

Zeitoun

4 March '15

My dear Hazel,

There is such a stir and so many rumours in camp that I am taking advantage of an easy day to get this started, so that you shan't miss your weekly letter if we leave here suddenly. There is undoubtedly something doing - we can see that by the preparations that are going on - but we can only guess what it is. The most persistent rumour is that we are leaving for Cyprus on Saturday or Monday, for the purpose of establishing a base there and moving on to the Dardanelles. Cyprus would be a very pleasant place - just the thing for "Bill Massey's Tourists", but I would rather be going to France.

This Dardanelles affair is a very daring undertaking. I do hope it is the first sign that the Allies are going to liven up and take the offensive everywhere. The next six months will see the war won or lost, though not necessarily

finished. Won't it be a treat some day to hear that peace is declared? The world will go nearly mad.

We have had a very quiet time since returning from Smailia. I have had two evenings in town, but stayed in camp all day Sunday. The food has been simply sumptuous in comparison, and the parades were very light until yesterday, which turned out to be the hardest day we have ever had. It was divisional training. Our N. Z. division now consists of all the N. Z. troops, two battalions of Australian infantry and a whole brigade of Australian Light Horse. All these were engaged, forming a column eight miles long on the march. We left camp at seven, and didn't get back till eight at night. It was a grand day, but undoubtedly strenuous, especially as the sun was terribly hot. We covered 23 miles of desert, four of which were in attacking formation. I stood it as well as anyone in my platoon, and am

feeling particularly fit this week. There were a shameful lot of stragglers coming home, and we are having a very easy day today, to give them a chance to recover. Tomorrow I believe we have another similar day. I like them much better than camp routine, being nagged at by little-minded, ignorant non-coms, so that every hour seems to drag.

The reinforcements are a very poor lot. "Jimmy" Allen must have had little to say when he called them superior, both physically and mentally, to the original force. We have eight in our platoon: three of them are shallow, talkative chicken-hearts, two are imbecile blockheads, and the other three are ordinary, rather below the average. All their non-coms have been reduced to the ranks, but of course they will get the first vacancies. I have not come across Mr Adamson yet.

Sunday 7 March

We are still here, and the rumours are dying away, or at least becoming less

definite. All we know now is that everybody has orders to be absolutely ready any day. Most of the Australians left some days ago, but for all we know they may only have gone to Alexandria. Those who profess to know all about it say that we are leaving in a fortnight's time for Lemnos.

We had another dose of divisional training on Friday night. I don't know if it is finished yet - I think most of the men will be glad if it is. It is certainly very solid. We left camp at eight, and marched out to the same locality as last time, the Third Tower - one of a series of old ruined look-out towers along the Suez Road. It is about nine miles from camp, but seemed further. It is very unpleasant ~~so~~ when the whole division is on the march. The dust from the waggons and guns and mounted troops is awful, and there are frequent stops and blockages. The main body just had to dig trenches out there and lie down and sleep (without blankets)

but the 12th and 13th (West Coast) companies formed the outpost for our brigade. We had to go out about a mile in advance and keep a look-out for a small body representing the enemy. I had some good scouting practice, and was kept on the run with reports and messages. Towards morning I managed to lie down for an hour or more, but it was too cold then to sleep. At dawn the "skeleton enemy" delivered an attack, which got pretty well muddled up, then no time was lost in getting on the road to camp. We got back in record time too - a much better performance than last time. It has come out in orders that men who fall out on the march will be left at the base when we get to active service again, so perhaps that kept them all going. You see the regiments are all over strength since the reinforcements arrived, and someone will have to be left out, so there is a certain amount of competition for places.

We had no further parades yesterday. I rested all day, and in the evening went to the Kursaal - a really high-class vaudeville

much worse than I do, because you are so wilful about swotting  
you are just a darling for sending me all those photos. They are lovely,  
good bye. With much love from Cecil

and music-hall. You get an entertainment  
for three piastres ( $7\frac{1}{2}d$ ) miles better than  
anything that can be seen in New Zealand.  
It is beastly windy today, so I can't be  
bothered going out, at any rate not till  
nearly tea-time. No doubt there are  
plenty of interesting things about the  
town that I have not seen yet, but I am  
absolutely tired of the place. It is a  
hateful town, in spite of all its wonders,  
full of filth and wickedness. One would  
like to wipe it right out and build it  
again on the scale of the best that is  
already in it. I don't <sup>think</sup> anyone of British  
race could ever feel at home here. One  
has only to think of a healthy, happy town  
in New Zealand to realise how widely  
different we are from all these "dagos" and  
niggers, and what a problem the govern-  
ment of them will be.

I suppose the College term is just  
starting now. I wish I knew what you are  
doing. I rather hope you are returning to  
College, but wherever you are, mind and  
take care of yourself. You need telling that