

ones are still missing, and I have not received any parcels since coming to Egypt, though fully a dozen have been mentioned in letters. It certainly is very disgusting and discouraging, and there is no excuse for it now that we are all in Egypt. But what ~~more~~ seems most unreasonable is the delay and irregularity of the mail ~~of~~ from here to New Zealand. I can't understand why they make such a muddle of that.

I suppose it is true that we are getting some interesting and valuable experiences - meeting all sorts of men and seeing all sorts of sights - but then we are so ~~long~~<sup>far</sup> from being in a position to appreciate them.

Ras-el-Tin Bonvalecent  
Hospital, Alex.

15 Jan.

My dear Hazel,

I like that easy-chair photo of you very much - in fact it is my favourite of all you have sent me, so it seems your father knows nothing about such things. I admit the imperfections of the photo, but they don't matter, so long as it recalls you to my memory just as I love best to think of you. But I think you are positively wicked to speak so disrespectfully of your face, instead of being grateful for your fortune, like the milk-maid.

I got two of your letters yesterday (Nov 29 and Dec 5), but some of the October and November

I certainly enjoyed Cairo last winter, when we were fresh from home, but I find I can't be bothered with Alexandria now. It is not that I am world-weary or very homesick, but our opportunities are so limited and unsatisfactory. If I had freedom and means I would be very keen, for I have all the instincts of a globe-trotter, but as it is I get more pleasure by drowsing over a book here in the sleepy, sunny court-yard. Our leave is only from 1.30 to 9.30 every fourth day, and there are always some items of shopping and details of business to see to. Then it is dark by 5 o'clock, so one can

hardly get beyond the main streets of the town. At least so I found it on Thursday, which was the only time I went out on leave so far, and I was very unfavourably impressed with the town. But then my temper was grievously upset at the outset by a little talk I had with a bounder of a British officer, and we spent all our time looking, without much success, for certain offices and shops. However, we went to a music-hall (there is no theatre) in the evening, and the show was passably good.

I don't know if I have ever mentioned to you my present comrade in distress - Allan Farquhar, from Fairlie. He is a

main body man and was in the scouts with me. We both got gaudied at Lemnos and have been together since. He is a thoughtful chap, though without any secondary education, and has a fruitless ambition to learn languages.

I really must make an effort to learn to understand French better. It is almost impossible to make any civilian acquaintances - though some men were lucky in Cairo - but if I can get furlough when I rejoin the battalion, I will try to board with a French family, to get practice in conversation.

Yesterday I had an appointment with the dentist at the 15<sup>th</sup> Y. H., and expected to get some leave out of it, but they only gave me time to have lunch in town and come straight back. I have been here since Monday, and like the place very much. The best point about it is the perfect freedom and the free-and-easy commonsense of the management. The patients are left to their own devices to an extent that would never be in a "Tommy" institution. Then the Australian officers <sup>are</sup> so unaffected and jolly-perfect gentlemen. There is cricket (of a sort) and tennis here, but I have no heart for games yet. I am too busy resting and

recuperating - and reading. There are positively too many books here to choose from - dozens that I want to read.

I have spent some time rewriting my diary, copying from several ragged note-books which served the purpose at different times, and filling up gaps from memory. I think I will send it home to Mother now, while there is practically no censorship.

I had a surprise visit last Sunday from Beattie, Maloney and Gurnsey, from College. It seems that practically all the College men are together in one section. They told me that Arthur Boyd was in the same hospital - had been there longer than me - so I looked him up that evening. He is recovering from severe dysentery. I hope to get out to the camp at Mex to see the others.

I will be very pleased to get the Saturday "Evening News" if it is not too much trouble to you. I still take an absurd

interest in football and cricket,  
and there are always other items  
of news too. Of course at present we  
see the papers (such as they are)  
every <sup>day</sup>, but on ~~the~~ Gallipoli we  
had to depend on the N. Z. papers  
for news, even of our own casualties.

My brother Charlie's letter yesterday  
~~told~~ <sup>told</sup> me of a friend of his and  
mine, who has been missing  
since August - and it was news  
to me. We never see nor hear of  
anybody outside our own unit.

I have never seen the Fred Lloyd  
you speak of, and I never expect  
to see Saxon or Harry Bell or  
anybody in the Rifle Brigade.

(except in camp as at present.)  
I hope Stan joins our reinforcements.

I have certainly noticed  
the difficulty you speak of, of  
writing intimately when our  
letters take so long. That is my  
excuse for the stodginess of mine,  
but you need no excuse. Your  
letters are all that I could wish  
for, and very much more. I  
have always noticed that it  
is just when your letters are

most personal, and so most to my liking, that you apologise for them. It doesn't matter much if you have no general news to give me, although it is always welcome, but I do want to know just what you are thinking and feeling, and as a rule your letters are very good in that way. As for mine, I feel that they are beyond apology, dull and common-place. Yet you say that you look forward to them, and if that is really so, perhaps I need not worry about them. After all, if they have the faults mentioned, they are a faithful index of me, and if I am a dull person, I would like you to be fully aware of the fact, that there may be no disillusionment when we meet again. Yet I wish I could write to you as you deserve, or even as

I feel towards you. The trouble is, as I think I have mentioned before, I have no power and no faith in words as the expression of feelings. I read the most celebrated love-letters and love-poetry, and as long as ~~it is~~ I look at it impersonally, I can say "How beautiful! What wonderful mastery of language!" But if I imagine myself writing to you in a similar strain, I must say "How unnatural, artificial and absurdly inadequate." So that is why I don't write love-letters to you, dearest, and don't attempt to tell you how I love you. It is not that I am half-hearted, for I do love you, my Hazel, almost as you deserve to be loved, and you are always in my thoughts.

With much love from  
Becib.