

I had a very nice letter recently from the eldest Miss Saxon (Mrs Boggard, of Wellington) and she mentioned that her sister and Miss Farrow were both still at the girls' college. I am sure you will like them both. I suppose you will have ~~had~~ been up the Dun Mountain track. We spent some happy days up there two years ago, and I hope to spend some more again - perhaps with you. It is true I enjoyed our bachelor outings most, but I may have different tastes when I come back. I thought of sending this direct to Nelson, so that you would get it quicker, but perhaps it will be better to keep to the old address. You might be home for Easter - I don't know when it is - and anyhow perhaps your lady principal - I

Moaska, Esmailia
19 Feb. '16.

My dear Hazel,

I got a letter from you this week, containing four very nice photos from Karitane, and the news that you were going to Nelson. I was not very enthusiastic about the latter: I would have preferred you to stay at home, as you intended at first. However, I am sure you will like the place and the people, and no doubt you will like the work too, when you get accustomed to it. And after all, I must admit your father is quite right in wishing you to have some experience in a profession. If I had any right to express an opinion, I would have wished it otherwise, but of course I have none, and the future is very uncertain.

have forgotten her name - would not approve of you getting letters from soldiers. I remember Miss Saxon used to speak of her in a very disrespectful way, and it was considered a dangerous precedent when I once stayed to tea with the lady teachers. You see I know something of your quarters and your associates, and I am bound to hear some gossip about you, as you did about me, so now you are warned.

The photos are very good indeed. I am getting quite a good collection of you now, and they are all more and more wonderful and precious to me. I am glad you were led to believe that I had none - otherwise perhaps you would not be sending them.

There were no false pretences either on my part, though I admit I would lie or steal or anything to get them. Thank you very much, dear, for being so good to me.

You will see from the heading that I have rejoined the battalion, rather unwillingly on the whole, though I have had a good holiday and am fit for anything now. An old main body friend, Ted Baigent, came to Giza from hospital on Monday, and we looked forward to a good time together, but next morning all men of the infantry brigade were ordered to rejoin. I was going out to tea that evening too, with some friends with whom I spent the Sunday, so I was rather disgusted. We left Cairo by the seven train, and arrived here at 10.15 p.m. The camp is about

two miles west of Smailia, and includes all of our infantry, artillery etc, and some Australian infantry. It is of course right in the desert, on very heavy sand, I went into the township on Wednesday afternoon, but it has been completely spoilt by the presence of so many troops.

"Prohibition" has been brought in, with the usual disastrous results - a terrible lot of drunkenness on impure "sly grog", and all the restaurants and shops closed down or badly deteriorated. On Thursday we had a big field day, and yesterday squad drill and bathing parade. It is very hard on a veteran soldier like me to come back to such training, is it not? I feel very bad-tempered about it. We are up to full strength again, for the first time since the landing. A lot of our N. C. O's are back from England, so promotion is very far away again. I lost on every one of my spells in hospital, and have indeed a poor record for eighteen months service. Do you remember I predicted we would be away eighteen months? It seems Fitchener knew better than I did.

This is the weariest camp we have ever had, because leave to go to Smailia is not worth having, and there is nothing to do in

camp. Gambling is the great amusement, but unfortunately I am not a gambler, and don't enjoy it a bit. But fortunately I am a reader, and am enjoying Gautier's "Nouvelles", which Arthur Ponder lent me. I saw the College contingent of the Rifle Brigade the other evening. They are all well. I have also seen Cuthbert Parr, elder brother of Stephen and a very fine fellow. Porter has been in hospital, but I hear he is back.

It is nearly time for "lights out" now, and I am, as at Zeitoun, in charge of a heathenish and unruly tent, so I must see to it. Tomorrow will be your twenty-first birthday. I will be thinking of you all day, and I believe you will think of me. Good-bye for the present, my own dear Hazel. I know I ought to write and tell you not to think any more about me, but I can't, dear. I am too selfish to let you go. If there is no sign of the end in six months, I will stop writing, but at present I can't help hoping that we will be home this year.

With much love from
Cecil.