

HOLMVIEW,

OMAGH,

NORTHERN IRELAND.

Monday, Nov. 9 1941.

My darling Frank, On Saturday last I sent you a ten page letter complete with 3 snaps of the family, one of Josephine, another of Mairiad & the third of my 3 big brothers. What do you think of them? Don't forget to tell me to-night when we have our talk!!

You talk about receiving no answer from your best girl when on the crest of a South China Sea wave you ask her does she love you? Well I tried the same little game but alas there was no answer, not even a smile from that very important officer who stands in such a prominent place upon my dressing table. But you do love me, Frank? and I love you too. Our love shall never change. It shall only grow stronger & better the longer we are separated. Will you excuse me dearest? At this point I stopped writing in order to sing one of my favourite airs which has just come over the Radio. Surely this will tell you how happy you have made me too. I sing of him all day.

- in the morning before breakfast (not superstitious at all), cycling up to school, moving from class to class - in fact I must be quite a nuisance to all but what care I? I am happy & I must express my feelings somehow. What will you think of a wife who goes singing around the house all day? Frances & I are rather odd in that way. Often when away for a walk together she recites poetry to herself whilst I just sings. Will you teach me to whistle some time Frank? I believe you are quite a professional at it. Don't ask me who told me or I shall say like the mothers of old "a little bird told me." In my childhood days before I was contemplating a "crime" I always looked carefully at every tree to see that there were no little birds watching me. Can you credit so much innocence in one who thinks she was always a rock of sense. In my various excursions to Beechwood it is my greatest delight to get your father or Anne talking about your childhood days, Frank. You shall have very little to tell me on that score, Frank when you return but then sure it will be grand to hear it all from you again. Won't we have the grand chats together? You will be everything to me - my best boy friend and my best girl friend too. Frances must sink into 2nd place as I too shall fall into 2nd place with her. Isn't love a wonderful thing too! All our old loves fall into insignificance once we fall in love. I have noticed the change it has made in me already. You, Frank, come first in my thoughts, in my prayers, my dreams and I know it must and will always be so with me.

I had a very busy job to-night. All my little Stamp collectors are anxious to get my new Pahang stamps so to-night I made out 3 bundles. Celeste Ray (12 years) Kevin Murnaghan (12) and Joan Murnaghan (10) are only 3 of the many. I think you must have realized my problem Frank because in almost every letter you make up the total with a different collection. Mursad is also a keen philatelist so I must be sure to keep one of each for her.

On Saturday I searched Omagh in vain for a Snap shot album in which to place our snaps but all is to ^{no} avail. There are no albums in Omagh. Can you credit this, Frank? and nowadays the only places, where anything one wants, is likely to be got is in small towns. The big cities are a minus quantity for such things. I mentioned my failure to Mrs Ray. This afternoon she slipped into my room and presented me with a lovely album, which she has had for many years. Now wasn't that very nice of her? My problem is now to collar some Snap corners. These are as difficult to get as the album itself.

This morning I had a very pleasant surprise when two of your lovely letters arrived. They came via Durban. One was posted September 14th & the other September 17th. They carried intact the Snaps - one carried my own darling post at the wharf of his Austin - how you must have hated having it taken; the other had 5 lovely enlargements of Snaps I have already got. You are not going to allow me miss any of Malaya beauty, Frank. Our Snap collection will be the most marvellous collection ever. I have them all in a nice box at the moment - which I stole from some felt-work I am doing. My embroidery work too has lost its box also. The latter now holds all your letters and cables. Up to date I have 36 letters, all numbered. You would smile if you saw how neatly I have them all arranged. I have every letter you ever wrote to me, even those in which you told me about your girl friends. Often and often I wanted to burn those earlier letters but somehow I just could not. Now I prize them as I prize my latter letters. So you have a nice blue ribbon for your love letter? Some time I shall sing you my mother's song "Old love letters". Daddie just loves to hear Mamma's sing it but nowadays when we can persuade her to do her party piece her "singing" daughter must stand by to help her take the top notes. Daddie's party piece is a recitation entitled "The Women of Mumbles Head" - it tells of a shipwreck which happened in the "blue of Swansea Bay" and the bravery of women who gave their lives to save some drowning men. My father holds many medals for valour - he took 1st prize in one competition and the famous Charlie Kerr came second. Charlie Kerr died a few months ago - it was particularly sad because he has left a very young wife (his second) and a large family.

