a long delay before the next. However don't worry about me because my present habitation is a Headquarters and about a 45 minute walk from the line.

Tell Helen, Gladys Cooper is just as pretty as her picture. I was greatly taken with both her looks and acting. she is quite strong in 'The Misleading Lady'. Yes, I saw the Museum bit not the Abbey, no I didn't either I was thinking of the National Gallery where I bought a package of postcards unopened and found nothing but nude figures so couldn't send them round careless like so mailed them home.

Yes, an individual does not count for much over here but if the individual takes care he can perhaps be OK barring accidents and then no one knows he is even in France save a few personal friends. There is to be true no sentiment and Mrs. Macgowan's little boy is the same as any other little boy (until peace comes). I have often thought of that "I don't care who comes home so long as Fraser comes home" and I know now how the old lady felt. I did not get through Saltwood Castle - was rushed off as I have written and had no time to attend to anything of that kind.

Be good to Gertrude I have received some of the sweetest letters from her I have ever read. The girl has matured wonderfully in her thoughts since

war broke. Nothing foolish or 'slushy' about her letters at all but she seems to be more or less fond of me if one reads between the lines as it were.

I hope that both yours and Dad's colds are better. Also that Gran is still well and flourishing. It was good of her to add her note to the letter. I think of her a very great deal and can see her writing away at her table.

I don't know why the Lord put so much mud and water between France and B.C. He left quite a bit in France even at that. What always stumps me is what they are going to do here after the war. There are millions (actually) of sand bags in the trench works. Miles of trenches, tunnels, mining operations, mine and shell craters as big as 30 and 40 yards across and say 70 feet deep...I have seen them this big in No-mans land with the opposing lines occupying opposite sides. Thousands of unexploded shells of various descriptions and countless numbers of bombs and small ammunition. I wouldn't follow a plough here if I could reap gold bricks.

Well, I haven't anything of interest to write I think all the general remarks I have made are permissible from a censoring standpoint.

Have been living better the last few days as I have turned my rations into H.Q. and joined its mess, so am off straight rations.

There is little snow on the high ground but very little. I have to get a good pair of leather mitts as I have nothing on the hands at present and they get pretty numb in the mud.

Next week will be nothing but clean up and polish brass and equipment for the Corps Commander's Inspection which is always threatened and sometimes comes.

Must stop now, this is more than I expected when I started.  
Love to all and a big kiss for yourself,  
Your affectionate son,  
Keith

p.s. Did I tell you the joke of the fellow with the pass word. One night it was "waffles" This chap was halted and the pass word demanded. he couldn't remember it and after doing his darndest to think of it blurted out "noodles" Not bad. Oh, there are some funny things going on even here if one has time to appreciate them. KCM

January 21 1917 - France (letter # 19)

Dearest Mother:

Rec'd yours of the 15th and 23rd Dec. Nos. 6 and 7. Have no record of receiving #5 yet. We have just come out of the trenches for a day or so more but we move to another town today so am very busy - practically no time to write at all. Weather very cold now with 6 inches of snow so things are rather chilly and it made me feel as though there was someone on earth who knew me.

Sorry to hear of Sullivans death. Yes war will stop shortly after spring I think. Fritz is getting pinched. However there is work to be done yet as his army is still going strong.

All the boys seem to be in the war and altho I would like to be home would not have missed joining in and trying to help out. If Gordon Hagard is in the Orderly Room he will be fairly safe.

News of the kids excitement over Xmas made me feel a long way off. I could just see them all.

I am in love with the picture of Joan and have it in this pocket pad which is all the paper I have left - thanks to Mrs Lambert.

Was detailed to defend a chap before a Field General Court Martial charged with desertion - penalty is death for desertion here of course - very damaging evidence against him and I was rushed in on it at short notice. Worked nearly all night. Do not know how it will turn out but hope for a conviction for absence without leave which is a lesser offence and of which there is no doubt he was guilty. Trial lasted a day. Will write Billie about it some time when I get results.

Establishment has been changed and my section has been cut down. I wish the business would wind up so that we might all go home to a natural life.

Our last tour in the trenches was comparatively quiet and don't think we are always there as it is all done by reliefs. So long in the line, so long in supports and so long in reserve, and about once in 3 months so long in rest billets.

There is very little to write about which is allowable so will close - letters will be further apart in future as I am very busy now.

Your loving son,  
Keith

January 23 1917 - France -(letter # 20)

Dearest Mother:

Am as usual pretty busy but just want to drop a line to tell you that I am not going into the line with the battalion tomorrow as I have been detailed to take a course in sniping - four weeks dating from 29th instant so I shall be out for some little time I expect.

The weather still continues very cold but I am going to try and get a bath today or tomorrow in spite of everything cold water or otherwise. My last was December 14th.

I see by the papers that the Allies are asking for about everything they want in the way of peace terms so suppose that it will be some time before anything definite is arrived at.

One day is just the same as another here. We remember the date but forget the day. I have seen one church parade since I struck the country. Generally Sunday is just an ordinary day.

The chateau we are in ap present is a cold barn. Evidently was a fine place - the floors after careful inspection appear to be hard wood and all hand laid in squares and diamond shaped pieces. At present they are covered with dirt and hob nail marks until they look like an ordinary dirty board floor. The shutters on one side are shattered, the roof broken in in places, and two or three shells have ripped right through the walls of the place.

The interior walls of the house - plastering and panelling all strike me as being rather cheap surprises me in this country, I believe this house was owned by a mining engineer.

In this country there seems to be numerous small villages only two or three miles apart but no farm houses. The fields all seem to be tilled from one of these small villages. And each village seems to have its chateau.

Must stop and get busy. Love to all, I am very sorry that I haven't more news.

Affectionately,  
Keith

p.s. Courses are apt to crop up any time so don't worry about me. We are not always in the line you know.

p.p.s. Our padre has just reported back from sick leave and told the Colonel that there was a man named Jamor at the Entrenching Battalion (a reinforcing outfit) coming to us and as he was a genius at the piano the senior chaplain wanted to secure him for concert work. I butted in and found that it was Frank and gave him a good word as far as I could and said he was a dandy on the ivories etc. Guess he will be kept at a base which will be pretty soft for him and I am glad. Would like to be able to play even a juice harp myself.

January 27 1917 - France - (letter # 20 -there are two # 20's)

Dearest Mother:

This is to acknowledge receipt of Helen's #4 and #5 and your #8. I received the last on the 23rd and Helen's on the 25th & 26th resp. Also Gowans which was much appreciated on the 24th. It was written on my birthday. I shall try and drop him a line this evening but I fear that it will practically be a duplicate of this. That is why I generally write to you only.

First of all I will run through the above several letters and reply to anything requiring it so excuse disjointedness, a la Hennie Ballow.

I was very sorry to hear that Gowan was under the weather at Xmas time and I am sure the kids missed him on that day. I hope that he again fit.

I am always glad to get news of the kids and am sure as you say - little Mary is growing a dear girl. By the time I come home fear I shall be a stranger to them all. I have changed because as I no doubt told you I shaved my lip just after I joined this unit. Am consequently again clean and my soup gets to my mouth first hand as it were.

Will you kindly write Mamie for me and thank her for the socks. Tell her I shall drop her a note when I can. It was very kind of her to include me when I am so far from you all. I hope her health has improved.

I received on the 24th Jan. a lovely pair of white socks from Aunt Tweebie. Isn't she a corker. Have to write her also. You really have no idea how hard it is to get the necessary writing done.

Your description of Father balling up the Xmas gifts was very funny but am glad Billie finally got his gloves and all lived happily ever after.

Don't worry about the air service I am in a unit the C.O. of which seems to have a policy of refusing to let any officer transfer to any other branch no matter if it would be advancement or not so the only way to get out is to have pull started and be called out without any reference to him. Hence as I have no pull I am in the Infantry for duration. The Artillery is the best branch I see.

I often think of the ones I saw on my way across Canada but really have no time to write to them all.

Tell Grandmother that there is very little Scotch whiskey in France and that she might take a portion of her Xmas receipts and issue a ration to the entire forces on the field.

Yes I am quite warm at night. Have a bedroll that is a dandy. Bought a small eiderdown to put in, in place of a blanket. Lighter and warmer. It was a good investment.

Tell Helen that Meyers enclosure was a visiting card with New Years Greetings. He has always seemed perfectly neutral and keeps off war subjects but I only hear from him once a year. Yes poor old Bill Keary is gone. I was surprised as the artillery is generally safer than the Infantry but of course now and again a shell gets a direct hit and then someone has to go.

Word of Roys accident was news to me. I had never been able to get any track of him. Hope he recovers OK.

Should imagine the wives of the 225 Officers might be more or less crude. Used to be about the Mandeville Apartments. I served a writ there once at lunch hour and the smells of cooking were never equalled until I struck a troop ship.

Helen wanted to know something as to whether all those who have been in the line get glass eyes I think it was, tell her I have never heard of he idea nor noticed anything of the kind. It all depends where one get hit and on the price of glass. Mrs Diamond has sprung a new one on me in the glassy stare proposition.

Remember me to Tudor and Maiden - would like to have pictures of them all but one can't carry such things here. Also tell Mrs. Scott (if still at Rands) and Mrs. Pyne, Sinclair, and Molly Freeze that I think of them all so often when plugging along thinking of what a wonderful little city N.W. is. Also note that Gertrude looked sweet at Elsie's tea. The reason for that is that she is sweet.

Now for what has been doing with me. I wrote you that I wasn't going into the line as I was detailed for a course. Well the day the Battalion went in I took my batman of whom more later and struck off for the Transport lines about four miles. This is what I carried...(definition of a soldier, a man to hang things on) trench coat, back pack, heavy haversack, gas respirator, steel helmet, electric light, rifle, telescopic sights, large telescope, prismatic compass, field glasses. There may have been other articles but can't remember. Then take heavy trench boots and ice on roads and four miles is a fair hike. Got to my destination and about an hour later a wire came through that we were two days early and to join unit in line at once. Got supper and tramped off for the trenches about seven miles. I put in the two days and last night we walked out so tomorrow morning I am off for four weeks to somewhere else in France. It was a long slippery walk last night especially in the trenches as the trench mats are covered with ice, The weather for about twelve days has been sharp. About 15 degrees above zero and about 4 to 6 inches of snow and the wind is bitter. It is cold in the line and no mistake

about it. Today is the Kaisers birthday and the artillery has been rumbling away all day. I hope the old son of a gun never has another.

Never imagine me in the trenches or wonder what I am doing because we are out of the front line as much as we are in it and then you never know when I may be sent on detached duty as in this case. Was going to wire you in order to give you a months peace of mind but they won't allow any 'move' messages through.

You know I bought a new suit in England and hadn't a chance to change clothes before coming away and as I wanted to have a suit in England, sent it back to Doug McLagan from Havre to be sent to Ramsay. Well Ramsay and I have -"never seen the 2 cents, the boy, or the liver" so I am out a suit and now I find I need a suit here so am just writing 'my tailors' for a duplicate order. In this business one lives and sometimes learns.

Now as to my batman - he is a little chap, fine brown eyes, a scotchman, name W. Linn, comes from Vancouver and is a plumber, having worked for Grumpy Spring. He looks out for me and is OK. He is a scout and a good patrolman. I took him on as my last man was dead from the seat of the trousers both ways. He tried several times to get me a new pack as mine was badly torn and worn and failed. We were in the Transport lines about half an hour when I passed Linn with a brand new pack under his arm. That is just a sample and he doesn't have to be told to do everything. I got Linn when the section was broken up in order to hold an extra patrolman as I was only allowed eight. As it happens the section is all reformed again but how long they will be allowed to remain as a unit is more that I know.

If you.....censored.....address to Pt. W. Linn # 629530. Scout Section 47th Canadians, France.

Now for English news I get this on good authority. Ramsay is O.C. of a company at R. expects to get to France before long. Corbould and Motherwell also have companies. Alec McA. was seen on leave in London. Don't believe he has ever seen the front line yet and still gets leave. It beats me gentlemen. Trapp is trying for the Forestry, Swan and Hornby are with the Railway Batt'n. Fussy Chamberlain is still in England, and B.G.Walker the old stiff is resigning. He should have enough to resign on by now anyway. Taylor demanded a court of enquiry on the Brig. and O.C, 30th Reserve in Eng. for their conduct and the way the 131st was treated. I expect he thought he had trimmed them. The court decided that he, Taylor, had not looked after his Batt'n. properly when they first arrived as he and his Senior Major and Adj. adjourned to the mess and had drinks and never went out to see how the men were doing and also that he was responsible for the whole trouble so he went home a thoroughly discredited man. That finding suits me, believe me.

Mother dear this is the longest letter I have written for a long time and will be for some time to come. As I shall only have time for a note to Gowan and Gertrude you might let them both see this if there is anything of interest in it but I fear that as far as war news goes you get more than we do.

The anti aircraft guns were after a Fritz today and it is quite customary to see from six to twelve planes up at once and often more. Excuse change of pencil but my other one was too dull.

Sent Linn over to a nearby town to get my last laundry as I won't be near here again for awhile. I generally give it out when I go into the line and trust to luck as far as getting back to the same place. So far I have always managed to pick it up. Am hoping to get a bath as soon as I get to my

destination as Dec. 14th was my last and I have half a hunch that I am not alone in this world but perhaps it is my imagination only.

Although my service here has been short I have seen quite a lot and enough. Would like to have my dressing gown, a good book, afternoon tea, a box of Purdys chocolates, a big grate fire and Gertrude sort of fussing about - I tell you I'm not a fighting man.

Am at present in the Transport Officers hut and he is just leaving to take the transport train up with the grub for tomorrow. He is a very decent chap and we had quite a chat last night although I was very tired. You see I got up about 7 am on the 25th and was out that night until about 3 am when Fritz started to throw rum jars and minnies - just as I got back to H.Q. so I went up and took a look and then had to dig up the Artillery Officer who shares my room and get the batteries turned on for retaliation. It was nearly 4:30 am when I got to bed and was up same morning at 6:30 am to write a report and remained up. Went up the line a hard 45 minutes walk and back and that night after getting my day reports off my chest and arranging to leave had to walk out nearly eight miles so naturally I was tired but I feel fine and can stand a good bit and didn't have any 3 months hard training in England either. Got soft on the way over, had six days leave in London and came to the unit.

Did I tell you the result of my case? - Found not guilty of desertion but guilty of absence without leave and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment with hard labour suspended until after the war. Carries on and if conduct is good or he does anything extraordinary will likely be let down a bit. I was quite satisfied.

I must stop now. Give my love to everyone and tell them all not to think that I don't remember them because I don't mention their names. Keep up the two letters per week if you can because they are good to get. Love to yourself and the kids,

Your affectionate son,  
Keith

January 30 1917 - France - (letter # 20A)

Dear Mother:

This is our second day at school and the weather is cold as ever but i am out of the line which makes up for a great deal. This is a corps school and officers and NCO's from all the Canadian Divisions come. Ed Rand is here and I wrote Gertrude yesterday so she will likely show you the letter. Our routine is about as follows for a few days. Get up 6:30am (darn cold) Parade 6;45 and coffee served, then Phy. jerks for 30 minutes. Dress between 7:30 and 8 and then breakfast. Parade 9:00, Lecture 10:30, Parade again 11:30-12:30, lunch 1pm, Parade and lectures to 4pm. Off for one hour. Lecture 5-6. Off from 6-9. Must be in by 9. All lights off 11.

I was platoon commander yesterday and consequently had to attend staff parade 9:45pm. It seems funny to go right back to slow march and turning by numbers after being in the line on service but as I am on a snipers and scouts course our drill only lasts a few days and then we go on with our own work while the general course goes on with drill and bayonet training etc.

Yesterday I counted over my socks and threw away two pairs. I still have seventeen pairs on hand. Some never worn so go light on socks. My hands

are the trouble. Have nothing but kid gloves and have not been able to buy anything better to date.

You may know that the officers have to censor their mens mail in battalions. I have the greatest bunch in my section to write long letters you ever saw. It is a regular fatigue but some are quite interesting. I have one chap who was studying for the ministry and is evidently carrying on an argument on some biblical subject. Am sorry to say it was over my head in places but rather interesting.

I shall have very little to write about from here because it is all hum drum routine but I shall drop a card every few days to let you know I am OK.

It struck me as funny this morning on the phy.jerks parade. We were doubling through the streets of the adjoining village and it struck me that just a year ago I was doubling along 2nd St. in much the same weather. My army experience of winter has been rather severe. This is the coldest they have had here since 1836. But it struck me as strange to be back on the same old work of forming fours etc. after having gone to the front. However this will not last long but I would be glad to form fours for the duration.

Later - Oh this is a fierce war. I wrote the previous pages at noon and this afternoon instead of parade they had us filling sandbags to bank the huts. Our hut had a space of a foot or so under the floor and the floor was cold and drafty all the time. Each hut did their own and I handled pick and shovel - held sandbags and carried them. Had a long pack across a frozen parade ground and when you get two full bags across the back of the neck it is some load. After carrying several pairs I saw some of these big six footers carrying one so from then on I took one at a time believe me. After working overtime we had tea then a lecture and then dinner. Tomorrow there are some French Generals coming and of course some stunts have to be put on.

Our mess here is pretty good. Coffee in the morning - 3 good meals and afternoon tea at 4:30. Cost 20 francs per week then we pay for our coal, washing etc.

My news is nil and detail such as above uninteresting except that I am satisfied I can stand more of that fatigue stuff than I could before. I expected to get some mail tonight but none as yet so I guess this move means another week added to the time coming.

With love to all I am your affectionate son,  
Keith

February 4 1917 - France - (letter # 21)

Dear Mother:

We have just completed our first week at school and I think the course is going to prove quite interesting. Altho the weather is still very severe the nights in a good bedroll are fully appreciated and we should have three weeks more of them in store for us.

Today is the first Sunday I have really had in France - Service this morning which I enjoyed and I have just loafed and read all day beside the stove and smoked. Last night I had a good sponge bath. The first I have had since Dec. 14th.

Your #9 letter arrived last night and today the first News Ad came in. I was sorry to hear that you have all suffered from colds and hope that your winter weather is easing up. Am writing this on one knee so excuse blots etc. Peace I am afraid is some time off yet. The papers today expected America to come in and Norway and Spain both seem to be doing some tall thinking. That



chap Raikes was pretty lucky. He joined us and did one tour in the line. Was sent to take a course before we went in again. Came back from it and was just in the line when he took sick and went to hospital. He was sent through to the base I believe and I have not heard of him since but he missed some shelling. I do not think he is strong enough to stand the game.

Was surprised over Jack's move. But had just received a letter from Hilda Morison in which she said that Vieve had written her that Jack had been in Calgary. Hilda also gave me news of Clair. I hope he doesn't have to come back to France.

I should love to see Joan and all the other kids but that will have to be postponed for a time.

I told you I think that Doris McLagan came to the old country. Well she married there almost immediately I believe. Just learned yesterday that an Engineer Officer at this school named Winslow is the gink. Must stop the bird and have a talk with him.

Carl Clement went into the flying corps and I hear he is now a flight Commander. Pretty good for a kid.

Yesterday afternoon Ed Rand and I took quite a long walk through the village, and the next beyond, and to the next. They are dotted all over the place. It seemed strange to be wandering along a road in Northern France with Ed. As far as the country goes, would be lovely in summer, undulating, but now it looks and feels like eastern Canada.

Major Ramsay, Motherwell, and Trapp are all coming over I believe. Had a letter from R. The last two were not very keen about it.

Reverting again to Hilda's letter. She says there is a chance of her returning to her old work in Calgary. She also talks about a dear sweet little baby being at the house so I guess it must be Doll's as Hilda isn't yet married. Her young man has had Trench fever and has been in England for Xmas.

A couple of nights ago I received a small parcel bearing an English stamp. I opened it to find my name written on the box in feminine hand and inside a sample bottle of Canadian Whiskey and a Canadian tax stamp on it. Also the card I enclosed which looks as though it were sent by some one who knows me and not just one of many samples. I can't for the life of me imagine who sent it. Can you clear the matter up in any way?

Since coming to the school I have received very little mail and I am expecting it every evening. It is still further delayed now as it has to be readdressed from the battalion.

Must stop now as I haven't time to write more and am short of news. You might tell Gertrude about Doris etc. as I won't be writing her tonight.

Wish that a satisfactory peace could be arrived at before the spring opens up because it bids fair to be a real war this year. Ed and I were discussing the whole thing yesterday. For a great many it is a perfectly lovely war but they are all in bomb proof jobs but for the ones doing front line work a drive means hell and yet I would rather go over the top and drive him out than stand and take the shelling we have taken on two or three occasions without much chance for retaliation. We lose more men this way I believe in the long run. Just the same I am glad I'm here and life wouldn't be worth living in Canada, for the young man, after the war if he hadn't come. I should also hate to go home feeling that peace had been obtained on fruitless terms. As I have thrown over a good deal and everyone has done the same to say nothing of the lives and money now gone I think that a clear job

should be made of it. Of course the actual army in the field can never be defeated on either side. If we had to count on that the last seven years of the war would certainly be the worst. I believe that Fritz is nearly 'fed up' being 'under fed' at home and I hope that the first push this year will bring him up to the mark. If the U.S.A. comes in I will be sure the end is near because I always said they would butt in at the 11th hour and ever after claim they ended the war if not actually won it. If they come in I should like to see the Canadians returned to help handle the Pro-Germans in the U.S. and Canada. That would be soft stuff.

Give my love to everyone from Grandmother to Joan. Wish I had more time for writing but expect to do some studying in the evenings now.

Your affectionate son,  
Keith

February 7 1917 - France -(letter # 22)

Dearest Mother:

It is about four days since I got a letter but my mail is delayed a little owing to it going to the unit first. The school still goes on and the weather is as cold as ever. We have had practically zero weather I am told. Heard a rumour of two Canadians being frozen to death on the road near here a few nights ago but guess they must have been full or they would never have stopped.

One of the officers from our hut, a Canadian Guardsman who would almost make Cassady look small and quite young has been sent back to Blighty this morning owing to weak heart. He seemed more or less pleased but I would prefer to go back up the line than have a weak pump.

This morning on physical jerks I was rather struck by the picture and could hardly realize that we were away over in France. Most of the small villages are the same with their Grand Place a small public or market square. The various platoons about 25 strong run down and do our stunts here. Picture if you can a widening in the streets something the shape of diagram.

This area is all cobble stoned. The stores a continuous line of rather shabby houses, all shuttered and none of our show windows. The roofs heavily tiled and sagging. The City Hall or 'Hotel de Ville' a poor looking building and yet unmistakably different from its surrounding structures. Signs indicating the various trades grocer, butcher, tailor etc. are designed in rather small letters and stuck here and there and several stores appear to bear no label at all. The ever present 'estaminet' however is always marked. Add to the above numerous pigeons fluttering on the pavement seeking a breakfast. Then six or eight platoons of Canadians all in various positions of jerks. Some flat on pavement others with their hands stretched high above their heads and so on. Here and there in the windows the head of some interested inhabitant watching the performance of the strangers. On the whole I enjoyed a few moments comparing the whole scene with our Canada

The Estaminet (pronounced Es-sta-man-ay) is a bar or saloon. There appears to be a license necessary but every second house appears to be one and with a small counter, half a dozen glasses or so, a keg of ale and stout, white and red wine and cheap champagne is all that is necessary. In most of them coffee, cocoa, eggs, french fries can also be obtained.

The country would be pretty in summer time, the fields are open and country undulating with the peculiar shaped hay stack here there and everywhere. So much for this subject.

There is a chap in the hut which is very much like Ward. Perhaps I told you of him. He comes from Vancouver and knows Ward (who by the way I hear has been wounded) is the same height and about the same build. He is rather funny and it seems quite natural to have him around having seen so much of Ward in the old defunct 131st. This is my latest and last news of the officers of the Taylor tribe. Ramsay should be in France now. Also Trapp and Motherwell. Cunningham expects to follow. O'Hanley is taking a 3 months course in England. Ramsay called upon Mrs. Lambert to say goodbye but couldn't go in as the daughter had the measles.

My brand new suit has never turned up so I have had to order another, - 7 pounds gone to blazes. Wore the suit twice.

Yesterday the French papers stated that the U.S. had severed relationship with Germany and later, on account of a ship being sunk had issued a declaration of war. I got the continental edition of the Daily Mail which comes here nearly every day but it said nothing as to the declaration but am not sure as the French news may have been later than the Mail's. I am glad the States are in for the sake of the faction who were finding it hard to hold some time getting into the swing. Their money ships and grub may help however and should cut off some leakages in our blockade of Germany. Of course it will be the U.S. that won the war if it stops next month. It looks as though it would be a real war yet.

As yet I have not had a chance to get a Heine but this spring we will all have plenty of show. I would like to have at least one officer or two or three men ahead in case of being accidentally wounded and put out of it myself. I'm not a fighting man but if I could only get a drop on a couple of the sons of guns they would never become prisoners. It is really the first big game hunting I have done. Fritz has any amount of fight in him yet but I really think the chiefs in Germany are figuring on the way to by now. If not they certainly will by the time summer comes.

Quarter dress has just sounded so must stop for now.  
Later: Cheers, have just received nine letters, 2 from England, 1 from Jack Cambridge, 1 from you, 1 from Helen, 1 from Totty Smith, 1 from Edith Helmcken and 2 from Gertrude. Took me over an hour to read the lot. It was Helen's #6 and your #10.

Am very sorry that you have had such a series of colds and I hope that you are all free of them before now. Also that Grandmother is quite well again.

I hope that Jack misses the spring advances which of course he should. When does Helen expect to go to Calgary? It will be a nice trip for her.

Was writing by the light of a candle which rested on a stick over a tub of water heating on the stove as Slim (Wadd's double) was just ready for a bath I took up the stick to let him get in the tub. The candle fell into the hot water and of course pretty much melted. Have been straining it with him. He stuck his finger into it and it came out like a candle, wax all over it.

I was much surprised and glad to hear of Jeannette Peele.

A parcel always takes longer to come than letters, if you want to send parcels be sure of careful packing and it is sometimes good to stitch a cotton or cloth round it. Cigarettes or smokes of any kind are always acceptable.

We go through a lot of it over here. Cough drops are also good. Light cake is of no use and heavy things cost too much to send.

Yes Sloan meant me when he wrote. I saw him the other day when on my way here and he had just received some tobacco from father.

There was very heavy fighting at Courcelette which is near the Somme. Our scout sergeant was killed near thee and I today got a letter asking about his grave. He was a son-in-law apparently of H.C. Chamberlain of the 131st.

I see that Aunt Letty is still a candidate for a retreat for the lightly demented. I really think that they should teach the kids German because it seems to be the proper thing to be learned in the dead languages. Perhaps Ken may have to take a chance himself yet if fit. So the old dame is all alone in a 25' bedroom. The woman's mad. Who the devil did she expect to have with her being a widow.

Don't bore people with any of my letters. Gertrude may care to read them but others -nix- I know.

My throat has been A1 and I have two and a half weeks here yet. Don't worry about the coming offensives, "Remember the Lusitania" the States are behind us. We should worry. I guess the above will be the States "Maine" slogan. (Helen will interpret if necessary).

Must stop now with love to everyone,  
Keith

p.s. Got the clipping re Stacy. He should stay out of the game. Fritz seems to have his number. KCM

February 14 1817 - France - (letter # 23)

Dearest Mother:

I have had no Westminster letters since Feb.7th when your #10 arrived. I do not understand why because I received one from Ruth Pyne from Vancouver this evening as Can. mail must be through. However our deliveries have been all upset lately as the weather is a little milder and the frost is easing off so I believe the heavy transport is reduced to a minimum to save the roads until the thaw is over. It is a corker the things that have to be given attention in this business. Some letters come racing through. I got one in 3 weeks time and it often takes 10 days from England to us.

I have been putting off writing each day thinking there would be a letter but then I haven't much news anyway.

Today Sir Douglas Haig with a bunch of 'Brass Caps' including our Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Sir Julien Byng, inspected the school. Haig is a fine looking man.

I am afraid that this course has deprived me of a chance to get a hun or two. Before I left I heard a hint of a coming show but thought I might be back in time or recalled but the other day just before lecture we were told that the Brigade (ours) would go over the top early next morning. I was rather disappointed as I didn't have the Somme work and altho no one really enjoys going over the sacks still I would like to have been with my section. I listened for the artillery which puts on a barrage and bombards his lines before hand and about 4am woke and the show was evidently on. The barrage was a heavy one. The attack was to be about 1000 strong but I have had no details except that it was very successful. I am very anxious to get details. We are at least 12 miles from the line and the heavies have been doing a lot of work.

All day Sunday and Sat. and Sun. nights they hammered away. Usually they bombard for an hour or two. Today they were at it again for quite a time.

We have a lecture every day at 5pm and tonight we had one from a mining officer who explained (tho a poor lecturer) how the war ,defence and attack, was carried out underground. Both sides have regular underground tactics so you see we are fighting in the air, on land, and sea and under both.

I see by todays paper that Mr. Gerard has left Berlin also that he thinks that the starvation of Germany will be a slow process. I don't know what it is but something has got to be done and that mighty quick. This can't go on forever. the credit just voted us 550,000,000 pounds which is to run us until May. It is "more'an I expected".

Today several of the chaps in our hut had to rejoin their units as their division has come out into reserve or rest so I guess they will have to train and practice for the coming push as I suppose there is bound to be one. Last night the hut had a dinner down town. Got a French family to put up a good chicken dinner starting with a cocktail and ending with champagne. We had speeches etc. and a barrel of fun. It is a long time since I have laughed as much as I did last night. It is the first night I have been out of camp since I arrived 2 1/2 weeks ago.

Ireally have no news. If I could have a talk to you all I could tell you a great many funny or interesting things but to write them is impossible.

Life here is straight routine and in one way I shall be glad to get back to the unit but am not worrying as I am going to be there quite long enough and have no doubt but that I shall have plenty of chances of getting into a show. I don't like the stuff but I would like to get a couple of huns just to be on the safe side.

At some school such as this one meets officers from the whole corps. Some fine chaps and some apparent bounders. A great many N.C.O.'s have received commissions and altho in nearly every case I guess it was coming to them now and again one runs into a fellow that's labelled "likely good front line man and an officer but no gentleman" I never criticize as I have done very little front line work myself and in this game we need material rather than veneer and polish. As associates however I prefer others. We have been very fortunate in our hut as the bunch is a good one and we have two or three ex N.C.O.s too but good stuff.

My fountain pen has gone on the rocks as I have to write nearly everything twice. Also have to do most of my writing on my knee.

Am enclosing a clipping from the Daily Mail which you may have seen. It gives the Canucks a good character but all joking aside what the Canadians have stood and their ability to scrap is OK. They are not as undisciplined as they are painted either.

Everything is fine with me and I am appreciating every night in bed. I get there by 9pm generally and up at 6:30. The last two or three days have been a little milder but a confounded north east wind is still blowing and has been ever since we came. It is a bitter one.

We consume a great many cigarettes here but the stock in the canteens keep running out. I would get you to send them to me but there is the danger of them being stolen and besides I can buy Players here for 1 1/2 francs a tin of 50 which is about 25 cents present value of french money, and you have to pay twice that and postage so you see it is a poor business proposition.

Give my love to all and ask Billie to drop me a line if he has a minute to tell me how things go with Rooms 605-610 New Westminster Trust Block. Also

conditions generally and as to recruiting. There was considerable noise in the villages the other night and I understand that a new class has just been called up.

With much love mother dear,  
Keith

February 17 1917 - France - (letter # 24)

Dearest Mother:

This afternoon I got your # 12 dated January 19th but your #11 has not arrived. Until today have had no letters from 316 since the 7th but received one or two papers. Also got the box of biscuits and cheese today. The biscuits were pretty well broken up but still eatable.

Letters going make better time than those coming it seems. For instance I wrote to England to have a tunic made. I received it two weeks later and about 3 days after got a letter from the tailors saying they had my order and would fill it as quickly as possible. So you see we cannot figure it out but most of the stuff comes through eventually. I fear however that your #11 may have been lost as I have not heard from Gertrude since the same date - 7th. No word of many mail having been lost however has reached us. I was wondering if the California could have possibly have carried any but that is most unlikely. As you know I got your Nov. Boxes and cake and almond icing was in great shape. Don't worry about the cold, the thaw seems to have set in and everything will be fine now.

Yes I have Vivians address alright. Richardson went to 54th I believe. I should think that Mrs. Diamond would have trouble getting back to England as they are trying to get rid of Canadian wives.

I am glad to hear that you have a chinaman coming. The work is too much for you altogether.

Dear little Hennie Ballow must be a great saver of steps for you all and tell her that I am so glad to hear she is such a good girl.

The news of the 225th was a surprise. I wonder what became of Lockheart, he was a Capt.

The car accident Johnnie Rushton was in was the B.C.E.R.Lakeview smash when 16 were killed by the runaway freight train.

Yesterday I got a bundle of socks, must contain nearly two dozen pairs. Mrs T.D. Trapp's name on. If I ever can get them back to the unit will give them to the section as I presume that is the intention. Will manage somehow and shall write her a note of thanks. Have just run through your letter so will give you what little news I have.

Later - I left this to go down town with a chap from this hut, a Toronto man who is with the 73rd Highlanders. We went into a tea room for 5 o'clock tea and the first man I ran into was Elsa Burnetts husband...Ramsay. He is with the 12th Machine Gun Company I thought he was in Vancouver. Only had a few words with him.

The weather has broken and the frost is coming out of the ground so we have mud again. I guess the trenches will be falling in in great shape when the thaw gets well started. I sent you a Daily Mail, save it. Also some post cards let me know if you have received three pictures of French places.

Our brigade show was successful but I have heard no particulars as to our own casualties. Have heard a rumour that there is to be a larger show tomorrow but do not believe it. If it is correct I have missed all the excitement. This course is quite interesting but my shooting has not been as good as I should like. Yesterday was the first day I really felt as though I could shoot. Got 8 bulls out of 10 shots at 300 yards 6" bull. I pulled one shot off and made an outer. My other was an inner and I was satisfied with it when I let it go so don't know why I missed. We have only bull inner and outer on the target 4.3 & 2. Got a score of 37 out of 40.

Have not heard the heavies working the last day or two but some days they pound incessantly and we are along way behind the lines. We have had several very interesting lectures, one on air photography and the study of the photos (illustrated) and one on the cooperation of the flying corps and the infantry were particularly good.

I have considerable studying to do this coming week and can hardly believe that the month will be up next Saturday. Am feeling very well and the jerks are helping out. I enjoy the morning run and exercise as much as anything as we get little of that when with the unit.

Ask father to let me know a couple of months before he needs more money so that I can arrange to send it to have it there for insurance and c.

Give my love to all and before long we will all have a gay old time together. We do not expect to feel any change here for a long time if the States come in and we have some months work ahead of us yet. I think it would take years to actually drive Fritz out of France unless we could get in behind from Hollands direction but we can smash them steadily and with the exception of the Bavarians they haven't got much stomach for standing up to us. They are clever defensive fighters and resist stubbornly at times but nothing living can stand our artillery when it really opens up. The big boys go overhead just like train cars but of course invisibly. Their infernal trench mortars give us the most trouble. Range about 1000 yards and weight about 200 lbs.

It is quite a sight to watch Fritz's flares when we start a barrage. He throws up his S.O.S. all along the line and I don't blame him. I have never seen our S.O.S. and no unit likes to put one up apparently.

Must stop now so with love and assuring you that I am quite OK I am,  
Your loving son,  
Keith

p.s. 9pm Have just heard that Hugh Stoddard was killed a few days ago but have no particulars except that he was sniped. I am awfully sorry about it.  
KCM

February 20 1917 - France - (letter # 25)

Dearest Mother:

I got a mail tonight 7 letters and 2 postcards. One letter from Billie, one from Elsie, Helen's #7 the missing #11 which was Father's, also a card from Sam O'Hanley's wife from Boston (Valentine's) a letter from Phil Coulthard, and Gertrude, a card from Totty Smith and a note from Mrs. T.D. Trapp re: socks sent for the boys. It was the first real mail since the 7th and I have just finished reading them all. I will answer the family lines to you.

Tell Helen not to worry about Jack as it will be a long time before he gets to "Sunny France" (it is raining like the devil today) and he is in a good branch.

Of course you know that when I came to this school I was Intelligence Officer. At first I wasn't going to tell you but decided that you would be sure to hear it from others and have all sort of ideas as to the dangers attached to the job. Now to speak truthfully and to give you my personal opinion I would choose the job in preference to the ordinary company work. True I have to do a little patrol work to see what I can see but I assure you it all sounds worse than it is. During the day I do not have to remain in the front line if Fritz is shelling but can go on with other work while a chap on duty in the line has got to stay there whether it is pleasant or not, so you see it is not so bad. Then again if we go over the bags I do not go with the waves, follow in after , gather information, captured documents etc. and see that the scouts and snipers are pushing on for information. So far I have not had to go over. I missed a show by being here. Again, when we go over our artillery barrage hammers his lines all to pieces and makes it untenable. This barrage creeps along ahead of us so that when we are in his front line he can hardly live in his support lines. Consequently don't imagine me fighting hand to hand every minute or any of that old stuff.

I am fairly lucky and it is 'wee'll' to be cautious. So far I have never fired my revolver and have only seen Fritz once or twice and then doubtfully. There is certain amount of a risk looking over parapet and I don't do it now altho I did have to do so many times when I first came to this new frontage in order to see his lines because my observation posts had been destroyed but we have appliances with which we can look over without being seen. A man may look over many times if he chooses a place no one else has used and not be noticed but the fellow who stands round in a shallow part of a trench and doesn't realize that he is partly under observation is going to be out of luck. Again on patrol work we do not go to fight and I have never seen a sign of a Fritz on patrol. Don't worry at all I am 26 years and can generally use a certain amount of common sense. There is bound to be a certain element of chance in war but we are all taking that but over here we are not all fighting all the time. Only the other day I said to a bunch of fellows, "Good Lord we are at war and the people in Canada imagine us actually fighting on the trenches all the time". Here we are back of the lines and one would hardly know there was a war on. Then to reserve and in about a months time or less our division should be due for rest so you see it is not so bad. Sometimes I may have written a gloomy letter but perhaps I was a bit wet at the time. No I have a safer job than the majority realize.

Father would be very much interested in this course if he could get the details of same. Some day I shall be able to give them to him. I was surprised to hear that the 225 came to grief but guess recruiting as Billie explained is slow for infantry.

Captain Carleton has my best luck and I guess he'll need it. I am glad Billie didn't take the notion of raising the company.

So Marsh was made a Major, I should think he would have to reduce here. Am glad the kids got their postcards. I wish I could send them something more.

Assure Billie that I can quite appreciate what 1775 Tax sale searches mean. Still I would be willing to swap jobs if old Fritz would realize that he has his fill of British shell fire.

Am sorry I didn't see Cassady. It is a pretty nice war from his position I should think. Was glad to hear Sullivan had done so well. Ask



Billie to thank Mr. Martin and staff for their good wishes and thank Billie himself for the letter. I enjoy one from him very much. Father asked for some reasons I had for forming certain opinions regarding a particular chap. I guess he will be fairly well aware of them by now as I have since written letters to you that size him up fairly well. I am glad father ascertained the value of my extra kit in dollars and cents with only one load of fountain pen ink. I have a new one though. I get paid according to a dollar and cent basis \$2.00 per day, and .60 cents per day field allowance and \$1.00 per day extra messing allowance. The total is deposited monthly in the B.of M. London in pounds, shillings and pence, then I draw against that by cheque for 125 francs at a time. The bank balance is maybe, and I take the passbooks word for it. Father should charge all disbursements such as Mildreds photo and my share of Gran's Xmas quilt etc. and if balance gets low let me know.

As to Aunt Tweebie business I could explain details easily enough with the papers but it is pretty hard from this distance. Am glad Billie found the assignments etc. in order and I do not think anyone but Collister is taking a chance if a deed of a single lot is given. He might be.

The news of Pat Bowler's death was new to me. The miserable son of a gun left quite a bunch of coin with him, the Coquitlam deal was a case of 'don't get you nothing'.

As far as being steady and keeping your head down "Johnnie" has nothing on me. I generally know just how near the top of the parapet my old tin hat is reaching. I also quite agree with him that a live dog is better than a dead lion but we are certainly having our dog days.

Did you get the postcards including my English actors?

Tell Helen my nerves are fine and that a "Minnie" has to land right alongside to scatter them and that isn't likely as one can see them coming. Her chocolates I got were not so dry but were a lot mussed up and gooey. The fudge is fairly hard but under the process of mastication once more becomes creamy. Postal rates are pretty heavy tho on that heavy stuff.

Yes we are losing a few ships by the subs. but I think that the subs are being sunk pretty regularly according to the papers here. From a conversation I had with the chief officer on the ship coming over they have their own way of rounding those little fellows up once they are located.

The address is vague but quite enough as I get all your letters but be sure to put 'Canadians'.

Am sorry you have all had such a dose of grippe and hope you are now all free of it. I wish you could get a good chink. The old scout Ling should be back soon surely.

Alex McQuarrie seems to have a pretty good post. The law business is the only one that really gets it in the neck on this business.

I can quite imagine that Mrs.Swan is delighted with the railway job Bill has.

So Fraser Allen was worried over a peace conference Fritz posted up. Well we don't take any stock in peace talk, and won't until our G.H.Q.calls us off.

So George Trapp is off for the air. It is a very important branch and does wonderful work. I should like to write you how it works with the artillery and infantry but that again is 'ultra vires'. I said I missed a show

it was successful, 49 prisoners, besides destruction of works. This was published. Read 3rd paragraph 1st page commencing "early" 3rd column.

Tell Elsie to keep up the golf. We don't call 'fore' here before driving but I guess it is necessary because there are softer things than a golf ball to get banged with.

I think I have had Mrs. Peels's matrimonial affairs from about six sources but they all differ a bit and so are more or less new. I have no news from here. We should wind up the end of this week but I have lost track of whether the unit is going in or coming out.

I am very well and have not missed a parade so far and have been out for jerks every morning. Will write more if I get a chance but have a lot to do.

With love to all and assuring you that the cold weather is over and that we only have our old friends the rain and mud and that one never takes a cold in the trenches. You may feel punk going in but the cold disappears once in.

Now don't worry over the mails. If anything hurt me you would hear mighty quick. Also don't worry about my work, it is OK and I expect to have my section complete again for keeps.

