

Wellington  
Sunday 27th?

My dear Hazel,

I suppose you know from the papers that our departure has been postponed indefinitely. Goodness knows whether we will ever go now. Our fleet was under steam on Thursday morning, when word came from the Governor just in time to stop us. They say the Auckland forces had actually left the harbour, and were called back by wireless. We are going ashore tomorrow to camp. The Otago, Canterbury and Wgtn forces are here, and we will be split up into a number of separate camps. Most of them are about the suburbs, but we have had the hard luck to be sent to Trentham, about 18 miles out from town, past Upper Hut. The ~~Canty~~ "Tahiti" lot are going to Lyall Bay. The "prize chickens", as our petty jealousy calls them, are certainly lucky beggars.

It is rather early to describe our life on board, but you might be interested to know something about

our boat. There are about twelve hundred troops on board. It is said to be the best sea boat in the fleet, but it is also the most crowded. Our quarters are down in the hold - both the berths and the mess rooms. The latter are the full width of the ship, and about the same length. They are full of long tables, with benches fixed along them, and very little room between. The tables have a sort of platform raised on beams above them, so that you can hardly see across the room through the forest of beams. The lighting is not too good, but the ventilation is splendid. There are a number of electric fans, which keep the room cool even when it is crowded at meal times. In the sleeping quarters the ventilation is not too good, and the crowding is painful. The gangways between the bunks are less than a yard wide, and there are six men - three from each side - all trying to get dressed at once. For washing etc the arrangements are very bad, and the ship is in an insanitary state already.

you have to wait your turn for a wash for about twenty minutes in the morning, and shaving is an awful nuisance. I think some improvements will be made while we are ashore. I hope this doesn't sound like grumbling - I am well satisfied with things in general. The food - you see I am back to the inevitable subject - is very good - better than camp - and the spirit of the men is excellent. Everybody is good-humoured and happy. Our togs are very free and easy - dungarees, canvas shoes, and Balacclava caps, with the neck part rolled up, and a regimental badge in front. For Sunday we wear our second best uniforms, without puttees or equipment. We have physical drill on the top deck twice a day. The rest of the time is our own, but there is nothing much to do, except play cards. The lights are too bad to read by, and it has been too wet so far to sit on deck. I want to get some books for the voyage when we go ashore - also some ink. We don't even get the newspapers to read. The boat which

comes out every day brings a few, but they are bought up by the men in the forepart of the ship, where our company are not allowed to go. The result is that we get all sorts of rumours. We spent one evening grieving over the news that Samoa had been retaken by the Germans, and half our New Zealanders killed.

I suppose you are settling down for a final revision before the exams. Please don't do too much. I am sure those headaches are due to straining your dear eyes, and you know you mustn't. Your friend in the photo has got one eye obliterated, so I am going to cut you out and get you framed. It would have been dreadful if the same accident had affected you. Please write even sooner than you promised - the address I gave you will do, and just a short note if you haven't much time. Good-bye, my own Hazel. I love you.  
Yours truly  
Cecil.