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Norton, Henry Thomas, 1880-1916

Letters

Auckland War Memorial Museum – Tāmaki Paenga Hira

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No 8

Egypt 3/4/16

My Dear old Sweetheart,

It is Sunday night and I am in my tent writing to you. It has been a glorious day & tonight it is very chilly. We had Church Parade this morning & I quite enjoyed leading the singing. We have not got a band, & so I start the hymns and I get on first rate. I do all I can & went to Communion too and my thoughts went back to you all at St Pauls.

I suppose by now you are well again. I am so anxious to know Dearie how you have got on. I have all your letters. No 6 was the last one received 4, 5 & 6 all together I noticed the date you mentioned and I am wondering if I will get news before we leave here.

We expect to move in a few days and I will be delighted to get on the Sea again. I think I told you that D. Coy had been broken up & I have been drafted into the 10th Coy, 2nd Battalion, Otago Infantry Regiment. No 2 N.Z. I. B. I am a Sergeant now & so is Du Flau. We are expecting our promotions hourly. I am the only Q.M.S. who has kept his strips. All the others have gone back to the ranks. Capt T is Capt. Quartermaster now & I am expecting to get my star in a few days.

There are 4 Q.M.S. in our Battalion sent from the Main Body. I wanted to transfer to another Battalion but the C.O. would not hear of it & would not let Capt T have me. He told me that a R.Q.M.S. was wanted shortly & that I was to adapt myself to strict routine for a little while until arrangements were made and so I am expecting it at any time.

There are a full number of men in my Platoon and I have to drill them, & it is pretty solid work, I can tell you, in the burning sand & the dreadful heat. We had a try out march, last week to find out the weaklings under Service Conditions. We were out from 3.15 a.m. till 12.30 p.m. and came back very hungry & tired. I got through splendidly & am fit & well as the best of them.

I am brown as a berry and you would hardly know me. I am quite thin, & there is not a spare oz of flesh on me. I have worked & sweated it all off, but I am so fit & well. We have had a lot of dysentery, but I have escaped it. I am very careful & looking after myself well.

Du Flau is just opening a tin of Bully Beef & has some biscuits so we are going to have supper. We have a Sergts mess & get good meals but this one is extra.

Do not send me anything Chum. I get all I can do with & perhaps by the time this reaches you I may be thinking of coming home. I don't think the war can last much longer now. We are so anxious to get into it and all have the impression it will soon be over and still we have a lot more training to do.

Capt. T reckons he got his job through my work in the old Company. Capt Mc. recommended him for it. He told me so himself, & is working hard to get me on his staff, & said it was all my work. He is pretty well but has got Consumption. The dry weather here is good for him. I am so fond of him. I expect Du will get his S.M. &

I.R.Q.M. back again. We are both Swatting again for another examination & will most certainly get through. But it is hard work trying to concentrate our minds with the flies & heat.

We will have very little time next week. I have enclosed some rats tails (I call them) that I got away out in the desert. We have bathing parades & the water is so bitter?

Fancy being in this land and at the spot so many Bible Stories are about.

I have got more money than I can spend last week I sent you £3 10/- in registered letter.

As soon as I am promoted, I will be able to alter my allotment & send you more. We have been paid in Egyptian money since we arrived here but last pay we got English money?

God bless & keep you all, & I am always thinking of our home.

The sun sets so big & red & my thoughts go back to you.

With my best love to you all my dear wife & Chum

X X X X X

E. F. Norton

*m* I have just been laughing till my sides are sore. Du & I camp together & he was in bed opening a tin of meat & cut his finger. The blood went into the meat but we ate it just the same, and one of the others broke a tooth on a biscuit. I have just driven my bayonet through the blankets into the sand to stop Du dragging them off during the night. He wonders why they wont come over & is growling. He has been digging me in the ribs all the time I have been writing so I hope you can read this.

We have lots of fun & you would not think it was war. We have visitors all the time and swap yarns

Good night Chum & dear wife.

X X X X X

We are off on Saturday. Hurrah. Goodbye to sand, flies & dirty filthy Egypt & the awful heat. If anyone talks to me again about the grandeurs of Egypt I will jump on their chest. I had an hour's ride today on a donkey for 2 ½d and helped to fix up a motor Launch that was in trouble. I did enjoy myself.

Good night Chum

Kisses & cuddles for the biddies & for your Dear self.