

OUR LAST DAY IN NEW ZEALAND.

We have received a copy of the "Pakeha," the paper published on board the ship of that name while carrying our 17th Reinforcements to the Front. To while away time many competitions were held, one being an essay on "Our Last Day in New Zealand." As the first prize essay was written by the brother of the Editor of the "White Ribbon," perhaps it is fitting it should find a place in our columns.

Prize Essay.

"DER TAG," September 23, 1916.
Special Order, 17th Reinforcements:
Reveille, 3.30 a.m.
Breakfast, 5.30 a.m.
Roll Call.
Entrain for Wellington.

Did anyone need a second call? No; straw had been burned and pallasses returned the previous day. Three-thirty, and the long, last, eagerly-looked-for day had started. "The Day Has Come." Yes, after 17 weeks of "Supplying Shortage," 17 weeks of "Lectures on Soldierly Spirit"—minus, of course, 17 days' final leave (I nearly forgot it)—the 17th Reinforcements were on the move. "Good-bye. Glad as I am to leave you, I liked you well." Once entrained, we soon lost sight of camp and township, on past the lake, and then "Over the hills and far away." A wild rush at Kaitoke, tea and sandwiches, and soon we reached familiar ground. Past the scene of vigils and desperate battles; next, Trentham. Good old Trentham slides past; and then Wellington, and detain. Many have friends waiting—Yes, Kaiser Bill—friends who have rallied from all parts of New Zealand to bid "God Speed" to the men who are moving from the uttermost end of the globe to fight side by side with those who will prove to you that "Murder is not Kultur." Our next stage, to the wharf, was short, and we soon beheld the ship that was to be our home for the next seven or eight weeks. "Pakeha"—surely a fitting name for the boat that carried Maori and Pakeha to the other side of the world to fight a common foe. The checking of rolls, and sorting of men and swags, was quickly dealt with, and soon all were settled in their new home. A "catch-as-catch-can" dinner, and we made ready for

our parade through Wellington. Assembling on the wharf, units were marched to allotted places on Waterloo Quay, and halted. And now the hour had come, the hour that many, if not all, had looked to with fear and dread. The parting moment was near—wives, children, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers; yes, and good and true comrades—all gathered for a final kiss and hand-shake, well knowing that for some it would be for ever; believing that some would look their last on the land that all held so near and dear to them. And those old comrades of the class, resplendent in new uniforms and Sam Browne belts, Perry, O'Connor, Stubbs, Deal, Doughty, Drew, Luke, and all the rest, who had achieved that laudable ambition, to hold the King's Commission in the British Army. Hector McLeod, with his gifts of telescopes and compasses, was in his usual place, ever quietly carrying out his work. But parting moments are fleeting, and soon we are on the move, here and there, wives, sweethearts, and sisters marching arm-in-arm with those they love. With bands playing inspiring music, we march through the crowded street, wheeling on to Lambton Quay, and past the saluting base. There are only occasional bursts of cheering—feeling is too deep; it does not run to cheers—hearts are stirred and eyes are wet. A shout and a wave of the hand, or a hand thrust out, a hurried shake, a hearty "Good-bye, good luck," from an old comrade, or, perhaps, a kiss from some one dearer still; and so it goes on until we again reach the wharf and quickly embark. But not before the ladies had further shown us how their hearts went with us: fruit, lollies, "Lucy Hinton," and other gifts were showered on us as we mounted the gangway. His Worship the Mayor and Mrs Luke, who is surely the best Mayoress that Wellington ever had, were at their old places; tireless as ever, buzzing about to see what more could be done for the comfort and welfare of the troops. As soon as all were safely on board the gates were opened, and friends and loved ones rushed to the ship's side. With dropping tears, husky throats, and waving handkerchiefs, last farewells were shouted, and as our floating home became a thing of life, we quickly got beyond the reach of shore—and heavy hearts, ashore

and afloat, realised that the parting, so dreaded, was past, and our last day in New Zealand was over.

TO MOURNING PARENTS.

O friends, whose feet have lately trod
In footprints of the Son of God!
And learned through sorrow's mystic
lore

The bitter agony He bore,
Shall such as I presume to share
The depth of suffering you bear?
O, weak indeed are words of mine
To comfort sorrow like to thine!
Tho' poet sing in highest strain
Immortal notes of love and pain,
Or paint in glowing rhapsodies
The morning land beyond the skies,
Nor yet, may these diviner arts,
Bring soothing balm to bleeding
hearts,
While tear-dimmed eyes, with longing
glance,
Turn to a grave "Somewhere in
France."

Pass summer days of throbbing pain
To winter snow, thro' autumn rain;
And then again, spring bud and
bloom,

To scenes of vernal loveliness,
Shall transform all the wintry gloom,
When, yielding to the soft caress
Of balmy winds and gentle showers,
Earth breathes herself in smiling
flowers.

But never can the bird song sweet
Make music like the lost one's feet,
Not all the melody in store
Can recompense for loss you bore.
Since silence aches around your
hearth,
Where once rang songs of boyish
mirth,
The fairest depths of azure skies
Shall but remind you of dear eyes
Asleep on France's blood-wet breast.
Yet, breaking hearts! God knoweth
best.

And He who in the past bright years
Lent you this treasure, heeds your
tears,
And when anew your grief upstarts,
When all your hard-won peace departs,
Shall send His Comforter Divine
With ministry of love, to shine
Into your sad and chastened hearts,
Till bitterness from grief departs.
When Love shall triumph over pain,
And Faith shall pierce the clouds
again,
For perfect life that never ends,
And bliss that all earth's joy trans-
cends,
Is now the blessed gift divine
That him God asked you to resign.

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mers.