

[~~Private~~] 5/9/16.

My dear Hazel,

I am a bit off colour today, and have stayed off the morning ^{parade}, so I have time to write you a few lines. Otherwise we are having rather a busy time, and I did not expect to have the time to write. We have covered two more stages towards the firing line since I wrote last, staying one night at our first ^{appointed} halt and several days in the present billets. I expect we will do the last stage of our trek ~~_____~~

I have had a nice letter from you dated July 12th, and by the same mail I received the news of my sister-in-law Florrie's death. I thought I was hardened enough to make light

of death, but it was a great blow to me. She was more than a sister to me. She had given me a home on all my holidays from Christchurch, and before that I lived with her while Mother was in the North Island. She was one of the kindest and dearest friends I have ever had. Charlie is the brother to whom I owe most, and I am rather worried as to how he is taking it, for his whole life was bound up in hers, and he is very highly strung and unfit to bear such a blow. It is sad too for Ken and the baby girl.

I fear I am absolutely on the shelf as regards promotion. My nomination for the R. E. was definitely accepted some time ago, but nothing more has been

heard of it. Meanwhile I am not considered for a commission in our own division, though they are being granted now on quite a liberal scale.

I hope all is well with you. You seemed to be settling down to teaching very well, and I hope you are taking good care of yourself and not working too hard. I have been in the best of form myself, and my present trouble is nothing.

Please give my best wishes to all at home. I still owe your mother a letter, but can't manage it at present.

With lots of love to you, dearest
from
Becil.

A. C. Smith