Your affectionate son,  
Keith

February 23 1917 - France -(letter # 25A)

Dear Father:

I acknowledged receipt of your letter to mother a day or two ago so will only write a note as I have not much time today. Naturally there are a great many things that one should not mention in a letter and we cannot state where we are.

Expect to return to the unit tomorrow and begin again the work in the line. It is certainly nothing to look forward to as the conditions are naturally not as pleasant as they might be. However, I hope that I do not make a bull when the real work commences. So far we have been carrying on 'a quiet warfare'.

I explained to Mother that my scout officer work is really safer in my opinion than that of the ordinary officer in the company. That is not just talk for her benefit but is actually the case. Another strong point which I neglected to mention is that I do not get called up to take charge of working parties at night. You see when we are in support, parties have to tramp up to the line every night for special work, such as trench digging or repairing. Often these are shelled work the work is disliked more than almost any other duty. So you see it is no small item to be free of those things. At times parties get lost or broken, on the whole it is a miserable duty.

Things are going along fairly well and if I get off as luckily as I have so far I will be OK.

My news is almost nil as I have written everything I knew to mother so you will naturally hear it all.

Give my love to the household and believe me I will take any precautions possible.

Your affectionate son,

Keith

p.s. I suppose by the unnamed party you meant J.D.

Facts were these, he just got everybody rubbed the wrong way, in my opinion by his continual petty wrangling. Never had any idea of coming here and when the bunch was split I am told he was assured that all ranks would be taken care of and would go to the units they wanted also that N.C.O.'s would retain their ranks, that all ranks would be provided for satisfactorily. He wouldn't take that. Wanted his battalion or nothing. What he expected to do with it is more than I know. Result was that we were sent here there and everywhere whether we liked it or not, a lot of the seniors are still out of jobs and the NCO's were stripped over here quite naturally. He never even said so much as goodbye to any of us that I know of. beat it for London and stayed there most of the time. He ran a big bluff apparently and I believe did it knowing that he would not make it stick and would then have a good reason for returning to Canada. As far as I could see and I was in the orderly room a good bit he simply got the battalion in wrong every where it went. So much for my reasons. KCM

p.p.s. There will likely be hell to pay before long. Many rumours but nothing definite. In case of an advance in any particular place, some units will have to go over and the others relieve and hold ground won. I fear we are going to 'hold' if our sector is chosen which is almost certain. Would rather attack any day because in that case our artillery hammers their line until it is a veritable 'washout', the infantry goes over in waves behind a barrage of artillery and generally fare fairly well. But when the relief comes up, consolidates and holds. Fritz reorganized and collects for a series of counter attacks and the holders in turn just stand and take the full force of his artillery. There is no use talking, shell fire is hell. I don't believe that one ever gets used to it and in fact it works the other way. The first day I ever went into the line with an advance party to look over our front a large shell nearly got the bunch of us when about 2 1/2 miles in rear of the line. We heard it and threw ourselves before she burst. It was about five yards on the other side of a bank I was leaning against. It hit in soft earth and spent itself. Some of the old timers cursed Fritz and pulled out. I thought that was to be the regular order of things and it didn't bother me a bit. If a shell comes anywhere near as close as that now I hunt cover in a hurry because I have since seen the effect of the things when they do hit. I would just as soon stand his shell fire though as his trench mortar stuff. Minnies, rum jars, fishtails etc. The first two are a corker.

I am satisfied that I missed being wiped out one day. They began to strafe us one afternoon. Whiz bangs and 4.5's were coming pretty regularly and our stretcher bearers were busy. I decided I would go up to one of the posts to see how things were doing. I came to a quarry which the trench ran through and a shell bit in it and on the hard rock it was a bird. Smashed one of our kitchens in but didn't get anyone. I was going to cross and go on up the trench when something said "better wait a minute or so" I stepped into the mouth of a Sap some pioneers were working in. I was there about two minutes when I heard another. I looked to see where it was going and off she went. A direct hit in the trench just up the steps beyond the quarry. I would have just been about there had I gone on. I waited another five or ten minutes and no more came so went on up. I saw what she had done and would not have given much for the chances for anyone hear there in a narrow trench.

On the other hand some days and nights one would hardly know there was a war on save for an occasional machine gun and the star shells, or flares as they are properly called..KCM

February 27 1917 - France (letter # 26)

Dearest Mother:

Just a line as I have only a minute. Am back with the unit and am OK. We go back into the front line in two or three days and if lucky after this tour our division may be due for a months rest.

I got back to hear that poor Elmer Warwick had been killed in the recent raid. I was so sorry to hear it. We have also lost two of our best 131st Sergeants who were recognised as being two of the best in this unit. Sgt. McMan was killed and Broderick who was acting Sergt. Major in our raid did great work and came through OK. A day or two after he was accidentally shot and killed by one of his best friends also a 131st man who is now up for Court Martial for manslaughter. I am defending and fear he hasn't much chance. It seems such a needless waste of A1 material as the man was a valuable one.

I am sending home my fountain pen to have the nib fixed. Would also like to have a small pocket knife and a couple of good erasers.

I have now a new batman. Linn wanted to get back to section work. He only took on the job because the section was being broken and he wanted to stay with the few left. He was a pretty good kid. I have now got a boy named Peter Sproute from Vancouver. He is a nice kid and I think will be alright.

I don't know what I shall do without a batman after the war. At first I did everything for myself now your shaving articles are handed to you and clothes attended to and brass shined etc. It is a great business but a good batman is worth a lot here.

I am enclosing a memo which please keep. I want it for the sake of the fool memo on the back of it.

Give my love to all,  
Affectionately yours,  
Keith

Memo mentioned in letter # 26 dated January 19 1917  
To The Adjutant  
47th Canadians

In the case of #219766 Pte Desjardins E.  
Kindly let me have at once the statements or summary of evidence of the following witnesses appearing for the prosecution.

Sergeant Norris MMP  
L/Corporal P.(can't read) MMP  
B. Dupont  
M. Dupont

(signed) K.C.Macgowan Lt.

answer on back

I can give you this personally at my quarters at 4pm. The evidence is of arrest. These witnesses were not available for summary. Your request is on the form of an order and similar notes in future must be modified in their tone.

(signed) C.Cars..(can't read)  
Lt. Adjt.

March 5 1917 - France - (letter #27) postcard written on both sides

Dearest Mother:

Have been too busy to write letters. Will be glad when this tour is finished. Am perfectly well at present. There should be rest in store for us soon and I hope we get a good one. I need it as I am short tempered and nervous when going without sleep but can do with about as little as anyone. Have had my trench boots off a couple of times this trip. Day before yesterday was beautiful. Someone told me it was Sunday. My snipers had good observation and got six hunns. Also succeeded in worrying a Fritz relief or what appeared to be one by turning on some heavy artillery. I hope it will all soon end as I am very tired of it but we will get him yet.

Love to all and I hope to see you soon  
Keith

p.s. I left this side for address but will send in envelope. One of the batmen just brought in 2 oranges. It is a long time since I have eaten one. Got your box with cigarettes, dates, socks, biscuits, cheese, chocolate etc. safely and in good condition. The cheese drew the rats so I had to eat it in a hurry. Fritz is chucking over a lot of stuff just now but it will stop before I have to go out again. Have received certain letters which I shall answer when we get out of the line. Summer is coming and my work will be a great deal lighter because the night will be shorter. Our grub is good and we get all we require in fact we mess very well. Nothing stylish but the substance is there.

Lovingly your son, Keith

March 08 1917 - France - (letter #28)

Dearest Mother;

It has been some time since I have been able to write you but this tour has really been a pretty hard one and I got to reserve billets last night about five miles back of the line dead tired. I have received the following letters. Your 14th and your parcel. Helen's 9,10,11, Elsie's of Jan.25th and Gowans of Feb.4th. I shall just run through them and answer anything requiring it.

Elsie's - I do not mind the rats. They roam about everywhere but they haven't bothered me. Your McLaren's cheese rather attracted them however. Yes Ward is not built for the dugouts. Sometime the entrance to a deep one is about 3'x3'. You back down feeling for the steps. Our dugout this last tour however, was quite comfortable. Elsie had better ease up a bit on the work or she will have a breakdown. If Motherwell really wants to do something for me he might just call this war off. I would really appreciate it. Was glad to hear Gray, Fraser, and Sullivan all got in. I believe I have some horse shoes on my neck, because the other night I came through a hot time without a scratch of which more later.

Yours - The weather this tour was fine but today raw with wind and snow. My men are nearly frozen to death because the snow comes through the roof of the barn and the walls are full of chinks. Your box was OK. I got it just after I got into the line. I got one from Gertrude last night when I reached billets which saved my life also that of Purvis the Signalling Officer as our kitchens didn't arrive until late so we ate half the box up.

Don't worry about me I am feeling fine I am not in any bombing business. My work is information not explosives. Yes I hope it will be over before the

fall but the fall is a deuce of a long way off when one sees how much can happen in an hour. Am always amused to hear of Bunkers speeches. She must be a corker now.

Helen's - You all seem to be worrying about the scouting. It is good work and although there is no end to it I prefer it to the company stuff. I have received nearly all your letters so don't worry about them either. No, I didn't volunteer for scouting, I was so green I didn't know what a scout officer had to do. I know now tho. When I got the job I had never even been in the line or under shell fire.

The man Taylor refers to as having lost his job is with us as a supernumerary Major. He was O.C. 30th Reserve. I don't think he likes the war as well here as in England. Was tickled over Walkers opinion of the kids. Great stuff Helen my hearty. If Jack has a chance for a commission in the C.E. tell him to take it. The expenses pretty much take care of themselves and allowances are larger. We received \$100.00 when joining in Canada, \$50 leaving Canada and \$100 when going overseas. So you have peace in the air eh? Well you have different air from us. It is mostly charge with aeroplanes and shrapnel here. Should enjoy a breath of yours. Yes Ward was wounded and Henderson was hit the other night in a big show near us. he has just got a nice Blighty tho I hear. Hope Helen will be able to take the expected trip. If the States come in I should like to go to Minneapolis to lecture on trench warfare while she is there.

My wants are few. I have sent my pen home. Cigarettes are useful in the line because the canteens and Y.M.C.A. are bought out regularly.

Yes, Mary Dorsey is rich. She writes a clever letter. Sorry to hear that Campbell hasn't fixed Billies nose up yet. He must be having a bad time of it.

Address 47th Canadians (Inf.)B.E.F. France, should be quite sufficient. Going to Army P.O. takes longer but in case of casualty they know where you are and the letter does not come to unit and then chase off to hospital.

Gowan's - I enjoyed his letter very much and I have no doubt but that he will eat that sort of work alive. Would like to be able to take a try at the skies with him. Tell him to go easy on the jumps. Am returning his sketch of boat. It looks very comfortable to me and well planned. As he says it is sometimes a good thing to be attached to H.Q. but a lot depends on the boss. I never saw one more thoroughly unpopular with all his officers than this one is.

Have had a letter from Ramsay and he is at the front alright. Would like to see him. Have to parade my fellows to the baths today - Quite a march but I may see Trapp or some of the others there because I heard some of them were in that village. You have all heard by now of poor Hugh Stoddard and Elmer Warwick.

Was very amused of Gowan's description of father's dress on the Pitt Lake trip. I could just see him in detail. I think I will keep it and show it to Bill Sloan when I am next at the Transport lines. (also got a letter from Elsie dated Feb.1st I think I have received all her letters)

Now as to what I have been doing. Returned from my course and found the unit in supports. Everybody was out every night up the line on working parties. I did not come in for these being a H.Q.Officer. Then we went into the line. I didn't look forward to it a bit because the thaw was well on but the line was much better than I expected. I had to go in the night before the battalion. There was a show on that night by the Brigades on our immediate right. It started at 3am. I watched the whole thing. It was a wonderful sight.

The artillery was fearful and the whole country seemed to be spitting fire and the shells all bursting in a limited space. To give you an idea one battery of small fellows fired 3000 rounds in two hours and there were many batteries other than the heavies. The machine guns were a continuous rattle. Then Fritz added his side of it and the flare lights.

I cannot speak of casualties but the whole thing was sickening in a sense. We came in and after doing a couple of days had to take over a lot more line in poor shape. I had been up practically for two nights and had been round the lines that morning when I got the orders so had to rush off and go all over the new front. I was very tired. Fritz is nervous and has been handing us all sorts of stuff

One night I struck the front line at midnight to relieve a patrol I had sent out and heard that one of my best men had been shot and had gone to the dressing station. I rushed off for Co. H.Q. and reported my patrol in then for the station. It was just one round of congestion in the trenches. An officer met me and said "Mac can you give me a scout?" I was out of sorts at having this chap of mine shot and was refusing when I learned it was to help a man with a broken leg out so I detailed one of my boys to assist and ran on. Trench was blocked. I ordered them to make way but found in the middle a couple of chaps who had just been buried and suffering from shell shot. Next a stretcher case and so on. Got to the station just after my chap died. I was pretty cut up. He was my first casualty and from our own bullet. Such is the life when a strafe is on but that is not always the way. Some days it is quiet and warm and everyone is working and one would hardly know there was a war on.

The night before last I struck the front line at 11pm with two scouts as I was going to take a short run out when suddenly I saw Fritz's artillery call go up and then another. Then an assortment of flares, gold, green, and long flights of stars, beautiful but bad medicine. The trench was blocked with working parties so I said to my boys "There's a 'Red', come with me because we are for it, right now". I got along the front line and out a Sap leading into No-mans land. I chose a place where the trench was deep and we stopped here. Then things started. First rapid rifle fire and machine guns. Then the artillery and rifle grenades. Front, Support, and Rear lines all came in for their share. I would prefer Front to Support because the heavy trench mortar (the 200 lb. Minnie) drops there mostly and it is a corker. I chose ahead of the front line for us. We were there for half an hour. No one could move. The shells were bursting everywhere and threw mud and water all over us but I had a feeling that none of them had my name on them. Everyone that skimmed the Sap for front line of course seemed as though it was yours and we just crouched low and flattened up against the front of the Sap. Three hits were made on the section of front line I left. As a matter of fact Fritz saw a large wiring party of ours getting out and evidently thought it was a raid and that we were coming over the top. He is expecting a raid all the time now. God help us if we had been, I do not know how it happened but in that whole bombardment and mess in the trenches we only had a few hurt and buried. I cannot understand. I am glad I went through it because it is the first real bombardment I have been directly under. Once is enough however. I wanted to look over the top to see if he was doing anything in the way of coming across but the machine guns were clipping the parapet so that one simply couldn't. The bullets just sound like angry bees. Just after it started the chap near me said "God here comes a Minnie". Everyone respects them. I looked up and sure enough there was the comet and another and another. I watched its height and shouted back "Its away over" and sure enough practically every Minnie went to the Support lines. After it let up I hurried along to see if the wirers had any casualties as I thought I might have to go out after some of them but strange to say they dug right out and got off scott free. It was some time before I could find their officer but he turned up in one piece. I feel all right when busy but shell

fire is something no man can get used to. The more one sees of its work the more one fears it. You simply can't argue with a Rumjar or Minnie.

The next day the weather was beautiful and the activity was all air. At times there would be nearly 40 machines up, patrolling, manoeuvring and fighting. I saw three of our planes come to grief that day. 2 came down in flames and in another the pilot was shot through the head and both were killed of course in the fall. I think everything I have written is general enough to be permissible. Fritz is a clever fighter in all branches but he has his own troubles because we pump a good bit of stuff into him believe me. I could write a great deal on the last tour if permitted but it is only one of the many we do. Some times they are very quiet and some times hot and so it goes. We should get a rest soon, are due for it any time but whether we get it or not is another thing. We certainly could stand it though.

Must get ready now to take my parade off. Our billets this time are poor and I wish the weather would "have a heart".

Every now and again you might send me a small pocket pad that I could use for writing I am using my intelligence report book now and they are hard to get so rather begrudge this paper for letter writing.

I have received two pairs of socks from Aunt Tweebie and she mentioned a box so I hadn't written to her until it arrived but it has not as yet come to hand.

Would you show this letter to Gertrude as I haven't much time to write. I don't want you to think that I go through what I have described every day. My lot so far has been fairly easy and hope it will continue to be so.

I wish it was also over. The whole thing is rotten. The world has gone mad and is amuck here. When one watches a 'show' and realizes that men are deliberately letting loose that hell on other men it is sickening yet whenever an unusually large explosion goes up on him you find yourself unconsciously saying "By God we got him that time" or something of the same effect. And if we get hurt we curse and damn him soundly. It is a strange life and brings out the good and the bad in everybody.

Must stop now. Give my love to all and I hope to be home before very long.

Affectionately your son,  
Keith

March 16 1917 - France -(letter #29)

Dearest Mother;

Have not had a Canadian letter since the 22nd inst. Our mails are most irregular and come in bunches. I generally write when I get letters and when they do not come the days slip by very quickly, they are so full. I am in a bad way for men just now as I have three or four on the sick list including my Sergeant and had three wounded last night. There was a show on. We went over the top. All I can say is that you may be thankful I was not on the party going over. The Signalling Officer, and myself were with the C.O. I cannot tell you anything concerning same except that the more I see of Fritz in all branches the more I respect his abilities. He is a chap that takes a lot of beating and just add a touch of salt to that "Kamerade" talk and "starving conditions" propositions. I believe that we have him but hard fighting and good generalship is necessary.



Believe I got a hun this morning after the show. Three of them were seen out in front of his lines looking for bodies I presume. I was carrying a Lee Enfield as I had loaned my six shooter to one of my men. It was just coming day and I drew on him over our parapet. My NCO said the man fell. At any rate he wasn't there afterward. Don't worry if you don't get letters from me. I have until the 19th. I believe and then perhaps I will get out to Brigade Reserve for a few days. We all certainly need it. I am nervous from lack of sleep but got from 9 this morning to 2:45pm when a runner called me to give me some fool report Lord how I wish it was all over. It is absolutely revolting to me. It can't last forever and I am hoping that matters will shape up soon.

Have no time for anything more now. If you keep this letter as a reminder some day I shall tell you some interesting things about it.

Give my love to all and a big kiss from your loving son,  
Keith

p.s. Am out of cigarettes but will be able to get some in a day or two.

March 20 1917 - France -(letter #30)

Dearest Mother:

Am writing this in bed and am in a most uncomfortable position so will not write much. Came out of the line yesterday into Supports. We are just behind the lines and of course under shell fire but only a few shells come over each day. Yesterday I had to ride to a field ambulance to see a man who had been in a 'show' and was wounded. He was in No-mans land for approx. 54 hours. His experience was a hard one and he was pretty badly shaken up. When I returned the M.O. and I decided we would go for a bath, a walk of about 4 miles or more each way. It began to rain and the hardest wind I have seen in France was blowing against us. We walked against it for nearly half way when we caught an ambulance which was bringing out two or three men who had collected some shrapnel from a shell which burst just before we started. We couldn't hear it on account of the wind until it was right on. The Doc. and I jumped for cover and beat it into the dressing station. It was out of our way however or we should have been too late. It got these men slightly however and the Doc. dressed them and we set out. As I said, it overtook us and we reached the bath place. This consists of a house which has hog heads. These are filled with hot water carried in by the jugfull and then four officers go at it. When they get doubled up in them one is reminded of the gold dust twin pictures. After the bath the tubs are dragged to the door and dumped over the step on to the street. There they are scrubbed out and a new bunch take a chance. The water was hot however and I enjoyed the luxury. The methods however are crude. We then started back and after walking about a mile and a half were picked up by a transport wagon of a pioneer battalion and got a ride the rest of the way but it was a pretty wet trip and the mules were not overly fast and the traffic was heavy.

Last night I had a good long sleep and have been on a court of enquiry all day. It reopens again tomorrow.

This last tour was a long one and I hope that the ones to come are less strenuous I hardly averaged four hours, per night, sleep during the six days in.

We have had no Canadian letters for 18 days. March 2nd was my last. There will be a big bunch one of these days but everything seems to be congested.

Things have been happening rather rapidly lately, Winsby goes back to England I guess and we will get a new man. Someone is always getting it in the neck. Cannot write more.

We seem to be gaining a good bit of ground at the Somme according to the papers but one never knows why old Fritz pulls out. I hope that the big drive never comes but I don't see anything to prevent it. Some day I guess it has got to stop but it does not yet seem to be in sight. I have seen all the war I want to and really cannot get enthusiastic over it.

Tell Gertrude I shall write soon and I hope that the mail comes along soon. I received your Province of the 7th Feb. this evening.

Am pretty tired so will call a halt. Wish I could really give you all some idea of war conditions here. If I ever get through it I will call soldiering off and if I get half a chance I shall get out of the infantry before it is over. No more infantry for me it is the family drudge believe me.

Give my love to all. Am going to try and get into one of the larger towns for a day before going into the line again.

Your loving son,  
Keith

March 23 1917 - France - (letter #31)

Dearest Mother:

At last a Canadian mail has come through. Yesterday evening I came home expecting a lot of letters and found none. All the others had some so I knew something had gone wrong. This morning the acting B.S.M. gave me a bundle of ten. They had come up with the sub-staff mail by mistake. I received Mrs. Homer Adam's box last night in fine shape. The letters were as follows, your 17th and fathers 18th (I have missed your 15th and 16th) Helen's 12th and 13th (missing none but her 9th is not yet to hand) Grandmothers, Elsie's of the 22nd Feb. Mary's, 2 from Gertrude, and 1 from my Montreal friend. Have been too busy to think of writing. Came out of the line and have had nothing but court martial and court of enquiry work. Besides trying to get some instructional work done so am generally tired out. I shall run through all the family letters in order.

Helen's So far I have not received your mentioned gloves that you have all gone to so much trouble over. They will turn up in time unless sunk. Yes Hugh Stoddards death was a shock to me also as I was away when he was killed. He was not one of my men but belonged at one time to the bombing section and did a few patrols with us. He was sniped while standing in the line. Was much interested in Elsie's tin wedding. Give her my very best. I was very sorry to hear of the Moss trouble. It is certainly pretty hard. I have a new batman. Linn wanted to get back to the other work. I didn't think I would keep him long. Have succeeded in getting him back in my section. Had three casualties (wounds) in a recent show. Hope your new chink is Ok a crank is no use.

I shall acknowledge all letters and boxes as they arrive but I don't keep letters so burn them as I finish with them. We will have to cut down on our kits before long in order to get ready should we have to close with Fritz and show him back a bit. Our mails are very irregular, comes in bunches, Transportation is very congested apparently.

Yours Thank father and Gowan for their trouble in the glove matter. I have not had a chance to obtain any and have only a pair of kid which aren't up to much for warmth. Gloves are necessary no matter what weather. Our weather has turned cold again with snow. I nearly froze to death yesterday.

Had a long ride to and from a General Court Martial. Our coming tour will be a wet one I fear. Am very much interested in Helen's proposed trip. Tell her to be sure that Jack keeps out of the infantry. We are the goats. Sorry to miss Will but his is only another of the small things this war does. Linn won't know what has struck the bunch when his parcels start to blow in on him. Don't worry about the sniping course. I don't snipe but supervise the snipers. I am going to give more attention to this work than before which will keep me off more patrol work.

I saw Willie Banks some time ago and meant to speak of it but didn't know that he had no letters.

I ordered parts 1,2,&3 of Fragments from France for you and they were to be sent straight to you from England. They are good and true to life. Was amused at Bunker's valentine stunts. Kids are certainly funny.

Father's The viscol soaked gloves should be Ok and I hope they turn up. Expect to go into the line tomorrow night ahead of the unit as usual. My boots are very seldom bone dry. They are fairly well full of oil all the time but unless I am moving my feet get cold. Yes the old 131st has already gone into the honour roll. Two of my platoon were killed in our recent trip over the top. I was not allowed over.

Elsie's Be sure and thank Nora Adams for me. I simply haven't any time to write and will be down to postcards soon. Good Lord ten years married. It is more than I expected and I hope you have several times more together. Am so sorry Billies nose is bothering him and hope he gets relief soon. Poor old Bill he always treated me in the best possible way although the Lord knows I made 'bulls' enough in the office.

Grandmother's Was tickled to get such a long letter but it must have been a severe tax to write such a long one. Am glad she is feeling better and with care I know she will be Ok. I enjoyed the letter immensely. You people are certainly having a lot of trouble with your colds etc. The weather must be very bad. Here we don't mind because everything is more or less mud and slop. For instance as I write the drivers are pushing six horse teams up the grade with nearly a foot of mud hauling ammunition and the artillery lets out a split and crash every now and again and the shells rush overhead. Everything is damp and the dugouts cold.

Gran enclosed a slip of an old lady 84 knitting socks but she certainly has the picture madam backed off the map. Bet she couldn't write the letter Gran did.

I wanted to write two or three more letters tonight but am really all in and want to get into my bedroll. Have to get up early. Would like to give you a lot of local news but can't however I can say we have a new O.C. nuff said. Also a new 2nd in Command over the head of Rhodes for whom I am sorry he is a decent sort but seems to be in wrong. Oh you get yours for small things in the army if you are 'in wrong' and the old O.C. certainly was. They can can me for a small thing anytime they like. If they don't like my fighting I am quite sure I don't either. Honestly it is quite a beastly game. Perhaps a lovely day, like today, for awhile you will be standing watching or working for perhaps just walking along when - buzz - drawn out and increasing in noise - you yell "duck" and crash away goes the shell and leaves the small cellar. I generally crouch so that my tin hat covers the plan of me fairly well and don't like falling flat because shrapnel landing on the small of the back doesn't look good to me and I believe in giving these little things attention.

Today was up toward the line to an observation post with Hill who is a staff Capt. I mentioned him. We are seeing heavier fighting by degrees and I guess before long we will really see life. I wanted to write to Gertrude tonight but simply can't get it done. Am tired to death and it is ten pip emma now. Have just heard that I do not have to go into the line tomorrow night but can leave the next morning so I get rid of a very uncomfortable night. Bedroll looks good to me.

Must stop now. I am off to bed. Raley is just reading a Columbian of Hugh Stoddard's death. It speaks of him dying of wounds. I understand he was sniped. Shot between the eyes and never knew what hit him. I have seen a good many who would have been far better off than they were if they had gone the way Hugh did. Elmer was killed as I said during a show. But honestly everyone here is so busy keeping his skin that casualties are mentioned once. Generally "By God that's too bad, isn't it a corker?, Oh damn the war, will you have a cigarette" I have heard it over and over again. Everyone is sorry but what's the use. We are all happy and Fritz is going back a little - it is well to be cautious.

Give my love to everyone and I shall write Gertrude as soon as possible.  
Affectionately your son,  
Keith

April 02 1917 - France - (letter #32)

Dearest Mother:

Am in reserve - got here about the middle of last night and have been through a fair example of hell and back again. Am quite well and will describe this last tour later. First let me acknowledge a receipt of the following family letters. Your 15th, 16th, and 19th. Elsie's Feb. 9th and Feb. 16th marked 5th and 6th and March 2nd. Helen's 11th and bunkers Valentine. Gertrudes 25th, 26th, 27th, 29th and 30th. Also Margaret's box and Gowans two pairs of gloves and a box from Gertrude tonight. I am in bed so cannot write. We are quartered in what was a German prison camp and the huts are just corrugated iron shells and cold as sin. We are having something to eat now as we all have something and have heated up some oxo. So will stop for a few moments.

Now to resume - we have had some oxo, Gertrude's cakes, other cakes, candied pineapple, figs, olives, dates etc. It is 10:30pm and I am dog tired. Today has been a beast, a driving wind, rain then snow and the drafts are fierce. Breakfast is off at 8am tomorrow and training has to be rushed. I have not had a minute to write and from now on my letters will get fewer. We went into the line on the 25th and we had rain. The trenches were in fair shape. Then our troubles began. For two days Fritz chose certain hours, the first between 2 and 3pm and next day begin at 3 and 4pm and subjected us to an intense artillery bombardment of all sizes. His gunnery was good and he just hammered the trenches and communication lines and the valley behind from end to end. Every battle front has a valley somewhere and they are always a curse. Personally I missed most of the fire because my headquarters were across the valley. I was just crossing when it opened and was forced back also I prevented about 8 Imperial Officers from crossing. The sight was one of the most wonderful things I have ever seen both days but when I went over the lines as soon as it eased up the sights are better left undescribed. The men stood it well but by the end of the tour they wore the usual haunted appearance that a severe grueling gives them. We expected to go out for Brigade rest for ten days but before we were to leave we had to go over the

top to cap the climax. I worked for two or three nights taking men over to Fritz's lines showing them the way so that they could act as guides for the parties.

Will finish tomorrow as I am too tired to write longer and it will take quite a letter to give you an idea of the show.

April 03 5:30 (continuation of letter)

Received your box including woolen gloves, pencils etc. Everything was in fine shape. Thank Gertrude for hers also. I have lectured all day to a class of 50 men. Have not had a bath yet but have the lice proof stuff on. Everyone nearly is crummy but so far I have not been troubled.

Now to resume my story...The show was early. We were to get prisoners for purpose of identifying those opposite to us. I only had two scouts fit for duty and as men should work in pairs I put them in charge at one side of the affair and I took the other side as I knew I could always associate with someone. I was to see them safely off, that the jumping off place was correctly left etc. Major Rhodes was also on that side. Just before we went over Fritz whiz banged our line. You would almost think he was wise to the game.

I will give you an idea of how barrages work. This is just a hypothetical case as Judge Morrison would say. At a certain minute our artillery and machine guns etc. open an intense fire on his front line and over go the men. Allowing time enough to get over the artillery lifts at once to his support lines and forms a box into which no one can enter. We enter his front line and clean up inside this box. We leave at a certain hour and the artillery drops back into his front line. Of course the instant our artillery opens, up goes his S.O.S., and our front line supports and rear areas get everything he has.

Well over they went and I saw one party going too far to the left and I roared to an officer that they were going off a little too much so he said "perhaps you could take hold of them". So over the top I piled and caught up. Steered as many as I could correct and the rest were in pretty good shape and beyond control in the roar so I came back to my job. I had arranged with Major Rhodes to take shelter in a mine shaft during the shelling so as to be on the job after the thing was over. I met him and he said "where are you going Macgowan?" I yelled "The mine shaft is the best place if we can make it" but by now the C.T,s were under a terrific shelling. Rhodes said "I think I'll wait behind this traverse". So we stood the barrage under the cover of the stars leaning up against the traverse in the trench. You have no idea of the roar. Shells burst on all sides and overhead and never a scratch. Got covered with mud and stones and a small chink in the face that didn't even scratch me. Finally wounded started too come along in charge of others. We were only blocking the trench and couldn't do any good yet so I told Rhodes to follow me and we would clear out of the way. Just before we started someone stumbled around the corner and asked for water. I recognized Robinson who was a company Sgt. Major in the 131st. I asked him what was the matter. He said he had been hit in the stomach. I knew there was no chance of getting him to the dressing station as he was badly hit, so I took him to an old mine shaft entrance, the shaft of which had been blown and slid him down following with him. As I did so I called for stretcher bearers and as luck would have it they had taken up quarters in the hole, so they took him in charge at once. He died last night. I didn't see him again as I left immediately he was in good hands. I ran back and met Rhodes and we ran for the mine head where we arrived safely outside of a couple of bad falls going overland. As soon as the show was over I went out to get a wounded officer whom I found unwounded but

with a wounded man. I sent him in and with a party of men commenced to bring in wounded. No one can describe the mud.. We went over to the German line and took a couple of poor chaps from under his parapet. The men seemed stupid and slow to work (they were simply all in) I cursed them loudly and got the man on my own shoulders only to stagger and fall in the mire. The nerve of the chap we were getting in was wonderful. He did everything I asked him to and hung on to my neck which left my arms free. It seems ages before we had everyone in as only one stretcher was available. It was moonlight and we were all walking round upright within 30 yards of a German sentry who watched us and never fired. I thought one of the fellows was going to fire at him and I wouldn't let him as a machine gun could have cleaned the lot of us up. Everyone was so weary that no one cared if they were shot or not. I finally stumbled down the trenches to a company HQ. on the way I found another wounded chap and sent a stretcher for him at once. At C.H.Q. they gave me a good shot of rum. There I got my two scouts, one sick the other struck in the back by a lump of mud but not cut. We made HQ (advanced) and I stumbled in and reported. I had lost a pair of heavy mitts and I was a mass of mud. The O.D.(our new one) said I had done good work, the reaction set in and I nearly had hysterics for a minute when I was told that young Sparrow a Lieut. of whom I was very fond had been killed. I left there and the three of us crossed the valley. You never saw such mud. I stepped in a 6" hole which is nothing under the ordinary circumstances but I simply fell headlong in the water quite limp, got up and hiked on never feeling the jar. We got home and I stumbled in to the HQ where a couple of Staff Officers were waiting for news. They thought from my appearance that I had been mauled by a shell but I assured them that I only need a cup of strong tea. Sproute my batman was there and took charge and for the first time in the line I washed, stripped and got into my bedroll. The whole thing was wonderful and was considered quite a success also a splendid example of what the Canadian boys can do after standing a weeks shell fire. this letter is chiefly the big "I" you will notice but one can only see what goes on in his immediate vicinity. everyone did wonderful work. Jimmie Scott went over in the raid and is unhurt He acted splendidly I am told. At first I thought I might be frightened but when the barrage started there was too much of it to bother about trying to avoid it and there was work to be done. I rather felt that the new C.O. hadn't the confidence in me that I would like and I hope that he has more now altho the Lord knows I didn't do much. However mother dear if Fritz should ever get me he spared me this time because my party was his for the asking. I became so sure that he wouldn't fire that I put my gun in it's holster and buttoned it up and got about my work. At least one German has a few humane ideas and I shall never fire on a stretcher party as I know now what it means.

I haven't a scratch except several small chunks out of one hand where I mired and fell into the broken and bunched German barbed wire and the poor wounded chap went with me. I feel fine now and have three times the confidence in myself. I hope I make good on the work that is all. It is a glorious way to die if one has to and I am glad I did not remain at home.

We are now out for only four or five days instead of ten and we are training all the time. Our meals are good and I am looking fine (for me)

Tell Mrs. Stoddart that I did not write because I couldn't get the information. We see each other here very seldom. those in one company never see the other companys while in the line and so I wasn't able, Besides it is almost impossible to get any writing done and his platoon officer should have written.

You should see an army in motion. The traffic is beyond description. Transport, artillery and infantry etc. a block occurred near us yesterday for a short time and motor lorries were held up both ways for five miles. It is really wonderful. The day after the show we held the line, an extra day, I

left that night with Raley, we walked a mile and caught a lorry, then a transport wagon and another motor which got us nearly here. It is a strange life. Fritz is getting many times the hammering we take and his trenches are in punk shape. We will beat his head off for many miles this summer and we have the artillery and men to do it.

I would like to answer all the letters I have of yours but feel so far behind that I haven't the heart to do it. Please tell Gertrude I am well and that I shall write when I can. I do not think that anything I have said is objectionable to the censor. Remember me to everyone and I hope that before long the guns will stop. Thanks ever so much for the parcel everything was much appreciated. Linn told me he had received a parcel but didn't know who it was from. He wants to thank you for it. I must stop now as I am really tired very early these days and I shall try and write a few lines tomorrow to Gertrude.

I have wanted to tell you many things but forget them. I hear tonight that Dick Baker formerly B.of M. is missing from the R.F.C. I wish I could remember or tell you all the news I hear. Tell Billie that I met Bigelow of Coquitlam (young barrister) here today. He was with the 196th and is now 46th. He is looking fairly well

Must stop now. Thank everyone for their letters. I cannot promise to answer in future. The weather is cold as the dickens again with wind and snow.

Gowans gloves were life savers and are the real things. Your woolen ones are going to be useful when weather gets drier. I have Margarets -next to the skin garment - on right next and if I find lice flirting in that stuff I will get bug powder. I saw a party of them on a chap today that were the biggest things I ever saw. Before I could get a machine gun turned on however they had dispersed.

Love to everyone and much for yourself and don't worry as I am well and happy.

Your loving son,  
Keith

April 15 1917 - France - (letter # 33)

Dearest Mother:

My last letter to you was on the 2nd inst. I believe and I simply haven't had a chance to write since. Just came out of the line yesterday and I was just a mass of mud and dog tired. Will describe the recent fighting generally. You no doubt have read it all in the papers and as we are now through with the job I think I can tell you it was Hill 145 the highest point of Vimy Ridge that we were operating on. We went to support on Sunday the 8th. I met Arthur Henderson and one or two other friends and later Jack Knight, Atkins.

The first attack commenced at 5:30 am on the 9th and we watched the 'show'. No news came through for a long time but we learned it was successful but hill 145 still held out.

That night Ramsay dropped in to see me. He is in charge of some railway transport work and was rather badly crushed between a motor and a truck but is now OK once again. I was awfully glad to see him and got tea ready which we had and was getting ready for along chat when I got orders to go up the line and relieve Major Baker. So I had to hurry off and was up all night at Brigade HQ in a mine shaft where I got all reports that came in. In the morning I had to hurry off for the Colonel and back again with him. Our unit

moved up and I went with Hill to see the boys go over on the next attack. I had no lunch or supper but things were happening too fast to think of food. We were well in the enemy's lines and about 3pm started to push down the far side. We were up in the front lines which had been blown out of all shape by our shell fire. The boys fought splendidly and soon the prisoners started to come in some badly mangled. I was busy all afternoon and when we moved up to hold the line, which is more telling than going over because you simply have to stand and take artillery fire. I worked all night endeavouring to see that the line was correct and complete. It is unbelievable how hard it is to definitely settle where one is when the whole country has been churned up and no trace of any landmarks left.

From that time on none of us had any sleep. None of us had anything with us. Not even a haversack. I had on my first old suit I got in Westminster. You should see it now. If we lived in mud before Fritz lived in it many times over. He shelled us almost constantly and the weather was cold. Snow fell often and there was practically a blizzard blowing when the boys went over once although half an hour before it was quite clear. The mud got so bad that the trenches were impassable. A company tried to move along to a sector about 500 yards distant and took something like 1 hr 45 minutes. losing eight men stuck in the mud on the way. One man was in up to his knee one leg when I saw him at 12 pm when going on patrol duty I called two men and told them to get him out at once. I returned at five, he was in nearly to the thighs and a party were endeavouring to pull, push, drag and shovel him out. He was released about 7 am. Men swear that the Somme has nothing on that place. And so it went. The dugouts where we were were poor ones and the mud ran down. There was no sleeping accommodation and of course all fires forbidden. Wounded were taken out as quickly as possible but at first I know where men had been dressed and covered with a coat in the trench where they remained for 36 hours. The hun wounded was here there and everywhere. There were also some of our lads (Canadians i.e.) in dugouts for days simply because there was no possible way of taking them out. Fritz was shelling us and I was making my dugout in the front line from HQ when I passed big Henderson. The night we first came into supports he saw me and took me and gave me dinner and I met a lot of his chums among the engineers he was with. I hadn't seen him before. He was as usual quite cool and hearty and asked me if I had seen those artillery officers beating it which I had. I heard yesterday that he had been killed the following day. Was killed instantly by a shell while coming along a trench. I wish you would write Mrs. Henderson R.A. in Chilliwack and tell her of it. Henderson had done fine work and was very popular.

I hear that Fred Meredith and Frank Myers have also been killed. I am terribly sorry. Art Lloyd was wounded in the hand but not seriously. Jimmie McGregor is still OK.

I think Henderson is the first 131st officer to be killed, altho Ingraham has been wounded - also Davidson and Ward. Ingranham only saw the line about once I think but he always was lucky. It is impossible to get particulars of deaths but Major Sweet, and Ross and Jack Manley of 72nd were all killed.

To resume on the night of the 12th some darn fool started a scare of a heavy counter attack to retake the ridge. In consequence we had to take out strong officer patrols. Bailey and I had ten men and I started about 10 pm. Fritz shelled us so heavily that we had to make a run for a coy HQ where we took shelter for 3 hours. We were then out on defensive work until 5am daybreak. I hadn't a casualty. After I had my men all placed in pairs we settled down to put in the hours. The ground was simply a soft wet clay. I studied the flare lights and signals pretty carefully and was so mad I could



hardly see straight because we were wet through and everyone's feet were so cold that there was no feeling in them all to guard against a counter attack we knew wouldn't come. A shell dropped in rear of my line and fearing Fritz might have a gun shooting short I moved my chaps into an old trench. About five minutes later another dropped just where my sergeant and one of my best observers had been lying. I walked home by daylight and owing to the mud in the trenches walked along the top of the parapet stopping and carefully studying the ground. No one fired at me so to show what I thought of counter attacks I reported that in my opinion the enemy had withdrawn and was not in the valley.

That started something I guess. I slept for a couple of hours and a signaller gave me a cup of coffee and we went out in front quite a long way. I returned to report and got orders to investigate position of enemy. I took the boys and the patrols worked in various directions. The result was that along toward 5 pm we were in touch with the enemy and about 2500 yards ahead of our lines. I was working with and reporting directly to Brigadier General Odlum to whose brigade we were then attached. He was very pleased. I found him getting ready to establish a line well in rear and told him he might as well go on because there was nothing before him. It was the first open warfare we have seen. I was going along approaching a line of trenches and had no cover so had to walk slowly up to find out what was in it. A Fritz started to crawl for the trench and stopped behind a knoll and watched me from behind it.

I warned my two chaps to be careful of traps and covering him with my revolver walked up. He thought I was going to kill him and rolled over with his hands up. He was wounded in the leg. I got what information I could out of him and took everything of documents from him and left him. We were ordered to investigate a village and as I entered it 4 hunns must have seen me because as I worked round the brick yards up into the town 4 of them ran out of the way I came in. They were seen and a machine gun was turned on them but they got away. That was the only disappointment I had all day. Talk about foot sore, everyone was all in but we had to hold certain ground until the troops were put forward. The Imperials relieved us about midnight and we had advanced then about 2500 yards. We then had to carry in a box of Fritz armour piercing ammunition and walk out to support lines. We crossed the valley about 4 am and he was shelling it so we had to cross the open on the double nearly, and I had this blooming box of S.A.A. on my shoulder as the boys were pretty much all in.

We got in and had something to eat and fell asleep until nearly noon when we came on here. This is St Lawrence camp -there is also Vancouver, Niagara, Beaver, Canada etc. and the mud is still fierce. One can't step off the duckwalk or down you go.

