

From Private William M. Kelly, 85th Battalion of Nova Scotia

Vimy Ridge, April 14, 1917

Dear Margaret,

It has been ghastly, this past week or so, but your big brother has had a chance to prove his worth. I know it has only been a month since the rest of the battalion and I first came over, but I was still wondering when I'd be able to actually fight, instead of just being in a labour unit. I got my chance on Easter afternoon. The attack on Vimy Ridge was planned for months in advance, and on Easter it finally took place! The 4th Division was given the toughest job, that of taking Hill 145. However, they couldn't manage to take the hill on schedule. They had to call in reinforcements for help, and guess who they called? The 85th Battalion of Nova Scotia! It took us only an hour to take the hill, even without an artillery barrage. Several chums of mine fell to the German machine guns, including old Jim Mallows. We'll all miss him. I was lucky not to be hit myself. It was a change to be waiting in the trenches we helped dig. The mud is almost unbearable. It gets everywhere, including in my dinner, though Bob Sherman joked that the mud is probable tastier than the rations we have. I haven't been able to get much sleep lately, as the constant noise of shells exploding keeps me awake, and the fact that we might be attacked at any time puts everyone on edge. I'm luckier than some because I managed to grab a dugout in the trench wall. Another thing that keeps me up is my wet feet, though some of the boys that have been here longer than I have say I'm lucky not to have to deal with the boots that were handed out when Sam Hughes was still in charge. I hope you are doing well, and you are helping Mother with Billy and Anne. Give my love to Mother and Father, and remember me to all friends.

Your loving brother,

William.