

Brockenhurst
29 November

My dear Hazel,

This week's

medical bulletin is a little too favourable to be really satisfactory to me. The doctor tells me he is not at all certain that I shall get back to New Zealand. It seems the latest cry is for "economy of man power", and the new chief surgeon is very chary of granting discharges. So it is doubly unfortunate that I was not "boarded" a few weeks ago. My foot is now looking so well that I admit I will probably be able to walk quite well, but I am not going to pretend

that I want to go back to France. It would be absurd for any Main Body man to pretend to be still keen on it, and nobody would believe him. All the same I am determined to go back rather than put up with a base job, and be associated with the hundreds of shirkers who are clinging to "soft jobs" in England. That is ~~the~~ what seems to be in store for me at present, but I will refuse to do it under present conditions. If the authorities make a genuine attempt at "economy", and try to utilise every man in a suitable job, I will be glad to ~~be~~^{do} what I still can to help,

but when I see dozens of perfectly sound men being sent home, and hundreds, perhaps thousands more who have seen absolutely no service and never intend to, I am satisfied that I have every right to get a trip to New Zealand if I can, and failing that to claim the privilege at least of being classed among the honest men who are doing what they undertook to do.

You will no doubt perceive that I am writing this "hot", that is to say I have just sat down after my interview with the doctor, and it is more than likely that I am

taking a disproportionate view of what he said - which only was that he did not think I would get to New Zealand, though I would be unfit for active service, and after all he has no say in the matter. The board consists of the commandant, chief surgeon and another, and quite likely their opinion will be different from his. Anyhow I am fortunate in my doctor, who will put in a word if he can.

This has been another very quiet week. I got a trip to Bournemouth on Saturday, and enjoyed the outing very much. We are only allowed to

^{go} to in parties in charge of sisters, but ours kindly left us to our own devices in the town. We got there at three and left at six (unfortunately the sisters can't get away earlier in the afternoon), but we had time for a look round before dark, and then went to the skating rink, where we sat looking on while we had tea. There were dozens of lovely girls there, wearing some very pretty dresses. It is a fine town, much larger than I thought. I only knew it as a seaside resort, but there are some big manufactures, including munitions. There

is very little space on the sea-front or the gardens leading to it, but money has made the most of it. It has nothing like the natural advantages of Timaru. I am going again this week, at the invitation of our company second-in-command, Capt. Dron, who is collecting half-a-dozen of the company for a trip, when we hope to have a little more freedom and a longer leave. I don't think I have ever mentioned Dron to you, but perhaps you have heard his name in Nelson. He is one of the best officers in our brigade, came with the third Rufts, but for all

his splendid work has had no decoration and no promotion. For a while he had the company, but was reduced to make room for the old major, who is quite unfit for the work. He is really "one of the best", and a real friend to every man in the company.

I have been for several quite long "walks", and though the autumn is over the Forest is still very beautiful. I have been reading up the history and the places of interest, in the hope of getting to see them before I leave here.

I had some very anxious letters by the last mail, on account of the big casualty

lists, but I was glad that yours - two of them - were very brave and sensible. No wonder the people at home were feeling it though, for it seemed to me at the time that practically everyone I knew had been killed or wounded.

I don't feel at all inclined to scold you for your confessions about neglecting to write to Jeanie when Florrie died, because you gave yourself far more punishment than you deserved, in your letter. You poor darling! You must have been simply miserable about it, and yet it was due to nothing worse than just a little foolishness.

But can't you see that you are doing something absolutely wrong, to yourself as well as your friends, in making yourself so busy as to be unable to write to them. You are doing it with the best of motives, that you consider it to be your duty, but you are mistaken. That is as clear as daylight to me, and yet I can't persuade you of it. So I have no scolding for you, only I beg you to think it out more rightly and work less.

With lots of love to you,
my own Hazel,

from
Cecil.