I forgot to mention that when starting on the scouting trip we found a smashed British plane by a Fritz dugout and the two aviators were inside. One with a broken leg and the other wounded in the head. they had been dressed and prisoners for 5 days and were to be sent out but the hun had left in a hurry not even taking his own wounded. We sent a runner back advising of their location and requesting immediate assistance.

That night as I came through the tunnel I dropped in at the dressing station and found one of them. (the chap with the broken leg I have not seen as we were in a rush and only saw the one chap at the dugout) This fellow's name was Cooper and he was to be sent to Blighty. He was a good sport and thanked us all for our kindnesses.

At the Y.M.C.A. we all got cigarettes and biscuits. I had been out of cigarettes for a couple of days and hadn't had a real meal since going in. The Y.M.C.A. is doing splendid work and has these stands established and everything is given away. I wanted to pay for the lunch but they said "no the boys have it coming to them" I also got a drink of water. I searched many shell holes that day for clean water but couldn't find any. Our battalion was better off than many however.

We were all lousy. Margarets suit was still on in places but torn from the neck down and nothing will keep the lice out in those dugouts.

Our attack was made about a week before the hun expected it and the Canadians fought wonderfully. I did not get any souvenirs of interest. Am sending one or two small badges off uniforms but I couldn't be bothered packing most of the stuff.

The Canadians are death on souvenirs and are never too busy to secure them.

I have not given you half the particulars of the last few days but cannot write for ever. The Imperials who relieved us are very funny. I was patrolling the advanced lines which were at that time disconnected and all flanks 'in the air'. Some one lit a light. I pounced on him and wanted to know who he was. He was a Chestershire(Chesure) I gave him a cursing that he fully understood and was going to slap him under arrest but shortly after found that they were apt to do anything. They came out by night, had no idea where Fritz was and were whistling and singing and talking out loud. They got into position about midnight and went over at 5 am but I believe met pretty strong opposition at a mine shaft I tried to reach the afternoon before but found it behind Heines lines.

Every hun has a smell peculiar to him only much like a Hindu. Their dugouts smell and their clothes smell. They had any quantity of good clothes, lots to eat and all sorts of wine. The men were good looking specimen and mostly Bavarian and Prussian.

Have lost my cap and water pail(canvas) and am wearing a borrowed cap which looks like the deuce.

Now let me acknowledge receipt of Helen's of Mar 7th Your 20th Elsie's of Mar 9th. Also Margarets box and Elsie's Box. For all of which please thank them muchly. I got a letter from Tudor the other day.

Helen I suppose is now in Calgary. Let me know how she got along. Yes the 72nd was near the gas stuff. I watched the show from right alongside. We had gas everywhere at that time.

I saw Harry Bond yesterday. He is OK still looking well. Yesterday I received a lovely box of chocolates from one of my Montreal friends met crossing Canada. "Bien pour soldats"

While writing mail has arrived bringing your 21st, Billie's of Mar 13th 3 from Gertrude and one from Helen Rand, which I shall now read.

April 16th - Was too tired to finish last night. Tell Billie I got his letter and no joking tell him to keep clear of the Infantry. It is the family drudge. Do be careful of your throat I hope it is all well again.

Yes we will have to have a bit of a time when I get home again altho to look at me now you wouldn't think so. Perfectly well and fat as a seal (for me)

. My legs are the only things that give me any trouble. I have cramps from crawling. You see when trench boots are coated with mud your feet resemble footballs and to crawl on ones stomach and drag them sooner or later begins to tell on the legs.

I have taken note of the "Knight boys" addresses but we never come in contact with the Australians or N.Z.'s.

Alex Robertson just walked in. He is a Lieut. and is looking fine. He is to be Brigade bombing officer I believe so has now got a safe job which is coming to him.

Hope I hear from Helen. Had a letter from Peggy Morrison from Calgary. Tell Billie that when he gets to England to tell Dick McBride that he wants me over there and special leave might be worked from McBride. I couldn't ask for it but I would surely like to do London with Billie. Also tell him not to envy anyone over here. We are all doing our best but no one wants to stay in this stuff. If Billie really arranged to come to the 47th for a tour I might find him a place on my patrol gang. I can just see Billie crawling on his vest through the muck. I spent too much time on our docketts to be stuck by his writing and can carry right along without trouble so he needn't dictate his letters.

I have heard nothing further about Frank Myers. Perhaps it is not our Frank and tell Capt. Myers (if it should be) that I am terribly sorry and will make full enquiries as soon as I can get in touch with his battalion. I believe he was with the 46th but am not sure it is terribly hard to find people. You just run across them.

Am enclosing some German money and one or two small shoulder straps etc. which please keep.

Love to all,  
Lovingly your son,  
Keith

April 21 1917 - France - (letter # 34)

Dearest Mother:

Just a line to tell you that there is no change in the situation. We arrived here on the 14th after our relief on the night of the 13th and are still out and will likely not go back into the line for a few days yet.

Last night we put on a big dinner. Everything was fine and Brigadier General Hilliam and one or two others came as guests and he told someone at Brigade today that he had the best dinner at the 47th he had had in France.

Purvis and I spent a whole day at....censored...buying and had a mighty long ride there and back. I am enclosing our menu. I had one signed by the Brig. but someone swiped it.

Today we had an inspection by the G.O.C. Division.

Am in bed writing while lying flat on my back so make allowance. Was cold so I turned in.

Had a long talk with Art and Jimmie yesterday. Art was only slightly wounded in the finger and is on duty .

Since coming to France my only expenses have been messing and washing etc. so have a few pounds not many in the B. of M.  
9 Waterloo Place London. My box in England is at Folkestone at Messrs. Davis and Davis 132 Sandgate Road.

I fear that the livestock must be in my bedroll. I haven't found any but am scratching. Had no trouble until this last tour. They have to get so big and numerous as to crowd me out before I'll leave this bedroll. Have cut down on my kit. Owing to the mobile nature of our tours I can't afford to carry stuff in as our quarters may change without notice.

Mrs Lambert sent me a tin of shortcake for which I have not yet thanked her. Must do so but have really had no time for anything. Have to endeavour to arrange a concert for the men now.

Have not been able to get any particulars about Arthur Creighton and Frank Mayers but will try tomorrow. I think tomorrow is Sunday but every day is the same here. Our breakfast is off at 8 am and we go on physical jerks at 8:45 and so on.

The artillery opened a few minutes ago and is pounding away full blast. If Fritz is trying to make a come back he should be out of luck if not we may get a call to turn out and go forward at any time but it isn't likely. There is no sign of any end to it so far but something tells me it will end this summer altho I can't see what is going to stop it.

Understand that I have been recommended for an M.C. They are very cheap.

Tell Gertrude I shall write as often as I can.

Love to everyone,  
Lovingly your son,  
Keith

p.s. You will notice on our menu that we had goose. We tried to buy chicken and tried everywhere -finally got into a store where they had one dressed chicken. We wanted nine. This was too many for them so they took us into the back yard. This was all arranged with a bunch of wire cages with various birds in them. Then the kid paraded the whole stock past us. A couple of roosters and a few odd hens, 2 geese and a mallard duck with a few odd creatures. It was the funniest sight I have seen for a long time so we picked out the geese and the kid grabbed them and we called back for them later. The geese were 22 francs a piece.

In this country you are apt to have a complete farmyard about 25 yards from a main business street.

April 27 1917 - France - (letter 34A)

Dear Father:

Only a note as I have no time for more. It has just come to my knowledge that in case of death the government places to your credit or pays your estate three months salary. I cannot understand how it is that I have never heard this before but I at no time made any enquiries concerning post mortem affairs. Thought I had better let you know and would suggest that you allow my small balance to remain in the bank until you receive my pass book which will either be with the bank or in my effects. Then you will be in a position to know whether the quarters salary has a been deposited. It will likely take about sixty days before the matter got through the pay and records to the bank. As I am drawing \$4.75 per day (approx.30 pounds per month) you can see that it is worth looking after.

Everything is going fairly well. We do not yet know our new C.O. He is a Major who will be given promotion. Have just received a wire saying Col. Webb's progress quite satisfactory. I have lost a mighty good friend in him. However, it is the war.

Leave is still closed and I expect that we shall have some work to do before it opens. Am glad my cable gave mother two weeks peace of mind at any rate. I enjoyed the four days but if we do succeed in getting to Nice now the season will be over and the weather very hot. However "the season" in any place in France is a thing of the past owing to the war. I will see the place if possible. I figure that if I get a Blighty I may have three months in which to see the Isles.

Cannot see any chance of further promotion here for a long time to come. There are too many ahead of me. Two substantive Majors only are provided for and I stand about seventh. I believe however had an opening presented itself that Col. Webb would have put me over the heads of at least three.

Must run as I hear the Brigadier is about my lines.  
Your loving son,

Keith

May 8 1917 - France - (letter # 35)

Dearest Mother:

It is days since I have written but I simply haven't had a minute. Have been in the line for days and after a very hard tour we were sent over the top. The fighting has been very severe and we had big Prussian Guards against us. We have just come out into supports but had to stand to all day yesterday expecting a call to go back into it as Fritz was counter attacking steadily. He wanted the position as it is a sort of key. The situation is still tense and we have been fighting since 10 pm. May 5th and the ground was a triangle like this:

It seems a very little bit but we had to go over  
four hundred yards to get there and in daylight we were  
unable to get relief. Some day I shall give you a talk on the  
fight. May 5th was one of the worst days I have ever put in  
and the 6th was still worse. I have had practically no time. We have  
suffered of course and yesterday when I reported by phone to the O.C. from

forward where I had worked out to see the situation he called me in to take command of the company. No officers left in it. I took over during a 'stand to' and mustered a small band. More come in today and I am busy re-organizing and have one officer attached to me for assistance. One of my old scouts, a private, was company sergeant major when I took over. The old 131 suffered again. Sergt Sam Love and others were killed. My job is only temporary.

I received your parcel with pocket knife and all else in good shape. It was a life saver this trip. Also your letters. I do not know what number as I have not my mail here. Am writing on a casualties paper. Young Keller of Westminster. He was rather badly wounded.

I am through with the scouting for the present. Had some rotten jobs assigned me this last trip but I only lost one man killed and one wounded although we were punished for 25 minutes trying to put ammonal tubes under his wire on a brilliant night. These pipes are 30 feet long and 4" diameter. No more jobs like that for me. The men I lost were not scouts. I didn't lose one of them although nearly several times. I am very fond of them all and I believe they are sorry to see me go but perhaps not. I had no hand to hand fighting but did one good job if I do say it but it was one of those unspectacular things that don't count. I ran along for a couple of days without sleep or food practically and after being over to the captured area I reported in at 6.30 am. At that time we were cut off entirely from the position by open ground and the C.O. asked me if I could make it by day and find a road to get information and assistance in. I knew my front was impossible so I ran an artillery barrage across our front and the unit next worked down a trench I found and up a railway cutting and entered the area from the rear. Found the situation bad and ran the barrage to get back again. We got parties together and at noon I set out with 60 men loaded with ammunition, bombs, grenades and grub. The first trip took me from 6:55 am to 8:30. I left again at noon and the artillery fire was intense. I simply had to get the men through for reinforcements and the stuff was badly needed. I started through after instructing every man just how I wanted them to act. Kept the party closed up across a certain distance and then increased speed so as to make them straggle. I yelled to them to keep coming just keeping each other in shape. They did and I reached the railway. I checked up and found them all OK through absolute luck. My next bad area was getting into the new trenches which had been shattered by shell fire and Fritz was sniping from all sides. I made each man walk stoop or crawl as the man in front of him did and then I set the example as I wanted them to come through and I made the poor devils crawl and drag the boxes behind them in places. It was one of the most satisfactory moments of my life when I counted the last man in without losing even one by a wound nor a box of stuff or sack of grub and the hope and cheer that came into the faces of the garrison when they heard I had arrived with help and grub and particularly bombs etc. Then I took my runner and set back for home. I hadn't the heart to tackle it the 4th time for 45 minutes while I got my chaps - a couple of scouts - under cover - and when it lulled I gave the word and we all made it again. I never saw such luck. It took nearly 2 hours for my party to make the single trip. A party of 35 men which came over behind me lost ten men at a crack. I have been under plenty of barrages but I guess Fritz knew help would come that way if at all and he just covered the area with his big stuff. I am feeling fine and believe that we shall now be pulled out for a months rest. I hope so at any rate. Several of the boys have done splendid work this tour. To give you an idea of the position I shall give you a small sketch

Blue:my course  
Red:our captured position  
Blue crosses: enemy still  
sniping  
original objective.

You will see that  
when I finally found  
my way in I was at holding and  
the back of our

Tell Gertrude I shall write soon. She should have seen the fire works  
Fritz threw at me in celebration of her birthday. Don't worry if you don't  
get any mail from me.

Love to all. I think we will get a rest soon and we need it but am  
still going strong.

Affectionately yours,  
Keith

May 13 1917 - France - (letter # 36)

Dearest Mother:

I have received a number of letters from you numbering up to 23 and also  
one or two parcels. I think everything has come through. The little jack  
knife is what I wanted in that line. We are back at St Lawrence Camp France  
which is now clear of mud and the trees are shooting. It is really lovely  
here. The weather has been hot. One days rain in the last three weeks. We  
are out for some days but do not know how many. We must reorganize before  
going back. I am off the scout job and have been given 2nd in command of a  
company for last tours work. I didn't do much the lord knows. Bailey is the  
hero of the hour and has been given a company so I am his 2nd. He has also  
been recommended for the D.S.O.

Was very surprised to hear of Jack being turned down. Never dreamed of  
such a thing. One of these days they are going to need men because looking at  
the scrap from the front line it is going to take a long time to decide this  
little dispute and I firmly believe that in the end it will be a diplomatic  
finish and they might just as well get the job under way and save a few  
thousand men. Was sorry to leave the section. They were fine chaps and would  
follow you anywhere and stay by each other when the fireworks started.

Our Brigadier was called before Sir Douglas Haig and was told that this  
Brigade had gone through more hard fighting successfully than any other  
brigade in the British Army. That is a pretty tall statement to make  
voluntarily and when not half pickled after a dinner. Incidentally the Brig.  
says the 47th is the best unit in the Brigade so figure it out. I don't know  
what he told the other battalions however and hot air keeps the units fighting  
here.

Haven't seen Art or Jimmie for some little time. They are in the same  
Division however so their brigade is never very far from ours.

I want to get to town in a few days to buy summer underwear etc. and I  
surely need it. Had to throw away my clothes when I got out to get rid of the  
lice. Made straight for the baths as soon as I had a bit of sleep as we  
walked all night and got here about 6am. It is about a 15 mile walk to town  
and the same back. A fair hike for one day. The motor transport is not so  
good on those roads now because the fronts have changed and consequently the  
bases. Enjoyed Helens letters also Elsie's very much. Tell Elsie to case up.

Also heard from Mr. Martin and was very glad to get his letter. Thank Aunt Tweebie for a parcel she sent me it came while I was in the line and it surely helped.

we are parading early now and working all morning and in the afternoon we have sports. This afternoon I have to play baseball and haven't touched a ball since Vernon. We are having our usual spread - dinner tonight. Once each time out we have a blow out.

Received letters from Totty Smith. She is a great kid. Writes in bunches like she talks but her letters are newsy and I enjoy them. This is a fair passage but don't by any chance tell anyone who might start it back to her as she is touchy sometimes and I certainly have appreciated her letters. "When you next see Arthur Lloyd please tell him I am so sorry for him about his brother. Are there any dogs around the trenches?" all in one breath as it were.

Should like to be through with this business but before long guess I can make Blighty sooner or later so don't worry as I have no intention of not getting back to Canada.

There are all kinds of rumours about Russia quitting etc. but we can't get anything definite. I would like to have worked well enough to have earned a decoration but am not a fighting man so the medals I guess are napoo for me. had a long talk to Billie Sloan after we came out. You see he doesn't go up into the line but brings rations etc. up to the rear at night. Even at that they have artillery fire to go through at times.

My old section seemed sorry that I was going and it gave me quite a satisfaction. I have several recommendations pending for M. Medals for them and I got a corporal put through for a commission. He is now in England getting it and I just got a box of 100 cigarettes from him. Decent of the kid. I want to have my sergeant put through now for scout officer and then I shall be satisfied.

Must stop now and get ready for baseball. Cannot write often as I have more work to do out of the line now than I had before. Every time I go into the line I rather feel afraid that I won't make good but so far I have sort of stumbled through by good luck. I am really a pretty bum soldier. Would like to see it finish most any time. The men have been wonderful. There are very few of the old 131 boys left with us. We showed them some fine material and the 131 would have held its own well over here if it had been well led but its life was a gay and short one.

Give my love to all and don't worry about letters not coming Address my letters to 'D' Company

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

May 17 1917 - France -(letter # 36A)

Dearest Mother:

There is nothing new. I am just enclosing a few slips of paper for my scrap book. Please keep them for me. They are now all ancient history here so there is no objection to my mailing them. Have been out of the line since the 10th. Went to town yesterday and we managed to get a couple of horses. Meant to have a bath but Purvis not having his batman along couldn't take off his riding boots so we called it off. Some boots. Rained yesterday and today so we have some more mud. The flowers are coming up and I picked some violets yesterday.



Have had no mail for some time but received a box from Gertrude.  
Love to all Your affectionate son,  
Keith

May 20 1917 - France -(letter # 37)

Dearest Mother:

We have come to the end of a most enjoyable rest of ten days and move tonight into supports. It will likely be eight or ten days before we are again in the line. The time here has been spent in cleaning up, smartening up drill and ceremonial stuff also a good bit of time devoted to sports. On the whole our few men have picked up wonderfully and we are all ready to take another crack at the hun. Yesterday afternoon we held battalion sports - although gotten up in a hurry they were very successful. I entered in one or two events in which we pulled out successfully. I ran in the officers relay race team and we beat the field by a long margin but we had the advantage owing to the fact that our boots are lighter than the mens.

We have some pretty good athletes in the bunch and have just got hold of a champion boxer and he is a fighting machine. Took on the star of the 50th the other night and made him look like a beginner.

As this is supposed to be Mothers Day I went out in the woods and am wearing a white wild flower for your special remembrance although it is directly contrary to dress regulations. This letter is also a further recognition of your day. Many, many happy returns of it Mother dear and may we all be together next year. Leave has just today opened and with luck we will be able to send 4 men from the battalion each week and perhaps one officer. If this fails I think a slight Blighty should be due me in a couple of months and give me a good long time in England. Ten days leave is so short that I am not very anxious about it but will not turn down anything of the kind just the same. The fighting on this front has eased off a little and with luck we should have some quiet tours.

I am way behind in my letter writing but one of these days shall take a fit and clear it up. Mrs. Lambert sent me some Scotch short cake and I have not as yet thanked her for it.

The other day a brigade of the 1st Div. held some sports near here and the army commander attended. I never saw so many generals and staff officers in a small place in my short experience before. A full colonel was simply out of luck and just tagging along likely because he was ordered to attend.

My news does not amount to anything. Cannot figure out the Russian situation but it does not look very cheerful.

I wrote a short note to Gertrude yesterday but just scribbled it off in a hurry so I expect it was rather unnewsy.

Am enclosing a couple of additional scraps for a book please keep them. I have a couple of samples of enemy armour piercing ammunition and shell nose caps also an egg bomb but these cannot be sent out of the country I fear.

Brigle has just gone for church parade so must stop for the time being. 11:25 Just back. It seems strange to stand hear a sermon and the chaplin assuring us that God is with us and so on while at the same time the

artillery can be heard pounding away up the line and the anti aircraft guns throwing shrapnel at planes. The prayers for peace are said or offered in earnest.

Today is simply beautiful. warm and these woods are lovely and the trees all in leaf. At night you will hear the owls and in the morning the cuckoos. Then an order comes to move and we hang nearly everything we own on our necks, as the transport will only carry 35 lbs. per officer, and move out.

Bailey will likely get the M.C. and a bar to it as he was recommended for the D.S.O. He has made a good reputation. I hope that the C.O. will give him and me a rest for a bit in the line as we have been working pretty steadily. In a day or two Bailey is going to a rest camp for 14 days. He never felt better in his life but got it so I guess I may have to take the company into the line if we go. (You can add D Company to my address in future.)

We have had such a snap for the last ten days that I guess the walk this evening will come hard. I am feeling fine and everything is lovely so don't worry. Am looking forward to a stay in England sooner or later but I really don't need it as I have had nothing to grumble about and the work is not too hard for a young man but line work is a young mans job without a doubt.

The other day we got to town and succeeded in raising a couple of horses so had a 30 mile ride instead of having to trust to catching lorries. I think I have received all your parcels etc. and although we can get food galore when we are out and feed pretty well in the line as a rule we sometimes get stuck.

Players cigarettes run out and we cannot get them anywhere at present. The B.E.F.canteens in the large towns which are good big grocery stores cannot keep them in stock even. All officers messes are supplied by these canteens. So when sending anything remember players cigarettes. I can buy good chocolate here and as it is heavy stuff I don't think I would send too much of it.

We had a blooming good M.O. lately but he took sick and has gone to one of the Field Ambulances. We have a new one just now but I hope we get the old one back.

There should be a Canadian mail in now but the letters haven't come through yet. It is about ten or twelve days since I heard last.

Am just told that we are going into a very quiet front this trip. I have heard that stuff before and don't count on it but still it sounds better than the opposite reports.

Must stop and get some details attended to before lunch and see that our advance party gets off safely.

Give my love to all and tell Elsie and Helen that I enjoy their letters and regret that I cannot answer them all individually.

With much love I am;  
Your affectionate son,  
Keith

May 22 1917 -France - (letter # 38)

Dearest Mother:

Since writing you on the 20th I received a couple of letters from Helen and one from Elsie and since that I got your box enclosing Mrs. Gifford's socks. Please thank her ever so much for me, they are very fine ones. Today I got Elsie's box of cigarettes. Please thank her and Billie for same. Both boxes caught me when most needed.

I have wanted to write a great many letters but haven't been able to. We are now supplying working parties each night and last night it rained hard so we have mud today. Day after tomorrow we should move back for a few days and then front line for a tour. Bailey went today and I am acting O.C. company and just when I want to be about I am a cripple for the first time since joining the army. Before we came here I began to develop a small boil on the inside of the leg just above the knee but it got the tendons of the leg. I made the march in alright but got the M.O. to let it out and put on a bandage. Today I made a trip over the front and had to put on breeches to wear high boots on account of the mud so when I got home I had a rather sore leg, The M.O. took a look at it and said "Hot fomentations for you" after giving it a couple of squeezes and slapped on some boiling water soaked stuff and did me up in oil silk until I looked like a Blighty case. It is pretty sore but will be OK now and I am to have a new dressing tomorrow morning and everything will be fine. I never remember having a boil before and it makes me "sore". However I don't want to lay up just now as it would be unfortunate to be out of business just now as I have three green officers to take into the front line with me and will have to be able to be on the job.

Had a letter from Ramsay. He has a good job not far from where I am and hope to see him in a few days. About a year ago today we were starting out on our 80 mile Fraser Valley hike. I wouldn't mind starting the same trip tomorrow boil and all.

At present the front we are on is fairly quiet and I look for an easy tour. I saw old Vimy Ridge and one would hardly know the old place. Spring and the rains are doing their best to bring forth a little grass here and there but it is an uphill job. No description could ever give an idea of the ridge during the winter months when we were holding and it was being churned up daily. Am enclosing a copy of a report put into brigade on the employment of my section during the offensive. It is now ancient history and I can send it without violating any censoring regulations I believe. Please tell me if you get it OK.

Give my love to all and heaps for yourself. Leave is opening up fairly well and if nothing happens I may get some before long.

Lovingly,

Keith

May 27 1917 - France - (letter # 39)

Dearest Mother;

Only have a minute. It is some days since I last dropped you a line but the time has slipped along pretty fast. Have had things fairly easy since I last wrote except that my leg gave me a little trouble. We go into the line tomorrow and I hope the tour is a quiet one.

Everything is well with me and I had a long talk with Ramsay on the 24th and am just going over to spend the evening and have dinner with him now.

On the 24th we came here to canvas and as the weather is beautiful the tents are a big improvement on the dug out billet. We got here and the officers supplied beer for the battalion after a dozen military medal ribbons were presented to the men and N.C.O.s.

Art Mills and Carmichael are now Majors and Art is O.C. battalion owing to the C.O. being away on leave. Im beginning to think that if they let you live at this game long enough I might even get another star although I see no signs of anything of the kind. Owing to so many officers being on strength - some sick, some killed, some wounded, and the remainder carrying on with some side unit or the other. They only grant an acting rank which gives the pay but 30 days away from the unit and you automatically go back. Doesn't look very good to me. perhaps a chap wins his promotion and later is wounded. He goes to England and in 30 days has to take down his rank. Sort of rubbing it in.

The news is nil and I will endeavour to have something of interest for the next time of writing.

I am enclosing one or two papers which please keep for me. Thank Elsie and Billie for the smokes - they came in just right. Tell G.E. Martin that I want to write him but haven't been able to. I enjoyed his letter. Simply can't attempt to answer the back letters.

Love to all and for your information Ramsay says I never looked so well in my life.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

May 29 1917 - France -(letter # 40)

Dearest Mother;

...censored.....things are OK so far. Expect we will be here for some days and then I hope to get ....censored.... The front is fairly quiet at present but Fritz has taken the habit of throwing over an occasional gas shell which of course is something which has to be guarded against as much as possible. Am still a bit of a cripple but doing nicely and will be OK in a day or two. The walk in was a hard one but I am actually in charge of a company in the front line 'in slacks' (borrowed)

I had dinner and a long chat with Major Ramsay on the 27th and while there a Captain Scott a cousin of Sheldricks told me that Ted (as they call him here) Rand had been killed. I was so shocked that I did not even get particulars but I do not think he knew much about it. Have not written Gertrude or A.E. for fear there might be some mistake. I hope the deuce there has been one. I was told he was killed some time ago so I may hear in my next letters from Westminster. I haven't had any for a long time. Somehow I don't feel as good a soldier now as I did before. Guess I'm worrying less some foul accident should possibly happen to me on account of you and the kid. If Ed is gone she will be worried to death over me I suppose but it is all very foolish because our chances are splendid and it is just an accident if

something happens. Again, we came here knowing the conditions and if a chap loses he should certainly not be mourned because he has died too well to warrant leaving a lot of grief behind him. However one of these days I am going to roll into the Royal City and invite myself to dinner. Should be due for leave one of these fine days also if it remains open.

Have just opened Elsie's last box of cigarettes and they are my last until I get out so tell her that they have not been wasted.

A man in the line this morning turned to one beside him who happened to be an officer and said "I can see them and they are diggin like hell" The officer took a look at the place indicated and the chap was looking at some tall weeds. So it shows what a chap sees when he looks long enough in the dark. When first on patrol duty I have seen a chunk of mud on the edge of a shell hole grow a head and shoulders and move.

Am sorry I haven't more news but there is really nothing I hear. Have not been to bed for about 36 hours so think I'll just turn in for a few hours sleep.

Give my love to all and tell them that Fritz is playing a losing game but playing pretty tight poker. However happy is the dealer in the big jackpot.

Write me and give me any news you have received of Ed. I am very anxious.

Your loving son  
Keith

June 8 1917 -France - (letter # 41)

Dearest Mother,

Am at a rest camp at the sea side for two weeks. Will not write all the details as I have just finished a fairly long letter to Gertrude which she will likely show you. I expect they figured out I needed a rest after carrying a bum leg through the last tour. My leg is much better and is now healing. As I wrote Gertrude there appears to be several letters missing and I suppose I shall not receive any mail while here.

Im sending you some post cards of the neighboring places to which I have been the last day or two.

Sometime ago I registered a box containing some of my old badges. I intended having pins made of them as I had promised Gertrude one to replace hers which was lost. Am also sending a copy of "Canada" with an account of the R.P.C. chaps I found. Two or three units and brigades claim finding these fellows but I am satisfied we were first on the job and as it all 'amuses she and don't hurt I ' I let it go at that.

The other day I picked up a B.C. paper in a dugout and found a half page picture of May Day. It looked like home to see Cambridge and McKenzie and co. looming up in the foreground.

Your letter 29, Helen's 28 and a long one from Billie all came together while I was in the line. I see that it was all too true about poor old Ed.

The boy was a good officer and I can hardly realize that he is not yet carrying on.

Yes I heard Motherwell had been wounded. There are very few 131st officers left in France who have really gone through line work. Men like Swan and Hornby hardly count as they are practically bomb proofers.

Don't worry about me. You never know how far from the line I am. here I am at a rest camp miles away from the line and you are fretting your head off. We cannot wire and by the time you get this I shall be in and out again. Besides leave is due me before many more weeks and then I get a trip to England. So don't imagine me in the line all the time. We are not in the line as long as we used to be as the fighting is fairly severe and men can't stand it.

Would like to have seen the kids at May Day. To-day at the beach three or four little kids were playing. One just like Mary. Red coat and white hat short stockings and about her size. enjoyed watching them for some time.

Have not yet written Tudor. Received a paper from her the other day. Incidentally this vicinity is full of Australian hospitals. As there is a big show on now the wounded have been pouring in the last day or two. I saw Fraser Allen and Charlie Major the night before I left camp. They all look well and being on signals should be comparatively safe. Lloyd and McGregor are both receiving commissions and are out of the fight for a time.

It is getting so dark in this tent that I can hardly see. Have been quite interested watching the girls here. Over from England and holding clerical positions. They are in khaki and look very smart. They are sworn in I believe and receive a man's pay and rations. I saw about fifty of them fall in, form fours and move off, the other evening. It is such a relief to hear English come from a girl instead of this 'wee wee' stuff.

I really haven't much news. Tomorrow I intend going to town as Sunday I am orderly officer for the Canadian Corps in camp. I had arranged to go in to a band concert and see the town in bathing but guess I'm out of luck unless I can unload the job on some one else.

We have here of course representations of some three or four Imperial Corps. Some of them good sorts. Some talk English so jolly well I cannot understand them. Another wears the single eye glass. Looks like a blooming simp and would be rather good looking otherwise. Seems quite unconscious of it and no one seems to object to it. Queer world. The Commandant here is an Imperial Lt. Col. He isn't a bad chap but has what we would call 'buck teeth'. His upper lip was certainly never expected to cover them. He holds his cigarette between his lower lip and his upper teeth which throws it parallel to the slope of his nose. As he hasn't any more chin than is absolutely necessary the effect is rather a peaked cap.

This is really a rest camp. The whole day practically to one's self.

Must really stop this rambling and turn in. The bunch here isn't half bad. A chap I don't know from the 1st. Div. has just bought me a bottle of bass so I shall have to buy him a drink and call it a new acquaintance. Fool of a life this.

Love to all,

Keith

September 26 1917 - France - (postcard)

Dearest Mother:

Have practically no time to myself. Am terribly busy and my writing for a time will be very little. Am quite well and have seen Jim Motherwell and Luckie came to see me last night. He is over as a sub with the 29th. Darrell Sheldrick came up last night and will be with us before long I expect. Bert Bowell who left us in February was back to-day. He looks very well.

Charlie Bailey has got the D.S.O. for the last fight which took place while I was in London. He has certainly done pretty well. Recd. parcel of Aug 22nd OK

Give my love to all and when next sending a box put in a few of these cards

Lovingly,  
Keith

September 27 1917 -France -(letter # 54)

Dearest Mother;

Your 45th and Helens 34th and 35th with your box of Aug 22nd. all arrived safely. When I returned from an all night working party about 3 am. I had two parties of 250 men each this time, here in reserve, and it is a long hike to and from the job. It took nearly 2 hours each way and 4 hours pick and shovel work.

Thank Mrs. Allen for the short cake; it was splendid.

Helen asked about cheese cloth suits. I don't think they will keep lice out but as one can throw them away I suppose it is a way to get rid of them. I picked them up again last tour in but haven't been troubled since. I have a suit or two in my pack as we haven't been doing as many days in the line lately as we did last winter.

Fritz is throwing shells over our heads at present trying to shoot one of our observation balloons. The gas bag has been pulled all over the place to avoid him. Just ran out as a shell forced the observer to jump. His parachute opened well and he came down his 3000 feet very quietly. Fritz is still trying for the balloon.

I was much amused with Peggy's production and Bunkers admiration for her ability as an actress They are some kids.

It was very kind of Cash Henderson to remember me I am sure she doesn't know me from a side of sole leather but she has a good heart anyway.

We go forward tonight and I suppose will eat our peck of dirt and dodge the usual amount of Krupp's output. It is truly becoming wearying and sometimes I think a fellow would be better off if he got it quick.

The Imperials have struck again up northwards and it has been a big success. The German is very nervous and is endeavouring to learn what is going to happen next, all along the line as he never knows just what minute the whole world is going to open fire and our barrage light on him and our infantry always follow. We have a bad reputation for mercy and I have given an order that in future I want no prisoners unless they are required from us for a certain purpose. I have gone through quite enough already to make a man a savage. I wouldn't miss this fall in France if I had the opportunity.

Must stop now. We do not know when we will be called upon

September 29 1917 - France -(letter # 55)

Dearest Mother,

We are in the line and I am out of paper. As it is quite a hike for the batman to the nearest Y.M.C.A. will make this do. After Ross was killed I got a lad named Firth but he was a dead one and I fired him. I fear I am getting a regular grouch. Now I have a chap named Cook. He is new on the work but I hope will be of some use later.

A day or two ago I think I told you about the balloon observers above us then, having to jump to avoid shell fire. It was about an hour later when a Fritz plane came out of the heavens and made a rush for the gas bag. Nothing could save it although our anti-aircraft guns were putting shrapnel all about him. He fired his explosive bullets and circled off while the bag burst into a mass of flames and fell. One of our planes, a slow artillery observation bus was between Fritz and his lines and our chap waited to allow Fritz to come out of the mass of air bursts. Finally they closed and for a moment I thought we had him but our battle planes which rushed to the spot at 120 miles per hour couldn't overtake the fellow and he got home.

About 6:30 that same evening an enemy plane came straight over for the next balloon on our left. He travelled like a streak and it may have been the same man as before. The balloon men waited far longer than I would have and then jumped. I believe he took a shot or two at them but went straight for the bag and it went up as before. The whole thing burst into flame at once. Our planes were on the spot like hawks but he fought well and handled his plane cleverly. He succeeded in avoiding and I believe driving off the first to attack him but there was no hope. Our boys circled and swooped in on him and finally he started down and went out of sight behind a rise of ground. I was told yesterday that he landed and was a prisoner. Was shot through both arms. I don not know if he had an observer or not but guess he must have.

The air fighting is wonderful. Yesterday morning I saw a Fritz and our own - evidently both observation machines pass within 400 yards of each other and carry on. One scared and the other did not dare I guess. I was up looking over the ground in front of us at the time. Incidentally it is ugly looking ground. Nothing but railway embankments slag heaps, mine buildings and 30 foot brick retaining walls to say nothing of the houses and buildings totally or partially ruined. Oh it is a good war.

Last evening the sky was full of planes and we got strong glasses on a Fritz battle patrol flying very high over his own territory. We then saw some of our own at much the same height going over. They were just mere specks and must have been moving at an altitude of 12,000 or 15,000 feet. Suddenly we saw a burst of flame and one chap came down. It took a long time for the burning machine to reach ground and it fell in "Germany" I fear it was one of our chaps as a Fritz followed down for some distance. It is a very hopeless



sight, but I see by the paper last night that on the 26th we got 24 of their planes. They take their chances but after all they don't go through the drudgery we do and we take certain chances ourselves in the infantry.

Our tour so far has been fairly quiet - save for a bombardment the first night. We had a little trouble but our company was OK as we are just behind the front line and will move forward in turn.

A chap bet me 25 francs that the war would be over by New Years Day. I took him and will spend the money the first trip out. Offered to give him two or three months pay on the same basis but there was nothing doing.

Am very glad that Capt. Mayers heard definite news as to Franks burial. It is very hard to go looking for information and the best generally comes that way.

I am feeling first rate and will write as often as I can but have a lot of work on hand.

Love to everyone, your loving son,  
Keith

October 3rd 1917 - France - Coy. H.Q. Front line (letter # 56)

Dearest Mother:

We are still here and I have had a good sleep. Am in a dug out about 45 feet in the earth but our sleeping quarters are nil. Bailey had the boys bring in a big mattress from one of the houses yesterday.

Talk about war. Yesterday I wanted to get an observation post so Lindsell of B CO. and I went out and managed to get into the upper story of a house which had most of the roof in the cellar. We got down a road and into the thing and managed to get five observation over a very interesting front. Of course all these houses are very closely watched. I took the colonel up and he was very pleased and wanted me to make it into an established post, which I intended to do but upon making enquiries found that the place was frequently shelled. You see we were just fresh in and one has to learn the bad spots. That afternoon Lidsell and Hincksman were up there and a sniper smashed a bullet up against a piece of the wall so I am marking the place as dangerous because the C.O. wanted to let every one use it and I considered that the movement in and out would bring down the whistle bangs on us. They always spoil a good thing. Later I got out from one of our posts and got some good observation. Saw several Fritzie's and today am going to try and get one or two. The range wouldn't be over 500 yards and I believe that Clarke (a D Coy. officer) and I can annoy them. Clarke is very enthusiastic and a good shot. I wish we all had as much spirit as that chap has.

The men I saw are either one of his Jaeger regiments or else a minenwerfer company. I am not sure which. They wore a light uniform with a band.

This country is ever so much more interesting than when on the old ridge at Vimy. All we could see there was a sea of mud. Here however we have every different obstacles to contend with and the country is a beautiful one for a defensive position. He has and is working hard to strengthen every natural feature I believe but if we should go after him we'll get the place alright.

In the house I spoke of there was a fine oak bedstead downstairs and a good range. All smashed. The front stairs on the parlour floor and the roof, walls, ceilings etc.. spread about carelessly. On the table there was a text book on geography for a school I judge similar to our lower public schools. Everything looked as though the people had just walked out and that a cyclone followed by various uninterested persons of both armies had mauled it. I can imagine the feelings of an owner coming to it. Most of the houses are just piles of brick dust and here and there a fragment of wall standing.

Factories and shops are masses of twisted steel. It is a beautiful business and men take to it naturally. Smash anything and to blazes with expenses - we have lots of them.

The nights are getting colder and longer. Before long we shall have the good old winter and Jack Frost will spread his beautiful mantel of white over all the scars of war - Sure! what it means is rain, mud and slush and the cast iron continues to fly. The marches get longer the farther forward we go but I hope we go because there are some Minnie men I want to get in touch with. When on the ridge one prisoner put up his hands to one of our fellows and said "I'm not a fighting man I'm a minenwerfer man". Our chap took one look at him and said "You're the \*@ we are looking for". and put him out. After you have dodged Minnies for months there is not much mercy in store for such non combatants. Notes are hardly sufficient to meet the exigencies of the case.

Must stop this rambling nonsense as I have some work to do to further the progress of this great and terrible war which is really a serious business when one stops to consider it.

Am perfectly well and fatter than usual as you will have seen from the small photos.

Give my love to everyone and tell the kids that their uncle is desirous of coming home but the Kaiser won't let him. That will put him in wrong with them I suppose.

Lovingly,  
Keith

October 12 1917 - France -(letter #57)

Dearest Mother:

A note only. We are very busy but haven't had any severe fighting for some time and am at present out of the line.

You made a guess one time which was correct but not so now.

I really have no news to give you. I hear that Ramsay has returned to Canada. I tried to persuade him to go back if possible. He is not young enough for this game.

Billies letters arrived with yours and Helens. In fact we got a large mail bringing me about a dozen letters and I have had no chance to answer any of them.

The English papers are full of air raid reports. I got a letter from there and it seems they raid nearly every night.

The weather is not nearly so good now and I suppose that our old enemy the mud will be with us before long.

Give my love to the whole family and I shall write when I can but don't expect letters regularly for some time,

Lovingly your son,

Keith

October 23 1917 - France - In the Field (letter # 58)

Dearest Mother:

It is some time since I last wrote but it has been impossible to do so. Have seen another side of war altogether. We are in the line and the weather is wet. Am writing lying down because there isn't room to sit up. I was sorry to leave F.....  
Am feeling fine except for a bit of cold which will leave me now that we are back in mud and water. The conditions here are bad but I hope they will improve soon. Raley got a nice little Blighty. A piece through the fleshy part of the leg. He was on an advance party and had no trouble getting back to the lines of communication. If the wet weather and shell fire keep up this front will soon resemble old Vimy. It was not as low and flat as where I am now. Our artillery is heavy. A steady pounding all the time so I take it that Fritz is worse off than we are.

For the present we have left the old trench warfare as it is generally known and the whole thing is a new war to me. Someday I shall be able to attempt to tell you all about it. I hope the States throw in a big weight and we go at it to a finish. Have gone through too much muck to grant quarter or consent to a draw now so hope they make it a finished job although I am heartily sick of it all.

Tell Gertrude that I simply cannot write and don't expect any further letter from me for some time.

Got your 49th and hers of Sept 13th. the night I wrote my last to you, the 12th, but have had to destroy them.

Give my love to everyone and with exceptionally good luck will get home to see you all soon.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

Please keep this short disjointed paper on patrols for me. I had to write it as time permitted.

Had a letter from Pauline Balloch a day or two ago and will write her. She is at Rouen. She wanted to know where I am. Have changed spots as often as a leopard since. It is some war and one has to keep thinking to know what we are fighting for but ....Remember Belgium.

Yours, Keith

October 31 1917 - Belgium -(letter # 59)

Dearest Mother:

Am out of the line again and glad to be so. We have had the hardest tour I have ever made and are still bombed nightly. Our air service is very poor here and gave us no protection in the line. Raley and Jimmie Scott both got Blighties and so did Frank Clark who was with us. He was a fine little officer and I hope he won't have to come back. Poor old Hinkesman who was one of my chums and is one of the group I sent you was killed. We were in a bad hole and he and Allsopp and I had a consultation and they left me to return to their company. Poor old Hinck was shot through the head. I was very much cut up about him but had too much work on hand at that time to think of anything but the situation.

I have received two letters from you and one from Helen and was so glad to hear that you had had such a good trip to Victoria. A also had a letter from Father.

