

[Armentières] 3 June '16

My dear Hazel,

I had two very nice letters from you this week, dated 30 March and 9 April. One was very bright but the other was simply blue. You poor darling! You will never be a teacher till you learn not to worry. You are absolutely miles too conscientious. Why, I have just as much responsibility here as you have, with a lot of mad, wild men instead of pretty little flappers to look after, but I have mastered a practical philosophy that enables me to have plenty of spare time and no worry whatever. Do whatever work comes along, at once and hastily, and then forget it. The work will not be done to perfection that way, but on the average it will be quite as good as if you took more pains with it, because you will be always fit and ready, instead of being sometimes too weary to think clearly.

I quite understand your looking forward to week-ends and holidays - they are certainly a blissful break in the monotony. You will have had a holiday today (King's birthday). It was always the football tournament day before the war, but I hope you have been for a real happy picnic instead. You have never told me yet whether you have been up the Dun Mountain or any of those glorious walks.

Please go as often as you can, and don't dare to develop a pale complexion, whether caused by chalk dust or work or worry or anything else. And if it is true about those wrinkles - especially the vertical ones - you must just massage them every day. I want you just as you used to be when I come back. So be careful too not to cultivate that horrid school-marm disposition.

I saw Eddie Withell yesterday. He is a corporal in the 2nd Brigade,

and came round to see me, as they were going into the trenches last night. He didn't get into the engineers after all, and he lost his stripes, but has two of them back already. I am glad Stan is in our reinforcements - not the Dinks - but he is more likely to go to the 2nd Brigade than ours.

Yes, I have certainly had lots of experiences since the war began, but I don't think I am to be envied all the same, and the quiet existence with which you are slightly bored is just what I am longing for. You see, this ^{military} life is rather a hard one at the best of times, and changes of scene and friendships are not of the slightest interest when one's heart is not in it. All the same, I admit I am having a pretty good time at present, while we are in billets. We have short parades morning and afternoon,

and every second night we go to the trenches on fatigue. There is a good picture theatre, and plenty of nice beer-shops - which are not like N. Z. bars, but simply sociable places with pianos. I have a great admiration for the girls who run these places. There are no men, of course, but the girls need no protection but their own good sense and tact. They are really wonderful - energetic, bright and capable. It is a hard life for them, but they don't seem to need one's sympathy.

We have nearly a week yet before we return to the trenches.

I am sorry I promised to send you a photo, because it was a failure - the negative was spoilt, and other samples I have seen were so poor that I am not bothering to get another taken here.

Now my time is finished, and I must say good-bye.

With much love to you, dearest,
from Cecil.