



BRITISH RED CROSS
AND
ORDER OF ST. JOHN

Convalescent Home
Ras-el-Tin, Alex.
30 Jan. '16.

My dear Hazel,

The mail is behaving itself beautifully nowadays. I expect a letter from you every Saturday, and it always comes. I got your first letter from Haritane yesterday, with the lupin flowers and those two lovely photos. And before I tell you what a dear, good girl you are, I must do my painful duty of reproving you for a very vain and discontented person. Every time you send me a photo, no matter how beautiful, you make some disparaging remark about it not doing you justice. So I must have been right when I

accused you of vanity once before. However, it is not a grievous fault, as long as you avoid the kindred error of conceit, so I still love you - all the more, because after all if you were an angel I wouldn't like you a bit, but you're not. Now in your reply I shall expect a whole-hearted, indignant denial, please. You are simply spoiling me with kindness lately, for which I am very, very grateful, but I believe the old scoldings were more salutary.

The lupins were still very sweet, and the photos too, as I said before. But I mustn't minister to the fault I have condoned. Otherwise I would like to describe those photos to you, and point out the wonders of them to your unseeing eyes. By the way, wasn't it thoughtless of me not to send you a photo? I

must get one taken tomorrow. And you needn't be afraid of praising it, if it is any good. I am not vain.

I also have to thank you for the second pair of mittens and for the Virol toffee and handkerchiefs. I kept every bit of the toffee for myself, as I have always kept the chocolate you have sent me. It is greedy perhaps, but I don't think so. With your Mother's cake I acquired a little fleeting popularity in my ward, but your gifts would be wickedly wasted in that way. To anyone else they would be mere toffee and chocolate, but to me they are your gifts. What a sentimental fool I am! Do you notice too with what matter-of-fact calmness, what condescending kindness, I accept your sacrificial offering of mittens, and pass them over with a bare acknowledgment.

After all the time and trouble you so lovingly bestowed upon them, I take the first pair without a word of thanks, and nearly forget to mention the second. And all because I have no use for them there. If we had been on the peninsula for the winter I would have been loud in my acknowledgments. So you see my gratitude is measured by purely selfish considerations. Why don't you renounce me for an ungrateful beast? I wonder if there is anything else I have overlooked, any just cause of offence I have given you. If there is, please ascribe it to clumsiness and thought^{less}ness, and try to believe that I mean well.

There is no possibility of us ever being sent to New Zealand for a rest, so if you see me back before the end of the war,

I will be sick or wounded - and pretty bad too. I won't go back (much as I would like to) unless it is really necessary. There has been too much of that sort of thing.

So you profess yourself a cynic, and expect me to take the statement seriously. Why, you don't know anything at all about yourself, if you think that. A cynic is a horrible person. Besides, you have only half confided in me, so I can't advise you. What is the nature of this terrible cynicism of yours? If it is only occasional discouragement and doubt, don't worry about that - everybody feels like that sometimes. If it is unorthodoxy, whether of religion or social views, dare to be unorthodox or unconventional - it is no crime. But if you are

puzzled or worried about your own thoughts and opinions, remember at least that it is no use tackling any problem without first settling your postulates and axioms. "God is good" is a statement as axiomatic as anything in Euclid, and I think it disposes of the cynic right away. Another tip I will give you, out of the fullness of my wisdom - don't expect to solve any of these problems: they have no solution, that is to the human mind. They are worth thinking about, but ~~not~~ not to the extent of letting them disturb your peace of mind.

I was passed out by the doctor on Wednesday, but have had to stay on till the dentist is finished. I go to him on Tuesday, and I think that will be the last. I am feeling

very well now. I have been
out three days this week, and
have a good time in town,
~~and~~ ^{but} I would just as soon
stay at home and read and
play tennis. I have had several
good games. Thank you for
introducing me to W. G. Locke.
I remember you mentioning
his name long ago, but I never
came across one of his books
till yesterday, when I read
"Septimus" and enjoyed it
immensely. There was a splendid
concert given here the other
evening by some amateur
pianists, including a titled
lady and some eminent staff
officers.

I suppose you will have
left Haritane yesterday. I was
pleased to hear you began
with ideal weather, and hope
it continued. It is really a

beautiful place, especially in the early morning. I don't think you ever knew of my matutinal prowling, but I have a habit in summer of waking at day-break - caught it by going to catch fish at that hour.

But what a wretch I am - extolling the hours when you were asleep as the happiest part of my stay with you.

You said nothing more about Nelson College, so I suppose your application was unsuccessful, and I am glad of it. I don't want you to have the worry of teaching, and I wish you no luck in future applications, so there!

I think that is all I want to say, so good-bye for the present, dearest. With thanks and much love to you from

Becil.