Daddie was also a great athlete in his day. He represented Antrim many times in the All-Ireland Football final at Croke Park. In the team was also Uncle Jim (R.I.P.). The Captain was Harry Sheehan (R.I.P) a first cousin of Daddies. Why am I telling you all this, Frank. Perhaps it is because I am so very proud of my father or perhaps it is because I have no news of interest to tell you in this letter. I am just writing because I want to write and because you want my letters in your jungle home.

What shall I tell you about now? I should really send my love, say good-night and pop off to bed but I don't want to leave you. Is this the way you feel when you write to me? I am writing this in the dining room (our room). It is now 10 p.m., there is a nice turf fire kindling in the hearth—There is also very nice music filling the room from our Radio. The Ray household is rather sad to-night. A wire came a few hours ago to tell them that Valerie's husband has already gone abroad (it is expected out east) He is an engineer, Bentham White. They have only been married 3 months. Poor Valerie must now return home and wait for the conclusion of this awful war when her husband shall return to her, God willing.

I must leave you now darling—To-morrow, perhaps I shall have something more interesting to tell you. I am so happy, Frank because I am in love with you. I shall always be and it will not need much trying on my part. God bless you to-night. I am praying especially hard to the Holy Souls in this their month (November) for you and all our intentions.

Tuesday, Nov 11th

Although it is now 10 p.m. and time to be in bed for my beauty sleep I have got an awful urge to write you a wee note to-night just to tell you again how much I really love you—you mean everything to me, Frank and it shall always be the same no matter what the future holds for us.

Since tea time I have been working like a black at my tea cloth. You should see how well I have got on. I am not rushing it off with any easy stitches. People tell me I am mad to do the difficult stitches I am attempting but they admit it will be a very beautiful piece of work when I have it finished. Josephine has begged to launder it for me. On my next week-end to town I intend bringing it along in order to buy a dog serviettes to go with it. When you see it on our tea table I bet your appetite shall improve a hundred fold.

Aileen was not peeling up to the mark to-night & has retired early to bed. I am acting the nurse. I made her a nice cup of bourn-vite & armed with it & a hot water bottle I set off for her room. Now that she is cosily tucked in bed I am alone in our sitting room sipping as I write my own cup of the same beverage. I have been reading again (the umpteenth time I think) your last letter to me, dated September 30th. In it you were so worried because your cables to me had not been answered. Poor darling, Frank. I did not cable because I was searching, by post & otherwise for a suitable ring. I failed in my search but I am so happy now that I did. I do so want you to give me my ring—it will be then your choice and on that account so much more precious to me. I am still wearing an engagement ring and I shall never leave it off until you replace it with our ring.

I was doing some shopping for Frances this afternoon and got her a

nice rug like ours. I wrote off to her & I know she will be so pleased that I managed one for her too. I was able also to get in a lovely walk. It was like a Spring day after the fearful rains we have had for the past few days. The rivers were very high indeed. Omagh is situated at the headwaters of the Foyle & many small rivers join the main one here. When the rains are very heavy & continuous there is grave danger of our town being flooded. It happened once while I lived in Sedan House. The road was a raging torrent about 4 feet deep. Can you believe this. We were marooned for over 24 hours & could not get across the door step. The milk man had to wade in in order to give us milk. There was a veranda outside my bedroom. Una Walsh & I climbed out & surveyed the town. We might have been in Venice. Campsie where I now live is even in a more dangerous position with regard to the river. It flows past my bedroom window with only the road between us. I can hear it gurgling along each morning as I lie awake waiting for Mary to "wake" me. I am afraid Frank I am much more of a sleepy head than you are. To get up at 5 A.M. in the morning would be a terrible "act" for me. You shall have to get me out of my bad habit. I am useless at sitting up late at night too. When 11 o'clock comes my head begins to nod as it is beginning to do now. Will you forgive me if I say good night darling and pop off. God bless you. May our Blessed Lady whose medal you now wear bring you home safely to me very very soon. No matter how long the waiting may be you shall always find me here loving you and wanting you.