Leave has been extended to 14 days and is coming along well. With luck I should be due again in about a month. Anytime after 3 months and I came back hear Aug 25th

The Italian situation certainly looks bad to me and I hope that it will be straightened out. We can't afford slaps like that.

I hope that we won't have another tour here but one can never tell.

Give my love to everyone and I will try and run over to see you all if an opportunity presents itself.

Lovingly yours,  
Keith

October 31 1917 - Belgium -(letter #59B to Father)

Dear Father:

I am going to give you a general description of our last tour. I can not give you any names of places etc. but will speak only of my own experiences which I believe is perfectly in order.

You know that we were billeted in a farm. It surely looked good to us after we had left it as it was the last we saw of comfort. On the morning of the 21st we had reveille at 3:30am and pulled out onto the road by 6. Thence by motor bus, again by foot, and finally through a town to our camp for that night. Fritz was slamming very heavy stuff into the town and we got mixed up with one of them. We were given an area and everyone dug a hole. We got an old tent and hoped for fine weather. It rained like blazes and at daybreak all tents had to be struck to avoid observation from the air. We existed that morning and in the afternoon moved forward. The area was one of the most desolate one I have seen. The wastage was frightful and the ground strewn with everything which moves into a battle area.

We got to our area in the evening and for the next two days we were there and the weather was frightful. Wind and rain.

Knowing that there would be trouble getting supplies forward I got everything well in hand and had all ammunition etc. correct and water bottles filled and managed to carry in 30 tins of water. All this time there was heavy artillery fire and our transport roads were being heavily shelled. The work went on steadily. Streams of men horses, mules and motor transport and limbers moved up and back on the double. No trenches. Everything done overland. We moved further forward the evening of the 25th and it was quite clear and bright. There was to be a show early next morning so we dug ourselves in as we were support troops and Bailey and I dug a hole about 5 feet in diameter and put a tarpaulin over it. During the night the rain came on.

Nov.2nd. - Excuse the jump but orders came to move forward again so we entrained and are again in the confounded area though some six miles behind the lines. Now to resume - and of all the uncomfortable places and frozen chaps I ever saw that place and our boys were the worst. We were on high ground and could see well forward. The country was undulating and nothing on it save the "German Pill Boxes". Concrete emplacements and shelters constructed so as to cover the whole country. From the time we arrived in the country our artillery had kept up an incessant roar. Day and night. It became very tiresome as the vibration in our little place was a corker. The gunners were having their troubles. Pushing forward in the open. No emplacements or cover and the mud was bad.

We were both up by zero hour and I had just managed to get a little better than half rations for the men as our mule train had been hit by shells. We watched the show until the smoke hid all movement. Fritz of course filled the air with fireworks and his artillery and machine gun was beyond description.

I shall never forget the 26th, 27th, and 28th of Oct. if I live to be a hundred. At intervals the battle field would clear a bit and we could see our troops running here and there.

We waited for orders to go up. One by one our other companies stood to and silently moved over the ridge out of sight. We spent the day there eating a bit of cold bully and stuff full of mud and water. It was all most disgusting but one ate heartily. Funny things cropped up on all sides in spite of the uncomfortable conditions. I saw a chap standing in his mud hole, shaving. It made a queer picture in the rain and shell fire.

At 5pm we got orders to go forward and relieve a company of another battalion. We set out through the mud. As we went over the ridge an SOS went up in front of us and both artillery opened up to full speed again. We trudged on through the mud and the boys did well. We had trouble from one or two shells of course but the soft ground saved us considerably. Arriving at our destination we could find on one to relieve, they had gone forward. We got the company into a fighting position (as we did not know what the SOS meant) and sent runners to the nearest H.Q. to report and get orders and to find out who we were now under. About dark we were ordered to move up onto high ground on the right. We did so through heavy mud. We had one man mired, but got him out, and the odd casualty.

Arriving here BAiley got orders to push his company forward. About three different O.C.'s all had a crack at us I believe that day. He left me in charge and took guides, going forward to reconnoiter. In the course of an hour the guides were back to me. I was ordered to move the company forward in a wave. This appeared tommy rot and impossible but not knowing the situation I

did it. The men were pretty well all in and I was carrying the load of one chap then. We got forward and connected up with our B.Co.y Bailey and the O.C. B.Co.y then pushed the line still farther out and we placed four posts to watch our left flank. The hun did not seem to be strong but he shot a couple of flares very close. I learned that B.Co'y had no one on the right. Australians were on that side but patrols could find no one. Our left was in the air by over 800 yards and we were a long way ahead of our other troops.

An officer came up and said we would have to go back. There was an argument between this chap and Bailey also the B. Co'y. The result was that Bailey turned the Co'y over to me with orders to fight to a finish and he and this other fellow went back to straighten the matter out. The hun became stronger every minute and the rain had cleared away leaving a bright moon behind me with a distinct skyline I could not avoid.

Sniping machine gun fire became so that we had to jump from one place to another. We had a few men killed and got a few huns. The O.C. B.Hinckesman, his second, and I had a consultation and they left me. Poor Hinckesman was killed going back to their company. Midnight came and the enemy getting stronger. I got a report that he was coming over on one of my posts. I did not think this likely so issued orders that they were to fight and, if forced to, to fall back on our line. Everyone stood to and we waited for we knew not what. I had a hun prisoner over whom I placed a man with orders to put a bullet through his head upon the first sign of an engagement. The false alarm died away and about 1am the O.C..Co'y came up and said he had orders to me to retire. By this time retirement was a very difficult thing but the men were too tired to dig in and I knew that by daylight we would be picked off one by one. I got my officers together and arranged with B Co;y so that we could cover each other and we got back losing a few but not many. Just before we started (the next part has been censored but readable) Bailey came back to me and from that time until the end of the tour he acted like a boy. It was the first time I was ever disgusted with him in the line. I could not get him to attend to things and while he was there I had no authority...however, we got back to a trench line behind a ridge but really too low on it to be of much use. I saw one chap shot in the head on the way back. Lowe one of our company officers and I were both watching him go back and the bullet actually sparked in the dark when it hit him on the head.

At 2am I found that our rations had not arrived i took a runner and we started for advanced H.Q. After traveling for a time we arrived back at our starting point. In a new area and not a landmark, also only a general idea as to where we wanted to go. Took a new runner and set out again. Fritz began to shell. We had to run and take shelter and run again. We were twisted about until it was impossible to say where you were. The moon had gone down and the country a sea of mud holes. We found piece of trench at 4:30am and slept under a ground sheet until 6 when I got my bearings and arrived at my destination at 7am, found my rations and made the front line again on the jump by daylight.

On the 27th he shelled us pretty hard and his planes were over us constantly. Our air service disgusted me absolutely. That night we pushed our men out to the top of the ridge and they dug in. Frank Clark left me to go on duty and got a bullet in the arm which broke it and entered the thigh. He started out after being dressed but it is an awful job to get out over six miles of that waste through fire. He made it the next day. Before we shoved our men forward Fritz gassed us. Threw the shells to our back area and the wind brought it to us. He was trying for the batteries I think. When the stuff struck me I gave the alarm and we all climbed into masks. Your eyes hurt and the nose runs badly, the throat and lungs also feel it if you get enough. We again had difficulty in getting our rations on the morning of the 28th and all my 30 tins of water had been lost. He commenced to shell us the night of

the 27th but I slept fairly well except when we had to get out altogether. On the afternoon of the 28th he shelled us intensely. Our support was the only one he knew as his artillery had not yet found our front line. I thought I had seen shell fire but I know now I never had before. Very heavy stuff crashed in all afternoon. I got Bailey to make as many men as possible crawl from the support to the front line. We stayed with the remainder. It was simply hell. There was nothing to do and we just sat and talked each one wondering whether the next had our names on it. Lowe was partly buried and we had to dig a couple of others out but on the whole we were very lucky. No money could get me to go through such an afternoon again.

Our relief came in about 8pm and after the company had gone I took Lowe whose leg was very sore and we started on our tramp out. We were very thirsty and I finally salvaged a petrol tin half full of water but it tasted like turpentine. We had a good long drink and filled our bottles. It was a long hard six miles but we got to the duck walk and would have done well but Fritz shelled us with gas so we had to walk in respirators. You don't know what that means at night but take my word for it that next to being blinded it comes first. Twice we ran into heavy gas but came through without trouble. My lungs and stomach troubled me a bit afterwards but I think it is mostly cold as we were constantly wet and no fire. As we came to the transport lines a blooming gun fired just as we were approaching. It had a 20 ft. flash at least and slapped us on the chest nearly knocking us over by air alone. I called to the gunner to know what size he had there. He replied 9.2 and carried on.

I met Chic Robertson on the road as I got in. Their unit had not been up. We had something to eat and went to bed. Fritz dropped bombs around carelessly but I was looking for sleep and got it. The next morning we moved out by train and were supposed to be through here but after being bombed for two nights where we were we went back. We are at our old transport base. I have hopes of seeing the end of this place in two or three days.

This country is frightful. Everything gone and the people are worse than that French peasant by far. We pay enormous prices for everything and generally can't buy at any price.

The above is not written carefully and has been done as I could find time. It will not give you any idea of what the actual thing looked like I am afraid. Someday however, if you keep this for a reminder I shall describe the thing a little more clearly.

In a letter some time ago I mentioned an Englishman we have here who is the funniest thing out. He nearly shot a couple of pigeons the other day, and would have bagged them had he had a shotgun, before he realized that they were communication carriers. Oh he's some kid.

Must stop now. Hope to get leave in about a month and it is now 14 days instead of 10. Sloan is on leave now.

With love to all I am,  
Your affectionate son,  
Keith

This note on Passchendaele was with the letters and seems to be part of a letter that is missing.

"The battlefield of Passchendaele was a sight. I never saw such desolation and waste - miles of mud and dead horses, mules limbers, guns equipment,

everything, and dead men lying all over the place, and the artillery fire all the time was hellish.

I never underwent shell fire such as we sat under all the day of Oct. 28th. Heine just slammed 8" stuff at us without a pause until it got on your nerves and you wanted to yell. I worked off myself by cursing the flying corps which up there gave us no support."

November 3 1917 - Belgium -(letter # 60)

Dearest Mother,

Since writing you I have received your 51st and 52nd, also Helen's 39th. Your parcel mailed Sept 24th. arrived last night and Billies cigarettes (200 Players) a day or two before. Everything was in fine shape and thank Amelia for the helmet. I wore it last night as we are under canvas at present. Don't bother about putting figs in the boxes in future—they are generally all dried up by the time they arrive. The socks were fine. Last tour I used eight pairs but have had them washed and when dry will be OK again. The gloves were splendid. Just what I wanted. I have a heavy pair for the line and a woolen pair for dry weather while these will do to put on the odd swank with while behind the lines. Straight kid is pretty cold on the hands.

Had a letter the other day from Gerald Hartley Hill. He is in hospital in England with his eyes troubling him. Will write him today if possible.

I was so pleased to hear that you and Dad had been able to get to Victoria for a wee small spree. Tell Helen to keep up the good work and to push the two of you out of the house whenever any chance of the kind presents itself.

On the other hand I was very sorry that father was not able to accept Daltons invitation for the shooting trip.

Helens news about Bogey Jones was the first I had heard of it. Am very sorry and hope his injuries prove less serious than at first thought. I have seen men go out with apparently a good blighty and in a week get a report of their deaths and visa versa.

So you have prohibition in. Here we manage to get some stuff but this country is drained compared to France. From the first I drew the line on whiskey. It is the prevailing drink in the mess as it comes through the B.E.F. canteens and by not touching it I avoid a dozen drinks a day I don't need. I take the odd shot of rum, brandy or champagne and I tell you the former in the line is often a life saver when wet through. They all laugh at my stand in regard to scotch but I am generally on the job when needed.



Bailey was drinking too much for a time so I went easy. he is a good chap and deserves the Medal he is wearing.

I have heard nothing of Harry Bond and hope that his wounds are not serious. There is really nothing to tell you. We are still plugging along and are at present in the back area doing working parties. The present salient is apparently worse than the old one and he shoots at you from about three sides. If the Italian situation improves however I hope to see a big improvement by spring.

Must stop and get squared away for the afternoon. Hope to get leave in about six weeks and will likely go to the home of R.P.H. Leach - 8 Balham Hill, London S.W. for a sort of headquarters.

Ask father if the remittance I made to the B. of M. went through to him OK.

Your loving son,  
Keith

November 8 1917 - France -(letter # 61)

Dearest Mother

Your 53rd, Helens 40th and Fathers box of 200 Players all arrived today and were all much appreciated.

I am quite anxious to hear how the Conservative nomination goes and hope that Billie doesn't have much trouble with Gray still I wouldn't underestimate an opponent having learned that much from a year in the line. On the other hand the woman's vote is bound to be uncertain "husband influenced" so I wouldn't count on it as Gray's. I should be in the office and might have been in a position by now to have taken on a good share of work instead of which I am farther behind than when I passed my finals.

We are out of the line for a few days but expect to go back to the low country for another support tour at least. You will have read that we were sent in to clean Fritz off the Passchendaele ridge. I hoped we had seen the last of the place but guess we will have another walk in.

We were marched about 5 or 6 miles to the rear for the first night and Bailey and I managed to get nearly all the company on lorries. I tipped the drivers of the trucks I took over, 20 francs which equal about \$4.00. It is a continual round of small outlay in order to help the men along and the majority of them do not appreciate what is done for them at all. The hard part of it all was that next morning we were obliged to march three miles back to Ypres station (and that is an unhealthy town) to entrain for where we now are when the train ran us back practically past the camp of the night before. Then upon detraining we had a hard four miles to do with heavy loads. Such is the way in the army.

Bailey went on leave yesterday and I have the company. Today has been a busy one and tomorrow will be worse.

About young Hine. I have not had a chance to dig the boy up as yet. He is in the company though and looked after as the others are. He is a bit young. His mother should claim him and as a minor he would be sent to the base until of age which means duration. In fact I have just this minute had orders to send another young chap to the transport lines pending his departure for the base.

Annandale has gone out to have an operation on his throat. It is a cyst I believe. I fear he will not be sent back to us. He was a rattling good man on the pay and record job and again someone who knew Westminster.

Have had another seige of boils. Four at once on wrists, neck and cheek. Felt a touch of gas and a cold and the M.O. offered to send me out before we came away but it would have stopped Bailey's leave and I wasn't exactly keen on leaving the war for a boil so just took things easy for a day or two and feel much better now. Am looking for a chance to get to a dentist now.

Had a nice parcel from Pauline Balloch and must write her. also had a long chat with Tuck the other night. His brother is a corporal in our company. He is a first contingent man.

We are under canvas and Lowe and I have a double lined tent. Also two wooden frames with wire stretched over for beds. These covered with straw and our bed rolls on top do first rate. We have a brazier but only green wood for same so it is a smoke barrage one minute and the fire out the next. It is raining and blowing but we are quite comfortable. The companies are separated here so I am boss of my own area and have my own bugler etc.

Here's a fairly good one. One of our officers - a scotch chap who was one of the old sergeants, named Jimmie Baxter C.Co'y. was censoring his platoon's mail the other day and one chap wrote a description of his officer (baxter) to his wife. After detailing Baxter's good points he added "and he is not an "eye brow" Jimmie thought it was too good to keep.

Am writing on my knee and pen is not working well. Give my love to Aunt Tweebie when you write. I would write her but really am on the go most of the time and should be in bed now.

Tell Gertrude I will write her tomorrow if I am able to get the time. Tomorrow I have to get through pay parade, C.O.'s inspection of the company, specialist training commenced. Bath parade, gas apparatus parade to say nothing of answering memos and calls to H.Q. and investigating why men fell out on the line of March, cut down the odd great coat (to lighten pack) ate iron rations without permission, lost their gas respirators, wire cutters or rifle grenade cups and so on. Most of the parades are miles apart for instance the nearest bath is a long way from here and no where near a gas gear store. A chap surely earns the odd \$ and is tired when night comes. Again we have to keep our records of reinforcements and casualties up and try and write to the next of kin which is a no bon job.

Well with much love I shall stop writing what is likely Greek to you and get to bed. It is 10:20 pm and I have only one runner out now. When he returns I hope to be through for the night.

Your loving son,

Keith

November 13 1917 - Belgium - (letter to sister Helen)

Another note. we are back in the area and Fritz is overhead dropping darn heavy bombs. My scout corporal was killed by one of them yesterday morning. We are about 6 or 7 miles from the line. Some air supremacy alright, Bailey is on leave and I have the company. We did not expect to be taken forward of here but fear that we shall have to relieve the line yet. I am hoping not as we have already done our stunt. with luck if we complete this week we should all be out for a month but one can never count on anything and therefore I could not cable.

I saw Richardson yesterday. He looks OK and is Q.M. of the 54th now. Before we left our last billet a major of the 29th came in and when I had a chance to see him knew that I recognized him but couldn't place him. Asked what part of Canada he came from and he said B.C. so I had him. He was Fred Kirkland who worked for H.M. Smith. I also saw Thomas of the 121 Irish yesterday and Jekill of the same unit is one of my platoon commanders.

Yes, as you say I look husky but I am not the same lad I was last winter and dread this one coming on. Have been troubled with boils again and the M.O. offered to send me out the other day if I wanted to go but I didn't want to go that way and it would have interfered with Bailey's leave. If I should really become sick I would go out but don't like to otherwise. would be glad to be out of it though for the winter as it will not be over for a long time yet. The hun is having too much encouragement on the other fronts and is playing a good game on this one.

What luck did father have with the Mud Bay ducks? I am glad he still gets a chance to nail a few of them. We have bigger game here but Bailey is the man killer and I am more the one who sees that things are in shape for the boys to do the killing etc. Lovely business, but it is certainly the young mans game. Stiff limbs do not chime with heavy loads and mud.

Your comments as to the loneliness of the life having a lot to do with the immoral conditions are very true. A man is still a man but the conditions are many times as trying on him consequently those without certain moral resolutions go by the board as they may be killed next day - they argue. I see it on all sides among all ranks and don't blame some but I had my eyes open long before I came to this business and a chap can scrap and live here as easily as he can when surrounded by home ties if he makes up his mind that he still thinks something of himself and those at home. The girls get a pretty raw deal even in normal times.

Was surprised to hear that Tom Trapp was in the conservative field. He is certainly not a member in any sense of the word.

Had not heard of Charlie Major being sick but tell his mother that any chap who is sick enough to go out is generally considered lucky. Once away from the unit the medical attention is first class and hospitals good.

My extra stripe was put on by an army tailor or helper in a very poor manner but Bailey is ordering me a new suit in case I get leave next month which I should providing everything goes well in the meantime.

I have not heard as yet as to how you liked the small photos I had taken on leave or the one we had in France Poor Henckesman was the first to go. Neal has just been in chatting with me. We are great chums. I had a letter from Hinckes sister-in-law and have written his wife. Have also half a dozen casualty letters to write to next of kin now. It is a miserable duty. The corporal killed yesterday was one of my old scout section and a rattling good man.

Now my dear Helen I have to stop and forward to H.Q. a chit advising them of map location of my anti-aircraft machine gun etc. The present subject of conversation is the possibility of going forward. As usual I am betting we go so you see I am still a gloomy gus but my hunches have turned out right more than once and when they haven't I have been agreeably surprised and the remaining times it has been a case of "I told you so"

If I can keep on top for another week there should be no difficulty in living until Xmas. which I am anxious to get past as it is a miserable time of year for bad news etc. but old girl personally I have no fear of death if it is down in the books for me and in case of the worst I would want you all to carry on without any mourning business. I have never regretted coming and feel justified in taking a little time out of the line if the chance comes more for mothers sake than my own as I have nearly completed a years duty to my country in the line and now I think mothers turn is due for a time. At times I have been blooming homesick but work is a good remedy and tell Gertrude (if necessary) that I have never forgotten that she was trusting or leaving it to me.

With much love to all I am  
Lovingly your brother,  
Keith

November 17--1917 - France -(letter # 62)

Dearest Mother;

Your 54th cam yesterday just after we arrived here. Got out of the area without being drawn into the front line again and were mighty glad of it. We tried (Neal and I) to get a bath but gave it up. After dinner we went to a movie show at the Y.M.C.A. and the artillery fire was very heavy. It seemed strange to be at a movie and knowing that same old mess of mud with the poor devils playing hide and seek with the 5.9's existed only a few miles away. When out no one worries about who is in.

Molly sent me a lovely box which came today. It was a dandy too. Billy wired me. It arrived with your letter by mail. Took from 11th to 16th to reach me. The last part of the journey is by post and mails run slowly. The roads have to move grub and iron rations for the guns.

Fritz has been hammering us with our own heavy stuff brought from the Russian front. All I can say is that I don't want to be in his forward area when our artillery opens up wide.

It is queer to get your papers and read of things of which we know something. Moral - Don't believe all you read in the press.

Tell Bill that I will pass it along in good shape and give him my very best of luck and good wishes for success. The hun is fighting hard and well and more men will be needed before he is beaten.

Glad you were pleased with the photos. Ask Helen if she thinks I have a glassy stare. Have been under shell fire for a year now and it is a long time, am nearly ready for a change but don't think that Mrs. Diamond's fancy's have me as yet.

Am very sorry to hear that Clare is not so well and hope that he pulls through OK. He must be very sick if it was necessary to wire for cousin Louise and Vieve.

Yes I received fathers cigarettes and have already acknowledged them. In fact I am still smoking them and have added those Molly sent me today.

This is miserable paper but in a day or two I hope to be near enough to a French town to enable purchasing possible.

Our band was trying out some Chee Chin Chow music today. The officers awhile ago all chipped in and we sent to England for a lot of late stuff as we were all tired of hearing the same old things.

Atkin was in England while I was there. He was not over with Bailey. I do not know whether he has his captaincy or not. He didn't have it then but expected it. He was told it had come through and put his 3rd pip up while over there but returned to find it hadn't come through.

Jim Motherwell has been wounded again It is wonderful the way these fellows get Blighties. Saw Tom Cunningham yesterday and he told me about Jim. I guess he was fairly hard hit in the leg.

Since writing you I have lost Jekill. He went out hurt by a chunk of stuff that hit him flat on the chest. If it had come edge on he would have been a wash out. I was told he was not cut but will have to be kept quiet for two or three weeks. I have only two officers with me now and one of those (Lowe) is developing water under the knee cap so I suppose it will be Blighty for him.

Really have no news. We will likely move early tomorrow and it is dark and cold at 4:30 in the morning now. The transport generally hits the road about 6 am and our kits must be ready and breakfast over before that time so it means an early rise.

From over here it looks like nearly another year before there is any chance of a wind up. In fact there is nothing to show a finish at anytime. It is such a blooming hopeless thing.

Give my love to all and kiss the kids,  
Your loving son,  
Keith

November 19 1917 - France - (letter # 63)

Dearest Mother,

Have only two sheets of this blotting paper left so this will only be a short one.

With luck I should get leave about the end of the month for 14 days. My address will be c/o Mr. R.P.H. Leach 8 Balham Hill London S.W. England. When I get an envelope large enough will send a post card photo of Leach to be put with my other pictures.

We arrived here yesterday and we are billeted at various farms. We move again early tomorrow. Yesterday we made an early start and in the dark it is

miserable. I had nothing to eat yesterday from 5:30 am to 6:30 pm. I made up for it in a hurry however.

Love was sent out today with his flooded knee cap. His knee is puffy and stiff just as Helen's was and he was sitting with it up on another chair as she used to. I have only one officer with me now and that is Wall. He is an ass in most ways too.

Am going to dine with C.Coy.tonight and the men are all in town until 8;30 blowing their money as they got a large pay today to provide for a little Xmas shopping. I can see the shopping most of them do although one chap came and gave me 50 francs for safe keeping. Unfortunately I had just cashed a cheque for myself.

Have just this minute got a letter from Frank Clarke who got shot through the arm and leg in front of Passchendaele. He was a hard looking ticket when he left me there but a better chap never came into the line.

With much love to all and the best of good wishes and happiness to you all at Xmas and New Years.

I am your loving son,  
Keith

December 3 1917 - London -(postcard)

Dearest Mother:

Everything is fine. Have seen a lot of boys. Will write later and give you the news. Your birthday box arrived the day before I left and the icing wasn't even broken. The cake was beautiful and we did enjoy it immensely. Ran into Alf. and Ed.Johnston today. Also Harvey and Pat Turnbull, Donald Rashleigh, Jimmie Scott (having lunch with him here today) and many others you do not know. Am staying with my friend Leach. He is kindness itself and has a lovely home. Shall send you a snap of him. He gives a great many Australian and Canadian chaps a home here. Has a circle of friends and insists on them coming straight to him. Mrs Leach is a dear. Have just sent her up a lot of flowers. The weather is beautiful, clear and cold, and London is the same old city that is different.

Lovingly, Keith

December 6 1917 - London - (letter # 64)

Dearest Mother,

Here I am and leave is going splendidly. I have seen a great many chaps I know and the other day ran into Blackman and had lunch with him at the club. I must say that I couldn't afford to stay here long as the cost of living is becoming something unheard of. I bought \$20 worth of shirts etc. the other day and could hardly see the parcel. Boots are very high. Street shoes are up to \$10-\$15 and field boots cost from 5 to 8 guineas

I told you I think that your birthday cake arrived the day before I left France in the best of condition and I did enjoy it. As I was coming away we cut good generous pieces and the boys all seemed willing to take a chance at a piece.

I am up with Leach. He insisted on me coming straight to him and they have been so good to me. They have a lovely comfortable home and put it at the disposal of several Australian and Canadian boys. Mrs. Leach is a dear. I took the crowd to the theatre the other night. We had two boxes, holding twelve. I do wish that you would write Percy and thank him for all the kindness they have shown me. His address is Mr.R.P.H.Leach Tregothnan, 8 Balham Hill London SW. I shall enclose a postcard photo of him. Talk about an Englishmans table. He surely is a good provider. Yesterday we had a big lot of Devonshire cream arrive straight from Devon.

Expect to go to Scotland this week end and will try to get in touch with Jimmie Scott who is home on leave following discharge from hospital.

Saw Bill Swan a day or two ago and he is quite well. Have dropped a line to Mrs. Lambert hoping to be able to see her at Folkestone on my way back and will call on Laura Pitt.Brown this afternoon. Ran out to see Mrs. Richardson but missed her.

As I feared I would be delayed on return trip and might miss the poll I voted here yesterday. Met Alf and Ed Johnston and have been passing the election work all along. Am enclosing a few odd chits and slips which mean nothing to anyone but myself but they recall a great deal to me so please keep them for me.

Some days ago while in Bruay I bought a lamp made from an 18pdr. shell case. I intend to have the burner taken out and electric light put on for a desk lamp I have also bought a couple of rather well worked shell case vases. All these will likely be packed and mailed to you by Cooke my batman. A glass dish should be placed inside the brass case to prevent leak through base plug. It is quite a relic as it combines a British shell actually used with the French work since this chap hammers it apparently in his spare time.

Have been looking around the shops but have had so little time. Am sending you a little 'drop' for the neck. It is silver and platinum and the crystal is a very good one. It was the only one they had as it was a catalogue sample and then I bought it in Regent St London so it is another trinket from the great war.

The fighting looks none too good just now. I am keener to go back than I was last time as I thought then we had it all our own way. There must be something in the Britisher which gets his back up if there is any chance of him being beaten. I am all for scraping it out now and having it a make or break. We have given so much now that we may as well go through.

I heard a day or two ago that George Trapp had been killed. It will surely go badly with his mother if this is correct. However such things are to be expected.

Fritz raided London early this morning and bombed not far from the house here. Percy rushed up and woke me about 4:30 and told me an air raid was on. I listened to the archies firing and said something about them being fairly close and went to sleep. I found that the household and all the others in the vicinity were up half the night. The 'all clear' did not go until nearly seven. I get a good bed so seldom to waste good hours shivering and waiting for air bombs.

Must stop now dear heart, give my love t all and tell them that one of these fine days we are going to clean this thing up properly but guess I'll stay with it until we do.

Your loving son,  
Keith

No Date 1917 - London -(letter # 65)

Dearest Mother:

Leave is going along very well and I am having a great time. With about a hundred dollars worth of new clothes etc. I am quite a nut. Have seen several plays including 'The 13th Chair'. The Willow Tree and The Yellow Ticket. My old favorite Gladys Cooper is playing in the latter.

Went to see Mrs. Richardson and had tea. Also called on Perkins Bull KC at his office and learned that Laura and her husband had left unexpectedly for Canada and are likely in Hamilton. Bull asked me to go to his place the next evening for a bit of a dance and apparently runs a sort of open house for such chaps as myself. I however refused the invitation owing to a previous engagement. He left me with a standing invitation.

I may leave tonight or tomorrow for Edinburgh. Just a flying visit to see the fleet and have arranged to have Jimmie Scott go with me. If I have time I shall try and see the McGregors but don't want to stay up north long as my time is getting short and I want to spend a day with Mrs. Lambert before sailing for France.

The Leaches have been goodness itself to me and this house has been a home since I arrived. Leach is in the meat business and has four businesses. The meat shortage is quite a problem here now. yesterday nearly all shops were sold out and closed by noon.

It would be nice if you could drop Leach a line to tell him how much I appreciate their kindness. Am enclosing a photo of their three kiddies. Mary is six and they are all very fine little kids. Am also sending some snaps home which please keep for me as I will only lose them in France.

I have heard that our O.C. is about to leave us "going to England (sick?)" I suppose something has gone wrong and he has been shelved. He always did the square thing by me and I am rather sorry to hear that he is going.

Am horrified over the Halifax calamity. I hope Pope and his wife are OK. Aunt Tweebie cannot stand much more in the way of trouble so I hope she has been spared this.

Don't worry about my physical condition. If I can dodge the scrap iron I think I shall weather the conditions. Bailey I believe will go to staff work and is anxious for me to 'swing the lead' while here and not go back but things don't look as well as they did at one time so I am going to return to line work. That is what I came over for. Was sorry to hear of McLagans' death. I heard it while we were in at Ypres. He nearly was on bomb proof work but on that front the back areas were as dangerous as the line and he was unfortunate. I will carry along dear and as I have lost so much time out of the most needed years of my professional training don't think that I have much to lose in that line over what has already been lost. So I will finish this work if possible. Don't worry and remember that if an accident should happen to me I can think of no way I would sooner go. But if the job can be done without accidents so much the better. I am more a British subject than ever and I want to see the thing finished properly. Germany must be in trouble for food etc and I am all for playing a steady slow game until we have her weakened. Terrific losses must have been inflicted at Cambrai. Our allies



are a bunch of spineless blighters I fear save France. Britain, France and the U.S.A. will beat Germany eventually. After it is over I would gladly enlist to clean Russia of some of her political microbes. We would have been home this year had she really gone to war. They have fighting men too if lead. One of our chaps, a Russian Corporal in B.Coy. won and got the V.C. the other day. I hope she takes a definite stand soon. We will then at least save our guns and munitions which Fritz has been taking from them and turning on us. I have had a three day taste of that stuff and one taste is enough.

Enough of war. Im for finishing it out as it should be and no more prisoners for me. And I'm not looking for decorations so don't imagine me doing foolish things on that account. Should you again see old nurse thank her for her very kind messages and tell her that it is just those messages that keep us all going. It would be a lonely business if one had reason to believe that nobody cared.

I have no mustache my dear mother. My safety blade slipped the other morning.

Give my love to each and every one. I am very anxious to see them all but I didn't come because I wanted to and the reason for staying is the same that brought me so lets stay with it. We will all be home before very long. Peace cannot be more than twelve months off.

With a big kiss and much love and wishes for a good years health and happiness in 1918 I am as I always have been,  
Your loving son,  
Keith

p.s. Ask father the date of expiry of my insurance policy and be sure that application for a permanent policy without war conditions is obtained in good time before date of expiration. I will send more money when needed. KCM

December 15 1917 - Boulogne -(letter # 66)

Dearest Mother,

My leave is over. On the whole I had a very good time and the Leaches were kindness itself to me. I did not get to Scotland. had it all arranged to go up and Meet Scott to go to see the fleet and expected to look up Mrs McGregor but on the day I was to leave I took sick and in the afternoon they took my temperature and I was just over 103 so they rushed me to bed and shot a lot of dope into me to make me perspire and I surely did so. Next day my temperature was practically gone but they kept me in.

The 13th I went to Folkestone and went to the Lamberts. They were very kind to me indeed and have a beautiful home. Too much dog though. If I left my room for five minutes the maid was in and rearranged everything. I had a most beautiful room. After dinner we went over to Mrs. Lamberts married sisters as they had a small bridge on.

Do you remember me losing a uniform when I first came to France? Well I found it at the Lamberts. I do not know how it was steered there as it was sent to Ramsay at the 30th Reserve but arrived after he had left there. I am fairly well fixed with suits. Two with me in France. A new one in London and one in Folkestone and three or four pairs of slacks.

The boat did not sail from Folkestone until nearly 5 pm and it was quite dark. A little rain fell and it was cold. We had to stay on deck and I was chilled through when I got to the officers club here two hours later. I had a drink and dinner but couldn't get warm and the old shivers were racing over me so I decided I wouldn't enquire about my train but go to bed so I came to the hotel and turned in and slept late. This morning I enquired about the train and it leaves at 5:14am so I have had all day here. I went out to Wimereux and saw the people from whom I bought Gertrudes little bag etc. They insisted on me staying to lunch with them and I rather enjoyed it. They had a Spanish wine followed by a French beer but I wouldn't rave about either of those articles.

Tomorrow I set out to find the battalion they have moved since I left them I believe and have likely gone back to the Lens front but I am not sure.

Give my love to all mother dear,  
Your affectionate son,  
Keith

p.s. I had a little neck affair registered to you from a shop in Regent Street. It is rather small and frail like but very good stuff and I simply left a card so you would know who it was from. Small as it is it carries all my love and best wishes for a happy Xmas and new year. I really had no time for shopping and kept putting it off and then took sick. could have gone to hospital but decided I would get back; as I am not feeling just right however may report to the M.O. when I hit the battalion.

Keith .

December 17 1917 note in letter

Dear Mother,

Please keep all these photos for me as they are of a most charming girl. Arrived back today and received the M.C. It came through, for the Passchendaele show, while I was on leave and they cabled me but the wire missed me. However I got it for the glorious 18th and am at present a company commander.

Received large mail today with boxes from Margaret and Holy Trinity. Many thanks to everyone I will write when I can.

December 23 1917 - France - (letter # 67)

Dearest Mother:

This is a night cap. I have been on the go all day today in spite of the fact that it was Sunday and I had promised myself a long afternoons letter writing.

I reached the battalion on the 17th where I had left it. On the 19th we moved to our old St Lawrence camp billets and it was surely cold there. Snow and wee bit ice with scarcity of fuel. On the 21st we left there and came to these quarters - Hill Camp - It is still very cold and bright moonlight nights. Our huts are better however and we have more fire wood. One of the boys -Joyce has just run in here to the fire in pajamas, a sweater and balaclava which tucks into th sweater. He looks like an arctic explorer.

Upon my return to the battalion I was given command of D. Coy. Bailey is near Adjutant but I think expects to leave soon. The C.O. is gone and we have a new colonel-Webb- who seems a pretty fair scout so far but I will wait and see how he is on the line. Mills has gone sick and is at present at Field Ambulance.

We will not go into the line until after Xmas Day but I couldn't cable because I could get no definite information.

Am feeling much better - as usual in France, and we expect to do less line work this winter than last from a number of days standpoint.

We have had reports showing results of elections and I see that Billie has got in and I guess the soldiers vote will only increase his majority. Give him my congratulations. The old office would also look good to me also.

How I should have enjoyed Peggys birthday party. I am so ashamed. I haven't the date of one family birthday and never would be able to think of them a month ahead.

Yes the cigarettes have been coming splendidly and both Margarets boxes have now arrived. The plum preserve was the same old brand and the boys more than enjoyed it. I had it every meal. The sweater was also great stuff but a small quantity of jam rambled into it so I have not yet worn it. I have another splendid sleeping helmet also from Baxter. my second in command who is a great chap.

I must close now as I have to scribble off one or two more notes. Would have had time today but some ginks in England had me named as Commissioner for taking the evidence of a chap here who is suing for a divorce and I have been on the job most of the day but as usual there is no money in it as I am not charging the boys for anything I can do for them. They are a pretty fair lot and I get it all back in other ways because I think they would tackle a job for me if I wanted them to.

Love to all and a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year. The former applies to 1917.

Lovingly yours,  
Keith

December 26 1917 - France - (letter # 68)

Dearest Mother:

The only time I get for letters these days is late at night and then I hardly feel like settling down for a long detailed account of what has been happening to me but shall try and give you an idea of the splendid Xmas. we have had this year.

Last year we were in the line and had a long march out on the 25th and the only dinner I had was a tin of sardines and a bottle of champagne. Now listen to 1917.

I wrote you on the 23rd so will carry on from the 24th. I worked hard during the day and after supper three of us walked over to the 13th. Field Ambulance where we know several of the M.O.'s and had a very enjoyable evening and missed a fairly stormy night here as we had sent some of the boys to town

to buy for the xmas dinners. They arrived back full of cheer and the crowd just carried on from there. Yesterday we had our company dinner at 1 pm owing to the fact that some of my officers had to go up the line on the working party. The work is being rushed so that no holiday could be granted for the 25th. Just after dinner I received a chit from Neal (one of the group of four) inviting me to the Transport Lines for dinner. I accepted and Neal dropped in later and wanted Baxter to go too; so I saw the C.O. and got permission for the two of us to be out over night. We ordered our horses for six pm. Our cold weather had broken and Xmas morning was green or rather brown because we don't get much green stuff here. However, yesterday was cold and snow fell in the afternoon quite heavily. It cleared before we left and there was a beautiful moon so we enjoyed our five mile trot exceedingly and had a good appetite when we got there. We rode across some of our old stamping grounds and it was quite interesting. Upon arrival at the Lines we went through all the huts and wished the boys a Merry Xmas and all that sort of thing. Had quite a chat with Billie Sloan in his hut. Then we went back for dinner. There were in the party eight - Art Mills, Capt Lacey (P.M.) the Padre, Neal, Dad Quinn (acting Q.M.) and Cunningham (Mule Train Officer) then Baxter and myself as guests.

The mess hut was decorated with greens, don't know how it is spelt but it is called "box". The table cloth was a large Union Jack and the lights were prettily arranged. It was one of the best dinners I have ever had anywhere. I am enclosing a menu which I had the mess orderly make out for me. I threatened to apply to have him back on company duty if he put anything more on the table. They got hold of a great wine which was far ahead of the ordinary stuff. After dinner we had a game of poker and then we all had a snow ball fight about 1 am. Baxter and I rode home this morning arriving here at 10.

At noon we had the mens dinner on for C&D Coys. and the Band. Tomorrow is A&B Coys. The seconds in command worked very hard over it. We had a large tent in which we could sit some 350 men or more. It was a 'sit down' dinner with dishes etc. (as well as mess tins for beer). The C.O. Mills, Carmichael and Purvis and myself as O.C. companys were guests. All the remaining officers and N.C.O.'s (sgts.) were waiters. We started with a ration of rum and ran through a big meal with lots of beer. The motto was 'Give the boys lots' and I saw some get away with three meat courses. After the King, Mills proposed a toast to C and D Coys but gave permission for the boys to drink ut as they were all C and D so Purvis and I did the sitting stunt. I arranged for Tommy Todd (who used to live at Sloan's and is in my company) to reply for D. Coy. Then the C.O. spoke very shortly. Someone gave a cheer for me and the next minute everyone was shouting for a speech. All the rest had pulled this.. 'Lt Col. Webb, Officers and Men'..stunt so when I stood up I just said "Well Cheerio Boys". It made rather a hit. I gave them just a short snappy run of the usual soft soap and let it go. On the whole it was a big success. Todd made a mighty good little reply and Don Company showed up well. Then I was invited to Batt. H.Q. mess for dinner tonight and had another very enjoyable meal. Have been giving all the boys the best time possible. Sent a bottle of whisky to the Sgt. Major another to the Sgts., One to the cooks, and one to the corporals. On the whole they all think that they have been treated fairly well.

The tent for their dinner was all decorated with strings of flags from poles to the walls and we had a piano which carried on despite the clatter. As I came away I said to one chap "well, lad, how'd it go?" He said "Sir, it was a dream, I never expected it would be like that." The old Sgt Cook came in to see me tonight pretty well lit up. I had to guess his age - for the twentieth time. Have to do that every time he is full. He is over 50 years and I always guess 37 so as not to take the wind out of his sails. He is a

pretty good old sort however and puts up the grub for the fellows in good shape.

Tomorrow night if possible I am going to try and find Richardson as I understand he is quite close to us here. We may go into support for eight days before going into the line and when we do our line tour there may be another month out for us unless something goes wrong to alter the frontages and tours. I am all for this month out business during the winter as snow water is no bon.

Well mother there seems to be no end to the war and I am losing good years . I am beginning to think that I shall see if it wouldn't be possible to get married before the confounded thing ends as if I wait until I get into shape again in the office I shall be gray haired.

Many seem to be managing on army pay so I thought perhaps it might be possible. However I always have been willing to try anything once. Must stop now as I must get to bed. Have a lot of work to do tomorrow.

I have still several letters to write acknowledging receipt of parcels. Farrer sent me a parcel of several heavy cakes of Neilsons chocolate for the line etc. My friends have been very good to me indeed.

With much love and a kiss to all the kids. I enjoyed Peggy's letter so much and it was very well expressed.

Every happiness for 1918 to you all. I thought of you many times yesterday. I was the only officer to get a Xmas stocking. I think Baxter hung it up but I found in it two tin whistles, a tin horn (which upended makes a fine candle stick) and a bottle of beer. Your loving son,  
Keith

p.s.excuse envelope

January 9 1918 - note from Webb

Dear McGowan,

Going around the left Coy. frontage tonight, I was pleased with the general alertness of all posts.

I am very sorry to know of the lose your Coy. has had tonight, as I know that such types of men are hard to replace, and in writing, especially to the Sgts folks please tell them how much he was respected by all of the 47th.

