

9, Holmview,

Omagh,

Co. Tyrone

Tuesday, Jan. 13th

My own darling Frank,

Here I am back in harness once again and feeling not at all like work. The day pupils returned to-day but the boarders do not put in an appearance until to-morrow. - so you can imagine we did not overwork ourselves to-day. I spent the morning inspecting with Violet Busack, the contents of her domestic kitchen. You have no idea of how interested I am in pots & pans, dishes of all descriptions. No fashion store could interest me half so much as the hardware store - how I have changed during the past year!! So you know, darling, that there is not a baking bowl to be found throughout the length & breadth of Belfast. I spied a few in Omagh to-day so I intend to get one or two.

We came up by car to Omagh last night - I say night, because it was so late before we got away (5 p.m.) that the majority of the journey was made in the "black out" and it's snowing too. The car was a Vauxhall 16, so it was quite roomy & comfortable. I was given the honour of the front seat & Mary & Margaret (my 2 pupils) got the back seat. It was 9 p.m. before we finally reached Omagh. I had the most pleasant surprise imaginable, for upon entering my bedroom Mrs. Reagh had a magnificent fire. So you know Frank that it was glorious - so warm, so cosy - it made me feel so welcome back. My first act was to take out your photograph and put it back in its place of honour. A grand meal of rasher & vegg & a hot A.K. Aileen came down & joined me & we chatted until bedtime. There has been great excitement in the McLean family this Christmas. Both her sisters, Sheila & Patsy have become engaged, Sheila to a boy called Dermot Hennessy (he is a nice fellow and a

champion tennis player, Patsy to Don Richardson, an engineer
in the Navy. Now I don't want to talk about the rings, the
Housecleaning & the "bottom drawers". Before going to bed I did not
forget to say my prayers for you with arms outstretched and also
to say the remaining two of "your" 3 rosaries. This morning
saw me at our mass, again praying with all my might & main
for your safety in this awful war. It was an nippy morning.
The snow & slush of the previous night had become frozen so many
times I nearly went "harp ore" before reaching the church & on
the hill. It is no effort for me now to go to daily mass. I still have
had no colds, so please for my good fortune will continue, so that
I shall never have to miss daily mass again until your return.
This is the only reason why I do not want to be sick. I see the
major & Mrs Ray have both had the 'flu so here's hoping that no
germs make me their target. This afternoon Mollie Keefe & Judy (the dog) called
in to welcome me back. Did you know Frank that your
friend Jerry knows quite a number of my friends? He has
known the Hughes for years (year after year they met in Bundoran)
Both Annie & Mollie know Nan for many years well. Besides this,
Jerry has met Vera Hale, who told him about me before he
met me. You remember the girl I picnicked with in Strabane
last summer? You should have heard all the inquiries which were
made for you at the convent to day. Every nun & teacher I
met asked had I got good news. The day was so frosty that
we could not cycle so on my way to school I was again
stopped & questioned. At news time, it seems to me all I might
listen with bated breath for the Malayan news. Should I miss
anything myself I have many good friends who come hurrying
with the news especially if it is good. Mr Vaughan of the Minister
& Kemler bank called me aside to day to ask me how I heard that
some of the R.A.M.C. had been withdrawn to Singapore. It is
now nearing 4 weeks since I received your last letter written on

3/ November 27th (strangely enough the Feast of the Miraculous Medal.) I am not complaining darling. I know how difficult it must be for you to write under war conditions. Besides the Clipper Service is off and all your letters must come by ordinary air mail. It will be mid-February then before I can expect to see your dear handwriting again. I must tiddle off to bunk now. Where ever you are this night I wish you God's blessing. May He protect us both, May He bless our love and May He bring us together very soon. You have all of my heart, dearest Frank. It could never belong to anyone but you.

Thursday, January 15th

The snow covered ground of last Monday has now become a very dangerous frost—so that Aileen & I have got to go to and from school on foot. It is quite a change and so I am enjoying it. However it means we have very little time to browse after breakfast or dinner. I cannot help thinking during these bitter winter days of the soldiers fighting away in Russia. God help them, for they must be suffering. During the past two days, there have been no new developments in Malaya. I have a feeling you may be in Singapore. I wonder how you are, are you in very grave danger? are you suffering? how have your men, whom you loved so much, fared. I pray for you all and you darling Frank, especially hard. Yesterday I finished a nine day novena of masses & Holy Communion to The Holy Family. Today I commenced another similar novena to your Angel Guardian & St. Francis of Assisi, your patron Saint. These novenas shall go on constantly until I have made friends with all the Saints in Heaven, on your behalf, dearest one. I want to know more about your patron Saint so I hope Mother Teresa can find me a book in the convent library of the great St. Francis. Have you read the life, Frank? I am trying also to have a mass offered in London each week for your safety dear Frank and early return to us all.

