

Oct 1

My dear Hazel,

I received your very welcome letter this morning, and am taking the first chance of answering it, as our opportunities are very uncertain. By the way, did you ever get that last letter I sent from camp? I can't understand how it could be delayed.

The latest news is that we are here for two months at least, and more likely four. In fact, January 20th is mentioned as a probable date for our departure. The prospect of staying here in Water for that length of time is simply unthinkable. The men would drink themselves to death in sheer disgust. I think it is far more likely that we will go onto camp ashore. Some say we are going back to our centres, and there is a possibility that we may even be sent home for a couple of months. The whole thing is turning out quite differently from what we first expected. In any case, we have a definite programme of work

up till Saturday week, so we may almost believe that we will know where we are till then.

The week has not been a very eventful one. We berthed at the wharves early on Monday morning, and immediately did a route march to Petone and back - sixteen miles. It was a very hot day, ~~and~~ the men being very soft after the lazy life on board, I think it was the hardest performance we have had yet. On Tuesday our ~~comp~~ battalion went out by train to Trentham for shooting practice. One of the three battalions goes each day, so our turn comes again tomorrow. It was the first target practice I have had for years, and I am very keen on getting more. On Tuesday night I was on the town picket, marching up & down one street from six till twelve, without a single halt. The result was that I skinned my foot, and when we went out next morning I found I could not stand it. We were doing attack practice up the hills behind Newtown.

I kept going till dinner-time, and then pulled out and came back alone. There was general leave both on Tuesday night & last night, but I missed them both. I stayed on board today, on light duties, but hope to get out to Trentham tomorrow. It is fearfully slow on board when the regiment is away.

This letter is not being written continuously. I have had several interruptions - being called on for odd jobs.

Yes, there are canteens on the boats. Probably you have seen the scandal in the papers about their excessive charges. I think this is the first time in my life that I have been absolutely penniless & unable to raise money. I don't know when pay day is, but perhaps it won't be long, and in the meantime I am living cheap. It is only a foretaste of what we will get later on.

I didn't have my hair cut till yesterday. It must have been squashed down by my hat at Lyttelton - it was really very long.

I made my first attempt at washing, mending and darning this morning. The washing was right enough, though the handkerchiefs are still rather dingy. The mending was frankly a failure. Our uniforms are made of very loosely woven stuff, and after I had carefully sewn it right along, it simply pulled away again from the stitches. At darning, I will improve with practice. The first sock I simply pulled the edges of the hole together, but the second was quite a respectable darn, I thought.

Now I have to go down on the wharf for a muster parade of all hands and the cooks. The regiment is just back from a very hard day at Terorri. Good-bye, my Bayel, and thank you for your kind wishes.

With love from
Ferd.