Sincerely,  
Webb

January 15 1918 - France -(letter # 69)  
Canadian Corps Rest Station

Dearest Mother:

I left the battalion on the 13th and spent the night at the transport lines. I came here yesterday. This is really a field ambulance and I hope to be sent on far enough to receive vaccination or inoculation for the boils which are again making my life miserable. I at last got one on the right knee so I told the C.O. I was fed up hobbling around. He suggested that I go to the T.Lines for a few days but I said nothing doing. I would go up the line or go to hospital so they started me off. At the 11th F.A. I ran across Captain McKinnon one of Billies cousins. He is a very nice chap and left yesterday for England to take up work there. Young Gilchrist a brother of the Gilchrist who was in the office is a clerk in the same ambulance.

The Xmas mails have been so large that the letters have been arriving backwards and are still coming. During the tour I have received three or four letters nightly and have a whole haversack full to answer. Am going to try and make a start today. Will write you at more length when I have cleared off the outsiders. In this ward there are eight B.C. chaps. I don't know many of their names and don't bother much about them. They are a pretty decent bunch though.

Expect to be away from the unit a week or ten days.

I mailed you a copy of Canada in which you will see that I got a mention in dispatches. I was in for a bar to the M.C. but my luck still pursues me and I didn't get it so I should worry.

Will try and get in touch with Fraser Allen by post and direct him to Leach.

The company is in the front line tonight and then two nights in support after which they come out for a couple of weeks. Baxter has taken them in. I could write for hours on various details but can't be bothered. I always did hate going over things. I had two bits of very hard luck. Fritz got two direct hits on our line during the tour and each time got some of the boys. I had four casualties -all killed instantly. Sergeant McLean who was a brother-in-law of Tom Cunningham and used to work in Jean Brown's was one of the four. Must write his wife today.

Love to all and I hope that some day this thing will finish.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

January 17 1918 - France - (letter # 70)

Dearest Mother;

I am writing Billie Gowan and Dad so will make this very short. Everything is going well with me and I hope to be back with the unit in a few days. It comes out of the line tonight for a couple of weeks.

The condition of my health is quite OK. I am just about over the boil nuisance.

All the Xmas boxes were received and I have acknowledged receipt of them before. I got the photo of the two kids and in love with them. Helen is some stunner and Joan lives up to what I have been told of her.

The other day I had a letter from Miss Jones -no Hughes - The one who called on Elsie on her way from New Zealand. She wants me to call but it is very awkward as I'm in the army now. However, when next in England I shall see what I can do.

No I did not receive any word about Dr. Dohertys friend before leaving. You see I was in England before I expected to be. Send me Fraser Allens' number and address. I have no way of getting at him and if he is still in England I will be able to make his stay enjoyable.

Unless urgent do not send me any more English addresses mother dear. Leave only lasts a few days and I hate spending it running around looking for people who have moved in the meantime. I have no desire to sight see or meet strangers. I can live comfortably, well and easily with the friends I already know so why worry.

Did you receive five or six photos of a young lady in costume? Forgot to mention them in my letters. They are of a young lady I met here. She is not now on the stage but expects to return to it. Sings beautifully and on the whole I enjoyed her company very much. We did several plays together. A great friend of the Leaches.

There is really nothing new for me to tell you. Was thinking of trying to get home to be married as this is going to be such a long affair but of course I'm broke and that always makes it bad. Of course it is also necessary that the girl is willing and I am not clear on that point. Guess I'll stay and kid the troops along. They are sure they are winning.

Am enclosing a postcard photo taken half an hour before my last return to France. I have also a head and shoulder one without cap but the boys took all I had so will have a couple of dozen finished and will scatter them around among my correspondents.

Much love to all and tell the kids I am very anxious to see them.  
Lovingly yours,  
Keith

February 3 1918 - France -(letter # 71)  
St. Lawrence Camp

Dearest Mother,

It is simply ages since I have written in fact I had no idea it was so long until I looked at my list.

I returned from the hospital after a week there which was quite enough and found the unit at a Petite place about three miles from here. We were there until the 30th. when we moved here and should be here until about the 8th. I left hospital about Jan. 21st. Since arriving at the battalion I have been working long hours. We have been doing range work and reveille has been 5:30 many mornings. Lately between training, meetings and courts of enquiry etc. it has often been midnight before I have gotten to bed. The company is going strong and the boys will follow me through a pinch I believe.

Some time ago I began to talk about going to Doullens which is too far to ride. Pauline Ballock is there. I worked the subject along carefully and the other day walked into the H.Q. mess and during the conversation which was concerning places worth seeing I remarked that I simply had to go to Doullens.

Finally the C.O. arranged a little party which came off yesterday. He got us an eight cylinder cadillac 1916 and Purvis Bailey Valiquette and myself set out yesterday morning about 10:25. We ran down through Arras then to Bapaume, Albert, to Amiens. We got there about 12:20 having had ten minutes at the cathedral in Albert (the falling virgin) We passed through all the Somme battlefields en route seeing Courcellette and the famous sugar refinery and sunken road of that place. It was all most interesting. Amiens is a very large city and we went to an A.1 restaurant and had a wonderful dinner (from oysters to creme de mint with to kinds of dessert etc.) then we went shopping and again hit the road for Doullens. There we ran into Gordie Corbould who told me that Pauline was just going down the street. I did a double and caught her. She was very surprised indeed. We gathered both into the car and away we went to the hospital which is in the citadel.

We had tea here with the nurses and Pauline and I had a good long chat with many interruptions. Then we tried to get Capt. Manchester on the phone but failed so I went with Pauline and got leave so we all piled in again and ran out to his hospital about five miles away. We found he had gone away to dinner so we called him by phone and he excused himself and came racing home. We all had dinner together with the sisters of his hospital and about 8:45 we persuaded him to come back with us so he arranged a relief and we took Pauline and Gordie back to Doullens and set out for home. All the roads have been put in splendid shape and we travelled on an average of 40 miles all day. Arrived home at 10:30 having done between 180 & 200 kilometers. Today being Sunday we have an easy time so we got our horses and took Manchester over Vimy Ridge and pointed out the places of interest. We rode probably twelve miles.

Brimacombe was in this evening and has his captaincy. Jack Knight and Atkins were in a couple of nights ago. Upon returning today I learned that Alex McQuarrie had come to see me and am so sorry I missed him. He is some miles from here but I may be able to make it on the horse. On the whole however it has been a very successful week end and no doubt Pauline will write you all about it. Could write long descriptions of all I saw but everyone is in bed now and it is cold so I must turn in. We have also an early start tomorrow.

I received Billies cable and will write him. I don't think there will be anything doing. A couple of days after his cable arrived the Corps Commander inspected this battalion at work. The things had no connection. He saw my company at work and questioned me about several matters and we had a chat together. The next day the C.O. had us (the O.C.Co) accompany himself at an inspection of the transport. We went to the lines for lunch and while at lunch the Brigadier called and the C.O. had to go out to talk to him. I was then called out and the Brig. had a chat with me. I will break here and give the balance in a letter to Billie. You know the story of the Scotchman who bet sixpence on four aces.

This colonel is a strong disciplinarian and a hard worker. He knows all the higher ups personally and if a fellow makes good with him he can feel assured that ones job has been fairly well done. I have been working hard and at present am OK.

You must have mixed your letter numbers. I have 62, 64, 56 and 65 here now. I received a 56 long ago and also got your 63rd. Also have two of Helens #47 and one of Dec 30th unnumbered

We expect to do a tour before long, and I am hoping to be sent on a five weeks 'first army course' at Boulogne for company commanders, before very long. I am next due for it I believe and have already paved the way fairly well. Then leave will be coming shortly. On the whole we are having a much better winter than last. Far more time out of the line and when in I am a Coy. O.C. instead of crawling in the mud in No-mans land. The weather also



has been good for the past ten days. I missed a terribly hard four days front line by being in hospital. The mud was so bad that both the Bosche and ourselves were walking overland and our boys sat on the parapet to change their socks and rub their feet on one occasion. Baxter carried on well although I am sorry to say that one officer fell down badly and as I had had previous reasons for complaint when he let Baxter down in my absence I upon return jerked him up on the carpet and paraded him to the C.O. where I laid my complaint. As the fellow wanted another try I agreed to take him back and give him a chance to make good in order to save him from a court martial. I find that there is considerable disciplining to do and I am not exactly the easy going lad I used to be once.

Seeing that it is so long since I wrote I shall try and drop you a cable. Tell Bill shall cable the office in future as I may be able to use the code address.

I got my back pay of about 30 pounds. My captaincy has gone through and is no longer an acting rank. If I got a blighty now I would not revert automatically.

Don't worry about me not looking out for myself. I am watching things fairly closely but I came back here because I wanted to try and hold my seniority. I am working up the list in this unit. I either want Canada or this and the line. If I can't get home I will do what I threw everything up for. Don't worry about me. If I am to be killed in France there is no way of preventing it 'the book says so.' as Huck Finn used to say.

There is no chance for further promotion for a long time however barring vacancies by casualties. Keep a stiff upper lip and we will call it home or fight it out. I guess they will hang onto most of us as fourteen months experience counts for something in this game where so many last a week. However, the political man is never ignored and there is no use striking at anything lower than the highest. If you can't read sense into this Bill will be able to no doubt.

And now I must stop. If all goes well I shall make up to you all the worry that you have been put to but if they don't I know you will still be the wonderful brick you have been to date. I was glad I was out of the line when I got your last letter as it was so full of worry that I should have shrunk from a fight.

Would have cabled but could not get any idea how long we would be out and don't like to cable saying I shall be out for two or three weeks and likely be called up the line. A bad news advice would be like a bomb out of a clear sky then. And incidentally I have seen a good many real live bombs drop out of the same clear sky. At Potize we could see the blooming things released from the gothas.

Will run through your letters and answer them all in my next. I really must get to bed. My leg is nearly well. The other day I had to have the scabs pulled off as a little matter was forming below but everything is fine now and I am as lively as can be. Everything is fine on the Western front at present and will be unless he drives and if he does he'll pay for his ground as we have beaucoup wire and machine guns. It is an infernal combination to buck which I know from experience.

Love to all. Everyone raves over the pictures of the kids.

Your loving son,

Keith

February 17 1917 - France -(letter # 72)

Dearest Mother:

I have been trying as usual to write to you for days but there is something doing every minute. We have just completed one of the most pleasant tours I have ever put in. We went into bad lines for hun sniping but before we came out everything was in pretty good shape. We had no casualties from sniping but filled our own lines with ours and got some Bosche to our credit.

While in I got your 67th and 68th. Also Helen's 50 and 51st. Marys letter came safely and I think it was beautifully expressed. I shall write her in a few days. I shall just run back over your letters and reply to anything needing answering.

Hope the shell cases went through OK. I paid something like ten dollars for them,

Now for the 'neck drop' explanation. I bought the one I wrote you about and took it home to the Leaches. Forgot that I had written you about it but meant to send it on. One evening I showed it to Mrs. Leach who thought it was very dainty. I had to get something for her anyway so I asked her to have it. When up town I purchased the one I sent for you which by the way is something considerably better than the other so you are not the loser by my forgetfulness. When I got your letter I had a good laugh and thought of Mrs, P.S. and her gifts.

Who was kidding the Ouija board? Ask it if a person can hear an eight inch shell which is coming straight for him before it arrives and if so how long before. Write me the answer.

Am very glad to hear of Clairs improvement.

Helen wants to know if you add an M.C. on address. I get them safely without and when I have a couple of V.C.s she can stick it on.

The night before last we were relieved and came back into Brigade support. We are in a village which has many houses still standing although none intact. My H.Q. is in quite a comfortable cellar but not shell proof. Yesterday he shelled us hard and I was coming through the town and he chased me down one street and up another. With paved streets and brick houses one cannot afford to be close to an 8" burst. I got home only having to drop to the ground once. This morning I made along reconnaissance trip up forward and got back just about noon. Lt. Daniel who was one of my officers until a day or two ago and was made scout officer dropped in as he often does for lunch. He had received a parcel for his platoon - that was - and he and McGregor were just at the top of the cellar stairs which lead into a hall behind the front room, all of which is now an open air porch, when Fritz got a direct hit on the centre of the door step. It is a wonder he didn't get someone as we all had to come in and out by that entrance. Of course the odd piece of house came down and the explosion blew a good bit of filth on us here in the cellar. Daniel and McGregor got a scare but were not hit. Poor Daniel was shell shocked once and last tour up the line got another shaking up. He felt fine and was laughing because an artillery Johnnie said he thought it was just a careless shot as the shell was really y meant for the batteries that are round us. At lunch a few minutes later I saw his face commence to twitch and I watched him closely and was in time to have the boys beside him, catch him when I saw the shock take him off. He faded away and we got him onto a bunk. He presently came to and was ashamed of himself. I sent a runner to B.H.Q. with report saying I was keeping him with me for rest and to relieve him from duty. Shortly afterwards he had another convulsion so I wired for the M.O.

During the afternoon before we could get him evacuated to hospital he must have had eight or ten of these fits. The M.O. says that he is through with the war and will have to be kept quiet for a long time and look after himself for a couple of years or it will become a habit.

It was funny today - Joyce was asleep below a couple of small window holes and I was at work at a table with my back to the same windows and about two yards from them. When the shell hit of course a blast of air and all the dirt in the country came down, Joyce woke up with a start spitting the dirt out of his mouth and saying over and over "I've got it" between spits. I looked at the ceiling and told him that I guess it wasn't coming in so went over and sat on my own bed. Why I don't know but that seemed to be my home and the proper place to be. Baxter was at the cook house a block up the street when someone ran in and said "Fritz has got H.Q." Baxter hiked down and found a goodly bit of the remains of the front of the house gone so ran down stairs to see if we were OK. The shell knocked the chimney full of bricks and dirt and my fireplace would not draw tonight until we got it cleaned out. We had much softer time up the line. However we leave here tomorrow night and go out to another shelled town to do working parties for a few days and then we go back for another training period. We have had a pretty soft winter so far and have been out of the line a great deal more than last year. The weather lately has been beautiful and not much cold. A lot of air activity on all the time but I have seen no fights. Yesterday I spent the morning watching the Archies and the Heavies in action.

Tonight I had a letter from Doc Manchester. He had not seen Pauline for some days.

Today I mailed you a copy of the Year Book. You will see that it does not cover the Passchendaele shows and consequently I do not figure in the decorations as mine came through following that tour.

The new OC is a hard man to work for but a darn good man. I am standing in well with him at present so far as I can see. Carmichael told me yesterday that the CO was expecting that I would be sent back as an application was made direct to Corps. I told him that I had left it entirely to the General and hardly expected that I should be returned. Honest I would feel an awful piker coming home without a scratch. On the other hand I have done quite a time here (which is no excuse) and would be glad to have the constant dread of a misstep hanging over one. If it was only a case of 'do your best everytime and we'll be satisfied' it would be easy but instead it is a case of 'win everytime or look out for yourself'

Am enclosing one or two cuttings which I thought rather good.

I wish you could just have a picture of these HQ of mine. In this cellar there is an open fireplace in the chimney. Six bunks round the walls with Baxter lying in an upper reading. Berner and myself at the mess table writing and Tupper who was a student in Corbould Grants office and wrote his second when I took my finals is at a side table preparing my 5 am returns. He is at present my company clerk in the absence of Sands. It is truly a strange twist in conditions and circumstances for everyone.

I have holes through the walls into the adjoining cellars on one side the runners and batmen and on the other our mess cooks and beyond them the signal station. I have a C.P.R. cook of some years experience. I sent my other off to a course to become an officers cook for which I stood the cost of some \$5.00 (Mrs. Allen)

Have just received my move order for tomorrow and have had to stop to give details to various ones to cover the move.

I have also got to write to Mrs Daniel tonight as she has got a nervous wreck of a husband for some time to come. He is a big heavy stolid chap too.

Am rather worried until I find out what the outcome of the Canadian move will be. I would hate to be taken for a quitter. Would prefer to stay here anytime because it is quite a game even if uncertain.

More bad luck on my last night of tour. Have just received the following wire from the line where the battalion is furnishing working parties. 'Privates Kilding, Gibault, Woods killed, Private Norris wounded all D Coy. Norris has been sent out am bringing the three other bodies out later' Isn't it a corker. All good men.

Must stop and get matters attended to. Fritz has got a spite against D Company today alright.

Give my love to all and I shall write or wire depending upon circumstances.

Your loving son.  
Keith

March 13 1918 France - (letter # 73)

Dearest Mother,

It is nearly a month since my last letter to you and I have written only once to Gertrude since that date. I am really ashamed but we have been kept on the go very steadily and when free some one has had a prearranged party of some kind or other and I have gone to bed good and tired every night. We got out of the town where the shell lit on my door step of which I think I wrote you, on the 18th of last month and went to St. Lawrence camp of which there are many on that date. Left there on the 21st and marched to another town where we were in billets until the 3rd inst. (I will know this by the letters Noeux L.M.) Here I wired you to say I would be out for some time but after passing one censor it was returned from Army. I was easy in my mind as I thought you had it, when I suddenly got my money back. On the 3rd we moved back into army reserve at H. near the first town I joined the unit at.

We were here, we thought, for at least a couple of weeks but on the 11th pulled out to Corps reserve. We marched to the town in which Corps H.Q. is and stopped for a night. The next day, yesterday, we moved again and here we are at Columbia camp which means nothing to you. In other words we have made a complete circuit and are now heading toward the line and in Divisional Reserve.

Since going out I have seen Bill Swan. He dropped in with a 'doctor' from a Can. C.C.S. up north. They had tea and then we ran down in his ford to see Jack Knight and Atkin who were only a few miles away. They both stayed the night with me (Swan that is)

Yesterday on the line of march I saw Alex. McQuarrie for a moment. He is with # 8 F.A. and is looking well. Have also seen Brimacombe and Richardson a couple of times.

One day we went to a lecture at Corps given by Sir Julian Byng on the Cambrai fight. It was very interesting indeed.

They wanted to send me on a three day trip to the bases to see how supplies are handled for the purpose of lecturing on it to the other units in the Division but I side stepped it. I am due for leave but am the 12th name

on the list for England so Valiquette and I have put in for leave to Paris and Nice instead and I hope to get away in a few days. This will recommence my three months for England and raise me a dozen places on the list. If I waited for English leave it might be nearly two months before I got it and the result would be that I would nearly lose a whole leave.

As I have been to England twice and have a chap who speaks good French to go with I am rather glad to take France in.

While out this time the Corps Commander inspected us on the ranges. He had only seen me once before but when I saw him and kicked off the usual salute he said "How are you Macgowan?" It nearly took my breath away because you are generally asked your name by a general every time he comes in contact with you.

I received your parcel of June 18th also the cigarettes. Everything has been arriving but your letters come last first and so on.

Do take care of yourself as I hate to hear of you being sick. I am feeling splendidly outside of a little cold in the head. The weather has been wonderful. Some days just like summer. The winter has been a snap compared to last. Instead of constant line work we have been out more than we have been in.

We have a new M.O. A very decent chap. The last was sent to England sick.

Don't believe everything included in a recommendation. A lot of it is always hot air.

You speak of the nights of Oct. 26, 27, 28. I have just this minute received enquiries for grave locations of a couple of boys killed the night of the 26th. I know where they were killed well enough but who buried them or where I do not know as we could not do so. In fact I refused to order a party to carry out a wounded sergeant of whom I thought a great deal because four or six sound men could not be sent to death to save one already badly hit. I consented to a single man volunteering and the chaps brother succeeded in getting him back when a party would have been wiped out. I recommended the lad for a decoration. The sergeant died in hospital. One of the platoon officers thought I was cold blooded that night but I had the homes of six others to consider besides the effective strength of my company to keep up. One has got to be cold blooded at times in this work and that night I had difficult work to do under a bright moon which I cursed with all my heart.

Today I was training behind the camp. Had the men going through sham attacks on machine guns and so on. A big 12" How. was roaring away a couple of hundred yards off. It was a beautiful day and we were just doing ordinary work with soft caps on etc. and yet that gun was throwing heavy shells into the Hun back areas. Everytime it fired one realized there was a war on. We are very comfortable in snug huts and yet an hours march on short notice would take us right through a regular hell.

A couple of nights ago I was dining in the officers club at Corps H.Q. A lovely big open fireplace and oak chairs etc. There were several Canadians in civies there (over on the election work) and they were handed some great stuff by the boys. Then one of them told us a lot of startling things about the war which a friend of his had been told. He explained to me that if an armour piercing shell hit a tank it would not detonate until it got inside when it would put all the engines out of business and probably kill the crew. They were going to be taken somewhere from where they could see the line and

had all been given new gas respirators. One of the fellows decided that they didn't need these souvenirs as badly as he did so he salvaged a new one and left his old worn out one in its place. I could give you a lot of their conversation which would make you wonder what we are fighting for.

I am so glad to hear about Clair and hope that before long he is quite well again.

About young Anderson. I wrote Mrs. Motherwell all the information I could get concerning him. I am afraid there is little chance of hearing more. It is very hard at times to get any information at all. If people wouldn't worry about graves. It really doesn't matter at all if the man is known to be dead. If he is wounded and missing for a considerable time death is pretty near a certainty.

I sent the last cable you received because I had not written for a long time and wanted to catch up with myself. I am again as far behind.

Helen spoke of Ilsa. Is she suspected? It would be interesting.

I know nothing of Swan being a Brig. He was a major when I saw him a few weeks ago.

Tell Gran that Kathleen Lambert is very nice indeed and also pretty. My visit was very short and they were all very good to me but I was just on my way back and not there long enough to really get to know them.

I shall write you cards while on leave if the leave comes through.

We are all on our toes and watching Fritz pretty closely as he is having considerable encouragement on the other fronts. The troops in the line, if he pushes, would likely be a washout but he has got to be ready to pay a terrible price if he wants to try to break through and then I guess he would not make it. If he doesn't drive this year he won't be able to next because we will be too strong. Our job is to hold him until the armies of the States can be transported and then he is a beaten nation. I doubt if his people will stand more than 18 months of it.

I am a bit tired of living in a kit bag and moving every week but I have had a fairly soft time of it compared to others and my route marching is practically over save for going into and out of the line as I have a mounted job for all back area road work and have also been able to do some riding.

Have had several letters from people in England. None of which I have been able to answer. The last was from one 'Cherie Brine'(I think) and whoever it is she's a friend of Lauras who wishes to carry on the good work in Laura's absence. Awfully nice you know but oh I am fed up with looking up strangers. If I go to England I want to live quietly where I know the people.

Must close now as it is quite late and Baxter and the boys are all asleep. The guns are booming away so guess I'll get to sleep.

Give my love to all and tell father to remember me to all the men including Cambridge and the L.R.O.

Am glad the kids are so well and that the new chink is doing well. We have plenty of them here now.

With much love to everyone in the family and tell Gertrude I shall write inside of the next six months without fail, Heine permitting. Lovingly

your son,  
Keith

March 29 1918 - France - (letter #74)

Dearest Mother,

Things have been happening very rapidly and there has been little or no time for writing as usual. On the 21st my leave came through for Paris and Nice but I couldn't get away until late as there was a 'stand to' on and I went up on the ridge to watch them throw some 6000 projectors of gas over on Fritz.

We were to have from the 23rd -29th in Paris and from 30th to April 6th in Nice. Our original intention was to go to the latter place first but they made out the papers the other way round so we had to stick to it. As we rode to the Transport lines things were active up the line and the S.O.S was calling all the artillery into action. We knew the battle south had commenced but had no particulars as to the size of the attack. The next morning Valiquet who does not ride went down to the train some six miles away by mess cart while Neal who was going to a course, and I took the horses and rode. The first stage of the trip was made on a medium gauge train and we had lunch at the changing town. Here we got a place in a train for Amiens. It was packed. We had twelve in our carriage. French, Belgium, British Imperials, U.S. officers and ourselves. We had a party of five made up at Amiens. A French interpreter, two Americans, Val and myself. As the train came in the Americans were to jump and grab five seats in a carriage while Val and I did the same in the diner and if we made it stick then they were to come in and we would have dinner on the way to Paris. We got our table and had a good little party. We arrived in Paris at 8:30 pm and as we were leaving the station an air raid took place. The fire department went screaming the alarm around the streets and the people as usual got very excited. I went to connect up with a missing member of the party and lost everybody. I waited round for an hour and ten minutes thinking that they would know where to look for me so long as I did not move away but no luck. While here I had time to make some funny and interesting observations. A French girl of about 20 came along crying to beat the cards and stamping her foot. She was in a wee small rage. She leaned up against the fence of the station a couple of yards away and carried on with the footwork. Seeing a dear sweet thing in distress alongside I was all for putting my arm around her and telling her in English which she wouldn't understand likely, that that sort of thing wasn't done, when a Belgium came up and commenced to parley in her own language. Gee I was glad I had played a slow hand. She just naturally turned on him and gave him a flow of sounds that didn't strike me as being friendly. Away she went past me worse than ever. I never learned whether her father has been killed by a bomb (of which I heard none) or whether her fellow had just thrown her over. I mae a mental note of how to treat that kind of case in future. To make a long story short I got a taxi after much trouble and went to the hotel. The boys had not yet arrived. I got a room and met another American chap so we went to a show. It was late nearly eleven but we heard some singing and a darn good coon band. I got home about 12:30 and went to bed. The next morning Val phoned me from his room.

The weather was beautiful and there was a constant air alarm on for the first 48 hours. When the alarm is on half the town closes up and I had no end of trouble getting my cable away which I wish now had never gone as I shall be in the fight long before the 14 days are up.

We went out for breakfast and then to the bank and did a little shopping. We had the Interpreter still with us and he was so excitable that we decided we would have to shake him. Fortunately we learned he was leaving by train that night. He would grab your arm every time we crossed a street and there was a taxi coming 50 yards away. The French are some people. We then reported at the Can. Commissioners and left our address and went to a restaurant and had lunch. For tea we went to Ciro's. Here we were joined in the odd drink by a pair of lovely little girls, who judging from their remarks in English, had been existing in Paris waiting for us to arrive. However, I am older than I have yet been taken for and even Paris has to go some to kid the troops beyond overcharging them for everything. Prices are something awful. The girls were nicely dressed, spoke well and we all had dinner together during which time I was able to add quite a lot to my education as far as Paris and the ways of its fair ones go. It is a city so distinct from every other as is London. The women do dress beautifully and their feet are as dainty as can be. they paint and powder more than the English perhaps but when one does see a pretty girl one can look at her feet without going crazy which happens when you do so in England. The girls are very nice about everything. A good dinner is very acceptable and we just improvise another engagement and they are still your friends. But Paris is no town for a kid on his own.

On the 24th I got up about ten and Val. and I set out to see a couple of places. The bosche was shelling the town with the mystery gun - 75 mile range - and a shell came in not far from where we were. Lord the excitement. I think that the constant air alarm was due to this gun as I believe they thought the shells were bombs coming from a tremendous height as Paris was considered out of range from the line.

We say the hotel de Ville or City Hall and went through Notre Dame Cathedral. It is very fine with beautiful stained glass. The organ is divided with a set of pipes at the alter and the other at the other end of the church.

We then tried to find a place to lunch and after two or three attempts we got into a 2nd rate place where it seems to be against the rules to take off your cap. It was very interesting and while there a French man had a big row over a tip. Nearly everyone stopped eating to listen and a number joined in the argument. We had a good lunch for about a third of what we generally paid. We next went to the Eiffel Tower by taxi and the Palais du Trocadero. We could not go up the former of course and nearly all the buildings are closed. Also all the monuments and statues of value are sandbagged in to protect them from bombs.

I am sending you a couple of books of post cards. I have seen practically everything in them. We then went to the Invalides and saw Napoleon I tomb but it is now sandbagged..also the museum. We proceeded through the gardens fo the Tuileries and from there to the hotel. We had dinner at a little cafe called Adriennes. They serve a very good meal and the hostess, she really is one, greets each arrival and comes around and has a word with each one at dinner and then sees them off. You come away glad to have met her and I went there two or three times just because I felt at home. After dinner we went to see the Folies Bergere. This is a sort of variety show and during the intermission everyone comes out to the rotunda and has the odd drink, mostly beer, while they are entertained by a banjo band with expert drummers. Everyone sings and the din is awful. An Australian who was pretty well on his way was on the top of a table and it was a general mixup. The rag band is good though and I enjoyed it all.



On Monday the 25th we set out at noon for Versailles. We had lunch and left from the Gare St Lazare. Arrived at Versailles, got an English guide who took us through all the Royal Palaces the grounds, the great and small Trianon and the Swiss Village. Some rooms were closed but we saw all the rest. One could write for hours on these buildings alone. The paintings, the tables of the finest inlaid marble. The Queens and Princes stairway. The heavy finishing everywhere.

I had a very fine book showing the interior views but I lost it so will get another some time. The gallery of battles and the gallery of mirrors are beautiful. Then we saw the royal carriage and had the whole French history repeated to us but I didn't bother attempting to keep all the various stunts of each Louis separate. That night we had dinner at the Grand Cafe and afterwards went to a show at the Olympia where I met Ed Lane who was a law student in Whitesides office at one time.

On the 26th we took a taxi all through the Bois De Boulogne and around the racetrack. We saw the Arch de Truimph and the Avenue des Champs Elysees.

We went to another cafe for dinner and the people presented several interesting studies. Afterwards we went to the Casino de Paris .

On Wednesday 27th we took things easy. We had been following the Somme battle and knew that our corps was north of it but all leave had apparently been stopped and England recalled. There was the greatest interest around all bulletins. We had tea at Ciro's. (Maxims is now very dead) and had dinner at the Adriennes. We then went to the Casino. Things were at their height during the intermission, when a corporal of the police kicked off a salute to me and asked me if I had been warned to report back. Everyone was to leave by the 11:40 train. Val and I looked at our watches and caught a taxi for the hotel. When I got the order I thought of Vanity Fair. However, we got ready and I was not down hearted at all. I had really expected it and after all it will be a good fight. I stood at the turnstile to the train with the A.P.M. and I was proud of the Canadians. The boys came down singing, laughing and joking, some of them on leave only two days. Everyone was in high spirits. As the train pulled out they cheered and one of them sounded last post on a bugle. I thought that if Hindenburg could only have seen that spirit he would have realized how little chance he really has of winning this war. I see today that he is in Albert and is being driven out.

It would be a hard thing to repeat the motor trip we took some time ago. We travelled all night to Amiens. The service was very congested. We arrived there 8 am yesterday morning. Refugees were coming in from all sides carrying all their belongings and old men and women were sitting in the station waiting for some train to take them away I suppose. We went on to Abbeville by the same train. Arrived there at 11:30 am. We had had nothing to eat since dinner before and were getting hollow. It was impossible to get anything at the station. We were sent right on to the Can Base here where we arrived at 1 pm. We met Val's brother who is an M.O. and he fixed us up at the mess for dinner and we were invited to share huts instead of having to take a tent. Our division cannot move from here as I believe the division itself is on the march and I know where to. I fear we shall have to stay here until the march is over, then we shall be rushed up and probably join the unit just before it goes into action. One is working under a handicap that way. I should like to join it early so as to fully understand what is on foot. I figure that the Canadians have been offered to take on the fight and I would just as soon tackle him when he is in new position with difficulties to contend with in the way of transport and artillery than I would to drive against his established lines. We are going in at a good time. It may be a heavy fight

but I believe it is his last great effort and we have already made him pay dearly for it.

When we hit him as we no doubt shall he will have to be ready to put up a big price in men. He will never break through anymore than we could have smashed through completely. He has driven to buck his people up. It will have the opposite effect before he is through with it. I hope he puts his all into it. I understand that his first day was a failure as he hoped to go much further on that day.

I may not get much time for writing for sometime dearest. We may leave here today. We may not leave for two or three. At any rate I hope to come through and finish our leave to Nice and then perhaps something may crop up to get me home but I wouldn't like to leave here now. I think we can get him this year if he will keep driving.

Love to all and let Gertrude read this as I shall only scribble a note.

Your loving son,  
Keith

Please don't worry.

April 2 1918 - France - Postcard ( # 75)

Dearest Mother,

Expect to leave for unit tonight. Some time ago I got a very nice box from Jessie McCallum of Seattle. Have lost her address. Could some one write her and tell her it arrived in good order and was much appreciated. Cannot place her unless it is one of Grandmothers relations. I thought they were further south.

With love,  
Keith

April 4 1918 - France -(letter # 76)

Dearest Mother:

Am just leaving for the line. Left the base on the 2nd and reached the battalion last evening. They have been moving from place to place but have not done a tour since I left so I haven't missed anything but a lot of worry. We are not in the big battle but are quite close to where poor old Ed Rand was killed about a year ago.

Upon my return I found three letters from you , 73 and 2-74's. Two from Helen, Fathers and Billies. Tell father he applied for the policy I wanted and everything is fine. Billie did not get me in wrong. I think he could not have done more. It is out of the question to think of Canada now. I wouldn't return just now if I could unless on war work.

Am enclosing a special order issued by the G.O.C. Corps.

Also received two letters from Gertrude.

I shall be back in the line before the expiration of the time mentioned in my leave wire but hope that everything will be OK.

He attacked on this front some days ago but the retirement by the Imperials was not very great.

When I have time I shall make my London account a joint one with father if possible. He might get a signature card from the B.of M. fill it out and send to me. Tell him I am on for some sport when I get back but to go easy on any money outlay because the war will not end until probably this time next year and it is a real one just now but the Canadians are recognized as good troops so if he comes over he has got to make a clean up to get past.

Give my love to all and don't let anyone scold you. Write me what you like. My own letters are most inconsistent according to mood.

Lovingly your son,

Keith

April 8 1918 - France -(letter #77)

Dearest Mother:

We are in the line. Hence the note book paper. I had five hundred yards of front line until last night when I was relieved and came into immediate support. I left a good H.Q. for a very poor one. I have the company at present in a tunnel under some old Bosche gun pits and we have to go out to turn round. Outside of that everything is OK. It rained two of the few days I was holding front line and kept everyone busy on trench maintenance work.

As far as war is concerned we have had an easy trip and have been left alone by shell fire. He is still pushing according to the papers, down south. We might get down to it yet.

I am enclosing a message I sent this morning also reply to it as I want them as scrap book items.

This time I did rather a novel thing and that was to establish a cook house, where I cooked all rations, fifty yards in front of the front line. We took over from the battalion that Jimmie McGregor and Art Lloyd belonged to and they were having everything cooked at the base and coming up cold because they couldn't find a place. I found two but the best one was a deep dugout out in front so we cleared a trench to it and managed first rate.

I see by the paper that the leaning Virgin on the Albert Church has fallen in the last fighting. You will have a post card of it. When I saw it our engineers had wired it so that it would not fall. The prophecy of the Tommy has always been that when it fell the end of the war would be in sight. For a time it looked good for ever but has finally come down. I guess one more winter is all we shall have to spend over here.

I have at last got a good batman. His name is Srigley and he looks after me alright.

When I get out shall write father and Billie if possible. I see by orders that my leave has been cancelled as it is possible to obtain four days leave to Paris when leave is open, as I only had four days I am still entitled to a whole new leave and will try to make Nice.

Give my love to all at home everyone is in good spirits and, British like, are absolutely confident that the hun has no chance despite what has been going on. We have to be kicked to make the higher commands get active.

Does Grandmother know we now have a pipe band of five pipes and some drums lead by McKinley of Coquitlam? The C.O. calls it D. Coy's band because the battalion never hits the road for more than an hour before I am after it to march my company.

Lovingly yours,  
Keith

April 14 1918 - France - (letter to father)

Dear Father:

I am sorry that I have neither time nor material to write you a letter but in reply to your long one would say that you had better go easy on the outlay of money for shooting gear until peace is in sight. When I get back I am all for it but the situation here at present appears far more serious to me than anything since the first of the war and I think it will take every man to hold him up. After that we shall have to defeat him. In my opinion something slipped.

Thanks for your trouble about the insurance. It is a good thing to keep in order at present. I think another winter after his drive proves a failure as far as ultimate objectives go will see the end in view.

I shall enclose you a form and card to be signed and witnessed and returned to the Bank of Montreal 9 Waterloo Place Pall Mall London S.W.1. That will make the account a joint one. All cheques would have to be stamped of course. It would make a withdrawal of money easier in case of my death. In such an event you would wait probably 30 days to make sure the pay office had deposited everything that might be due and then draw. The only trouble is that my pass book is generally in my kit and you would not know the amount. However, I guess a blank cheque would get everything there. I shall remit more money toward the end of the year.

We are at present in the general vicinity of the place Ed Rand was killed. We have been about this neighborhood since my return from Paris. If we should go to the Somme I shall have seen a good long stretch of British front. There is one chunk north of Lens and south of Belgium I have not worked on but no more north for me.

Our artillery is working fairly hard. The whole country is given over to the army. There are no civilians near the forward area and nothing on the roads but army traffic of every description. It is a wonderful business if only bent toward another purpose.

Am afraid there is no further promotion in sight for a long time. I am a long way down from the majority and am not just satisfied. Have to go up the line tomorrow morning to reconnoiter. Your son,

Keith

April 15 1918 - France - (letter #78)

Dearest Mother:

Just at present I am not able to get any note paper but will next time I am near civilization. Our easy time is over and from now on it will be pretty much steady going. Leave is still closed so don't know when I shall get away. Have cut down my kit and sent a bag to England as we are very mobile these days. The situation looks very serious to me at present. He has such a supply of men. As yet he has not struck at us but when he does I think there will be a pretty good demonstration of what a small determined army can do.

Don't send copy of stuff I send home around to the various relatives I wont send anything home if you do. Am sorry to hear that you lost your chink and hope you have another good one. Go easy on the work yourself. Don't worry about me. Have a strong hunch that I shall come through OK. Don't think I was born to finish up here. And so Aunt Lettie has gone West. Had a letter from Helen full of sweet thoughts and ideals. Tell her the same horse kicked me. Hennie Ballow sent her love which I was so glad to get and give her a kiss from me.

Shall try to write Father and Billie on one of these funny things. I hope they go through without being opened as it would be hard to close the things again. We have been moved about since my last to you. After doing my part of the tour in the front line we went to Brigade Support. After one night we were pulled out and moved again the next night. I expect another move back to the line in a day or two. The night I struck Brigade support I was out from midnight to 3am going over my lines and it was pitch black. No rations arrived and the parties were lost all night. The orders gave me an incorrect map location for the dump and I didn't get them until 7 am. The company had to move early for a working party so I wired to have permission to feed men before moving to the work. A whipper snapper of an asst. Adj. wired me on his own that party must proceed. I beat the party there and roused the C.O. out of sleep and raised a row that lasted about three days. The C.O. told me to take the men home and feed them. The result was that the job was never done as we have long distances to march. I got to bed about 11 am. I was so mad that I couldn't talk and the C.O. backed me up because H.Q. had kept us up all night looking for a dump that didn't exist. I travelled miles and one couldn't see a foot. Take a step and land in the bottom of an old seven foot trench. One gets used to stepping expecting a rise or fall and generally all you do is tear your clothes.

Oh we do have our dull days and before long I guess we will have a chance to get at a few of these massed divisions of his.

With much love to all I am,  
Lovingly your son,  
Keith

April 21 1918 - France -(letter # 79)

Dearest Mother:

Just a note from the line to tell you that your 75th letter came on the 18th and your box last night. Everything was in fine condition and the cake was much appreciated by the boys. The socks were very welcome and I got the receipt for the cigarettes attached.

We are nearly through with this tour but there is dirty work at the cross roads on foot before morning and I hope everything is successful.

Before we came into the line we were billeted in a camp in frame huts and Fritz shelled the place two nights with heavy stuff. We remained with the hut and managed to sleep most of the night but it was anything but nice. He hit one hut which had been practically emptied and killed two chaps who had gone back in. Today I heard a rumour that he had shelled our transport base and had killed one or two. Billie Sloan I believe was hit and got a broken arm out of it as far as my information at present goes. I have asked my Quarter master sergt. to bring me a full report tomorrow morning.

I have little or nothing to write about. My mails are very small and far apart. Have been under the weather for about 36 hours but feel OK now. Think I caught a chill and my stomach went into reverse without notice.

Give my love to all and I shall write when I can.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

April 24 1918 - France - (letter # 80)

Dearest Mother:

I wrote you on the 21st but since that we have been hit pretty hard by bad luck. On the 21st Fritz threw some shell into our transport lines and Sergt. Kennedy our Pioneer Sergt. and a man of the Q.M.staff were killed and Bill Sloan wounded. Got it in the arm and with luck I guess he should be able to keep away from the war. We were in the line. On the 22nd. the colonel dropped into my H.Q. and remained to lunch with us. I left him about 1:30 and he went back to Bn H.Q. Fritz shelled the place in the afternoon. The C.O., Mills, Purvis, Martin of another unit and a colonel of the medical corps were all at tea. They stood up to greet this colonel when a shell landed and blew the end of the hut out. The C.O. had his left leg blown off below the knee and has since had it taken off well above. Mills had two toes on left foot knocked off. Martin got a bruise on the head and will be back in a few days. The med. col. collected some shrapnel and Purvis was just blown out of the hut. Of course everyone was terribly shocked but I did not go to H.Q. as I knew there were three in the line senior to me without Purvis who should have been at the Transport Base. About 8 pm I got a wire to report to B.H.Q. after I had finished certain duties and it was about eleven when I got there. Purvis was in command and he asked me to carry on with him as second while Carmichael was sent for to handle the administrative end of it. I knew it would only be for 24 hours or so and as Brigade had sanctioned it I didn't mind the ones who are senior to me. I think they were all more or less peevish but such things are the least of my worries. In losing Webb we have lost the best man the unit has had and I have lost a mighty good friend. Had just got to know him and could arrange nearly everything I wanted with him. Things were going fairly well from my point of view. I have had no word of his condition since but he was conscious all the time. As he has will power to burn I think he will put up a good fight against the shock.

This morning the chap who is to get the unit has arrived. A Major Keegan who will be made a Lt. Col. Again we have to become acquainted with him and his comical ideas. As this is the fourth in 16 months I am rather fed up.

A number of our senior officers who we thought had left for good are coming back and it will be a surprise to me if some of the junior company commanders do not get superceded. However, I am quite capable of telling them what I think on most questions. Don't know how this man will prove up as I had never exactly taken a fancy to him from the little chance I had of seeing him in the past.

Your parcel with the socks and cake, arrived, it was mailed Mar 18th. The cigarettes have not arrived yet.