On Sunday last I went over to Beechwood to say goodbye. Anne asked me to bring Josephine along. I am anxious that Josephine & she should be good friends. Anne is lonely and I don't want her to be alone too much. She still feels for your mother. Well, the two ladies got into chat about the colour scheme of the new curtains which your father is going to get for the drawing room about the cooking of this dish & that, so I was left alone to entertain your father. As usual he sat comfortably on one side of the fire & his future daughter in law on the other. We had a very nice tea

4 altogether, after which Anne & Jo went off to the Christian Brothers
shop in St. Mary Hall. I waited & escorted your father through the
"black out" to the Sacred Heart Church to say our prayers. You
would laugh if you saw the pair of us arm in arm groping our
way in the inky darkness. He is not too able for the black out. We
spent 15 minutes in the church, just enough time to say a rosary.
There is no need to tell you, for whom those 2 rosaries were said.
So I prayed I tried to imagine you kneeling in that very same
church, first as a child, then as a boy, and finally as a man.
After prayers we wended our way to "155" where the cat was duly
fed and the fire set for the morrow. Again I had my thoughts of
you as a lad within those walls. I had intended taking the bus
from the Oldpark Road but realizing it was too dark for your father
to return alone, I returned to the Cliftonville, where we parted.
He keeps on asking me to tell you, dearest, that he will do
nothing or change nothing until you return. I believe he means
about retiring. He wants to know your views about taking the
rooms above the shop for a surgery. Oftentimes he says "I wish
that boy of mine were home". Thank God he appears to be well & strong,
although he complains about the rheumatism in his shoulder. When
he complains about Anne wanting to go out, I try to explain to
him, that she is going and she would be unnatural if she did
not like to be going around. At first I felt he was not heeding
me but Anne tells ^{me} that lately he is quite improved & even
asks her "is she going out". Although I was over 40 times during
my 3 weeks Christmas vacation, he scolded me for not coming often
enough to Beechwood. I explained that if he did not give me so
many presents I should come ^{more} often. To this he answered "I do
not want you to forget Francis or me". Jo thinks that I could
forget you. The idea is so inconceivable as to be ridiculous. No
darling one, whether your father liked me or not, whether he showered
gifts on me or not makes no difference to my love for you. It is
something which will never change, no matter what obstacles we shall
have to surmount before or after our marriage. I am trying to prepare
myself too for such a great sacrament. I know that I shall be
happy with you darling, more happy than I have ever been in
my life before. I want to give you all the love that is in my
heart.

5, Only yesterday I received a very friendly letter from my teacher friend in Dungannon. You remember the girl I visited when I went to see Margaret? Well, great was my surprise to find that she entered the Convent of Mercy Dungannon on Monday last (the same day as I passed through by car) Margaret & she have become fast friends. Grace is very fond of Margaret. She says ~~she~~ since I intend becoming Sr M. Teresa's sister in law it means that they shall be even greater friends. She prophesies your safe homecoming on the strength of Sr Teresa's prayers alone. You must be a veritable saint by this time, darling! If you only knew of all the prayers you are receiving. All the Omagh nuns are praying daily for you. The nuns & children in the Mercy Convent, Downpatrick are praying, not to mention the community in the St. Louis Convent, Banickmacross where my good friend Sr M. Fidelis is. Besides these there are the Poor Clare nuns in both Belfast & Nottingham. The mother Abbess of the latter convent writes to me "I have included you and your fiancé and all your dear ones living & dead in two novenas of masses and in all our prayers & devotions during this Holy Season. We will also give you a share, day & night in our prayers & penances & daily adoration of the most Blessed Sacrament and in all our novenas & devotions." Now, how could any harm come to you darling? Our prayers must be cramping the style of your little yellow opponent.

Frances was very pleased to get your card and cable for Christmas. Although we met at de Ruemeesters last week we really did not have an opportunity of having a good chat. I wonder did you ever receive the last Trans-Pacific letter I sent to you at the end of November? It was to arrive for Christmas. I wonder too are these letters reaching you at all? How I hope & pray that you receive them constantly. I am still writing as in the days before the Far Eastern war clouds burst. Still there is no word of the beautiful candlesticks or the ring and still no letter since December 17th (posted November 27th). As yet I have not written to Fr Ashness to thank him for sending to me your beautiful gifts. I am waiting - until I receive some news concerning mails to Kuala Lumpur. If needs be I shall write to him through the Red Cross. Your gifts have received tremendous admiration on all sides. Yesterday, every nun in Loreto had to see & admire them. It was just grand to receive them intact. I wonder could the candlesticks have been stolen in transit?

6, I am "turning in" earlier these nights on account of my
early start for mass each morning. Good night now darling. God
and His Holy Mother bless you & protect you now and always.
Friday, Jan. 16th

I have just finished a long political discussion with the major
over our afternoon tea. Being a bit of a globe-trotter himself, he can
be most interesting in conversation. His mother was a French Canadian.
There is no one at the convent in the very best of spirits. All
are suffering from the beginning of term feeling and the
bitterly cold east wind and sleep do not help. The children have
not all returned as many cycle miles by bike. The roads are
really in a pretty bad condition. Wouldn't it be grand darling
if we could make a bargain, you taking some of our cold
weather & giving us a spot of heat in return?

