

"Athenic"

15 October

My dear Hazel,

Your letter was a very pleasant surprise, and one of the best you have ever sent me. As you say, it was just you as you were at the moment, only it was not silly or dismal, but just delightfully intimate. I hope you will often make me a "victim" in the same way.

I suppose you got my telegram yesterday. We left the wharf sure enough in the afternoon, and the intention was to leave the harbour today, but there has been another delay, and we don't leave now till tomorrow morning. Perhaps we won't then. There are only four warships for the convoy so far - two of our own N. Z. gun-boats, one from the China Sea fleet, and one Japanese. They say there are more cruising round outside the Heads. It seems we are going via the Red Sea and Mediterranean, and picking up a strong convoy at Colombo or Aden.

We might as well be in gaol for all we see of the beauties of nature. Last Thursday we were scouting through the bush at Karori, but were too busy to admire the scenery. I know the Clematis flowers were glorious. On Monday we had scouting and a sham fight on the sand hills near Lyall Bay. On Tuesday we had the usual shooting at Trentham, and our last evening ashore - a merry one for most of us. Yesterday we had leave from seven in the morning till two, but as we are again penniless, we had rather a weary time, and were not sorry to leave the wharves, which we did about four. We got a great send-off - especially the Wgtn boats, of course.

I spent my last sixpence on getting a frame for that photo. You wouldn't believe the trouble I had to get one of a suitable size. I was just giving it up in despair, when I went into a filthy old shop with a friend who was pawning his watch, and saw one which looks

about fifty years old, but was just
the right price for my means.
It is rather small, so I am afraid the
whole of Miss Digby will have to go.

The government have taken over
the canteens, and everything is being
sold at quite reasonable prices now,
only they haven't ~~a~~ a very varied
stock - you can't even buy ink.

I don't approve of your choice of
the name Theodocia - it is certainly
uncommon, but naturally so. And
you can't improve on Hazel; nuns
are supposed to be sweet and lovable,
not cold and stately.

Perhaps you would like the
whole verse of that German poem -

Du bist wie eine Blume
So hold und schön und rein.
Ich seh' dich an, und Wehmuth
Schleicht mir ins Herz hinein.

"Thou art like a flower, so gracious
and beautiful and pure: I look at thee,
and sadness comes stealing into my
heart". I don't know why sadness,
except that Heine was a man of an
exceptional temperament.

We are almost certain to call at Sydney to pick up the Australian force, and then again at Albany or Fremantle, to get coal and exercise the horses. Of course things may turn out quite differently, but that is what we expect. I don't think half the men realise even yet what they are in for. They just treat the whole thing as a picnic. We have had beautiful weather again this week. It has been hot certainly, but not too hot to be enjoyable. I knew you would be getting nor'westers in Ch. Ch., and you have my sympathy. I know how fearfully trying they are when you have to swot. I find the best course is not to attempt anything solid, but just read the most interesting of your set books.

I quite appreciate your longing for Puketeraki. I used to dream of the Lower Opahi - my favourite fishing ground, where I lived like a hermit in my brother's hut, and just fished and dreamed for the first fortnight of the vac. We are missing the spring, being cooked up in camp and on board.

This letter has been interrupted
several times by showers, ~~since~~ hence
the blotches in some places, and I
have been hampered all the time
by the wind, hence the writing.
I am writing up on deck, as it is
too much of a strain trying to
write by the light down below.

The last mail is just going, &
am told. Good-bye.

With love from
Bevil.