

15th General Hospital
Alexandria
8 Jan.

My dear Hazel, I have been up out of bed for some days, and may be leaving here tomorrow for a convalescent camp. I am quite well again, and have had a pleasant time. It is so absolutely lazy and restful. The days have been quite mild and yet sunny - I didn't think Egypt could be so pleasant. We had three days' continual rain too, very unusual in this country. I have been having a feast of reading, and have got my correspondence

all written off. We have also played bridge a little; it is a game I admire but don't enjoy so far. One night there was a concert in one of the big wards. The singing was only fair, but I enjoyed it after being deprived of music for so long. Besides there was quite a good violinist and a very amusing farce.

You should see our pretty uniforms! Sky-blue with white lapels and red neck-ties. They make quite a gay scene along the balconies, with groups

of green palms and beds covered with red blankets. I don't know if the colours clash, but to my mind they are very picturesque. There are three large blocks of buildings with asphalt courts between, but there is not much ground and no garden.

The food is very good indeed. Today I had a whole chicken for dinner - a small one certainly, but such a feast. The jaundice convalescents have terrific appetites.

I had a pleasant surprise last Monday, when

the orderly brought me three letters - one from you. Compared with past experiences, their quickness in tracing me this time was amazing. Another greater surprise last evening, when I received from the record office the contents of my pockets, which I lost on the "Makeno" last September - pay-book, with all the photos you have given me, diary, purse, identity disc etc. The possession of the pay-book makes me a man of great wealth; I have nearly

£25 to draw. I could get an occasional dole without a book, but now I can have the lot if I want it. Major Griffiths should have replaced the book months ago, but he is an expert procrastinator, full of fair promises, and a very unsatisfactory man to have any dealings with. He won't see this letter, so I can just tell you about him. I don't value the praise he wrote to Mother - smooth words cost nothing. However, he has treated me well enough in the matter of promotion, and it is just sheer hard luck that I was not a sergeant long ago.

The rumours don't seem to be true about English nurses. This is my first experience of them, but they are splendid. But the sister we see most of is an Australian, and she is the best of the lot. This place is such a treat after those awful Mudros hospitals. Of course I was never in Malta, and the report you saw must have had the date wrong too, for I was just six weeks in hospital, and lost no time in getting back.

Your letter was dated Nov. 19th, and the one before was about Oct. 20th, so I have quite a lot of mail to get yet, including half a dozen

parcels which have been mentioned in letters. Thanks for sending the photo. Of course I have two of it now, but it was very good of you all the same. You have come back to my dreams, after never coming for months. Perhaps the photo did it, or perhaps it is the happy, peaceful sleep ~~to~~ I have enjoyed lately.

So you ^{are} at St ^{Baritone} again! I can just imagine the happy days you are spending. And you must make the most of them. I could tell from that last letter that you were very tired after the exams,

and would need a perfect rest.

The convalescent camp I expect to go to is seven miles out, but I hope to get some leave to see Alex.

I will have to come in one day anyhow, to get my teeth, which the dentist is making here.

Yesterday I had a visit from four of our company, who are on furlough. I imagine the joy of it - to be absolutely free for a week. Of course only the old hands (up to fifth reinforcements) are getting this privilege. Our troops are in reserve at Samailia, and will resume

training when the 7th and 8th join them from Zeitoun. Meanwhile they are having a holiday, which I probably won't get, though I shall certainly apply for it when I get back to the company.

By the way, I remember one of your letters complained that I never spoke of my friends in the company. I have had no friends since July - only plenty of good acquaintances. Last winter in Egypt there were four whom I could call real friends. One of these was our first casualty at the landing. Another,

"Porky" Littlejohn, my best friend, was killed on the 13th of August, the day I got back from my first illness at Semnos. He was gone by the time I found the company, and Jack Mansell went over the same day. Of the other ~~two~~ two, one went sick to Semnos in July, and got a light job there, running an oil engine on a wharf. The other was wounded on Aug. 8th, and took a job as cook at a hospital at Semnos. These two, Bert Warnock and Ted Baigent, rejoined us at Christmas. When I got back in August, I found nearly all the old crowd gone.

There was only one whom I was at all friendly with, and he has since gone to New Zealand. I barely got to know the 5th reinforcements in our platoon before they all went sick, and very few have returned. Then I went sick myself, and returned to find my company almost entirely composed of 6th reinforcements. By the time I get back again, there will be the 7th and 8th, and I will be a stranger once again, especially as I will probably not be in No. 9 platoon. Latterly I was in charge of No. 11,

but they have picked up some of the old sergeants in Egypt, so I may get back. Warnock and Baigent are of course in No. 9, but I won't see much of them unless I get in the same platoon. You needn't think, though, that there is anything lonely about a soldier's life. Every man is a good comrade, and no introductions are needed, but it is more a matter of acquaintance than friendship.

There are dozens of "Trents" coming here to get their teeth done. The

~~first~~ second battalion
is camped near here. I don't
think I have any prejudice
against them, but they seem
to be suffering from
swelled head. I wonder why!

Well, I am really getting
loquacious. I must draw
the line here.

I hope to get some
little birthday present for
you, if I can get to a shop,
~~but~~ if it doesn't arrive in
time, don't think I am
forgetting you. I wish
you many very happy
returns of the day.

With much love from
Cecil.