

Leonard Hall subsequently visited the Ransteads on their Waikato farm in 1906.

Dear Mr. Ranstead, How are you all. I hope you are having a nice passage. Mother and I both wish we were coming to New Zealand with you and have a little farm with a cow and some hens and some sheep and I would get up every morning and give them all a bath then I would milk the cow and look for eggs and then I would have my breakfast if there was any then I would take Father and Hilda their breakfast as I expect they would stop in bed all day then I would make butter and do all sorts of things. If ever I swim over to New Zealand I will just drop in and see you. . . . I do not expect Hilda will want to come to New Zealand as there will not be any Pierrots there. Are you feeding the fishes yet. I think we are going to Paris for a little time so I expect we shall enjoy ourselves. Well I think I must say Goodbye now. Please give my very best love to all and also to yourself. Your loving Mildred.

Mildred and Hilda were the young daughters of Alexander Thompson. Later letters from Thompson mention his having to watch each of them in turn die a slow death: one from tuberculosis, and the other from cancer. Before that, however, Hilda, from whom there was also a letter in the 'Ocean Postage', visited the Ransteads in 1916.

The next letter seems to justify inclusion because of its sustained salty flavour. The letterhead is *National Union of Dock Labourers in Great Britain and Ireland, Liverpool*.

My dear Will. So you are really off at last and by the time you see this you will be takin of a trip in a big steam ship ten thousand miles away as the poet says. So sing hey for a brave and a gallant Bark

And a stiff and a rattlin breeze
And a bully crew and a Capting too
For to carry yer o'er the seas.

Alas, in these days of progress the simile is no longer, and the comparison between the poets crude description and present day navigation is odious and to my mind all in favour of the past. . . . With the recollections of my old "wind jamming" experiences with all its glorious and exciting uncertainties and quaint associations and hardships I prefer it to the more modern system of spick and span and the certainty of arriving on a given date. For gone is the old Jack tar of my early associations and his place is filled by the suggee mugee man and the deck swabber, while the bare poles sticking straight up without any visible means of subsistence so-to-speak, give me the jim jams. And gone is the necessity for the cheery hail of "ready about" with all its quaint accompaniments, while the labour of the old barnacle is no longer lightened by its associations with "Sally Brown the bright Mulatto" or "handy my girls be handy".

I hope by the time you get this you will be in the doldrums but there - I forget steamships don't have any doldrums which for your special information is a region close to the equator where the light winds (just cap fulls) shift all round the compass every minute, and Lor' I fancy I hear even now the old time shell back swearing in all his pristine vigour at the bow yanking he would be called upon to give the yards in order to keep the ship in trim. Did I ever tell you how I got a ship into the doldrums in my first and last sea yarn, and was so hard up for copy that I kept her there backing and filling for months until the bally paper bust up and the editor's (Shaw Maxwell by the way) reason tottered at its economic basis. Lor' what days they were to be sure. By the way I also set the house on fire while concocting a plot for that story.

But there, I have been long enough on this tack, so hard a lee, hard over, main-