

13 March
Zeitoun

My dear Hazel,

I have received two more of your letters, both of them particularly nice ones. I only hope you are getting mine as regularly, and I do wish some of my family were as good correspondents as you are. I haven't had a letter from home for six weeks now, and by next mail it will be two months. They simply won't write unless they receive letters, and of course our mail has been so badly treated. I don't see the sense of delaying our letters from Egypt the way they have.

This is liable to be a rather bad-tempered letter, as it is fearfully hot and stuffy, and the flies are nearly driving me mad. The summer has come suddenly, and the heat is terrible. To make matters worse, it has caught us in the middle of our divisional training, which includes big, long field days three times a week. We leave camp at 6.45, and don't get back till five or six or even later. There is not an inch of shade

all day, and the water in our bottles gets quite hot and worse than useless. Monday and Wednesday were terrible days, with a wind like a blast from a furnace, and what with the heat and the dust, I don't hope to have many more such experiences. Our butter, which we have no means of keeping - not even a tin or a bucket - ran right away into the floor of the tent. The nights were as hot as the days, so that there was no relief to the continual strain on our nerves. Your hair or your blanket sparked beautifully with electricity, when rubbed against the tent. We got back to camp both days completely exhausted, but the pleasure of returning to camp in such a state is almost worth it. It makes such a delicious luxury of a shower bath, an ice cream or a mug of beer. All the same, I am far from agreeing with your wish that we may remain in Egypt indefinitely. We are pretty well tired of the place, and anxious for a move. I don't mind giving you my candid impression, because I am pretty sure we will be away before you get this, and

you won't need to waste any sympathy on our hardships, such as they are - they will be all over. Besides, I think most of us are amateurs enough to really enjoy them: and they keep us wonderfully healthy.

We had a quiet day on Tuesday, with leave in the afternoon and evening. I had a very pleasant rest down in Zeitoun, where there are some nice garden-restaurants. On Thursday we had a programme which I think will be the usual thing later on - if we are still here when divisional training is completed - namely, parades in the early morning and evening, and leave from 9 till 5. I went down to the Esbekieh gardens, in the heart of the town, where there is a Soldiers' Cafe run by Cairo ladies for our benefit. We pay for everything, but there are no profits. I spent the day there, writing letters and reading. It was absolutely too hot to think of going out in the streets, but it was fairly comfortable there. The gardens are lovely, and there is quite a good library. On Friday the heat was tempered by a delicious breeze, and the

day's work was quite enjoyable in comparison. It was lucky for us, for we must have covered a record distance in the course of the day, and we could hardly have stood it but for the cool breeze.

The last mail from New Zealand has caused a good deal of amusement, partly owing to the mistaken ideas the newspapers have expressed about this country, but chiefly because of the ludicrous lies our people have been sending home. One Nelson man wrote a truly amazing letter to his sister, ~~to~~ full of wild imagination and wonderful deeds, but unfortunately she got it published in a paper and it has come back here. He is now the laughing-stock of a merciless camp - and serve him jolly well right.

I am glad you safely received that book of views. All the people here - even government officials - are such awful thieves that one feels distinctly lucky when a thing gets safely through. Half the parcels that are sent to our men never reach them. I hope the other things I sent

you have gone through all right.

As to your request for photos with me in them, I have had nothing but disappointment in that respect. I wanted to send you some all along, but never a one has turned out decently. The one I am enclosing is a failure of me, but will enable you to identify Hall-Jones, and I will promise to make a special effort to get some more worthy of me.

You will be relieved to hear that I am not studying Arabic. I soon realised the futility of it, as we have precious little intercourse with the natives. And my reference to "book Arabic" was the outcome of an experience which I bought for fifteen precious piastres and some time and trouble: for in my complete linguistic ignorance I bought an Arabic text-book and waded in, only to find that the gabber of the average "nigger" was completely different from the literary style I was cultivating. Whereupon I got disgusted and hastened to forget the little I had learnt.

Our pay is not exactly princely now, owing to the way prices have risen since the soldiers came here. You can't get a meal now for less than two shillings, and drinks and light refreshments are about the same price as in New Zealand. Fruit has become very scarce, and cab-men, guides etc have ~~become~~ raised their prices. Besides, there is such a constant need for pocket-money here. In New Zealand one can live quite well without spending a penny, but here one can hardly get through a day without exceeding the average of nine or ten piastres, so that for a while before pay-day we are completely "broke". All the same, I am glad we are not getting any more cash pay. What we have is really sufficient for requirements, and the rest will provide a good holiday when we return to New Zealand. I think it was Harold Bell who said the men would come back "wasters"; and I am afraid he was partly right, but there will be plenty of exceptions, you may be sure.

I hear the Senate is going to give us

that time of year. But what a lazy waster you will think me - if you happen to see me during the first month or so. I will just want to lie and dream - or sleep - and my appetite will be positively indecent. My company will be an awful bore, so if you are wise you will avoid me. People will want me to talk about my experiences, and I will refuse to give a thought to them. Do you remember one afternoon at Karitane, when you gave me up in disgust and read a book? It will be worse than that, because I will be ever so much lazier and just hopelessly in love.

Thank you again for those two lovely letters. Good-bye.

With much love from
Becie.

a "roll of honour" in the calendar. Perhaps the students, as a class, deserve a little honour, for most of them have made a genuine sacrifice, but it is ludicrous to think of making heroes of ~~most~~^{many} of the men of this force. Not that I have any doubt of their behaving well on active service, but it was no notion of "patriotism" that caused them to enlist. Still there are so many good men amongst us that I suppose it is not advisable to say anything against the force as a whole.

There is nothing more to be said about our future movements, but public opinion has veered round to the view that we will be here for several weeks yet, and then go straight to England, after all. One would give something to be able to see a month ahead.

I certainly hope to be back for next Christmas, and will make a point of visiting my brother - if he will have me. If it is not next Christmas, I will be almost content ~~to~~ to wait till the next one after that. I would like our return to be about