

Brockenhurst
14 December

My dear Hazel,

1811

I have just received my New Zealand letters in time to write for the return mail. There were three from you, written after you heard I was wounded, but the latest was October 19th, so I think there are more to come, especially as there was only one from Geanie, and it was three weeks' mail.

I had a very nice letter from your mother, and one from Hall-Jones - the first I have had from him. He was in a law office at Te Huiti, but spoke of going back to hospital. Miss Swingstone also wrote - she has always been very good to me.

I am very glad to find that you nearly all took the sensible view that my being wounded was a matter for congratulation, but I am afraid Mother was rather worried, and her continual poor state of health is becoming a great

anxiety to me. However, as soon as she was sure I was not badly hurt I know she would see it in the same light as the rest and be quite thankful. My brother Percy tells me she is getting the habit of queer fancies about imaginary slights, and though the others tell me there is no cause for anxiety I can't help feeling concerned about her, and it hurts to think that ~~she~~ she may find her much changed when I come home.

As for you, dearest, I don't know how to thank you for those very lovable, cheerful, sympathetic letters of yours. It is true that they only reach me now when I have no need of sympathy, but they are such a revelation of just what I expected of you, showing your natural anxiety but above all your courage and unselfishness. Don't think I idealise you, dear, though it would be natural enough if I did, but I don't believe a word of

all your nonsense about your awful faults. If you want me to believe you, you must prove it by your treatment of me, which at present is miles above my deserts anyhow.

I am able to tell you now as almost an absolute certainty that I will be coming to New Zealand. I went before the board on Tuesday, and though their decision is not supposed to be known, it generally leaks out through one's ward doctor. I have not asked him outright, but he told me this morning that he thought I could get leave now, so that seems plain, as men who are not going to New Zealand get their leave from one of the command-depots (Bornechurch or Godford) not from hospital.

I would be most ungrateful if I had any discontent left now, for I am really having a ripping time. Last Saturday - the day after

my last letter, I went to Bournemouth to an orchestral concert at the Winter Gardens. There were also two singers, an Irish tenor and a French bass, both of whom were splendid. Sunday and Monday I stayed at home, but that was such a change that I quite enjoyed it. Wednesday morning Capt. Dron rang up to say he was leaving hospital today, but was going to Bournemouth for the morning, so he got leave for me from 10 to 2.30, and we had a very good time, most of it devoted to lunch. On coming back I was met at the station by a distant cousin, Mr Stanbury. His wife (they are cousins to each other) had called on Sunday and again on Tuesday, only to find me engaged for the Board, so she arranged to send a car on Wednesday for me and half-a-dozen friends. Mr Stanbury took us by a round about way over the hilliest part of the forest, where there are

some fine views, and to Rufus Stone, marking the spot where that most justifiable of "accidents" was committed. Their house is a few miles ~~before~~ beyond Lyndhurst. It was so imposing and splendid that I began to feel nervous, but we got such a good hearty reception that I soon felt at home, even when I was introduced to two titled ladies and Miss Vachell, daughter of the famous novelist. She is a very beautiful girl. We had to baggan rides on a little switchback railway running down the hill to the foot of the garden, then they showed us the workshop where Miss Vachell and several other girls are engaged in making crutches for hospitals. Then there were some excellent cinema pictures in the billiard room, tea, and a straight run home in the dark. It was simply lovely, and I have a cordial invitation to come again, but my cousin appears to be such a busy person that she can seldom fix a day, but can only

run over on the chance of finding me at home and taking me away impromptu.

I forgot to say that on Tuesday a party of us spent the afternoon and evening at Mrs Matthews', the our ward doctor's wife. She is very young and pretty, and a charming hostess.

It is not at all certain that I shall get leave for Christmas, but I am hopeful. If they won't let me go as far as Aunt Lucy's they can surely have no objection to my going to Mrs Stanburys, and in either case I would be in good hands and would have a lovely holiday. I have applied for a fortnight.

My foot is now, to outward appearances, at a standstill, and the doctor says it will take "quite a long time yet" to heal over completely, but he is quite satisfied with it, and the movement of all the muscles appears to be practically normal. It will be quite a long

time before I can get away to N.Z.
as there are hundreds ahead of me
and the boats are far between. I
shall be lucky if I leave in
February.

Friday morning

I have just received your cable
of Xmas greetings. It was very good of
you to think of it, my Hazel. I was
so disappointed at not being able to
send you a Xmas present, but as you
know I was in bed at the time and
almost penniless anyhow. We are only
allowed sixpence a day here, the
idea being to save up a cheque for
our leave.

The doctor in recommending me
for leave this morning mentioned
that I was boarded for New Zealand,
so now I know. If I get the leave
and draw my money I will be sending
you a cable in a day or two, but
otherwise this letter may be the first you
know for certain. Must close now for
the mail. With lots of love, dearest
from Cecil.