

H. M. T. Berrin

17th Feb 1919

To my dear wife & sweetheart

Dear little woman

It is now eight weeks since I have heard or seen you & it seems like years. I don't know how I am going to stand a year of it. Expect there will be a letter from you to me at the Miles P.O. Queensland. I have sent you letters one each from Port Louis, Colombo, and Fremantle. Tomorrow Monday we will be in the harbour at Melbourne & this will be posted there.

I am wondering dear how you are getting along are you well or sick? Did you get those teeth in & how is Mother & Dad & Arthur. Has the winter been severe? & how did the cold weather affect you?

I haven't heard & can only guess you have been shivering about in snow while I have been looking for shady spots to sit down in; for it's been very hot for five weeks & this slow old tub of a ship took such a long while in the Tropics we were about roasted like a cooked dinner sizzling in the oven.

But now it's cooler just nice not too hot & not too cold for we are in the south seas & just off the coast of Victoria where I was born & it's a cool place & it's summer here now. I think I told you that we

get wireless messages on board every day & we read all about the peace conference & get news from lots of other places & some of it is good & some bad news. We hear that swine influenza has broken out in Melbourne where my mother

Of course I have not had any letters from there since
I came on board this ship. So I am a bit anxious
over my mother & sisters in Melbourne. They have not
got it as bad as ^{it} was England. My was a little of it
goes a long way & so they have placed Melbourne in
Quarantine, that is no one is allowed to leave Melbourne
or Sydney. So although I will be within a mile of
my mother's place I will not be able to go ashore &
see her neither will anyone be allowed to come on board

We land the Victorians at Port Melbourne & then
go on to Sydney & then Brisbane. I expect we will be
there in another week making it a seven weeks trip.

This is a slow 12 to 14 miles an hour ship & anyway
she has come the longest way for me but the shortest
way for the West Australians who were sent ashore
at Fremantle. There is not any influenza in Brisbane
where I am going to. Neither is there any at Fremantle
so we were allowed ashore there & I saw Mrs Ruddish
& Mr Elijah Ruddish & his wife too they treated me well
& hoped I'd be able to come again some day.

Had a great feed of sponge cake bananas grapes
oranges apples & ~~tomatoes~~ tomatoes & peaches. I was not
hungry till next day. How I wish you had been
with me we could have had such a time there

It looked so strange to see lots of milk & lovely tea
& some people putting two spoonful of sugar in a cup
of tea. (Lump sugar is not used much here)

I surprised them when I told them I felt like a rich man when I could sugar my own tea for except when I have been at your place I haven't done so for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years or so.

A lot of people seemed very doubtful if it was true about England being short of food & were even doubtful about our troops being short of reinforcements until I told them that you had so much trouble in buying food & that my own battalion was broken up for reinforcements for other battalions. They seemed to have an idea that it was only a yarn. To make people very careful about food. And they thought too that they had only been told we were short of men so as to make more men enlist for the war.

These people have been told so many lies in the past by their politicians that they won't believe them and always find an ulterior motive for every thing that is told them. I am satisfied that people in Australia never realised what war is or what people in England were suffering or even what we were fighting for. So many seem to think that even if we had been beaten that Australia would have been unaltered that it would make no difference at all.

to them. They feel as if they could have kept the Germans out by themselves. They don't know what a lot of men & guns it takes.

When our boys all get home & tell them they will hardly believe what a lot it takes to win a war. I have spoken to a lot of them in Fremantle & I was surprised at their ignorance.

Well dear I guess that is all uninteresting to you

But what will interest you is that when we two take ship from England I want it to be Panama Canal route I hate these long sea journeys they are so very monotonous. We have had fine weather for a long time

My word dear I shall be glad when I go ashore ^{too} in Queensland. But I'll have to wait a few weeks until the Quarantine is off & then visit mother.

How I wish you were here too. If I had only missed this boat I might have got a passage for us two on one of the honeymoon ships. But regrets are vain the thing is to make most of the present which I will do by seeing you get as good a house as I can manage for when the time when you & I are here together. Dear

I want a good home for you dear & I must have it. It's going to be a glorious time dear when it comes

I don't care how soon it comes either. You & I will be together in the same house (our house) for ever

I'll be working for you all the time & I'll be glad I have got someone to work for

And now sweetheart don't worry about me there will not be any "flu" where I go to. And there is nothing else to worry about. I have been true to you because

I love you. I know you will always remain true to me because you love me so. Cheer up dear & keep smiling
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XXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX Yours ever with love & kisses Fred W. Ford