The other day I got a most beautiful box packed by S.S. Pearce and Co. Boston Mass. I do not know who sent it but all the contents were of exceptionally good quality including preserved ginger stuffed prunes, bottled acid drops. Chocolate, 100 Pall Mall cigarettes in a large box and a package of layer raisins that are good ones. It also had a tasty little ginger snap which made a hit with the boys. (I am writing this one on my knee so excuse)

The cake in your box was in splendid condition and I only had a chance to eat a couple of pieces as the boys took to it and the candy like hungry wolves at a hay stack. It is sometime since I have made oxo but as I was feeling rather miserable and had to go easy on the eats I used yours this trip. The socks were fine and a pair is already doing duty. The tie I have as a reserve.

No leave as yet opened up. I guess it won't for the balance of the summer. Our part of the line is still quiet except that we try to raid him and he tries for us. If the situation north and south holds for another 6 weeks I guess his main effort is over and then I suppose at the right time and place we shall start after him again. I hope they hit the right time and place though. The Canadians are storm troops by now and when we again begin to move I shall be on the lookout for parallel movements of other offensive arms. The next time we go I want beaucoup tanks. I have only had one ride in the things but have had two lectures on them. This was some time ago before the Hun got busy.

Must stop now as I expect to be able to report back and taken over my company by noon today.

Give my love to all and tell Gertrude I may not be able to write for a few days more.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

April 26 1918 - France -(letter # 81)

Dearest Mother:

Your 76th and 77th letters arrived last night and I am just scratching off a line before the mail leaves. It is due to go any minute to catch the ration train. In fact the trench Q.M. has just asked for it so I guess tomorrow will be the earliest this will get away after all.

The news today is that Col. Webb is holding his own but cannot see many visitors. I am beginning to realize that I have lost a mighty good friend in him.

I was very sorry to hear of poor Clares death. He really deserved to get better after having put up such a good fight.

Your description of Joan makes me long to get home and see all the kids again before they all get beyond the funny age. Mary, Bunker, and Peggy must be getting pretty good sized children now.

And so Motherwell is about due back in B.C. I am glad he has got there. So many of the crowd seems to be sifting back wounded or otherwise. Motherwell did his job here however and I am glad he is through with it all. No, I have had no further trouble with boils and I believe that I am through with them. It is a good thing because I am a mass of scars from the things now.

I remember Storme very well seeing that we went through school together and played baseball etc. Storme was Hugh Stoddards great friend. He was wounded the first night of the triangle show and I was talking to him before he went out.

We are in support and my H.Q. is about 35 steps down in the earth under a railway embankment. I have the whole company less one platoon in this one dugout which of course is all partitioned off. The big trouble is heavy drafts with no fire arrangements.

My Q.M. has called back unexpectedly so I shall just address this and get it off.

With Love to all,  
Yours,  
Keith

May 3 1918 - France - (letter # 82)

12:45 am.

Dearest Mother:

It is over a week since I have had any Canadian mail and then only a very small one. My English mail has absolutely fallen away. It is just after midnight and I have only to be up until 'stand to' at 4:15 am and an hour and half later I can get to bed. Company C.O's are supposed to take the night duty and sometimes the shift seems a long one. I am in immediate support at present after having finished my front line duty during which we had wet weather and consequently beaucoup mud and work.

Fritz has been throwing over gas and high explosive tonight and I can hear the crumps falling above at present. I am in my H.Q. which is about 25 or 30 steps down. The entrance which I measured today is 2'6" by 2'6" and the steps covered with mud so we have a little physical training going up and down.

Col. Webb is doing very well and is to go on to England before long. I hope to meet the man again after the war. He is a splendid type of a man.

Baxter and I are here together this evening and we have had a long talk over how things are going. The company is not in a bad state but there is one other which is giving me a hard race for first place in the battalion and I am not at present satisfied because I know we can leave it behind but my big difficulty now is the finding of good N.C.O.'s. I have weeded out and picked my officers until I have only one dud left and before long I shall get rid of him. I can say that my officers mess is the happiest of the lot. The others



are all having friction but I fired out the only disagreeable chap I had as soon as I became satisfied that he would never make an officer.

As a company commander the men are not so much in direct touch with me and as we get new men from time to time some hardly know me. Consequently I am disciplining on a different basis and I guess before long I shall be heartily detested but I'm going to have things as they should be. The longer one is at this game the more important little things appear to be. A chap finds a kick here or a buried grouch there and each has to be dug up, traced down and cleared away or the trouble will smoulder and break out in a bad mess. 85% appreciate kindness the balance only understand driving and take notice when you get them 14 days Field Punishment and forfeiture of 2 weeks pay.

Have just received a new officer (I suppose at least fifty have gone through the company since I have). He was a newspaper reporter and a little chap with the happiest smile ever. His name is Lash and it is a pleasure to see him come into the mess. He is full of business and is looking right after his men. His nick name is Kewpie.

It is funny the different ideas of different men. Webb issued an order that no liquor would be carried into the line. None was. This man said he would make no order on the subject so I told him if it was satisfactory to him I would make a definite order so far as my officers were concerned, and issued a distinct order that no booze would be taken into the line unless I took it in myself. I wanted to be able to have some brandy on hand but had a fellow who had more taste for booze of any sort than will power and I was afraid he would get tight and I would have to arrest him. Consequently the other companies I think look upon me as a crank and yet they have all seen me take anything but scotch out of the line. I had two or three boys leaving on stretchers this time after stopping portions of a whizz bang and a drop of the brandy and a cheery word about Blighty helped get them over the two hours trip to the dressing station. A stretcher party in a narrow trench with mud is a very slow trip.

My gas N.C.O. has just been in to show me the nose cap off a German "green cross" gas shell. He is very much interested in his work.

Tell Billie that I have an officer named Berner - a married man of at least 35 years or a little over and I think he would make a rattling good clerk. Too old to article but thorough as the deuce. A fellow runs up against a lot of good material over here but each man has his own line and plans for after the war. Each one believes that he is going to come through all OK and yet the shells do make direct hits occasionally. It is a wonderful study. You will see men who would give their lives for each other wrangling and complaining over small matters like promotion or seniority.

Tell father that I made a blooming good revolver shot the other day. I have a gun that shoots dead on up to 20 paces. Smith and Wesson. One of the boys in my machine gun team of #13 platoon showed me a new revolver he had and I told him we would try it out so we stuck up a target and it was a pretty fair gun. Then I used my own. My runner picked up a tin canister. It was about eight inches in lengthy and had a tin partition - there's a strafe on must beat it....

Later: Its a heavy one and both artilleries are wide open but it is not on our front away to the right. Now to resume - partition about 3 inches from the open end - thus ....

**This partition had a hole in the centre which gave it this appearance looking down the open end.**

**The diameter of the open tin was 2 1/4" and the diameter of the hole in the centre of the partition was 3/4". I paced off ten paces and put a bullet through the open end down through the centre hole without damaging the edge of the tin and out through the bottom of the can. I was so tickled that I at once quit shooting and the runner saved the tin to show it to Baxter. When you figure that the cartridge is a .456 which is practically half an inch there wasn't much room to spare on each side of the bullet. Of course I admit that I'm good but that rather surprised even me.**

Must stop or I shall ramble on to "stand to". I have no news that I can write. A lot that I cannot so don't worry. The hun has been pushing our line all over France and yet everyone is quite sure we are winning and by gun we will for that reason alone.

The papers say that Russia will have an immense army against Germany in ten months. Did you ever hear the story of the pigeon message? There was a big fight on and the situation was obscure. The Brigadier was kicking his heels at Brig.H.Q. waiting for news of some kind. finally a pigeon flew into the loft. A couple of pigeoneers pounced on it and took the message to the General who hurriedly unrolled it and read. "Am fed up with this bloody bird -Pte. Smith." Well that's my feeling about Russia. Give my love to all and I shall write as often as possible

Your loving son,  
Keith

May 12 1918 - France - (letter # 83)

Dearest Mother:

Just an attempt. It is so cold that my hands are numb. This is Sunday - Mothers Day. I would have forgotten it was either had we not had a church parade at which the padre reminded us of the latter.

We have been in bivouacs in a wood for three days and the weather has been foggy. cold and windy. We are up at 4:30 am and work carries on until 3: pm.

I wrote you on the 3rd. In the 4th we moved to a camp where we were fairly comfortable until the 6th. (The boys have just asked me to play baseball against the platoons so I shall have to finish later.

12 noon: To proceed - We were then moved by night into the back country and into billets (poor). The district was one of the prettiest I have been in. Neal and I had one good ride. I traded the horse I had and have a good little mare now. After about 48 hours we moved to this wood.

There has been no shelling although we are within easy reach of artillery. The day we arrived was lovely but it was the only decent one we have had. I am writing on my knee. Sitting on the ground and my head is against the roof. Our shelter is a piece of canvas 13' x 10' and without walls, fires or lights and the usual dampness, bugs, snails and flies it is a real picnic. I never did have any use for them. If it rains we have no cover

over our mess so we put on our coats and bolt our meals. Everyone is happy enough and we hope to be pulled out of here soon.

The artillery fire lately has been pretty heavy all along the line and I suppose there will be more fighting before the bosche settles down for the summer.

I cannot see any end of the war this side of the middle of 1918. The enemy has had too much encouragement this year. He cannot beat us in the field but it will take either side years to gain a definite decision by fighting. The fronts and forces are too large.

By the time we get home we won't want to settle down to anything because after all this is a lazy life. We are messed about from morning till night but the actual daily work accomplished seems little.

My mail has not amounted to much lately. I received the parcel of cigarettes (200) OK. It is very hard to get Players here now and I was just out.

There is really no news to write because what little I have of interest I cannot give you but I hope that before long we may be able to send you some.

The papers are full of all sorts of rot. Everything is a victory for both sides and I am waiting until there will be something that only one side can claim. I think things in Germany must be pretty bad and I would like to see Austria break. Also Japan get busy. The States seem slow and I think we had better get busy and win the war ourselves without waiting for them much longer. We seem to have drawn a great many dud allies.

You never acknowledged receipt of a copy of the batt'n year book. I mailed one a long time ago but guess it was held up.

Have not heard from Mills or Col. Webb. The latter has been moved to the base or to Blighty and his leg is off well above the knee but he seems to be doing well.

In spirit this is your day. As far as weather goes you wouldn't give a franc for a dozen like it. I hope that before long summer sets in.

How is Grandmother getting on? Tell her that we have lost one of our best pipers. We only had five and McInnes was killed last trip in.

Must stop now. Give my love to everyone in the family and with much for yourself I am,

Your loving son,  
Keith

June 13 1918 - France - (letter # 84)

Dearest Mother:

It seems impossible that it is a month since I have written home. We went from the woods to our old home St. Lawrence where we remained for two weeks and came back here to the woods again. We have all been very busy training and the time off is devoted to sport. Yesterday the Brigade sports were held and our unit won out. We put a lacrosse team in the field but could not get an interesting game. We have some good runners and we cleaned up everything in the boxing and jumping.

I have all your letters up to #82 and one from Fred. I will write him when I get a bit of time and ink.

The Canadian mails have been few and far between and I have given up waiting for them.

Got a letter from Postill and he is in the army in some B2 class I think, poor joker.

How did Bunker get on with the measles? I hope they were light and that Joan didn't take them. The McQuarries surely do have their dull days when it comes to sickness.

I was terribly sorry to hear of poor Jessie Allen's death. It doesn't seem possible. I heard about two days before from Cherie Brine that Fraser had that day returned to France in the Infantry apparently. Poor Mrs. Allen will be frightfully worried.

Had not noticed Temple MacDonald's name in the casualties. Do you ever get "Canada" It is by far the best paper for army information and reports.

So far I have not written Elsie or Billie. Must do so, they should have a pleasant summer out of the session

A few days ago I had the company on a route march and noticed a lorry coming. I spotted Walter Cotton on the front of it and he saw me. We stopped the car and had about five minutes talk. He is looking quite well and is in some tunneling crowd I think.

That evening Harold Garden walked into my hut at St Lawrence. He is looking as big as ever and is with the Heavies.

Some one is cropping up all the time. I do not know what is to become of us here. If we had known we were to be out so long I should have cabled but we don't know what hour we will be called up. We are only just behind the line and he could shell us if he knew where to look. From our observation post we have the most wonderful view. Away up to the north we can see the hump of Kemmel and the whole country is spread out in front of us.

Fritz is starting something on the French front again and does not seem to have gone far. If he isn't quick he will find that fall is on him and then look out because if we catch him there is going to be a number of his men strictly out of luck. The prisoners we take next summer will be few if he keeps us here another winter.

Valiquet, my French leave partner has gone to England sick and dear knows when he will be back. If I could find some one to go with would try to get my leave again and make a try for Rome and Naples but I fear that it is a pretty long shot.

By the way did you ever receive half a dozen photos of a girl in costume? She played in the Marriage Market and is a great friend of the Leaches. I sent them in small bundles and addressed some to myself. She is an awfully nice girl. If they arrived open them and see what you think of them. I want to have them made into a panel.

When I last left England I had a small photo taken. One full length with riding boots and the other, head and shoulders. Did I send you them? Am

getting some more and will forward a bunch so you can hand them along and save Gran placing an order at Wadds.

I was amused at your description of George Mitten. He was our Regt. Sergeant Major here and was granted a commission. He was I believe slightly wounded in the hand on the Somme. He never went through any battles because Bn H.Q. is generally behind. He has seen some mud. Has never been to France as an officer. He is an expert hot air peddler but not a bad chap.

I have plenty of socks and the open ones are all right for summer but will not stand what the others will.

The other day the Brigade was paraded and Major General Watson G.P.C.Division presented ribbons to a bunch of us. We had to stand at attention for a goodly time while he came round and said the same few kind words to each one. I am enclosing the ribbon. Also a letter I got from Col. Webb which I want to keep. Our new O.C. can't touch him for knowing how to run a battalion.

Must stop now as I could run on for ever. quite a lot has been happening. I heard from Mrs Lambert the other day and have several short notes to write England.

Tell Gertrude I shall try and write tomorrow or next day.  
With much love to all I am  
Your loving son,  
Keith

June 23 1918 - France - (letter # 85)

Dearest Mother:

First of all let me acknowledge receipt of your parcel dated May 10th which arrived yesterday in perfect order. Everything was fine and the socks lovely. I have now quite a stock of them. At present I am low in collars, ties, and shirts but don't send any because I will buy from England. It is much quicker. Besides save your money as it costs a lot to pay postage on heavy articles. I really need nothing. Not having been on leave for quite a time my pay is going to my credit and we are allowed to cash three advances per month of 125 Francs each which roughly amounts to \$75 and I seldom spend that. Sometimes only a third of it. Leave generally shoots the account but I have nearly \$200 so don't skimp yourself while I have 1000 bucks not earning.

Bill Sloan played in hard luck because normally he should have outlived the war without accident as he practically never had to go up the line. His work was at the Transport lines and only once in a while he had to go forward. I tell you this game is fate or luck. If your down in the books to get it. It is coming to you and there is no good trying to side step it. And since the book is out of print, why worry over it.

I cannot write Aunt Tweebie because I have no address. It was a lovely parcel. If anyone is writing her tell her why she has not heard from me.

Am glad to hear that the kids are all well again and hope that Peggy keeps clear of the measles.

Will you write and give me a list of the family birthdays. I simply don't know any of them and didn't have Gertrudes right. I'm some beau alright.

I was sorry to hear of the Steveston and Coughlan fires. The ship building seemed to be doing very well.

Billie and Elsie should be home before this. I had a letter from Elsie from Ottawa and will write her as soon as I can.

Tell Helen I have her last letters and am much interested to hear of Ilse. The poor dear girl. She has lost her job. I hope they draw and quarter her. Tell her to ask Mamie to drop a line now and again even if she is married to James.

We have been training steadily. I have been out of the line now since May 3rd. Couldn't wire because I may go in any hour and so it has been ever since.

I have eight officers under me now. That won't last long however. The weather has been good and our life in the woods has been quite pleasant. My Sergt. Major leaves today to take his commission. He was pretty tight last night as I allowed him to give a little party to the sergeants of the co'y. He came in to see me and was very funny.

Must run now as I have a parade in the next few minutes. The men were not keeping their stuff properly cleaned so iI have kept them all in this morning (Sunday) to remove the unnecessary.

Love to all, I am,  
Your loving son,

Keith

July 9 1918 - France - (letter # 86)

Dearest Mother:

We moved today and are in a more desolate area. Tomorrow back into the line again. It seems strange after so long out. We really had a wonderful time. I attended the Corps Sports and met Bella Lord. She asked me to go down to the C.C.S. for a small dance. Capt. Pritchard and I went down the following Thursday and made another never to be forgotten trip. We had a barrel of fun and on our way back about (sixteen miles) Fritz bombed a town we were going to stop in. It was midnight and the sight was quite worth while. We got a billet and had a good sleep. Since then we have been very busy. A Fritz plane was shot down by a couple of ours the other evening and it was pretty to see them get him. I saw a very fine exhibition of a man trying to kill himself in a plane at the corps sports. Nose diving etc. at about 100 ' up. The performance was very good though. You have no idea of the show the sports day was. It looked like a fair and about eighteen or twenty thousand people there all khaki and red.

I have not time to give many details now as I want to make a lot of arrangements tonight in order to go into the line ahead of the battalion tomorrow as the front is partly new to me.

I saw Sid Fletcher and Walter Cotton on the line of march today. Both looked well. Also met Jim Motherwells sister at the C.C.S. but only for a few words.

Got a postcard from Elsie written on the train.

We had a big battalion dinner the other night before leaving the woods and it was quite a success.

So far the summer has gone well but there is plenty of fighting months left yet and every snap has to end.

I do not know when I can expect leave but not for some time. It is very slow. Let me know at once if you receive a bundle of surplus kit I sent home. It has gone astray between France and England.

Give my love to all and with much for yourself I am,

Your loving son,  
Keith

July 12 1918 - France - (letter # 87)  
Dearest Mother:

I am in the line but so far it has been the quietest front that I have seen. We have had a little bit of rain and consequently the trenches got a bit muddy but as the ground was very dry it soaks up quickly. Last night we poured cloud gas across no man's land on him. I went up the line about 3 am to see how things were and got back to H.Q. about 6:30. There were dozens of dead rats in our own front line. Of course all our chaps wore box respirators or else got out of the trench effected. I hope it caught him unawares. Some claimed that they could hear his gas alarms working. His artillery hasn't opened its mouth this morning so I hope their guns are all corroded.

The C.O. has gone on leave and Major Baker who took over called me to B.H.Q. so I had to hand over the company to Berner as Baxter is away on his course. Consequently for two or three days I shall be here. I am rather surprised as I am not the senior company commander and the acting adjutant is a major.

Major Baker had three months in Canada not long ago and was in New Westminster but was not able to see any of you. He was only there for a short time. Comes from Victoria.

I have absolutely no news that I can write. The war looks good. If he doesn't drive inside of the next two months the weather will be uncertain after that time. The Italians are more than holding the Austrians. Russia is still unsettled and the Americans are pouring in. Next year is going to be a hard and fast one for Fritz. If all goes well I will be home the latter part of next year I figure.

There has been no Canadian post for days. Not since June 27th and everytime I despair of getting any and write you the mail comes that night. It comes in after dark with the rations.

I have a small boil on the right side of my chin. It is the first one for months and I was in hopes that I had seen the last of the things. This one is really nothing however to what I had in the past.

Remember me to Jim Motherwell. Am glad to hear he is doing so well. He came over here as an Infantry officer and did his job which is more than a good many of our brave "Columbia Street Parade" officers did. He had a hard

time of it and deserves the rest he is getting. We are having a soft time of it and there is not much of a war at present. Of course there is certain amount of uncertainty about it and a 'regular home' can become a battle field in ten minutes.

So the English bay sights did not meet with your approval. Spend six months over in these free and easy countries and "nothing can't make you sick"

Tell Helen that Fraser Allen came to France before I got his English address. I do not know where he is at present. Cherie Brine was asking for it also. She wrote me and said Fraser had just gone back.

Is there anything more in the Propst affair?

Must stop now as I expect to be up the line all night to night and make a bit of a daylight patrol tomorrow at dawn. We are about a thousand yards from Fritz and it gives you quite a field. It is so long since I have done any reconnoitering that I am getting restless. I don't think we know quite enough about Fritz here at present. We took over from the Imperials and they are quite a free and easy lot and Fritz generally encroaches on no mans land. Everyone here is feeling fine and in good spirits. One of these fine days we are going to give him a bump he will remember for a long time. It is very interesting to read his accounts of his recent attacks and the way the preparations were carried out with instructions for future work. such stuff is often captured and comes round to us. Several articles have been over Ludendorff's signature.

Must call a halt. Give my love to everyone. I will write Elsie and Billy when I can.

Your loving son,  
Keith

p.s. I am second on the leave list for Paris and eight for Blighty. The first does not appear to be coming and the second but slowly so I suppose it may be two months before I get away.

July 15 1918 - France - (letter # 88)

Dearest Mother:

We came into support today and are on a quiet front. It got on our nerves, there was no war at all and we suspected him of being up to something. Yesterday morning the attack commenced on the French so I suppose that explains the thing. About the middle of the tour I was called to Batt'n. H.Q. for duty and am still here.

Expect to be with the company again in three or four days. I have no more news. The last few days I have been taking the night shift and have been in the line until after 'stand down' each morning. It is a long trip to cover the whole battalion front and support lines and return to the B.H.Q.

I have no record of receiving # 85 or 86 of yours but may possibly have forgotten to jot down the numbers. It is impossible to carry letters for long as they pile up. Don't worry about small discomforts. We have been playing in luck since last November and have really had a cinch.

From your description I can just see the rose bushes and ramblers. It is quite a time since that old train pulled out of the station.



Am so sorry to hear that chinks are not to be had. Take things as easily as you can. I would rather soldier than do housework. Did I tell you that I have another wonderful batman? His name is Srigley and comes from between Vancouver and Westminster. He was with the 121st. He surely looks after me and all I do is to keep him in funds and he buys for me on his own.

Poor Billie has had more trouble with his nose. I hope he is fixed up now for good and all. Colin surely ran a heavy temperature. I do not blame Miss Mackay for being worried. Over here such a temp. would be worth a lot of money. If they were clearing ambulances for a show it would mean a Blighty.

Tell Grandmother to keep up the good work of polling her vote. It is worth more than the average by a long shot.

Here comes the ration train and this has to go out by it.

Yes I got the Percy Pope enclosure letter all right. They come through but in bunches. You have not told me as to whether you take "Canada". It is well worth while. If not I will arrange to send it.

I today read a report of a German Intelligence Staff Officer on his examination of some American prisoners. It is very complimentary indeed to the Americans. I was very much interested in the dispatch clippings. I believe that this drive will be his last big offensive this year and he won't get a chance next. We are going to break him if he doesn't lay down. The policy we are adopting now seems to be a good one and after he is tired out I figure that we shall have enough fresh troops to hit him hard. I don't know anything but I have my eye on the latter part of this season.

With much love to all I am your affectionate son,  
Keith

July 20 1918 - France - (letter to sister Helen #88A)  
July 20 1918 - France - (letter to sister Helen #88A)

My Dear Helen,

This will be short and sweet for several reasons. It is 11:15 pm. We move tomorrow. I have a bum wrist as I fell on the thing. Besides all this I am peevish. All the envelopes I have to match this ink receiver have glued themselves down tight with dampness of this 30 foot dugout.

Your # 67 came a couple of days ago. All the letters come fairly regularly but in bunches. They sort of pile up I think in the army post offices and are cleared in batches as fast as possible.

As far as I can see it will be at least a month before I get a chance to go on leave. However it is quite a war now and as the last Bosche attack has been a failure for him and the French has bagged about 30,000 prisoners we might be called upon to do anything.

What is the matter with that finger of yours that it keeps splitting open. I hope it is well by now.

You and Dad had quite a wait at the station for the McQuarrie's train.

I have never received Aunt Tweebies or Maiden's address. Did someone let them know I got their parcel? It was a peach.

Expect to be back with the company in a day or two. We have had a pretty quiet time of it this tour so far and we are about to commence the second half of it.

Nothing much doing. We have it over him here in the air and bring a plane down every now and again. It is quite a sight at night to see all the searchlights looking for the bombing planes on both sides of the line and at the same time all his ground signals shot up to denote that our planes are overhead. Long chains of stars shot in the direction of the plane. A couple of nights ago we had quite a thunder and lightening storm and with the flash from the artillery made quite a picture. I was coming across country on a light railway track with my runner about 2 am. It was only a short walk but we just made it before the rain broke.

One of the most interesting things to watch in this business is the arrival of the ration train. After nightfall it pulls up by electric motor to the rendezvous and is met by the ration party from H.Q. and each company. It is like the arrival of a train in a little jerk water town. One of these tri weekly ones. It arrives this week and tries all next to get out. If you want to hear a man soundly cursed let him strike a match at the dump. The remarks are as good as a circus.

I am quite satisfied with the war and am more anxious to get at the Bosche than before. I hope that we get a chance on the job when they decide to break him.

Must get to bed now, which means taking off my collar and boots and getting under my trench coat. It is much warmer than my blanket.

Will write mother in a day or two. Have a fairly busy day tomorrow. I was wondering if there was any chance of transferring to the American army as a Major. Would like the experience and change and my experience should be worth something.

With much love I am Affectionately yours,

Keith

July 30 1918 - France - (letter to Father #88B)

My Dear Father,

Yours of the second inst. arrived a day or two ago and I was indeed pleased to get it. Mothers #88 and 89 came with it so I shall answer them altogether.

About May 25th I got a letter from the Bank saying that my letter of the 8th with enclosures had been received. I have no recollection of having written them or sent any enclosures about that time and I thought probably you had returned the cards etc. to change the account but I know now that couldn't have been accomplished by that time so the matter is still a mystery.

About the 3 months 'post mortem' pay. I have since been informed that this is not paid and that they only pay for the month during which a fellow is canned. If I can get any reliable information I shall let you have it but would not suggest making a demand for something the department knew of. It sounded too much to me. A person who is of no further use to the Govt. gets very little.

The cigarettes have been arriving quite safely and I do not think I have missed any of them. \$.15 straight is far too much. Here when we can get Players we get about three packages for nine pence. So that figures out about \$.06 per package. I smoked a pipe for some time after arriving here and had a nice little light straight stem which I bought in Victoria but some one pinched it and I got out of the pipe habit. The cigarette surely crowds the pipe out. The packages you send me contain 220 cigarettes.

How are the mallards coming along. I can hardly picture our place from the rear. Lets see the side entrance is reversed. There is a dog in the foreground, I suppose near the 'old apple tree' and the ash heap has given way to a cement emplacement for domestically hatched wild ducks recreation. What corner have you got your rhubarb in? That's a sure bet with you so suppose it has not been overlooked.

I should give a good deal to see the kids growing up. Joan must be quite a girl and the others getting well along. The time spent here is certainly time lost so far as the individual is concerned.

Billie seems to have suffered a great deal with his nose. I do hope that the last operation will give him relief.

If you can give the number of Fraser Allen's battalion I shall write him about the Leach's and he will be able to look them up when he is again in England. Poor Mrs Allen must be pretty badly shaken up. She certainly is not the type to stand a strain.

I had a note from Mrs. Lambert and yesterday got a D.R.L.S. from a A.W.Woods of the 3rd Div. Chaplain Services telling me he is about to return to Canada and enclosing a letter addressed to me from Frances I. Stevenson of Castletown Isle of Man. She wants me to go and see them when next on leave. I cannot remember ever having met Woods but he speaks of Mrs S. as Frances. I must write to her today. With luck I should get leave sometime in August but there is a move in sight and it looks like the long expected storm at last.

Am glad to hear that Grandmother is getting smarter every day. Tell her that when I get home we will do a fox trot.

The paymaster has just been in and cleared up the question I mentioned above. It seems that pay is deposited to the end of the month during which the soldier is killed. If one is killed on the 1st you win. If on the 30th you break even. We have no regimental paymaster now. There are two to a brigade. This chap is a very nice chap and reminds me of Jack Owen.

Just at present I am at the Transport Lines. Came down yesterday as I thought I would take a couple of days away from the battalion. There are signs of a move and we can look for anything anywhere. The chess game is developing and will move fairly rapidly for the balance of the year I expect. Everyone is keen for a show as we have done little since Passchendaele all of which ground was evacuated this year.

The States are pouring in now and If Fritz has got another kick in him he had better exercise his leg this year because it will be our turn next spring.

The Canadian Corps. is in fine shape and all ready to give a good account of themselves. When a show comes I hope it is a big one. There is only one place I am not keen to go and that is Belgium. It was a no good hole we got into up there although the job was done eventually.

The C.O. has been on leave and returned yesterday. Baxter is still away on his course.

Would like to see a chance of getting a majority out of the business before I am hit but there is no sign of any promotion in sight.

Am enclosing one or two notices and report I wrote concerning a patrol fight I was more or less mixed up with this last tour. I came pretty near getting my allotment of daisies that night

Must stop now as I have to drop a line to Mrs. Stevenson of Castletown.

Fritz has been dropping some very heavy bombs all over the area but the actual damage as a rule does not amount to much. He happened to get a band the other night which I heard play several times and they were splendid. Hit their huts and cleaned up the lot I am told.

Yesterday I went through some very large caves just a few hundred yards from our camp. They were dug I believe years ago by convict labour and have been used during the last two wars at least. They were quite interesting. We didn't get to the end of them and I haven't spoken to anyone yet who knows where they run to.

With much love to all I am,  
Affectionately your son,  
Keith

August 4 1918 - France -(letter # 89)

Dearest Mother:

It is amazing how the days slip by when they are full ones for us. I see that it is nearly three weeks since I last wrote you and today I shall only have a few minutes.

Some days ago we moved and have been on the go pretty steadily into the line and out. A day or two ago we march out about ten am and marched some six or eight miles to a town I had never been in before. We had a fair camp here and the next day we had a clean up and drill. The following day we moved out about 6 pm and marched a mile or two where we embussed. We debussed about 9 pm and in a heavy rain piled arms in a field and waited for orders. The rain stopped and the officers and men gathered in little groups around an instrument or two and sang every song in the world not forgetting that infernal Silver Threads. We tramped off in the darkness about twelve and it poured very hard with rain. We then entrained. The night was far from comfortable as there were no windows in the compartment and nine officers in each. The men were also a bit uncomfortable We stopped an hour for breakfast but as we were busy I only managed to get two hard boiled eggs. On the whole the trip was quite a good one as we know exactly what to expect whether walking, embussed or entrained and there were no complaints.

We detrained at 12 noon when it was again raining hard and shortly after started on an eight mile march to where our billets and kitchens were. It was either wet or hot and the march ran uphill and down dale. The pack and haversack were pretty heavy toward the last but I set a short pace on the grades and stepped out on the down slopes. The boys came along well and we marched into the kitchen singing. After everyone was fed we had some tea and toast from the field kitchen at 5 pm which was the first thing to eat for 24

hours excepting the two eggs. We got a dinner then about 7. Our billets are good and the people very good to us.

The house I am at has a very nice garden with lots of roses. Behind there is a splendid vegetable garden with an orchard behind it. I had not seen red currants for some time. The chateau here is quite a large one being built in 1633. All the places are quite interesting.

At one of our camps not long ago I went through a large cave system. It is used as shelter from bombs now but has seen two or three wars. It was very interesting and I did not get to the end of it. No one could tell me how far it ran. It was constructed I believe by convict labour.

If I am to be permitted to live for another leave I should get it about the middle of this month. If so I shall try to make the Isle of Man to see Mrs Stevenson.

I have not news to tell you. I could write a book on our life but as far as military news goes I can say nothing. We move off tonight for instance into the darkness and no one knows where to or why and I am glad to see that no one cares. By the papers the French, British and Americans still have Fritz moving back down south and I hope they keep him going.

I want to get a line or two written to Gertrude but I may not be able to as I have to change my clothes and climb into working duds.

Tomorrow we commence the fifth year of war and I do not expect it to last for the full year. I firmly believe that from now on the war is to be ours and everyone is quite satisfied that we can give him a proper beating. I expect to see his people become fed up before the fifth year is completed. I only hope that whenever the Allies hit they hit hard and suddenly.

I am with my company as the C.O. came home from leave and Purvis back from a rest camp. I would surely enjoy leave as my last was early December. Our leave has been altered and we must now do seven months before we are entitled to it.

I must close now and will drop you a card when I can I may be busy for some time.

Give my love to all and I am betting on the next twelve months.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

August 11 1918 - France -(letter # 90)

Dearest Mother:

Of course I cannot tell you where we are but it is quite unnecessary as the papers have no doubt got all the news. I shall not stop to give you details this time as I have so far only seen the army from behind. I was with the unit when the 'show ' opened but Baker Allsopp and myself were ordered to stay out and we have been coming along with the transport. This is the morning of the 4th day of the battle and I am now about ten miles from where we were when the attack opened. I was never so disappointed in my life as I was when I had to leave the bunch and go to the lines. The whole show was well worked up and we were counting on big things and I surely felt like a piker walking to the rear. Since then we have been moving twice a day and

until this morning the battalion had not been in the fight. I have this time however watched a big battle from the war correspondents point of view and no wonder they write thrilling accounts.

The prisoners pouring into the cages, by the thousand, the wounded coming through, the endless streams of traffic, artillery, ammunition, line transport, supply columns, tanks, infantry, lorries and everything that goes to make up an army. All this of both French and British poured along on every road as far as the eye could reach. I have had an easy time so far but am hoping that I shall be called up either today or tomorrow. Will write you at length when I get out of it all.

Give my love to all at home and tell Gertrude I shall write when the scrap is over.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

p.s. The evening we left our last billet for the final night march to assembly positions I received your box containing the waxed eggs and fruit cake. This is the first parcel that was badly hurt. The eggs were all smashed and beyond use and the cake had been badly soaked with something. However, we were having a bit of tea before leaving and I cut off what cake was fit to eat and we had it then. We could not have carried anything forward at that stage.

I will describe our approach marches in another letter.

Yesterday I got a letter from you # 90 with enclosures. I had heard Edith Helmcken was married and hope she has got a good chap. I enjoyed Grandmothers clipping "The Leddies Fra'Hell" and I don't blame Fred for not believing the Chopin story. The gink who wrote that ought to have one more dream and be admitted to an asylum. I also received Helen's #68 and one from Gertrude. I am glad that Fraser Allen did not make France again as his mother is so sick.

I don't remember having a photo taken in gaiters which Helen says you received. I had one taken in field boots. Is that the one she means. Helen says "I hope Fritz will leave the Canadians alone." He hasn't had a chance to. The Yanks are coming but we're still here. I hope the battle goes well as it is young yet. Our officer casualties are few so far.

Will give you a long account some day of this new style of warfare (to us). The country we are in is really beautiful and the weather so far has been good. It is nothing like the depressing fields of Passchendaele. This lovely open country is quite cheering.

With much love, Keith

August 16 1918 - France -(letter # 91)

Dearest Mother:

Cannot write much now as I am more or less busy. There has been a war lately but so far I am OK. Am in a bit of a clearing but not out of the woods yet.

Everything is fine. Weather very warm for fighting but the country is fine and the most of it in crop which Fritz Was trying to cut. We have backed him up some twelve miles and the Can. Corps I believe has the greatest penetration on the 40 mile battlefield. I have had some more experiences alright but missed the worst day of our fight.

Cannot tell when I shall get leave. Things are too unsettled but I have not seen England since I left there Dec.12th last.

I received Helens 69th a day or two ago when we were relieved to rest. She says she hopes Fritz leaves the Canadians alone. Just at that time we were pretty much mixing it with him and he hadn't much choice in the matter. Some of his prisoners are good looking men. The cages were a picture.

I volunteered to join the expedition for Siberia and when the C.O. found I was really ready to go he called me in and asked me to reconsider the matter. He made certain promises which I told him I didn't take any stock in because I had been promised things before. However, I dropped the idea as I thought perhaps that you would not like the idea. Again the war is well established here and we are not nearly so apt to go without food and water as we might be in Russia.

After all I guess this is as complete a war as a fellow will find in any other country.

Haven't time to give you any details so will write when I get through with the front. Would like to see the Cans. drop Lens before I leave France.

With much love to all I am  
Your loving son  
Keith

August 19 1918 - France -(letter # 92)

Dearest Mother:

Just a note to wish you many happy returns of the day. Also the members of the family who were married on the same day.

We are here. I am in a front line and my H.Q. is a miserable hole this trip. We have some of his crack marksmen across the way and it is no good taking chances.

Baxter got command of B Co'y but yesterday after I had left him for 2 minutes a Fritz sniper grooved his thigh for him and the lad has gone out. He is quite all right. The gink who shot him is not far away but very well concealed. He got a man walking behind me and darn near killed him. I got the trench mortars on him and I observed and gave corrections. It was fairly good fun, we played the deuce around the area with 10 lb. bombs.

Everything is fine but I am a wee bit dirty. My leave should be along in September if all goes well with me.

I have a few souvenirs this trip.  
Give my love to all  
Your loving son,  
Keith

August 29 1918 - France -(letter # 93)

Dearest Mother:

I have your #92 and #91 OK. Have been trying to write but there is little chance while this fighting is on. We have been through some great old times and then entrain, detrain, embus, debus, march and scrap again.

I cannot settle down to write a long description and doubt if I ever get one off now as the stuff becomes stale and one hasn't the inclination to go back over the details. So far I am OK although a lot of colds have been floating round owing to sleeping and living in the open in all weather. On the whole we have been pretty lucky.

My leave is still coming and (I should get away inside of the next week or two but expect to be in a fight before that time. Nothing makes me sick now though and I hope we keep on hitting him. He has his wind up badly and two of his divisions broke and ran not long ago. His machine guns are the only trouble makers.

Why is everyone in Canada crying down the Y.M.C.A. in France. I notice some who do so had as much as two months in the line. The Y is doing good work and should be backed up.

I see by one of your papers that Ike Hudson had a fall and hurt himself. Guess this will put a crimp in all Mrs Ike's hopes of society now.

Tell Gertrude I received her box of candy cake and nuts and the boys surely took to the candy. I enjoyed everything. We had the cake at lunch before hitting the road. We were in a wood and all the same picnic. Saw McDiarmid who used to be on the Burnaby engineering staff also Tina Mowbray as we marched to the train.

I have no Richard's in this company.

Must stop now Give my love to all and if I get through this next fight I shall wire from Blighty.

With much love I am  
Your affectionate son,  
Keith

September 10 1918 - France -(letter # 94)

Dearest Mother:

It is a very long time since I wrote you but we have been very busy and I have not had time to call my soul my own.

I shall now try to give you a more or less brief account of my doings and movements since we left the woods where we were at rest early in the summer. It is quite alright to give these particulars now as the whole affair is ancient history and the press has been printing it broadcast. We went into the line from the woods doing one or two tours and I was carrying on for a time as second in command. We had one or two rough moments during these tours. From the line we went into support and got orders to move. No one knew where to or why. We all did our own thinking. We marched to a near by village where we remained for about 36 hours. From here we marched to one of the main roads about dark and took busses. We debussed at 9:30 pm and formed up in a field. We did not entrain until 12:30am and it was raining very hard. The picture of the troops in that field was subject matter for a deal of thought. Our train moved about midnight and we stopped long enough for breakfast the next morning. Our train was crowded. We managed to get a bite to eat and have a shave. We detrained about 12:30pm and found we had eight



miles to march to billets. It was quite a hike but we were all in pretty good trim. By this time we could guess generally the front we were heading for. The country was beautiful and the people who had only billeted Canadians once before made quite a fuss over us.

We remained here that night and on the next the 4th of August commenced our approach marches for the Battle of Amiens. No one knew a thing but we lectured the men on secrecy and all ranks entered into the spirit of the thing. On the line of march discipline was strict. There was no noise no questions were asked or answered passing through villages. The men did not know whether they were north or south of our own front. All movement was by night and the men were confined to billets by day and meals parades were carefully handled.

We hit the road at 9pm from Friecourt and March via Etalminil, Hocquincourt, Hallincourt, Le Hamel, Chateau Airaines (a big town) Soues, to Fourdrinoy - 19 & 3/4 miles arriving at 4:50am on the 5th. Billets were only fair and it was late before I got to bed. The weather was overcast and drizzling. We were due to leave here at 9pm but were held until 1:15am on the 6th. We marched to Fluy via Saisseval, Seux arriving at 3:45am. Billets were good. An old maid of 76 owned my billet and the poor old soul fussed over me until I could hardly attend to my work of which there was a great deal. The march was only about five miles. weather wet. We pulled out of here at 10pm and I now had my horse. We passed the starting point in Pissy at 10:45pm marching via Clairay to Amiens Road to Saleux station and to Saleux. Traffic on roads was very heavy. We arrived at 3am on the 7th. The enemy bombed Amiens about midnight and all the searchlights of the city made a really wonderful sight. Billets were fair and the weather clearing up. This march was roughly 9 miles. We knew we were approaching a fight and had been given a very little bit of information. I had a conference with Pritchard in the bedroom of my billet (to get to we had to go through the bedroom of the Madam) and got to bed at 5am. At 7:45pm that day after a rush during which we issued battle stores.

We had a meeting before leaving and I was ordered to stay out of the show. I got permission to go to the assembly position. We marched via Dury, St. Fuscien, Boves approx, 12 miles. Traffic was so heavy that halts were frequent and to was 2:30am on the 8th when the battalion assembled on the western side of Gentelles Wood. The men had a short sleep and I got a stretcher under the medical cart and slept until zero hour. Tanks were moving into positions forward of us all night. On the road we had passed few troops. We were the reserves moving up last (with perhaps the hardest end of the fight to play) and on parallel routes. All the others were a few hours ahead.

At zero 4:20am the barrage opened and the assaulting troops which were forward out of sight went forward. The sight was one I shall never forget. Calvary in a column of fours rode by on the trot for hours. I saw them start some after zero and they were coming as far as one could see at 6am. Tanks and aircraft were all busy. At 6am the battalion moved forward to the 3rd assembly position missing the second one as the advance was progressing so quickly.

I said "so long" to the boys and with a big lump in my throat accompanied Major Baker to the Transport Lines at Boves Wood. It looked like a great show and I hated to miss it.

Boves Wood was a place of interest. A large wood of shade trees and all transport had been massed here. The night of the seventh saw 40,000 animals in this wood. The weather had been wet and the mud was nearly knee deep.

After some trouble we found our lines. I had a cup of tea and turned in. It was nearly five miles from the assembly position to the woods and it was 8am when we got there. I was awakened at 10:15 and told that orders were in to move in 15 minutes. We pulled out at once.