Wednesday, Nov 12th

How are you feeling to-day, my dear one? The weather here was so mild that I actually set off for a game of golf. We had a very interesting 4 ball. Owing to the bad weather recently, we are now "teeing up" which is a wonderful help to ones game, although it is a terribly bad habit to get into. You were nearly losing me this afternoon. While we were playing the 6th hole, some officer pulled his 15th tee shot, which ball missed my poor skull by inches - I could actually feel the breeze from it as it passed. You must have said a special prayer for me to-day. Did you Frank? I suppose you cannot remember. So you know, Frank when you tell me of some narrow escapes you have had I can feel a shudder run down my back. I know you will be careful of your precious self not to mention my heart of which you are the only custodian.

Belfast is ringing to-day with the news of the death of Mrs Maddox of Derryvolgie Ave. (R.I.P.) You remember I told you of the very enjoyable party we had at her home last Christmas (the day I posted my first letter to you). She was on a visit to her cousin, Mr James Clenchman of Armagh. She was found dead in bed on Monday morning. She has been suffering for some time from both heart trouble & blood pressure. Mamma & she were very good friends. She is Mr Peter Maddox's mother. She has 4 daughterless nuns, 2 are Dominicans (contemplatives) one a teaching Dominican & the other a

5) Carmelike out in Kenya. Your friend Mgr O'Donohue must be a wonderful prophet. I should love to meet him, if he ever should return to his native country. Did you really tell him about me? His words must have made a wonderful impression upon you and upon all your family. Both your father & thea spoke to me of your friendship with him. They too, were very interested in his words of consolation. He told you, Frank that you would come safely through the war and you would return to Ireland to marry an Irish girl. His concluding words will be so true - we shall be so happy - the nearest approach to Heaven upon this earth. Sorrows & crosses will come but they shall only make us draw closer together. A worry shared by one we love is no worry at all.

So you have commenced to play hockey! I played it while I was at the Dominican Convent (Falls Rd.) and I was a member of the 2nd Eleven. I played right half. I was so keen on my hockey in those days that I stayed long after school has finished just to play. How I passed my junior there, I shall never understand. On going to Killeck, my hockey playing finished and Camogie commenced. It was so much more free. Had I continued my hockey my golf swing would have been very cramped. Be careful young man, hockey is not the best preparation for beating Omagh 1st lady at golf!!!

You are also fast becoming a chess player too. Where on earth will your accomplishments end? Hold on there I have a rival all found for you. Fergus' pet game is chess. They play it quite a lot at rec. time in Killeck. He taught me last Christmas, in fact he taught the whole house. I must practise hard at it, these holidays so that I can match my wits against yours over a chess board soon.

There were certainly very high words of praise written about ^{me} by your father. I know I do not deserve them but nevertheless I believe I am even more pleased than you, Frank to hear that he likes me. I know we get along very well together. I never feel ill at ease in his company. You remember the letter I wrote you at the time of your mother's death (R.I.P.) and addressed it to Beechwood to be forwarded to you? You have asked about it, Frank so now I shall tell you what fate it met. Your father confided in me that he had opened it and seeing it was from a girl, without reading its contents, other than the address, he burnt it. I was glad he told me because I often wondered what had become of it. I explained to him that it was solely a letter of sympathy and although I said nothing further I felt he was sorry that he had burnt it. He then explained about the many girls who were interested in you. In his eyes, I was just another so into the flames went my note. Don't be annoyed Frank because I am not in the slightest. Had it been my next letter (dated Dec. 29th) than his action might have been so much more tragic. If that letter had not reached you that would have been a major catastrophe. Thank God, He helped so

