

#54 Private Bennett Lesley Fights for Canada, Part 3 (Happy 134th Birthday Ben)

I think that Private Lesley went across the channel to France sometime in September, 1917 because he wrote the following in a letter that will be the topic of my next post: *“Since that September dawn when the gentle fingers of the morning breeze drew the clinging curtain of mist and revealed to our eager gaze the gold crowned hills of sunny France”*. But before that letter, there was this one, dated “France, November 12, 1917” (Kinsley Mercury on December 6, 1917). The 47th Battalion was participating in the Third Battle of Ypres in West Flanders from July to November. It is also known as the Battle of the Mud. The campaign ended in November, when the Canadian Corps captured Passchendaele. This offensive remains quite controversial because of the 700,000 casualties to both German and Allied troops which resulted in a gain of just five miles of Allied land.

Dear brother and folks at home:

I will drop you a few lines to let you know that I am all right and getting along fine. I have been in the hospital for about nine days with a mild case of blood poison in my heel, but am about well now. Am in a convalescent home now but will be going up the line again in a few weeks. The hospital is the best place out here. Up the line at the front the mud is something fierce and our friend Heinie was also some fierce, too. It is sometimes warm but not so bad as you might think by reading some of the newspapers.

The shells are like the snags in the Mississippi river; they don't hurt you so long as they don't hit you. We are blessed with lots of rain here. Today is the first fine day I have seen for a dog's age.

I was in the toughest spot I have been in so far from the 20th to the 30 of last month, but don't suppose there will be much more hard fighting this winter. I see there is an American section on the line now, but don't know where it is as I have not seen many of the troops and they don't seem to know much about it but might run across some of them later on.

Well how are you getting along anyway? Gertie and Fern tell me that there was a failure out there this year from drought. It is a pity you could not have had some of this rain.” Ben

According to his army records record, Ben's heel was treated by a field ambulance on November 1 and then was treated in the hospital in Rouen, France. He convalesced in Buchy, France until he was discharged back to the base on November 29.