There were four roads converging at the Bove bridge and each road was a line of transport French and British as far as the eye could reach. We had to fight for place on the road and it took us until 4:30pm to cross the river and move a couple of miles to the main Amien - Roye Road. We halted for dinner close to one of the Corps cages and I again spent a most interesting hour. The army was pouring forward behind the infantry. Artillery, transport, lorries, motors, mounted troops, everything including ration trains and supply columns and ammunition. coming the other way were the empties and ambulances, columns of prisoners and stretcher and walking wounded.

A german brigadier general and his staff came to the cage which was already packed full. A Tommy said to him "well what do you think of this?" and he replied "oh there have been 200.000 English prisoners taken since March" Tommy asked "how many Canadians?" The hun shrugged his shoulders, so the Tommy said "200,000 eh will I'll tell you what we'll do - we'll give you 200.000 more and then lick the supreme hell out of you. Rank counted little just then. The Hun had a hard looking face but he had a beautiful overcoat.

I had supper and road ahead to Hangard via Domart to pick out transport lines for the night. Hangard was the original front line and the dead bosche first presented themselves here. I could not make any time until I picked up some cavalry so trotted along beside them and we cleared traffic pretty well.

I met the transport about 10pm and after seeing to the watering of the horse got to sleep between the mess cart and a G.S wagon under a tarpaulin - the weather was fine. The French were reported to be some ten or twelve km. ahead and our cavalry well into the enemy country. So far the battalion had not been engaged and were just ahead of us.

To be continued in my next. I am due to go on leave day after tomorrow.

Lovingly your son,

Keith

September 11 1918 - France -(letter # 95)

Dearest Mother:

To resume: August 9th - At 7am I rode forward to Demuin and looked for new transport lines. Returned and the train moved at 9am. we arrived at Demuin and had lunch. Orders were received to move further forward. I again rode ahead to Claude Wood at 12:30 pm and at a cross roads at hill 100 met Thompson of J.P.H.Bole's office. He is a Brigade runner and the same as ever. Reached wood at 1:30 and took over from 49th Batt'n 3rd Div. Slept for two hours. We sent the kitchens forward to give the battalion a hot meal. The enemy was retreating and the battalion had not yet been called into action. At 8pm three whippet tanks returned and stated they could not keep up with the bosche. Artillery fire to our left was heavy. The weather was fine and I received some Canadian mail I turned in about 8:30pm. Enemy planes bombed us all night. Night very cold.

10th - Orders came for an early move. We struck camp at 5am and moved at 6am to wood to east of Beaucourt in Santerre arriving at 7:15. There was heavy artillery fire ahead between 7:30 to 9:00. We moved again at 2pm to Beaufort Wood approx.

3 1/2 miles. Our lines were in wood near the old chateau which had been an enemy hospital. We arrived here at 3:45pm. The artillery was still pushing forward. There were signs of fighting on front of Le Quesnel. Dead Bosche and Canadians were lying about. Wounded men told us that heavy machine gun resistance was being encountered. Here we caught up with 1st line transport and I saw Neal. We were in touch with the battalion by runner.

While at dinner two or three lads buried three hunns about ten feet from our table. The comments were rather crude but funny. Fritz bombed throughout the night.

11th - There was heavy barrage again at 4am and fighting still progressing. Battalion was expected to go into action today. We remained in the same location all day. Three or four of our officers had been wounded. Lt Wilson was killed while with the tanks. Night was fine and the enemy bombed again. The battalion went over in the afternoon and met resistance. It occupied a series of trenches part of the old Somme lines on the hun side of old no-man's land.

12th - At 8:10am. I got a message despatched at 12:15am calling me up. I reached B'n H.Q. with Neal, on western side of Fouquescourt about 11am I was to relieve Capt Lindsell of A Co'y as he was worn out. I did so and formed a joint H.Q. with Pritchard of C.Co'y Batt'n had reverted to trench warfare. Men were weary and I had difficulty in having all necessary precautions taken.

13th - At 4:50am After a very complicated relief I was relieved by the 19th Battn and marched to Rosieres arriving at 6:30am. There was a good breakfast for the men and they turned in about 8am.

At noon I volunteered for Siberia.

At 4pm we moved to LeQuesnel area. Weather was hot and roads very dusty. We remained in the open here during the 14th and 15th receiving some reinforcements. Fritz began to shell the back areas and the weather was hot. The dead horses were very disagreeable and flies were rather bad.

16th - On this day we moved back into the front line at Fouquescourt. The relief was complete by 3:15am on the 17th. The battalion in the line had just pushed forward to Fransart and we took over while situation was still obscure. I was the left front line company. The night passed quietly.

17th - In the morning I went over the front and the enemy snipers were bad. We had Jaegers in front of us being part of the enemy's crack Alpine Corps (green cap I sent home) Barnes of the 44th Battn (scout officers) was badly hit while walking about 4 feet behind me.

I was with Baxter and a few minutes after patrols I wished to push out. Jim was hit cutting a groove in his thigh. Nothing serious. I called up our snipers and set them to work to get the enemy snipers location but he was well hidden in their end of the village.

The hun had set traps along the trenches and I removed three of these gun cotton charges from my front line and carried them to a shell hole warning all men not to meddle with anything not familiar to them. The night was quiet.

18th - This morning I took two sections and carefully searched the woods on my right rear as I feared there might be a few bosche still there. Shots had come from this location during the night. We found no one. The sniper was still active and wounded another officer so I got the trench mortars and we pretty well blew up the whole area from which he was working. The sniping stopped. Our patrols during the night did not get much definite information. Fritz was using very few flares. Norwest the crack sniper of the 50th was killed on this day. Hes planes were fairly active being over our lines at intervals. Both artilleries were active. No cooking could be done except on Tommy cookers and we got as many of these up as possible. Our run issue was good. To be continued.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

September 22 1918 - France - (letter # 96)

Dearest Mother:

Part three:

August 19th - On this day my company remained in the same location at Fransart and the enemy was generally quiet shelling intermittently. I had one man killed who was my only casualty this day. At 3pm I got the Stokes under McCallum, who was with us and wounded in the "triangle" on May 7th 1917, planing on the area occupied by the Fritz snipers.

August 20th - Was quiet except that over artillery hammered all day on sugar refinery and railway crossing. The weather continued fine. On this day one of my boys was accidentally shot and killed by a comrade. Such things will happen now and again despite all precautions.

August 21 - We were to be relieved by the 44th but it was nearly lam on the 22nd before the relief was in. We moved to (L11.a and c) back of Fouquescourt and the weather was very hot. We buried two of our airmen who had been brought down and the men rested for the balance of the day. Rations were late and did not reach us until after midnight.

We remained here during the 23rd and 24th. On the 23rd I rode to the Transport Lines some five miles in rear returning at 5 pm. The little horse was very nervous in the forward area. On the 24th Fritz shelled us at noon and about 8:30 pm. I was relieved by the 57th Regt. French and marched to Transport Lines E27d arriving at 11 pm. Fritz was directly overhead and bombing. Searchlights from all sides crossed above us in a vain attempt to pick up the planes giving one the impression that he was moving under the ribbons of an immense maypole. I had to put my men in single file and send the platoons by parallel roads. I had no casualties altho while riding along an avenue of trees a bomb nearly got me. Another battalion suffered quite heavily while in a column of fours.

August 25th - Our reveille was 5 am and at 7:30 we marched to (W26.central) via Caix arriving at the bath house at 9 am. The baths were good and the men received clean clothes. We spent the day here in the wood moving off at 7:45 pm. to the rear arriving at Gentelles Wood via Cayeux, Ignasicourt, Aubercourt, Hangard Domart approx. ten miles. This march started with terrific dust and an artillery battery trudging past nearly smothered us . About 9pm a thunder storm with heavy rain came on. The remainder of the trip was made in pitch blackness and wet. We had no shelter at our destination but

received an area in the woods which was fairly well soaked. We slept here quite comfortably however on ground sheets.

August 26th & 27th - We remained here carrying on certain parades but I spent practically all my time readjusting my records and getting things squared away for a fresh start. About 8 pm on the 27th we marched to Boves. Before we moved off McDiarmid who was on the Burnaby Engineering Staff came up and spoke to me. We had a chat for nearly half an hour. He is with the 12 Bn C.E. (A.Co'y)

As we marched to the station at Boves about 8:30 we passed #1 C.C.S. (Casualty Clearing Station) and Tina Mowbray was on the side of the road with some nurses to see who we were.

Our train pulled out about 10:15 pm carrying our entire transport with us. The night was wet.

August 28th - We travelled via Doullens. St Pol to Aubigny arriving about 10:30 am. Here we issued rations hurriedly and embussed at 11:30 moving to Arras and from here we marched through Arras to Beaurains.

The weather was wet and the enemy was shelling Arras with long range guns. We located in old trenches and dug cover for ourselves.

August 29th - We carried on a little training and again cut equipment down to battle order. Weather was showery all day.

August 30th - In the am I limbered the men up with some physical exercises and in the afternoon we were ordered to move to the eastern edge of the village and find new cover for ourselves. The day was fine and I here had a trench mortar officer with two guns and crews report to me for duty. We remained here all the 31st.

September 1 - At 3 pm following a conference with the C.O. at which we were given meager instructions and information about an attack we were to make next morning, we marched for the line to assault the much talked of Drocourt-Queant line. The situation forward was obscure so we moved via Neuville, Vitasse, Wancourt, to LaBergere. Here we served supper and issued battle supplies.

Major Baker who had been ahead reported that the situation was not clear, the Bosche was in behind our "Jumping off line" on the right and that the Imperials were trying to clear the situation up.

The CO and Co'y commanders went forward to Brigade H.Q. and the Battn followed under Major Baker. We were here given a barrage chart which was of little use in the dark and practically no more information. I was to be the left assault Co'y with Pritchard behind me and B Co'y on my right with A behind it.

The front companys were to jump at 5 am and attack and capture the first two lines of trenches. The rear companys passing through and capturing the next two lines. Having then smashed the line the balance of the brigade was to pour through the village of Dury and beyond.

At Brigade H.Q. we received guides for part of the way and we were led by them through a bad place owing to swamp, shelling and gas. I had one casualty. We arrived at the Imperials H.Q. in a sunken road and I had a long talk with one of their officers who seemed to know the situation. Our new guides had not arrived and the entire battalion was packed in this sunken road before they came. We were assured the wire was cut and I saw the C.O. and gave him the information I had. Pritchard and I were disgusted with the

gloomy outlook of things as our men had come eight miles taking 9 hours to do it and we were not yet assembled.

Working in a country we had never seen and where no one appeared to know what line of outposts the Bosche held. I told the C.O. that it was the biggest looking crime I had ever seen but that Pritchard and I would go at 5 am if we had to go without a flank at all.

We received our new guides and started. This time the trip was shorter and I soon recognized a woods and had my bearings from the map which we had been practically memorizing. Once I got my feet I fired the Imperials and told them to get out and they were glad to go. We walked all over the flat and put our men into position.

The Bosche lights were well behind us on the right but I was connected on the left and OK'ed my assembly at 2 am (P.19 c). As we were settling down some planes (I think our own) dropped bombs on us and one of the companys had about twelve casualties. The things began to fall as I was visiting my platoons and my two runners, batman, and myself were all forced to lie flat with our noses in the mud to escape the lateral burst of the blessed things. It was rather rubbing it in I thought and the cursing I didn't do wasn't worth mentioning. When one can hear them coming through the air they are not far off.

I got no sleep that night and at 4:15 am got my officers and N.C.O.'s to awaken the men where they had fallen asleep from weariness. Rum was issued and I stood sizing the situation up and wondering just how far behind my barrage line my troops were.

There was no nervousness before zero as there usually is. I thought the thing was going to be an awful day and was so disgusted with the whole business that I could hardly work up any interest. I looked at my watch - 4:58. Everything was quiet as the grave and dawn was just breaking so that one could see for a couple of hundred yards. Bayonets were fixed and the men all crouching to avoid being seen. While I was taking in the picture the 2 minutes slipped away and suddenly the whole world behind us seemed to burst out in a roar and flash. The barrage was down and the curtain of shells (a field gun to every nine yards of front not to mention heavies) was in front of us a good safe 200 yards. To myself I gave a grin of relief and thought 'that's pretty lucky' and to the boys aloud "Will she's away - lets go." and stepping to the front I led them up to within 50 yards of the bursting shell before the curtain lifted and moved 100 yards closer to the enemy.

We were off to a good start on our 1200 yard trip to his first line.

Lovingly,  
Keith

September 27 1918 - England -(note en route to France)  
(Mrs. Lamberts, Berkshire)

Dearest Mother,

Before coming on leave I despatched the following packages containing war trophies from France.

- 1. water bottle (German)
- 1. steel helmet (camouflaged)

Sept.7th

- 1/2 doz. mugs for a camping kit

1. watch chain and scissors  
Sept.8th  
2 caps -green of German Alpine Corps.Jaejar Regt.and one  
ordinary issue  
1. curved pipe  
1. pair field glasses  
Sept 9th  
2. belt knives  
Sept 12th  
1. Anti tank cartridge of which I had detonator discharged .

Lovingly yours,  
Keith

October 10 1918 - France - (letter # 97)

Dearest Mother:

I have been unable to write for some time as we have been very much on the rush since the hun line has been changing so rapidly under our continued smashing.

I had a good leave but did not get over to the Isle of Man as the weather was bad and with the unit going over the top I was afraid to go away from my address very far. Upon my return from leave I found a big bunch of letters and have not time enough to read them all over now to see if there are any questions

I received your box dated Aug 9th and the War Fruit Cake was very good. Everything was in good shape but don't put spearmint gum along with anything else. I have also received another box of cigarettes.

Tell Father I have a nice small collection of German revolvers. I am also sending home an Iron Cross which one of my Lance Corporals took from a colonel in the Cambrai show. He asked him for it and was refused. I don't know what happened but I believe the boys rifle slipped and the butt of it stunned the hun. I am sending a bit of stuff home by degrees and want to get a little cabinet made for them. Each thing has a bit of D Co'y history attached to it. Please let me know as you receive them.

I have subscribed to Canada and have purchased all the back volumes I could get. These will go direct to you. Please save all copies. When I get time I shall give you the last instalment of the Battle of Arras.

Tomorrow I am giving a dinner to the C.O. and Adjutant and all the old D Co'y. officers who are still with the battalion. There will be about 9 of us all told. We are in billets and I have rather a good one although every house in the city is shell shocked. I do not expect to be here long and would expect to see at least one or two more big battles before winter. Everyone is all for staying with the scrap rather than sit down for another 6 months of mud and give him a chance to reorganize. If the weather holds he is going to be put to the test of his life before Xmas.

The Canadians have done good work as have all the others and next year sees us finished fighting. If the German people could see the boys attack they would know the game was up.

He relies altogether on machine guns. The dead have been many for him. Every hun who fights is killed by my boys but I order them to give quarter to

a man who throws down his arms at the start. Some work their guns to the last and cut us up and when they see the games up, throw up hands and peddle this Kamerade stuff to us. Well its a case of "It don't get him nothin'". They come pouring out of the dugouts sometimes offering the boys watches revolvers, or anything they own. They say the Canadian fights for souvenirs.

One chap wanted to give me some cigars and cigarettes but I called him an uncomplimentary name and told him to go to hell with his cigarettes. I am sending home soon a nice silver mounted flask. One of my sergeants took it from a hun and as it was full he did not know just what the dope was so he grabbed a Fritz private and told him to drink some of it. Fritz drank the whole business. It was good brandy. The Sergeant was so disgusted that he gave away the flask.

The weather is holding fairly well but the nights in the field are fairly cold now. We spent an entire night on mortar lorries the other night and it was a bear. Everyone is working hard in order to make the most of our successes. This was to be his big offensive year and we have driven him beyond where he started from. His wire entanglements on his big main lines were terrific and I don't know how we ever did get through but he has his wind up badly and his infantry is a wash out. His best troops and fighting desperately to stop us but when a couple of million men start forward it takes some stopping.

I am hoping to see all peace moves rejected and to see Austria and Turkey lay down as Bulgaria did.

A Fritz plane is overhead and the anti aircraft are blazing away.

Tomorrow we have an inspection by the Divisional Commander and everyone is busy trying to get clean and fully equipped. That's one advantage about a show. A fellow is about as senior as anyone in the field.

Must stop now as I promised Berner to go and try and get a bath this afternoon. During the scraping we all got most beastly lousy. I have had a hard time getting rid of them but am OK now. I threw away clothes galore.

With much love to all  
Your affectionate son,  
Keith

p.s. I sent a guide to Scotland home to get rid of it and my Q.M.Sgt. registered the blessed thing. It is of no value.

October 12 1918 - France - (letter # 98)

Dearest Mother:

There should be Canadian mail in but so far I have not seen it. So here goes for a note. Letters always arrive just after I have written.

Yesterday we had an inspection of our brigade by the Divisional Commander. We were standing on one place for two hours while he gave us the once over and before that the C.O. and the Brigadier had both taken a swing at us. After the inspection he made a very good common sense address to us all and was very high in his praise for what we had done and seemed to be sincere about it.



Yesterday afternoon I rode over and had tea with Tina Mowbray who is about seven miles from here in a C.C.S. I did not see Bella.

Last night I gave a dinner to the C.O and Adjutant and four old D. Coy officers who were still with the battalion. We surely put on a bang up dinner with white table cloth china and decanters etc. A large candelabra over the table was very pretty when filled and lighted. This and the room was decorated with climbers the leaves of which were turning red. The colours were really lovely and the dishes containing the grapes, nuts and raisins etc. all had these leaves under the fruit. It was as pretty a table as I have seen for a long time. Old D. Coy has quite a reputation for its dinners. I shall enclose our menu also a translation in ordinary language.

Today is Saturday and weather bad. I am duty company and have no men left for parade so did not get up till nine o'clock.

Have been busy all morning culling out surplus kit and my old bed roll all of which I am forwarding to England. Today or tomorrow I am sending home a silver mounted flask taken in the Cambrai show. This is filled with army ration rum which in itself is quite a souvenir. The rum is English not hun. Then there is a watch. It has an alarm clock arrangement. I believe this is English but was taken from a hun so may have made a round trip. I also have two or three tassels which I would like kept as I hope to get some more. Then I am mailing an iron cross of which I think I wrote. These are all Cambrai.

My trunk is at Percy Leach's and I have some things in it but they are heavy. It would likely cost a lot to send them home so will see if I can go with them apre le guerre. There is a bit of D. Coy history attached to each bit. Don't let the customs soak you duty on these articles. If any gink does that I hope I meet him afterwards. He ought to try getting them.

Enclosed find a few coins - two minted during this war - metal poor. One just after the close of the last war.

With much love to all I am  
Lovingly your son,  
Keith

October 16 1918 - France - (letter # 99)

Dearest Mother:

Your 96th and 97th letters arrived last night. I knew of Winslow's death and was very sorry. I knew him and he was a very decent chap. Poor Dorie McLagan has lost pretty heavily in this war. She was living in England with Mabel Fraser.

So the water bottle got home. Don't worry about the kit. I stopped it in England. It got lost for a time but finally turned up.

The box that had the waxed eggs was badly smashed and altho the cover held it together it had had a rough trip. The socks were OK.

I cabled (full rate to get speed) on the morning of the 14th. Cannot understand how it is that you did not get the wire until the 16th.

So far I have been handed two or three copies of the clipping about my future promotion. I have been entitled to the rank as senior Coy Commander for some months but as we have two Majors there is no vacancy and little chance of there being one. Edgar Sands used to be with White Shiles and Coy.

I have not smoked a pipe for a year and a half as mine was stolen and I got out of the way of a pipe. I have never been given a pipe in my life so the other day in Scotland I treated myself to one. It seems hard to get used to and troublesome. I have a very nice leather pouch which was in my box in London.

I have not applied for the American navy. Do not know the Minneapolis Keith. Where is Kenneth?

At present I am in a dugout. Again it is a new front and I went up yesterday and gave it the once over. Cannot say any more.

There are great rumours of peace and the papers are full of rot. The hun is beaten and no one knows it better than we do. He can fight for a long time yet if his people stand back of him. His morale is low. We give him no peace and have no front line trench now. It is a semi open game we are playing and the bullet is more dangerous than it used to be. We do not want peace unless we get everything we want. These peace rumours are bad because no one wants to be killed or wounded if there is a chance of peace next week. Lets have it definite one way or the other. We have him now and he will be driven from France by force of arms which I thought impossible at one time. Belgium he still holds. The weather today is wet and I fear the winter is coming along. I sent an officer up today and he has just returned to say that the hun is not where he was yesterday so I must stop and get the company ready to move. We shall be on the road the minute the report gets throug  
Affectionately your son,

Keith

October 7 1918 - France - (letter # 100)

Dearest Mother:

Just a line to acknowledge receipt of Helen's letter of Sept 13th which was my first day of leave.

Charlie Bailey was not killed. He was wounded. A broken leg. Machine gun bullet.

The weather is not so good just now but I don't think there will be much rest this winter. The hun is in no position to sit down even if he were given a chance which I hope he won't. The whole line is in danger and he has to go back. He is very generous to offer to discuss the arrangements for withdrawing. They ought to tell him to quit cold or get back the best way he can.

If peace is not arranged Austria and Turkey will be wash outs. It is really wonderful over here and I would not like to leave France just yet.

I hope Billy and Elsie enjoyed their trip. Did she see Mildred DeBeck? I hear from her every now and again.

What picture of mine did Helen copy for a military coat? I don't remember any taken in an overcoat.

I have never written you anything further of the battle of Arras. I don't seem to get time to do anything and suppose I have forgotten a great many details. If I get a chance I shall give you a further brief account but at any rate it was a good scrap and we killed bunches of them. My company got about 300 prisoners that we hadn't a chance to put out. They more than ran

for us with their hands as high as they could get them. His machine gunners fought and were all blooming well killed.

I expect the C.O. round to see me before long. We are spread all over the country. I am a good half hours walk from Battn. H.Q.

With much love to all I am,

Affectionately your son,  
Keith

p.s. I have sent you a package containing a watch and an iron cross  
also one with a flask and some tassels. KCM

Menu included in letter # 100

MENU

Soupe

Creme a la tomate

**Entree**

**Fillets de soles au citron**

Pommes de terre a la Francaise

Roti

Entrecotes de boeuf gras,  
Sauce Maitre d'hotel

Salade

Combination etrangere d'Arras

Legumes

Chouxfleur a la creme delicieuse  
Puree de pommes de terre exquise

Desserts

Tarte Canadienne, a la mode  
Creme a la vanille Anglaise  
Peches  
Cerises noir du congo  
Gateau a fruits recherchees

Savoury

Rarebit au pays de Gale sur toast

Fruits

Raisins des coteaux, noix, et raisins sec du midi

The et Cafe

October 30 1918 - France - (letter # 101)

Dearest Mother:

I am in hospital for a few days. Left the battalion on the 26th with a rather bad carbuncle on the back of my neck. Am not sure whether they will evacuate me to the base or not but it is quite possible if there is a red cross train leaving tomorrow or the next day.

Recently I have had some wonderful experiences but I never finished giving you a description of the last big show I was in.

It seems so long ago that it is like ancient history and I suppose I have forgotten most of the details but will just give you a brief outline of what it was like in order to complete the letters already written. I believe my last stopped just before zero hour. Well here goes for a short Part IV.

Zero was set for 0500 hours and at 04:15 we were about with rum and getting the boys ready. by ten minutes to the hour all was ready and I stood looking into the breaking light to see if I could ascertain my landmarks for direction in the 1200 yard advance before we came to his line.

The time passed quickly. There was no excitement or nervousness so far as I could see. I had absolutely no feeling of either. I was very much 'fed up' with the operation and had left everything to fate. I worried however as to how far the barrage would clear my men when it came down. Outside of heavy guns we had a field gun for every nine yards of line. My speculations were suddenly interrupted by a roar of artillery and I woke up to the fact that my job was on. Stepping forward I said "There she goes" and shouting and signalling said to the fellows "Come on boys lets start." The long lines of men rose and moved forward as far as one could see on either side the lines continued. The barrage was splendid. A perfect curtain some two hundred yards ahead of us. I moved up to about 75 yards and held that. Dense clouds of smoke commenced to roll across the field and shut out all view. Keeping direction became very difficult and a certain amount of confusion crept into the movement. As the artillery lifted each 100 yards it became a little erratic and some shorts fell behind us. We had our first casualties. Poor old Pritchard was knocked out in this way and is still in bed in London. I had one or two very lucky escapes myself. I stopped to light a cigarette and one for my runner. We had been all night without a smoke. Now it did not matter.

Suddenly I caught sight of his first line wire. This was supposed to be cut. It was a good entanglement some 15 or 20 yards in depth and not cut. Our barrage was knocking it about in places. When I saw the wire I thought we were in for trouble. As we reached it a German got up. He rose right in front of my platoon and as he was the first Fritz the boys had seen about 15 bayonets levelled and came for him. That hun was the worst case of fear I have ever seen. The fear of death was just sticking out of his eyes and he squealed and danced. He was disgusting. I was afraid a machine gun would open from the trench behind the wire and catch half a platoon clustered round one hun. I ran in and ordered them all to get through the wire and to spread out and I gave the hun a kick in the seat of the pants and started him across the ground to our back area where his shells were now falling in good numbers.

We crossed the wire and found the trench behind it a dummy. badly frightened huns were leaving their posts and racing to their main lines further back. A few machine guns opened fire. Casualties began to occur and the stretcher bearers were busy. Now during a time like the above little things impress one and I shall never forget seeing a rabbit who was just outside the second belt of wire and between us and our barrage. He could not

run our way as the lines of troops were steadily approaching and on the other side the shells were bursting in rows. He looked about and then went like a streak along the wire. As far as I could see he was still going but as the show was on a 45 mile front I am afraid that he never reached the end of that line of men. Then I saw a partridge. It had been grazed by a piece of shrapnel and feathers were flying in all directions from it. The bird flew in circles and a more badly frightened thing I have seldom seen.

We came to the second belt of wire and scrambled through it to the trench beyond. My job was to take these two lines and have a support company under Pritchard go through one and take the 3rd and 4th lines. I could find no trace of Pritchard and did not hear till later that he had been wounded. I carried along and took the 3rd line. Where I stopped 3 of my platoons and allowed the 4th to go on with C Coy. to the last.. Fighting was now on in fair shape and the enemy infantry was throwing u his hands in big bunches. They came out of the town in a regular column of fours on the double. One of my little runners saw this and in great excitement called "Oh Captain, captain, look at them come!" I looked and said, "Yes they're coming alright but you're letting four or five run away there." He caught sight of a small party running toward their back lines. He never said a word but dropping on one knee commenced to shoot. I do not know how he made out as something else had my attention.

Reorganization was the next thing and this is always to hunt for souvenirs as soon as they get there. All the machine gunners who had fought their guns had been killed and my company had taken about 300 prisoners. Scrambling over a pile of dead and dying hunns I managed to find their dugout to establish a H.Q. in and run a telephone to the rear. It was quite a job getting down because there were a couple of wounded bosche on the incline. We were in these lines for about an hour when his artillery was turned on us. He gave us a hard smashing and drenched us with gas. We couldn't live in My H.Q. at all. Then orders came to move the battalion further forward. This was done and by noon we were dug in in shell holes on the reverse side of a slope along the crest of which the fight was still going on. His machine guns were holding our fellows up. Another Brigade had gone through ours by this time.

We lay in our shell holes all day and at 11 pm got orders that the advance would be continued at 5 am. Rations, rum, and water had to be issued in the dark and the battalion assembled in artillery formation which was no small job. At zero I was all ready and the artillery opened. The boys acted as though on parade and I controlled by a whistle which was passed on by all officers and N.C.O.'s. I noticed that the artillery was not shooting on our front and could not see any troops on my flanks so halted before running the boys over. Some one began yelling for me on the double and a battalion runner rushed up exhausted and shoved a message into my hand which said that the show had been postponed. Bn H.Q. received notice of this just two minutes before zero. It was rather lucky I stopped where I did.

At noon orders were received that we should move forward another battalion. It was a lovely clear day and we had to move over the skyline and across the open slope under the nose of one of his kite balloons. His artillery opened on us in short order and we had a nasty trip and lost some good men. I walked along with Douglas who was in charge of the leading platoon and a better chap I never met. When we reached our area I left him and went forward to arrange the line and coming back in about 15 minutes passed the word for him. A stretcher bearer ran up and said he had just been killed by one of the shells. He was one of my favorites and I missed him dreadfully afterwards but at the time I just said "Oh hell, send me his sergeant." There is no time to think of anything but the job on hand. We were badly shelled all day. Srigley, my batman, and I dug a hole for

ourselves up forward. the hole on my right was blown in. One man killed and his partner wounded. The one on my left was hit on the edge by a light shell and I thought that Micklejoh my runner (he used to play football on the Coquitlam team) was gone but as I asked if anyone was hurt he dived out of the hole like a rabbit and away to another one. The poor kid was killed in a show while I was on leave since then. The boys were pretty well tired out by now and we were eventually relieved at night by another division.

We marched out across country by compass and struck the main road. After doing a few km. we arrived at our field kitchens and everyone had a good hot meal. Then great coats were issued and everyone lay down in the field to sleep. We had a piece of tarpaulin and were quite comfortable. We moved at noon next day to a place not far from Arras and the traffic on the roads was very heavy.

As we went along I saw an M.O. and checking the horse I called to him and asked him if his name was Briggs. He said yes and it was the Doc.Johnnie I think. I had a chat with him and then over took the column.

So this mother is a short description of what a show consists of. By writing in great detail and exercising all my descriptive powers you might be given a slight idea of what it looks like but one has to see the ground and the barrage, the casualties and all to have an idea of what a show is.

Tomorrow I shall drop you a line as to some of the funny experiences I have had during our recent tours while the hun has been retreating.

One of these fine months Germany will realize that she will be better off to quit fighting. The sooner she starts to save money the sooner her war indemnity will be settled off.

I hear a rumour that Austria is settling up. Turkey will be next and then we will trim Germany as we see fit.

With luck I shall be sent down the line some time today but am not sure. My neck is ever so much better although the puss is very deep. Yesterday they took a large piece of the heart out of it.

Much love to all and address my letters to Leach for the time being.  
Affectionately your son,  
Keith

October 31 1918 - France - (letter # 102)

Dearest Mother:

This is a cold joint and I hope they ship me out to a good warm hospital. I get up and go out for a walk and all that sort of thing but today the weather is rather poor.

On the night of the 14th we commenced a tour which lasted until the 22nd. During that time the weather was dull with fogs or rains and we had not much comfort.

The hun was retreating and our job was to keep in touch with him all the time. It is certainly the hardest warfare I have yet tried.

During the tour I suppose we went about 20 miles carrying on a running fight as we went. Suddenly he would be gone and then we would advance until perhaps two or three miles further on we would get a splatter of machine gun bullets. It was very exhausting experiences. I was ordered through one town by night. The whole battalion was behind me and the enemy was suppose to be gone. Well he wasn't. I got out of a bad hole without a casualty and we had some bosche to our credit. The first intimation I had they were near was from a couple of French girls. Then I saw two men in a door way 50 yards down the street. I had my interpreter speak to them but they did not answer up to suit me so I pulled my gun and walked up the sidewalk to them. It was a German Sentry post. I had them cold as they were talking to each and did not see me walking up the side walk. I took them back with me and had them questioned in German and got their outpost strength which consisted of eight companies. We had to fight a rear guard ourselves for a few minutes before I could get the battalion back to a good position. The group belonging to the post I captured came running up the street with a machine gun but I already had a lewis gun team watching for this and we dropped about five of them and got their gun next morning. The machine gun bullets were soon rattling round the corners in good shape. I cannot understand how I was not killed by the sentries because the French civilians were making a fearful noise over us. Next morning we were told to go at it again and we tried to get our foremost patrols up carefully but the civilians poured out of the houses and cheered and clapped until we could be heard half a mile away. The fight lasted here all day. Next morning we had to chase him again and that afternoon and evening was mighty hot.

I tried to run across an open field but three trench mortar shells landed and as each exploded I changed direction finally making a run across a cabbage patch with my runner. A machine gunner opened up on us and we flopped and flattened out behind a cabbage head while he searched the ground about us. There was a four strand barbed wire fence in front of me and I figured I would have to pause to get through which would give him a chance at me. A lad tried it from the other side but while stooping to get through he got it in the head and fell about eight yards from me. I decided to wait a few minutes and then made my run suddenly and got away with it my runner following safely. I do not know how any of us got away with our lives that afternoon and yet our casualties were not heavy. I established a H.Q. in a cellar which was practically front line Bn. H.Q. because I ran the four companies from there. It was also a dressing station and hospital. It was really one of the busiest little rooms I have seen for a long time. In the town I first mentioned and which I rather feel I freed there are some thousands of civilians and they made an awful fuss over us. They have had no news for four years and are like kids. Anything we required we just used. They had no idea of being paid for anything. We certainly had some lovely billets. The chateau of the place in which I made my H.Q. had been Hindenburg's. It was a lovely place with large grounds. We have had some great side lights thrown on the treatment of our prisoners by the bosche and I guess it was pretty bad. The French people had very little to eat and say that the Germans didn't have it to give them. Of course all the civilians had to work. In this place they already have some 50 or 75 men and women in jail for assisting and giving information to the bosche. They have long lists of charges running back over the whole period. Many of them may be shot.

On the 26th I arrived there at F.A. and on the 27th the Prince of Wales and the Corps Commander etc, etc, were to be there. So I went up town to watch as our brigade was lining the street. I also butted into the church when the whole party attended the R.C. service which was a special one for the occasion. It was quite interesting and then they had a march past. The Prince taking the salute. I am sure neither the Prince or the Corps Com. understood the catholic service and being in front pulled several boners. The

prince seemed quite worried. The sermon was in French but the priest was apparently an orator of no small order and I enjoyed listening to him. Could only get little bits here and there. At the door little girls gave everyone leaving the church a souvenir flag. It seemed quite a splendid entry into the town for the Gen. and I compared it with mine a week before in the middle of the night because it was close to the back of the church I ran into his sentry post.

While we were fighting here the civilians hung about and didn't seem to realize that it was a real war going on. Machine guns were rattling and they would hang about the streets. On one occasion a party of 25 bosche surrendered and came in the French cheering their heads off when they saw them coming over.

These prisoners were taken to H.Q. in the chateau grounds. An old hag came in and suddenly spotted them. She ran up and opened up the greatest line of abuse I have ever listened to. When she finished for want of breath and old man took them on. Two or three more hunns were being brought down the street and some women gathered a lot of this sticky sloopy black mud and let them have it about the faces. Oh they heartily hate them. Out from under four years of rule.

He has taken everything that would be of any use and mined and blown everything in the shape of roads or bridges that would delay our advance. Am out of paper. Love to all,

Yours,  
Keith

November 5 1918 - France -(letter # 103)

Dearest Mother:

For a few days I am in hospital. I left the unit on the 26th Oct. and have been at a hospital here at the base for four days now expecting to be sent on to another hospital near here. I had a blooming big carbuncle on the back of the neck. However I shall be back with the battalion before long now. I have not been able to cable to you as I did not know where or when I would be going so thought I had better wait.

Since leaving the battalion Srigley brought me one batch of letters which included your # 98. I also received your parcel containing the socks, gloves, and pipe from Elsie and Gowan, coffee, oxo etc. Slip was dated Sept 24th. Everything was in fine shape and thank Gowan and Elsie for the gloves and pipe. I needed the gloves and the pipe is my favorite style. I think it is the first pipe I have ever been given in my life. The shaving soap was just in time and the shaving lotion an unlooked for luxury.

The parcel with the cake in it had not arrived. But according to the rules of the company mess these would have been opened by the boys in my absence and all eatables put on the table.

Any little personal article would be given to Srigley to keep for me. I received the receipt for the cigarettes in your letter but the cigarettes are generally some time longer in coming.

Your letter was the first intimation I had of your recent illness. You must have had an awful time and I do hope that you are quite alright again. You must take great care of yourself because this war is only going to last a few months now that Bulgaria, Turkey and Austria have dropped out. Germany is only fighting in the hope that something will turn up. With luck I'll be home next summer.



I am glad the German junk arrived. The whole of that stuff practically I got in the battle of Arras. I thought the cups would make a good camping set. The green cap is of their famous Alpine Corps. Just open the little tin box and have a look at the fountain pen.

I have had two or three letters from the Stevensons and told them I hadn't been able to get over but will try next. No I did not see Arthur Lloyd while on leave. In fact I have lost track of him altogether. I saw Jimmie McGregor the other day as our units passed each other in a town.

Please excuse this writing as I am doing it on my knee.  
Boots are also a fierce price in England. We pay 3.10 pounds for ankle boots and as high as 8.10 pounds for field boots made to order.

I have no idea where the battalion is now. When I left them we were on the western outskirts of Valenciennes but since then a large attack was launched on Nov.1st and they have a line some three miles east of the town now. A few miles and the whole line from Valenciennes north will be Belgium. Northern France will be freed. He will be off French soil by Xmas. I hope. Then we only have to clear Belgium. If an active line is established on his Austrian frontier he will have to go some to hold the lines. It is all over but the shouting and the question is how many good men must still be killed before he will agree to swallow a bitter pill. The Kaiser is stalling and trying to side step with a make believe transfer of powers to the government . Nix on that stuff. He has got to get out and take his family with him.

Our weather here has broken but I do not know how it is up the line. We have surely had a wonderful summer and fall. I am afraid there can be no stopping and holding a winter line this year. As long as guns can be hauled we have to push along but one at least feels that we are getting somewhere. He is fighting a splendid retreat but must be pretty well hurried and getting fed up with things.

Must stop now. Will drop a line when I find out where I am going. Can't remember whether I have written you most of this stuff before. I arrived here on the 2nd and I think I wrote from C.C.S.

Give my love to all the family. I hope Grandmother is still in good health. I want to see her run a 100 yards when I get back.

Tell father that if he needs more money in my account to let me know and I shall forward some. Will you please take \$5.00 or \$10. and buy something nice for Xmas. for my batman's wife. I think the account is good for that. He has surely looked after me and I think the world of him. Her name is Mrs. S.H.Srigley, Central Park P.O. I am enclosing a card which you can drop into it with my compliments.

Please tell me if a postal card photo of a young soldier with a kid in his arms has arrived in any of my letters. I believe I sent it. he has since been wounded and my go to Canada. He was one of my favorite little runners and I got him the M.M. which was surely earned.

With much love,  
Keith

November 16 1918 - France -(letter #104)  
25th General Hospital France

Dearest Mother:

Please excuse this note book paper but I am out of note paper and expect a box from England tonight.

Last night I received my first mail from the battalion, eighteen letters among which was Helen's 74th of Sept.29th.

How do you like the war now? The armistice is all signed but not as yet carried out and matters in Germany are at such sixes and sevens that I would not be surprised to see certain troubles before the terms are completed. At any rate I think that we can take it that any real warfare is a thing of the past. I am all for taking every precaution however. I believe that if you look back to about the time the Bosche were driving in March and April you will find that I told you to keep your eye on the latter part of the year. I always felt that there was going to be a big counter and that we were not kept out and fed and trained for two months for nothing. I did not look for such a complete and speedy break up however. I looked for the armistice about next July. Now I hope that we shall be home by then.

London went quite mad and they have had big times here. I have felt little excitement and think that they had better keep on soldiering for a few weeks.

I do hope that your indigestion is gone. Helen said that you had again been troubled with it. There has been a great deal of sickness here and in England.

I was sorry to hear of the accident to Gowan's dog. If it was a train I should think that it must have been a pretty close call of having no dog at all.

The coming Xmas should be a happy one throughout the world generally speaking. The last one with the forces away and the scrap wound up. A few however have lost relatives in the last scrap or two. Last night I got word of the Battalion. It went through a show a few days after I left and one of my favorite young officers a chap named Newitt who came out with the 131st as a private, was killed. He was with me in quite a few nasty spots and he was really a wonder, didn't know what fear was. He got through the show and went over to clean some snipers out of a house. He finished this task and when leaving the house a bosche machine gun from up the street in an old hospital building got him through the head. I have been so lucky with my old officers that I begrudge both Douglas and Gnat very much. The colonel wrote me and said that the hun had paid. Our battalion took about 500 prisoners and 800 bosche were buried on our brigade front, which means a two battalion front.

These figures are pretty large when one considers our present strength. When I left I had two platoons of three sections each instead of four platoons of four sections each. Each company is now organized on a one platoon basis so you see we haven't had a cinch the last three months.

At present our weather is very fine but of course cold. This hospital is kept like a refrigerator and everyone has colds. I am hoping to be discharged soon.

I had a letter from Mildred DeBeck in which she told me of Elsie's visit. Also a very nice letter from Mrs. Lambert who has not yet returned to Folkestone.

Everything is Ok with me. My neck is much better but will likely be scarred at the back where they cut it open. I get out every day and have a

good walk dropping into a tea room for a good feed as the meals here are very poor.

I have a great pile of letters to write and must get them off without delay if I am going to be in time for Xmas.

I have been notified that I have been awarded the bar to the M.C.  
Much love to all,  
Keith

November 25 1918 - Belgium -(letter # 105)  
Ghislage, Belgium

Dearest Mother:

Here I am at the battalion about 10 km. east of Mons. I left hospital on the 20th and they discharged me to an Imperial base camp where they were going to refuse me permission to proceed direct to my battalion. I was also not allowed to sleep in town and had to be in camp by 7pm each night. I was at that base just exactly 5 minutes after which I went to Boulogne and went to a hotel. I took a holiday in the town on the 21st and went to visit all my French friends at Wimereux. On the 22nd I caught the leave train at 9am. The journey was very slow and the train cold. I did the greatest part of it in a box car with 40 men and coal fire brassier burning which coated us all with a covering of coal soot. My coat cap and gloves were pretty well ruined. We traveled by way of St.Pol, Arras, Douai, Valenciennes. Arriving about 5km west of the latter town at 7:30am 23rd. We had travelled probably 100 miles in those hours. It was indeed a strange trip. No light save from the fire which threw a glow over the occupants of the car. Rough chaps mostly with here and there a refined face among them. The majority interlocked (to obtain room) with others asleep on the floor with others squatting around the fire chatting. The conversation for the most part of wonderful things which had happened to the speakers during the war. Every sentence punctuated with oaths and senseless expressions. Truly the ranks in the home of vile language. About 2am we arrived at Douai, at which town I had been in field ambulance on my way down to the base, the station was in working condition and we secured tea at a canteen. I had brought hard boiled eggs and sandwiches with me. Arriving at my destination I walked into a house and had a shave and a wash.