6, much in bringing us together. At the time I wrote I felt it was also so
hopeless. Incidentally, on your Christmas card last year you did not
send your love, nor did you send it on any of the other Christmas cards
which you sent me from time to time. If you had, Frank darling, we
might not have been so far apart to-day. I am not blaming you, dear
Frank in any way. I have always blamed and shall always blame only
myself for our long separation.

How I did laugh when you wrote to Mammie of our romantic
~~encounters~~ encounters. You did express it so well. I do not know which
of you scared me most — you on the one hand, Frank and Mammie &
Daddie on the other. Poor Mammie would have understood so well, had
I but the sense to confide in her then. Daddie, however, might have
been a tougher problem. You spoke beautifully about them both
in your letter, Frank. I was worried lest you would forget Daddie.
He likes always to be mentioned in our letters, yet he rarely writes
to any of us.

So, you are in love with Mammie too. I knew you would be.
Everyone is who knows her. She will be your mother always, Frank
and I know she loves you just as much as she loves any one of
her own children — she told me so. I am told I resemble her very
much in looks. I am always so pleased when told this, because she
has always such a lovely, kindly expression on her face.

What you term your strange ideas on life are not at all
strange to me. To see God in everyone ~~in~~ everything around you is a
very wonderful thought to possess. When I think about such things
then I think as you do, Frank but I am afraid to have that thought
ever before me is not always the case. I must try to cultivate your
perfect charity. I always try to be just and never to speak of the
faults of others. I have no favourites amongst the school children,
except those perhaps who are cold shouldered (for one reason or another)
by the others. It is wonderful to see how they react to a little bit
of praise and how they rise in the estimation of their class mates.
Don't you think that children can be very cruel to other children
in their own little ways. I believe teaching to be a wonderful
vocation — there is a wonderful responsibility placed on our shoulders.
Your calling too, is a very noble one. You must have brought happiness
or consolation to many a home. Sick people are so trusting in a doctor's
powers.

It is now 2 weeks since I received your last darling letter. Somewhere
~~they~~ are there are 2 precious letters flying towards me. I wonder when they
will come? Good night, Frank. God bless you, my own precious Frank.
I love you very very much.

Sunday, Nov 16th

My darling one you appear to have been neglected for the past few days but although I was unable to find a free moment to write, I did think of you such a terrible lot. Yesterday afternoon, I was feeling a trifle homesick and lonely too. I suppose it was Aileen going off home for the week-end. She goes rather often but then she has not to be in school until 11 A.M. on the Monday morning. It makes the week-end worthwhile but to night I am not envying her the 2½ hour journey to Omagh which she shall have to take in the morning. I do not go home any week-ends, Frank unless, for some reason or another we have either the Saturday or the Monday free. My next break is December 6th. (December 8th is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception - and a very big day at the Loreto Convent, Omagh) We usually have an opera, play or concert on that day but there is no word so far. How I am looking forward to seeing all at home again. I wonder when I am married Frank shall I still want to trip home? If we live at Beechwood, it will be most convenient. Mammae never lost her love for her home until the death of dear Grandpa. He was one grand old man. When he was a young man, he lost his young wife and he had to be father and mother to his nine children 5 boys and 4 girls. Fr Padraig's father was the eldest and Fr Joe the youngest. A few years ago I wore a hat which Grandpa swore made me the walking double of his wife - my grandmother. I could even see the resemblance myself between her photograph and Aileen complete with hat. This only goes to prove, Frank that the modern styles are a return to the old fashioned styles of the 1890s. There was another likeness between us - a small curl which for years hung down over my eye. She had the same annoying curl.