You will be pleased to hear that already I have
commenced putting all our snaps into albums. Before Christmas
I let fall many hints to the family that I should like a nice
album, well now I have no less than 4. Funny enough
I intend to use all four. One has the slit pages so that post-
card snaps may be inserted without snap corners. Into this
I have put all your enlargements. In our second album
(bought in Leeds & presented by Josephine) I have inserted all
the little snaps which you yourself put into a paper album -
you know the ones I mean - blue paper with explanations
beside each snap. Not for worlds would I have removed the
snaps. Instead I got small triangular corners with both
sides adhesive. These I stuck to both page of album & to your
blue "album". I have devoted 2 snaps (one page of book)
to each of the album pages. There are 3 groups for this album
(1) your home in Upper Perak, inside & outside
(2) your 300 mile trip Southward
(3) "Whispering Palms"
Do you remember making the album of each of the three?
They are very precious little snaps to me because I know how
precious they are to you darling.

1 My next job is to put all the loose snaps into the 3rd album complete with corners which I am lucky to possess. I intend to print your description of each snap beneath it. This is the nicest album of all & it was got by Mauread in Dublin. Into these 3 albums no snaps will be put except those of India & Malaya - the 4th album will hold any others of my own. I have some very nice family groups I have promised many folk a peep at my albums when they are complete. Aren't you anxious to see them, love? As I put each snap in, I think of the time we shall spend together pouring over them and reliving your stay in Far East.

Annie Hughes is coming home to-night for the week-end so I am going out. I want to hear from her all about Nan Jorman. I feel that Nan & I will become friends in the future since you and Gerry have been such friends in the past. Mollie thinks she is a very nice girl. I hear Gerry & she play a little golf. Won't we have the grand times in the year that lie ahead of us! We shall make a dancer out of you yet, Frank. During the holidays I found I was not the slightest bit interested in going to any dances. The answer is that I am not interested in any partner but one. I cannot ever remember having an English dance with him but I do remember him asking me for a "Cop Sapeas Day" and a "Ranapast" ballroom". You could certainly whirl any girl off her feet!!!

On last Tuesday I left your negative in to the shop to have six prints taken off it - you know the one I mean! The one, where a proud young officer is seated at the wheel of his Austin and looking quite the martyr, because he is posing for the camera. They are to be ready for Saturday (to-morrow) then I hope to send one to your father, one to Gerry, one to Una & the others home. All are asking for a snap of you, but of course I would not part with a single one. I had forgotten that you sent me the negative.

To-day's news from the Far East was even more disappointing than yesterday yet I refuse to get too depressed. I am praying so very very hard (never so hard in my life before) & making so many little acts & getting so many Daints to pray that it would be an

8, insult to our dear Lord, if I were to doubt Him.
Mrs Ray has just come in to show us the veil which Valerie,
her daughter wore on her wedding day. It is of Limerick lace & was
worn by Valerie's great great grandmother which makes it over 100
years old. It is a magnificent veil, no doubt.

There is still no word about the ring. You once mentioned
the firm of Mappin & Webb so I wrote from Belfast to their
branch in Oxford Street, London but they have replied to say they
had no communication with you but they would get in touch with
their other 2 London branches. I feel I should cable you so that you
could make inquiries from Malaya, yet I do not want to worry you.
Perhaps I shall have word in a few days. There is still no
word of the candlesticks. If they resemble in any way the
Malayan paper knife, then truly they must be very beautiful
indeed.

Let me see can I give you any news other than my own.
Engagements & weddings seem to be in the air at the moment.
Mr Michael Kelly's sister Annie is engaged. Mr Bobbie Arigal is
reported to be engaged to Maureen Black (a Dominican School
friend of mine). Gerry Mc Dermott who teaches in St. Malachy's
is engaged to Marguerite Duffy, a cousin of Aileen's. Tot Maguire
is engaged to Billy Mc Ginty. He is in the R.N. but they are
to be married on his next leave. Lanny Higgins has got his final
I hear he is going to do Courser for Felix while his friends have a
jacket to Dublin. They have the five times of it. Eileen Bowe,
now Mrs O'Kane is the proud mother of a red haired little
daughter. Fred Breen, although he is gone out East has a
lovely baby son born since he departed. Wasn't it sad for
him and his poor wife?

I shall post this on my way to Mass in the morning. Then
I shall be in Belfast at 10.30 A.M. The same day & in time to
catch the air mail service. May it travel safely to you, dearest
one and may it bring you some encouragement & comfort in your
exile. I love you, Frank, and that love will never die until I die.
God bless you (may your Guardian Angel be your bodyguard now
and always and may Mary, Mother of Perpetual Succour send
you home soon to your loving Eileen.