On the way from Arras to Valenciennes the trip was over the country the war had raged across and in the bright moonlight was quite wonderful. As day broke I was standing at the door of the box car looking over the forlorn stretch of territory - the train was creeping along a track which had been hastily put into working condition but one could not say more for it. Standing, half day dreaming, I suddenly missed the guns. That incessant roar of artillery which resembled always here and I realized that the war was off. It was hard to realize.

Emerging from the house considerably refreshed I faced the hardest part of my trip. I had a kit I could not carry any distance and my unit was "somewhere beyond Mons" which town was 30 miles from me approx. Fetching my kit from the station to the main road running to Valenciennes I watched the stream of civilians making their way along the highways by whatever means possible back to their homes. It was a weird sight and supplied material for a long chapter of any novel.

I picked up a flying corps motor which ran me through the gaily decorated streets to Valenciennes and dropped me at the main road to Mons.

Here the traffic was very heavy and the refugees streaming along the roads both ways with their bundles anything. The lorries were filled with people and any light car belonging to the motor machine gun corps finally picked me up and we made good time all the way. I crossed the Belgium frontier at 10:15am just 24 hours after leaving Boulogne and arrived at Mons about 11am. Here I put my kit in a store and asked for information at headquarters for the battalion's whereabouts.

I remained in Mons until 2pm. The town is unhurt. The shops full of pretty things but prices very high. People appeared well nourished and I do not think they have suffered much. The Canadians were the heroes of the moment having taken the place shortly before the armistice.

Ascertaining the name of the town the unit was in I gave a chap 5 francs to run me and my kit through the town to the road leading out the way I wished to go and then caught a road repair lorry which brought me within a quarter of a mile of our H.Q. and I appeared here at 3pm with my kit. It was an exceedingly quick time as I had expected to be anywhere from 3 days to a week. I was quite tired as I had not slept since leaving Boulogne but I met Baxter and some of the old boys who have returned and Jimmie and I sat in my room and talked till midnight. The next day being Sunday I did not bother to get up for church parade but had breakfast in bed and slept till noon. Thank heaven I am where we really get meals. My cook is a dandy and puts up wonderful meals.

Our duty here now is to keep the troops clean and some drill in the mornings. Sports in the afternoons and anything in the concert line for the evening. Last night we had a concert after which we cleared the floor for a dance. The women and girls are very keen. Talk about country dances. Last nights' was in a class by itself. There is no such thing as waiting for an introduction. Just grab someone and if you pick a non dancer make for a crowd where it is only a case of turning round and round and they are perfectly happy. I struck one big girl who I saw right off would make a dancer with a little leading and before the night was over I had her doing "one steps" she never dreamed of. I made a big hit and had to take her home. To the next village - never again - It is a deaf and dumb show and she expressed her approval of me by giving me a kiss on each cheek on parting. It is a 'hell' of a country. They fall for a little flattery and if I could only parley the gibberish I think my road would be a bed of roses but they have not had any chance to get the slightest idea of 'Anglais'.

Your letters #100, and 101 have just reached me. Your #99th is chasing me from hospital. Helen's 75th has also come to hand. I am much worried over your continuous sick turns and am glad to hear that your last did not pull you down too much. You must take every care of yourself. Tell father that if you have a recurrence of your last attack that he is to secure the best medical advice in the Province at my expense. I didn't like the sound of your last sick turn at all. It will probably be six months at least before I can get home and am really quite anxious to make the trip to Hunland if we get the chance.

The armies which don't go will likely be employed salvaging and clearing the battle fields and I know exactly what that means.

I received Billie's letters and will write him. Tell him I still have Fraser Hine OK. He is a corporal now and has done exceptionally fine work. Doesn't know (or doesn't show it if he does) what fear is and I recommended him for a well deserved decoration. Billie may possibly see his mother. I would have pushed the boy along with a view for a commission but nearly all the N.C.O.'s who take commissions and return as officers get killed. I can name a bunch including poor old Douglas and Gnat, boys I still can't get over.

Am very glad Grandmother liked the plaques. I thought they were quaint.

Mentioning Colin's birthday you say he would be 25 years of age. Remember dear heart that I am a man of nearly 30. Time flies doesn't it. I feel more like twenty and when I step into a law office I will feel like kindergarten.

The flu has been frightful in England and pretty bad here. In London bodies had to wait ten days sometimes for burial. I should say by then it would be high time they were laid away.

I am very sorry to hear of the Stoddard's troubles. Will you please convey to Mrs. Stoddard through Margaret or th Giffords my sincerest sympathy. I have often thought of her since Hughs death on the old ridge. It was an awful graveyard for us during the winter of '16 and I shall never forget my introduction to the war.

In your last letter you rather slate Bailey pretty hard. He is young, but I will say this that if Bailey has killed a defenseless man he has always been willing to tackle armed odds. He has plenty of courage but lacks 'balance' and mercy. He is recovering satisfactorily. I am afraid you are prejudiced and you must remember that we have been getting a pretty cold blooded training in a hard school for a good many months and 'our splendid Canadian fighting boy' are not all saints.

If we had ever carried active warfare into Germany they would have been shown what real destruction was just as we showed them what shell fire was. They claim that we do not know what it is to be shelled.

Yes, I am sending Canada. Save all copies please. It is impossible to get back copies.

This is a longer letter than I intended writing and as dinner is just ready I must stop. Went for a ride today and yesterday. I believe the little mare is glad to see me back.

May be mailing a few slips of interest to me as well as my maps of one or two scrap areas. If they arrive please keep. Have also sent you a book "Message from Mars" in which I am disgusted. It is all officers and nothing of interest to the men as I expected it to be.

Love to all and I do hope that your health will be Ok now that the war worry has been taken off.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

p.s. Had my first letter from George Cassady today in reply to one I sent him.  
KCM

December 9 1918 - Belgium -(letter # 106)  
Ghislage

Dearest Mother:

I have received your letters up to the 103rd which was mailed on the 11th. Lately I have had little or no time for writing. It is a case of parade in the morning, riding in the afternoon and probably a dance in the evening so we are on the go until all hours.

The ladies of Havre gave a dance for us the other evening. They are so anxious to be good to us. Am mailing a small box containing some powder for you from Mons. Also one or two souvenir papers.

Jimmie McGregor is with the 72nd Battn. France and Lloyd is in England so far as I know.

Don't worry about boxes for me or making yourself sick working over things. I have more kit than the law allows and a trunk full of stuff, mostly souvenirs in England. How I am going to get it all home is more than I know.

Received Paulines sweater yesterday. It is a beautiful heavy one and I shall write her when I get a minute but am swamped with letters just now. Suppose that from now until Xmas they will be coming from all directions. A number of the men are writing me from England congratulating me on surviving the worst of it.

Am so glad to hear that Dad is getting real enjoyment out of his decoys. The results of the chase were always a secondary consideration with the old sport anyway but he has certainly produced them also.

You speak of Valenciennes. This unit made the frontal attack on the town and was one of those to take part in the celebrations.

We should move on from here in a day or two. Our stay has been much longer than expected.

A day or two ago we had a brigade parade and the Div. Commander presented ribbons. I am sending the one I received along. All the officers who were in my mess at Bouvigny Woods last summer have won an M.C. since that time and I am surely proud of the "Happy Family".

Baxter is back with the battalion and has a company again. He and I are great pals. He was my 2nd I/C in the Family.

Your boxes have all come OK, but I think a shipment of cigarettes was more badly needed by some one before it reached here. In other words I think it must have been salvaged.

Molly's box arrived safely and was fine. She is a dear.

About "Canada" I think I sent you my invoice receipted. If so just check to see that you have the volume I paid for please.

I hope to spend my last Xmas in the army with the battn. After New Years I am going to try to go to Nice for leave.

Helen's 97th came yesterday with one or two from my old friend Meyers of Seattle who has often dropped me a line. Am so sorry to hear of the deaths Helen mentions. How is Aunt Tweebie? I wrote her some time ago. Am glad the flask, iron cross etc. arrived safely.

Don't let a small thing like Spearmint gum bother you. To read your letter one would think the entire parcel had been ruined. Well it certainly was not.

I see that Helen is keeping up her reputation for making tailor made suits. She is hard to beat at it. Tell her the boys say the rocks and fudge were great.

This is my last sheet of paper so will call this a letter. Intend to write Billie and have just received Elsie's Xmas card.

Have had two or three letters from Cherie Brine. She has been very ill for some time but is now fit. Be sure and take the best of care of yourself. We cant have these sick turns continually returning. Now that we have peace lets have a finish of such things as the flu.

Love to all and I know you have had a great Xmas Day before this reaches you.

Your loving son,  
Keith

December 22 1918 - Belgium - (letter # 107)  
Wassieges

Dearest Mother:

I have not written you since the 9th. The time has slipped by very quickly. We were on the march for about six days during which time I was acting 2nd I/C battalion. On the 20th I was ordered to Brigade where I am now and will likely remain. I am Educational Officer for the brigade and as this work is being developed rapidly I have enough to keep me busy. It was strange to sit down to a desk and call a stenographer again.

Am sending several parcels containing articles of clothes and equipment which I do not wish to carry. Also several cards. We have had some funny times but the most wonderful place I have seen in the way of a private home was Chateau de Mariemont of which I am enclosing a picture. It was our battn. H.Q. for one night on the march and I was all over the place. The contents of the house, an immense collection is roughly valued at 50,000,000 Francs and I should imagine it would take every cent of it. 'The wines and cigars was prime' to quote Huck Finn. I will give you all the details when I get home.

Have not been to Brussels as yet but may go there for Xmas. At any rate there is a big ball there on New Years Eve to which I hope to go and about the middle of January want to go to Paris and Nice.

I have not received a letter from you since the 9th. and none from Gertrude since the 3rd. Our mails are all upside down.

I received Molly's parcel and it was a peach. Also one from Gertrude and the Kewpie Club. Paulines sweater arrived and I'm wearing it. It is a heavy one and a beauty.

All the days on the march the weather was beastly. Our billeting area at present is poor but we hope to move along to something better.

Don't care if I never see Germany. The war is over and I am now losing money monthly by being over here. Me for home as soon as possible.

The last two days I have been riding the generals horses as he is away on leave. Oh I'm some bad lad but there is no promotion in it for me.

Will drop a line a little oftener but will keep details for home.

Love to all and I'll be with you before long. If Billie wants particulars about Srigley he can get them from his wife at Central Park. His business is going in his absence.

Your loving son,  
Keith

December 29 1918 - Belgium -(letter # 108)  
Wassieges

My Dearest Mother:

On Xmas morning I got a few letters including your 104 and 105. Grandmothers, Elsie and a couple from Gertrude. Some of them had been forwarded by Percy Leach. On the 20th I came to Brigade. Xmas morning Lash and I motored to Namur and took train a to Brussels. We were there for two days. It is really a pretty place and I got round to see several of the places of interest. Took in the Opera the last night and enjoyed it muchly.

Came back on th 27th. Was supposed to go up again tomorrow as I was on the floor committee for our big ball there New Year's Eve but I cannot get up tomorrow so will go for the ball only. The Belgium King will be there and the Court circle of ladies are handling the question of introductions so I think it will be quite an historic gathering. Each officer going pays three days pay. We have then some forty miles to travel to get there.

Am fairly well fed up with Brigade and intend to ask to go home to my unit as soon as the general returns from leave.

On Christmas morning I received notice that I had won my third M.C. I now wear two bars. Purvis got the D.S.O. I was awarded it for the tour from the Lensee Canal-through Denain and La Lentenelle to outskirts of Valenciennes. During those five days our brigade fought its way forward seventeen miles which is surely the hardest work I ever tackled.

If I can work it I want to go to Nice before returning home. Baker was anxious for me to wait until spring and go to Italy with him and also to do England on motor bike but I will throw the odd trip up to get home.

Am very glad I cabled but it should have reached you before it did. I only got Billie's cable on the 15th and replied by post to England. It takes sometimes ten days to get a letter to England from where we are now.

The Mons battle didn't amount to anything much. Our show at Valenciennes was the last real fight.

Prices here are frightful. Two of us had the following lunch at Namur. Soup, meat and fried potatoes, cheese, coffee and a bottle of wine, for \$5.00 a piece. At Brussels it is worse. We paid \$2 for 2 eggs, 2 buns, and coffee. Ices \$.80 each, wines are from \$5 to \$15 a bottle. Everything is out of sight. One dare not go to a town for over a day with less than \$50 and must then live soberly.

I do hope you are feeling stronger and are free of that frightful pain. Be careful of your diet and I will take a chance and drink a big glass of buttermilk with you upon my return.

Our division does not expect to go home until about May.

Was very sorry to hear of Gertrude Gaynor's illness. I do hope that she pulls through.

Am very sorry that fool rumour about me being wounded got about. I suppose some one thought I had gone to hospital with a wound.



So Joan wants me to play with her. Well I'm willing to try but am afraid that I have grown out of the way of amusing kids.

I told Srigley about his wife phoning. He has written her regularly. He has been a wonder with me. Looks after me like a nurse and I wouldn't have him in the line unless he was with me. Did you get my letter asking to have a Xmas present sent to her from me?

As to my room. I have pretty much made up my mind to try and get back into the law business and will have to do some studying somewhere.

It seems strange to be making plans for returning home. I have so often thought it was hopeless. It seemed like a case of the jug going to the well. I have had two or three tell me since that they always expected me to be killed. Pleasant idea but I have often had such hunches about others and they never went otherwise. Whenever I got into a bad place and realized I was getting scared I used to say to myself "Oh hell, I wasn't born to die in this blooming country" and I would take a chance. I surely had luck with me.

Our weather lately has been frightful. Returning from Brussels I had to walk 13 km. from the train here and it surely rained but Srigley made me change and had hot water and a change of clothes and a hot brick in my bed. One would think I was a kid. He was rather put out because I wasn't awarded a D.S.O. He is quite a lad.

Must stop now. Am going to try and get a note off to Grandmother and one to Billie.

With much love to all and I hope to be home before summer.

Your loving son,  
Keith

p.s. Have mailed about six parcels of surplus kit home to lighten up a bit. Please let me know what arrives.

January 2 1919 - Belgium - Wasseites (letter not numbered)

Dearest Mother:

This is not a letter. Just sending home a souvenir or two of our big ball which was an immense success. The Prince of Wales was dancing round amongst us and is a pretty good sort. Brussels was wide awake as New Year's Eve is their big day I was just forty hours without getting to bed and I danced miles. There wasn't much in Brussels we didn't see. After the ball we set out to see the fun and I guess we danced in half a dozen different places after that. I got to the hotel at 10:30 am in time for a shave and to catch the bus for here where I got a bit of work done and ran into a dinner party which kept me up till midnight.

Oh it is a very hard war now that the fighting with bullets has stopped.

Will write when I can. Am trying to get leave to Nice with Baxter. Am also overdue for English leave as our time has been cut from 5 months to 3, so

I am now back over three months. Intend to see all I can now but it is hard on the pocket as they surely stick up.

Have to see Louvain as I made a hit at the dance with a young lady from that place and I must get there to see her. Their home was destroyed in the sacking of the place early in the war. The young lady spoke English in the quaintest way and the whole dance was A 1. The Hotel de Ville is a Magnificent building and I will tell you all about it when I get back. Talk about jewels - some of the ladies represented considerable sums.

Your son,  
Keith

January 21 1919 - Belgium - (letter # 109)  
Wavre

Dearest Mother:

It is I know ages since I have written to anyone and I am ashamed but really for some time past I have been quite busy with duties and pleasures. I am still on Brigade and they won't let me return to the unit although I have pestered the General about it. Expect to go to Nice in a few days. After that I hope to go to Germany and then to England. If I have to remain here until our Division goes which will likely be the last I shall try to go to Italy.

From here I have taken short one day trips. Spent a most interesting day in Louvain and today went all over the field of Waterloo. Major General Harper was lecturing there today and it was most interesting. He is G.O.C. of one of the British Corps and of course is a typical old English soldier.

I have received your recent letters and Helens, Gowans, and Fathers. All very much enjoyed. Tell Elsie I got hers and that the parcel with cake came safely and cake was in splendid form. Received a big bundle of cigarettes from Jack Cambridge and they are blooming hard to get here now.

Father says that whiskey is about \$6 a bottle when obtainable. Purchased in civilian shops here it is worth (or rather demanded) about 150 francs which at five to the dollar means \$30. Oh prices are great here. A pair of ankle boots would cost between 200 and 400 francs. Everyone wears wooden clogs and saves the money.

Tell father that I somehow thought that he would be interested in a revolver and nothing else. One is apt to lose a gun which probably has put one to considerable trouble and risk as the various ones handling the posts are apt to be interested in guns also and it is an easy way of winning them. Hence the reason I have never mentioned guns.

It is impossible to get a souvenir now. Not a shell case or helmet even and I haven't even got my own old helmet as I gave it to a chap to go into action with when I was shot out to hospital.

Was so sorry to hear that Fred Toomey has died. It is a corker. I have come through this mess so far when opportunities for being sent west were fairly plentiful and he goes selling stuff in Saint Paul and dies of it. "No if it is down in the book Huck that youse goin to die they aint no use to try to duck"

It is nearly dinner time now so must close. Will write oftener but am hopping round as much as I can in order to see one or two places as it may be some months before I am this way again. Never bothered before as I was not certain if I was going to weather the gale. Leave is such an expensive proposition now though that I shall likely arrive home broke. I shall be there as soon as possible as I would sooner see Columbia street than all the places of interest in Europe. My pen has gone dry. Give my love to all and many thanks to Helen and Dad for looking after the Xmas shopping. I received a lovely letter from Mrs. Srigley. The poor woman had quite a lot of worry for a time.

Am glad that you have been feeling better and take care of yourself as we are all going to have dinner together one of these days.

Lovingly your son,  
Keith

January 26 1919 - Belgium - (letter not numbered)  
Wavre

Dearest Mother:

With luck I am off in the morning for Nice. it is a good time too because our weather has turned very cold and we are getting snowed on today. Baxter is going with me and I shall drop a card or two, along the way, to you. As yet I am still with the Brigade. I asked the General two or three times to let me return but up to date I have not been given permission. Lately I have been leading a fairly gay life between dances and parties but still believe that my constitution can stand the journey to Nice and there I hope the climate will restore my shattered nerves.

I got my answer off to Billies wire about the 19th of December so that a return may be expected any time. The General doesn't seem to be very keen about allowing officers to return to Canada. He has just turned down an application of our colonel's which I wish he had approved. It would have rid us of the C.O. and might have made promotion possible. However I am going to get back at the earliest date possible. It may be July before we get home in the ordinary course of events.

I see the newspapers have published the fact that I was recommended for the D.S.O. Where did they get the information. I knew it was quite impossible to receive the D.S.O..with a senior officer also recommended.

Love to all and take care of yourself,  
Lovingly yours,  
Keith

February 1 1919 - France -(not numbered) Nice

Dearest Mother:

Arrived here yesterday after a day or two in Paris and Brussels. The place is beautiful but absolutely flooded with the American army. The splendid chaps who have won the war, the most of them without reaching the line. Tomorrow we expect to run along as far as Monte Carlo and Menton. I think we shall only be here a few days as we have some friends to see on our way home by way of Mons and Charleroi. On the whole I am having a perfectly good time but now that there is a pretty good chance of returning home I

begrudge the money spent foolishly and one cannot enjoy himself in these countries unless he spends some that way. However I am knocking about as much as I can as it may be quite a time before I am this way again..

Received no mail before I left and will not be away long enough for them to forward it. I sent Srigley to Brussels for a little leave when I came away and he will wire me if anything comes through in reply to Billies wire.

I went to the opera in Paris the night we were there. Baxter and I met a couple of the nicer American Red Cross girls and we made up a little party of four for dinner and the opera. The music was lovely and the orchestra beautiful some 120 pieces.

To my surprise this morning I found it was trying to rain. It is not bad however and I think we will be away in another burst of sunshine tomorrow. The railway travel has been most interesting. The dining car crowd as cosmopolitan as it is possible to get but south of Paris the 'Twang' predominates so greatly that the interesting voices are drowned.

Love to all,  
Keith

February 1 1919 (post card to sister Helen) Nice

Dearest Helen:

This is not a fire sale in post cards. Just stole an hour or two to drop a line to the different ones I would like to be with. This is a great place. I have never been as far south before and the country is really lovely. I will never return unless I have time and money to burn. It is only a rush over otherwise. The old time peace conditions and prices are both pretty much up in the air. Thanks for photo. It is great.

Lovingly,  
Keith

February 12 1919 -Belgium -(letter to brother Gowan)

Dear Gowan,

Don't believe that I ever answered your long letter of Dec 7th which I enjoyed very much and was interested in the description of the additional work you had to take on. It was a queer hunch you had that by writing you would break the run of luck but I always play a hunch if I have to draw to an ace and ten of different suits. I developed odd superstitions and never defied them. I have a champagne cork in my pocket which I have carried every trip in the line for a year and a half and would rather have gone into a show without my gun or gas mask than without it.

I suppose hockey is in full force at home now. We have ice enough here for skating outside but no skates. Thank heaven there is an armistice. It was fairly mild until December but this month is the worst of all. I will never forget Jan and Feb. of 1917. I surely put in some awful nights that winter.

I have just received a small Canadian mail bringing letters from mother. I am glad she is better. We had a wonderful trip to Nice and had four days in Paris.

Love to all,  
Sincerely yours,  
Keith

p.s. Thank Margaret for the Purdy's they have not reached me as yet. Our mails are all to the bad.

Post card to Mrs Macgowan from J. Baxter while in Nice.

This is a wonderful place - most fascinating and interesting. Should think California can have nothing on it. Keith is busy writing - I hope to his mother.

JB

Post card to Helen (Nice)

Dear Helen,

You would love all this country but what is really needed is plenty of money and a car. Then oh, La,La,! The hotels are the finest to be found and the women do dress their feet prettily. But they are a strange lot.

Love to all,

Keith

February 21 1919 -Belgium -(letter #110 )  
Wavre

Dearest Mother:

I have received your letters up to #111. They have been arriving first - last and so on but that was mostly due to some having gone to England and forwarded from there.

Everything is going well with me and between the office and amusements I only get a few letters off each week. Since the armistice my correspondence has grown very much. So many writing congratulating me on having lived through the mess. Again every time one goes on leave new friends are made and so there you are - where are you !

I have just scribbled a note to Billie which I addressed to Ottawa. I am so pleased about the K.C. It was certainly coming to him as he is one of the best men in B.C.

You seem to have funny ideas about medals and how they are awarded. Don't worry about a D.S.O. It is too late to win that now.

Am very glad that you all had such a good Xmas this year. Your table must have looked very pretty indeed. Wait until next year and we shall have quite a time a sort of post victory dinner.

I am still at Brigade as educational officer and am in the office generally all morning. In the afternoon I go for a ride or sports and at night there is generally a dance somewhere or other. I wish they would get us home because between leave and present prices this life is a killer on the pocket book and I will likely arrive home broke. Tell father I shall send some money to the B.of M. during March or April to cover May insurance.

We had a splendid time on our Nice trip and made one or two hits with the girls.

If you have received Canada of Feb. 8th and the last one you will see items on the decorations of several of my officers names on the back of enclosed card. Also photos of 47th Battn Officers and 4th C.C.S.with Bella Lord in it.

In a couple of months we should be on our way home unless the hun should try and get nasty which is practically impossible. If you could see the guns that line the streets in Brussels, Paris and London to say nothing of the parks all over the country here at railway junctions and the endless number of trains and engines running for us - all Bosche - you wouldn't think they could do anything of an organized nature. However if they do I guess we will take one last slap at them by way of good measure.

Have not seen any of the old gang. Jack Knight is near here somewhere but I never see him. Saw Richardson in a train returning from Brussels the other morning. I had run in the night before Saturday to a dance.

Our mail services are getting a little better now. For a time they were hopeless. Nine days for a letter from England to the units.

You have surely been having your own troubles in Canada with the Flu. It was very bad in England and over here. It is claiming a chap every now and again even yet. One of my company of the 47th died in hospital today but we have not yet shaken the habit of expecting a man with us today to be gone tomorrow. You say to a chap - "so and so died today" - "Is that so, he was a pretty good head, where did he die, in France?" - "Yes. "Gee that's tough are you going to the dance tonight?" It is only a topic for the minute.

Am glad in a way that we will get home for summer. Our weather is bad but the cold spell has broken and it is milder than camping in Eastern Canada somewhere.

Have a great many letters to write home and if you see any of my friends remember me to them and tell them that I asked particularly for them. I am becoming an accomplished liar.

You should hear us try to parley to the girls. One girl in Nice who spoke English a bit gave Baxter a literal translation of his sentence. It was fierce. He thinks he can talk too. Generally volunteers to act as my mouthpiece. so you can see where I am at.

The General the other night was handing a young lady some very mushy compliments in French and thought he was being pretty complimentary and smooth. When he finished the girl said in English "Now General, you know, you must not kid the troops"

Best of love to all,

Keith

March 2 1919 - Belgium - (letter # 111)

Dearest Mother:

Have just received your 113 and your 112 arrived a few days ago.

Tell Gw.B. that a box of apples arrived in good shape at Xmas. time and that I did not know who it was from. Thank him muchly for me.

I am still at Brigade and have been crashing about to dances etc. One night General Ross and I went to a very fine dance given by a machine gun battalion and the next day we were invited to a luncheon in Brussels. Very nice people and they surely know how to entertain. After that we had to attend an afternoon dance given by Countess de Something or other. All the swells of the city were there and it was quite interesting. Have met a number of very nice young ladies but have not followed up the acquaintances as it is not in my line. The present war is very strange but not hard to take to.

I have been kicking for promotion but there is no vacancy in our battalion and therefore there is little chance of getting it. However I am after the General pretty regularly and he and I are pulling pretty well at present.

I was to have gone to England on the 1st on leave but I could not get a relief for my work so hope to go to Germany for a few days and then to England probably about the middle of the month. I am really not keen on another English leave except to go to the Isle of Man and arrange a few things in London. After that I am all fixed. Would rather spend a few days in Paris again than in London.

I hope Grandmother is feeling better. Tell her to buck up as I want her to dance the Highland Fling when I get back. It will likely be June before I get home. I have the opportunity of stopping off in the east but am not taking advantage of it. when I hit Halifax all I want is a C.P.R. super limited.

The people here are very kind and I get into Brussels quite frequently. Srigley is still with me and makes my welfare and turn out his one object in life. I shall certainly miss him when I leave the army.

I dropped a line to Billie the other day and addressed it to Ottawa so suppose he will receive it OK.

Now that the fighting is stopped the cost of living has gone up four fold. before we spent our time in the devastated area and had nothing to spend money on except grub but now it is like being on a sight seeing trip and if demobilization does not come along pretty soon I shall be a financial wreck.

You speak of high prices. Take eggs here. They were worth about one franc fifty a while ago which means \$.30 each. everytime you ate the yoke you thought it was pure gold. They are lower now about 20 cents each. I know a man who was stuck for 150 francs (\$30.00) for a bottle of whisky in Brussels. a reasonably good dinner there with a bottle of wine costs about 100 francs \$20. Oh that city is a real nice little place for prices.

My Nice trip was wonderful and well worth while and I had four days in Paris as well. The opera in Paris is really wonderful. The voices splendid and the orchestra of about 120 really lovely. I'm all for that city.

The flu is still pretty bad here and we have had to close up all public halls and prevent gatherings of a large nature. We are losing a certain number right along although the number of deaths is decreasing I should say.

One of my pals Baker a lawyer from Victoria left for England yesterday. He will join the unit again there. That only leaves Baxter as far as intimates go altho I know all the fellows in the battalion.

Am enclosing a new picture we had taken of those surviving the heavy fighting of 1918. In June when we were in the woods for rest I had nine officers in my company mess. Two were killed one wounded and the remaining six are in the picture. Every one of them has since that time won the M.C. once or twice.

This afternoon I have to go out to tea with Baxter. It isn't really tea they invite you to but the 4 pm Sunday meal is their evening meal and they seem to put on a long distance competition in drinking coffee, wines, and liqueurs and eating cakes and immense big pies. Last Sunday it lasted until nearly six and I couldn't look at dinner. If you don't stay with the game they think you don't like the stuff and last time I was nearly all in. I know what a hen feels like under this forced feeding stunt now.

Love to all and I'll be with you before the heat arrives.

Affectionately your son,  
Keith

March 5 1919 - Belgium -(letter also marked #111)  
Wavre

Dearest Mother:

Will not call this a letter as I am just scribbling this note from the office. My duties are very heavy these days, I don't think. For instance I get up about nine, breakfast 9:30, office 10 am and I work or make a fair bluff at it until 12:30 or 1 pm then I go to lunch and in the afternoon and evening generally find some sort of amusement either riding dancing or playing a game of cards. Of course some days I actually work all day but they are few and far between. When I first came to Brigade I was kept pretty busy but the work is now well in hand and practically runs itself.

There is nothing of much interest happening at present and our weather has been most disagreeable lately which has pretty well put riding out of the question.

Have had a cold for some time but it is just about well now and am busy fixing up one of my old friends, a boil on the neck. Srigley puts me through 45 minutes of hot fomentations and squeezing each morning. Its good war.



We have been tied up here lately with the flu and an order was issued to close all halls and stopping all gatherings. It is once again easing up so I expect they will soon carry on normally once again.

I am going to mail you a copy of the Corps Sports of last year which I attended also a small book on the Canadians work between the battle of Amiens and the Armistice written by some gink who wasn't there. I have checked on the parts of which I have knowledge and he is wrong in several particulars so I guess the rest is on a par.

We have hopes of leaving here in April or early in May for England but one never knows, you know. With luck I shall be with you in June.

I fear that I may not get a leave to England before we go over but am not worrying as I shall get leave then.

Drop me a line and give me some suggestions as to what I might get for the kids to bring in my grip for them. I want to get something for them that they would like.

Love to all,  
Keith

March 21 1919 - Belgium -(letter # 112)

Dearest Mother:

Upon returning from Germany where I spent a week I found your 114th and Helens 81st letters. Shall just run through them to see if anything requires answering.

Am glad to hear that you are finished with all your wretched colds. You must have had a hard time of it with them. I have had one of these long distance colds that hang on all winter but it is not bad. I also had a sore throat for a day or two but not enough to keep me in. guess our life is becoming too easy as I never had such a thing during the war.

It is quite a long time since I have seen either Charlie Major or Fraser as they were both in England for quite a time. I am so glad that nothing happened to those boys.

I should be home by June. Our Division the 4th is the last to leave France so with luck I should make Canada by June. Cannot say how we shall go home but by the time we sail the St Lawrence ports will be open and that may make a difference otherwise I expect Halifax would be the best bet.

It was too bad that Dad lost so much of the shooting season but tell him apples will grow again.

Have not been to Louvain again but want to go soon. Miss DeBecker should be home from Switzerland by now. Tell Helen that the Rhine is some country. I had a most interesting trip among the Fritzies. Went to Cologne, Bonn, past Koblenz, to Maintz then to Weisbaden and down to Strassburg in Alsace. Their cities are the cleanest things I ever saw. We got every respect in the world but methinks they hate us worse than ever. I shall tell you all more of it when I return. Left here on the 10th and got home on the 18th.

We may move from here about the middle of next month in the direction of England. Don't know how you had better address me but guess the old address will stand good for all time. I am of course still with Brigade and will likely go on leave to England in a week. I had to put it off again as we are short handed now. Am sorry but it is too late to work a trip to Rome I fear.

And so the old faithful Cadillac has been sold. It certainly was well cared for and the buyer should still have a mighty good machine.

Helen's photo arrived safely and is a peach. The kids don't deserve all the credit for being pretty by a long shot.

My life is very quiet here now. I don't go to Brussels very often and as the Battalion is in the same town I see quite a lot of Baxter. While I was away the Battn. dance was held. Three girls from Brussels whom three of us knew there came. They were rather discouraged as the people in the small towns do not like the Brussels people intruding. Consequently there was a chill all over the hall when the entry was made. To cover themselves with the local people the low life bums said they hadn't invited these girls and when asked who had replied oh Capt. Macgowan. I was the only thing out of sight. Well you can imagine what "my girl" thinks of me and the little job one has to explain such a situation away when you don't parley their lingo. I didn't ask the dames at all and have been squaring myself ever since but am alright now.

The General's wife arrives tomorrow so I suppose for some days we shall not see very much of him as he will be rushing her around.

Will mail you some cards of the Heine trip. King Albert inspects our brigade on th 27th.

Have not been riding much lately and am getting very soft generally not enough regular daily exercise. They have been having a lot of trouble in Berlin, it would be good to have a Division sent up to put a stop to it and get one last slap at them. But there is no chance. Oh how I love those people.

Love to all, Keith

March 26 1919 - Belguim -Wavre - card

Dearest Mother:

Recieved your letter of Feb.23 Ok. We havve been very busy lately preparing for an inspection of the Brigade by the King of the Belgians. It came off yesterday and was a great success but the weather was terrible cold. So glad you have had a reasonable winter. Our own has not been too bad. Yesterday I received a wire from Billie and expect to hear of another official wire arriving in the office any day but I hardly think they will let me go. If I am allowed to I may not be able to take Srigley. Yes that is Juliette's photo with her hand on the pony's head. I have not gone to Louvain since but shall do so one of these fine days. Had decided to cut out English leave and go to Rome in stead but the time is now too short and I have no one to go with so will call the trip off.

Best of love,

Yours, Keith

April 8 1919 - France - card  
Boulogne

Dearest Mother:

My last morning in France I expect. Sail for England at 10:30am. Cannot realize that I am not returning. Do not know how long I shall be in England but no longer than I can help. Left the Battalion Sunday 5th. Arrived here yesterday morning and spent all day saying fond farewells.

Was a busy boy this day two years ago as tomorrow 9th was the day we jumped to take Vimy. I can see the whole thing yet although many scenes have come in between since. The units will leave France I expect about the 20th. In one way I am sorry I am not going with them but am all for making speed now.

Best of love,  
Keith

October 26 1919 - Invermere, B.C. (last letter to Mother)

Dearest Mother:

We have been here since Friday evening and have had a good trip so far. After a bunch of rough necks gave us a send off from Vancouver we had a very comfortable trip to Golden as I had a comfortable drawing room on the train.

There is little or nothing doing in Golden but we were invited out for the evening by a chap I met when up here not long ago. We took the Kootenay Central on Friday afternoon arriving at Athalmer about 7 pm. This place is only half a mile from the Athalmer Station. The weather is cold but clear. We had snow last night but today was lovely. I obtained a motor and we took a trip up one of the mountain roads this afternoon. It is quite exceptional from a scenic standpoint. Tomorrow I have arranged for saddle horses and the next day we hope to motor up the lake past Windemere to the headwaters of the Columbia and on to Fairmont Springs. On Wednesday we shall go on to Cranbrook or Nelson and from there our plans are uncertain. We shall wire at least a day ahead of our arrival home.

The hotel here is quite cozy and the table good. I went to look up saddle horses and while doing so fell in with an outfitter for big game expeditions. I had a very interesting talk with him and tell father I have an idea that he and I can both get a shot or two next summer. I will get full particulars before I come home.

We were railroaded through the hall so fast that I had no chance to see you before leaving. Gertrude is a dear and sends her love to you all.

Affectionately yours,  
Keith

Article from newspaper:

Lieut. A/Capt Keith Campbell Macgowan

On October 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1917.

In front of PASSCHENDAELE.

This officer under heavy shell and machine gun fire pushed forward posts on to the commanding ground. During the withdrawal of our night posts he remained behind to see that all men were clear and accounted for, unnecessarily

exposing himself to enemy snipers who were inflicting numerous casualties on our men and coming back himself as day was breaking. On th night of the 27th and 28th, he organized his company as casualties occurred from the supports. Example set by him in the very trying situation was a great source of inspiration to the men. This officer has been twice previously recommended for immediate award for distinguished conduct and has in addition been recommended for the Military Cross in the New Year's Honors List . His valuable assistance in tending and dressing the wounded during the two bombardments without regard to his personal safety did much toward saving many lives.

**Article from newspaper.**

**POSSESSOR OF "TRIPLE CROSS"**

Capt. Keith Macgowan Awarded Second Bar for Gallantry at Valenciennes.

A London despatch recently included among a number of other Canadians who had been awarded the bar to the military cross the name of Capt. Keith C. Macgowan 47th Battalion, junior partner in the firm of McQuarrie, Martin, Cassady and Macgowan. As a matter of fact, Capt. Macgowan is possessor of what is known as a "triple cross" a distinction rather rare, having been awarded the second bar. The official account of the action for which this award was made is as follows:

" For conspicuous gallantry and good leadership during operations in front of Valenciennes from 17th to 21st October 19 18.

This officer displayed the greatest gallantry and devotion to duty throughout the operations. He led his own company with the greatest skill and daring throughout the whole of the attack, and when communications were cut off temporarily he co-ordinated the work of all the battalion in the street fighting in Denain and again at La Seminelle, and organized the whole of the

outpost system on the night of the 20th October. He made several personal reconnaissances under shell and machine gun fire, and secured very valuable information. The reports sent in by him to the battalion headquarters were of the utmost value in clearing up the situation, and his personal example throughout did much to inspire all those under him to greater efforts in spite of their exhaustion. The tactical ability he displayed did much to ensure the success of the operation".

Mentioned in a Dispatch from

Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig K.T. G.C.B. G.C.V.O. D.C.F.E.  
dated 7th November 1917

for gallant and distinguished services in the Field  
I have it in command from the King to record His Majesty's  
high appreciation of the services rendered

War Office  
Whitehall S.W.  
1st March 1919

Secretary of State for War

#### **MILITARY CROSS**

##### **DEED OF ACTION**

Lieutenant Keith Campbell Macgowan  
47th Battalion, Canadian Infantry

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He pushed forward posts on to commanding ground under heavy shell and machine gunfire, and exposed himself fearlessly to enemy fire while making his dispositions. He reorganized his company with great skill when casualties were caused by enemy shelling, and set them a splendid example in a most difficult situation.

(Authority: London Gazette number 30482 dated 18 January 1918)

##### **BAR TO MILITARY CROSS**

##### **DEED OF ACTION**

Captain Keith Campbell Macgowan, M.C.  
47th Battalion, Canadian Infantry

In front of Drury, 1st-3rd September, 1918, he, with conspicuous courage and ability, led his company through a heavy gas barrage to its assembly position. When other companies had suffered heavy casualties at great personal risk he went forward and advised junior officers in the handling of their companies. He supervised and lead the advance of the assault companies through an intense artillery barrage. During the whole of the fighting his fine example inspired those about him, in spite of their exhaustion and heavy casualties.

(Authority: London Gazette number 31158 dated 1 February 1919)

##### **2nd BAR TO MILITARY CROSS**

##### **DEED OF ACTION**

Captain Keith Campbell Macgowan, M.C.  
47th Battalion, Canadian Infantry

For conspicuous gallantry and fine leadership in front of Valenciennes from 17th to 21st October, 1918. Throughout the operation he led his own company with the greatest skill and daring, and when communications were temporarily cut off he co-ordinated the work of all the companies of the battalion. On two occasions of street fighting he led the battalion, and the tactical ability that he displayed and his personal example did much to ensure the success of the operations.

(Authority: London Gazette number 31265 dated 2 April 1919)

pencilled telegram:

:

**Buckingham Palace**  
**O.H.M.S.**  
**To: Captain Keith Macgowan**  
**8 Ballion Hill**

Your attendance is required at  
Buckingham Palace on Saturday next  
the 12th instant at ten twenty a.m.  
service dress please  
telegraph acknowledgement

Lord Chamberlain of London

Letter to KCM

Wavre, Belgium  
April 5th 1919

Capt. K.C. Macgowan M.C.  
O.C. "D" Company  
47th Canadian Inf'ty

On behalf of the N.C.O.s and men of your own command and of the remnants of the old 131st, still serving with the senior Battalion, we would like, before bidding you bonne voyage upon your departure from Belgium, to give expression to the strong, personal esteem and regard in which you are held by each one of us, an appreciation and regard accorded you as a result of our individual and collective experience and knowledge of your sterling qualities as a leader and Commander.

We have served with and under you in the trenches on Vimy, at Arras and Lens, in attacks on Passchendaele's shell torn slopes, at Amiens, Cambrai, Valenciennes and in many another field of fierce bombardment and violent assault such as the capture of the fine old town of Denain, into which you personally lead the Battalion.

When ever and where ever you called upon us to advance or to stand fast - your never gave us an order to retire - we did so readily, unhesitatingly, knowing that you yourself were shoulder to shoulder with us and that no detail for our safety and protection, commensurate with the success of the task set us, had been overlooked in your preparation, that under your leadership the goal would be achieved with the minimum sacrifice.

Similarly, when behind the lines, we knew that nothing conducive to our comfort and well being, that it was in an officers power to obtain for his men, had been overlooked by you.

In sickness or trouble we found in you a sympathetic staunch and loyal friend and adviser. We could rely upon receiving absolute justice in any matters pertaining to military discipline etc. or affecting our own individual duties and welfare.

Perhaps our esteem and regard for you may be better expressed by the statement that in saluting you it was never the perfunctory act, in compliance with military regulations, but rather the involuntary tribute of respect to an Officer and Gentleman whom had won our highest personal esteem and regard, one whom had military duties permitted, we would have felt no little pride and satisfaction in marching behind when our return to our home city.

We sincerely hope that before leaving England the opportunity may be afforded you of receiving from the hands of His Majesty the King the decorations you so valiantly and fully won on the field of battle and that your future career may prove as brilliantly successful as has your Military one.

Signed on behalf of the N.C.O.s and men of "D" Coy. 47th Battn.

C.S.M. A.G.Swan	E.H.Sands	C.2 M.E.
Sergt W.E.Wiltshire	Sgt. J.F. O'Keefe	
Corp. E.A. Warner	Corp F. Nobbs	
L/Cpl. E.R. Smith	L.Cpl. A.R. Tucker	
Pt. G.D. Potts	Pte. U. Evans	