I set off to tell you what I did yesterday afternoon & look at the digression I took! Well, I had intended following the hunt with my bike. Mrs Raup's cousin is "Master of the Hunt" so we have all the details about it in Holmwood. I have never actually seen such a meeting, but please God next Saturday I'm going off to the Leap Bridge to see what is to be seen (about 4 miles off). Mollie Hughes is a marvellous horse woman but she has no horse at the moment. She will probably like it with me. It was after 3 p.m. before, I had all my household jobs done so I set off in the teeth of a nasty gale for a good walk. At the outset the sky was overcast but before long the sun - a watery one - came out. I walked and walked until Omagh, its people & its traffic were left far behind. I was deep in thought all the time - they were probably the very same thoughts you have Frank as you sit each Sunday afternoon under the shade of a Malayan palm and gaze out to the blue of the China Sea. Suddenly I had the bright idea of taking out my rosary. There was no one in sight so I did not feel in the slightest self-conscious about parading

my beads. I said two rosaries (out loud too), the first was for the Holy Souls (this is November and besides the ranks of my army must grow) and the second was all for you, Frank. I wanted so much to squeeze in a few intentions of my own but I did not. It was absolutely and entirely for you, Frank. It was 6 p.m. before I got back and did I lower a well filled plate. Afterwards I did some ironing and then wrote a long letter home. I was a very tired lady as I popped into bed about 10 p.m. & slept the sleep of the just. I don't think I even blinked once during the night.

To-day has been another wet Sunday so there could be no golf. However this gave me more time to pray for all our intentions. When I feel lonely, Frank it is because I begin to think of all the ~~po~~ dangerous possibilities the future may hold for us. At such times my only refuge is prayer. No friends can alleviate my fears but the one true friend. So to-day I hastened to unburden myself before the Tabernacle. I pleaded for a speedy reunion, for your safety, for a peace which shall be just and lasting. For 2 years the Catholic Church throughout the world has been praying incessantly for this and yet this war only seems to be commencing. Victory will mean the overthrow of one side or the other but the question remains - Will the victorious side make a just peace? If they do, then it will be a lasting peace, if they don't then the next generation will see another "hell" let loose upon the world. The causes of wars are to be found in treaties. To treat the vanquished too severely is to lay up a store of future trouble. Why did I go off on such a tangent Frank? Forgive me if I have worried you in giving my views upon the war. I sent you the Redemptorist Record a few weeks ago. In it there is an article by Dr Arthur Ryan which is most interesting as it is sound. I am still reading my Asias. There is terrific reading in them. The major has perused them all and I have promised to let a friend of mine - Mrs Mulhern - have a read at the "Straits Times Annual"

The ~~Asian~~ Eastern question seems to be again simmering to the top. Please God it will not boil over. If war should break out in the Far East and you, Frank dearest become directly involved then my worries would only have commenced. Nothing must happen to you, Frank. Please, let nothing happen to you. I had a lovely letter from Mamma yesterday in which she tells me she is still reading your letters. She sends you her love & blessing & asks me to tell you that she never forgets you each morning at mass & Holy Communion. Both were very touched at your writing to Muttie. I wonder had you the correct address?

9 "La Toure" is only the name of the convent "La Toure St. Joseph" is the full address. The remainder is En St. Pern, Ille et Villane, Brittany, France. You see the convent is the mother house of the whole order. It is a regular town in itself and is completely self sufficient. In the centre stands a tower — (as high as Nelson's pillar!) but upon it is St. Joseph the Patron of the order as he is the Patron of the dying. There are a few houses on the outskirts of the convent but really no town. Why address did you put on the letter, Frank? Surely we shall both go to visit her when the war is over. I shall never forget August two years ago when the whole family went over to Greenock to say our farewells. We knew she was returning to France for her final profession that Autumn and after this she would probably be sent on the missions. The war has upset all these plans. Mattie very seldom sheds any tears but on ~~the~~ our departure she broke down completely. War was expected at any moment so she probably foresaw our long separation. I wonder will we ever see her again. I shall try and find a snap of her to include with this letter. If you knew how highly I think of Mattie you would smile, I am sure — She is a saint besides being a very capable nun. She was the comedian of all the Melkhal School plays & she still has all the humour of those days. Her one ambition is to make us all nuns, Frank. So your letter must have come in the manner of a slight shock. Strangely enough the "Little Sisters of the Poor" is an order which I admire above all others. No not wrong, Frank, I have no vocation. I am not one of the chosen few so I shall never leave you by entering a convent. Who, on earth told you that I had entered Frank? Una greeted me with the same question "I thought you had entered" why do people make up such stories. Goodness knows we have had stories galore made up about us both but thank God, we have found each other in spite of all. Nothing can ever separate us again.

It was only on Friday I learnt that there had been an educational film in the picture house here at the beginning of the week about "Life in Malaya" and I missed it. I was raging. Just imagine me missing such a chance of seeing the land and its inhabitants where my beloved Frank now finds himself!! I could kick myself with size 12 boot. I had it described to me in full but it is not the same. Any who saw it admitted that Malaya is truly a beautiful country. Singapore figured rather prominently in it. Mrs. Mumaghan, it was who told me. She had seen it ~~on the~~ last night of showing. She said "Normally I should not have been the slightest bit interested in such a picture, but on your account, please I watched it with wonderful interest."

I hoped to finish this letter to night but I hear supper being prepared so I must be off. Do not think I am in bad form, Frank. I admit this letter is not of the brightest but to blame the bad weather! God bless you

10
as you sleep soundly at this present moment (10.30 p.m.) in far off Malaya.
Shall I waken you by a lullaby? or what about a Serenade? I could tell
you that I love you if you were only awake but then you sleepy head
you must sleep!!

Monday Nov 17th.

This letter must definitely go off to-morrow as I want to start right away on
my Christmas letter to my darling. Do you know who he is, Frank? Well, I
haven't seen him for over so many years - my last glimpse of him was
breizily saying goodbye as he made across Royal Avenue, Belfast to get
a Cliftonville Rd. Tram in the year 1933? Do you remember the day? When
shall we meet again, where too? We shall never say goodbye again. We
should never have parted. Our "night have beens" can make me very sad
but then I say to myself, all this just had to be, and it will end, as you
say in Job's own time. Now I prayed for you to-day, as I made my
40 Stations in the convent chapel. My favourite station for contemplation
is the 11th - Jesus is nailed onto the cross. He has promised that anything
we ask the Eternal Father in His name shall be granted. At this
station I ask for all the graces & blessings we need - whether we
realize such needs exist or not.

I have just returned from Monday afternoon sewing class. I
at last commenced the smocking on my cushion. One lady smiled over
at me as my head was buried in my work & said "That cushion should
surely be handed down as a family heirloom" - it has been so tedious
to make. However no matter what the turn out I have learnt to smock.
My next ambition is to learn some "Rechtien" work - which means
cut work - that is work, the majority of which is cut away from the
stitching. It can look very effective & I understand it is not too
difficult. Then there is applique work to be learnt - but that will
come later. How would you like me to do a nice lincen set in
applique work? I suppose you are bored to tears with these
feminine topics. Miss Lyons, our teacher admired "our" ring to-day.
I explained it was only a temporary one but she thought it very
beautiful. The diamonds do sparkle beautifully in it but I must rise
lira my palm face upwards as the back of the ring is all
padded to make it fit.

Matte Marshall has just arrived in complete with knitting. She is
Hugh's cousin. She is looking at the wedding group while I finish my letter. She
is enraptured with it so as soon the enlargement of myself arrives you
shall have both. We both send our love & she is a very pretty girl.
God bless you, my own darling. May no harm come to you & may
you return safely and very very soon to your ever loving Eileen.