

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,

22.6.41

Ever my darling,

I sent you a letter this morning which should reach the blipper to-morrow before it leaves Malaya. It was a short letter because I wanted you to have a few pages rather than wait for the next post. At present I am the Commanding Officer as my C.O. has gone off for a week on special duty. As this is Sunday and no mail is normally sent out of camp to-day, I made an exception and sent a special despatch rider 50 miles with your letter to the Field Post Office! You should consider yourself highly honoured, receiving so much attention!! My darling, you know that I can never give you enough attention or enough love. I must send you a telegram to-morrow if possible because I cannot bear not hearing from you. No letter has come yet, Gilem, and heaven knows when it will come because the air-mail from South Africa to India has ceased for some time now and all letters are coming by sea.

It has been a quiet day for me even though I am the sole officer in the camp. Two of my colleagues have just returned and now there are three of us! It has rained incessantly all day and so I have been surrounded by wooden walls most of the time. I did miss my tennis and football and I am lost without them. I wandered around the camp chatting to the men and fixing up a programme for the week. We shall have to do some marching in the jungle and that's what I love. I am now censoring my own letters, Gilem, as I am the C.O.!

I have been wondering how many of my letters have reached you? I have told you how to find out if any are missing because I write daily. I would love to know what your plans are for the holidays as I want to go along with you (in spirit). I don't know the meaning of the word holiday nowadays - they call it leave in the army - but so far I haven't had any. I could manage a few days at the seaside somewhere in Malaya but I have no friends here to go with. My C.O. is the only other European in this unit and we cannot both go off together. Living in this camp is a grand holiday for me; I shall always be content with an open air life. Have you ever considered a trekking holiday, Cateen? I imagine it would be grand fun. We must try it together sometime, but heaven alone knows when that will be. I don't believe you are praying hard enough for this war to end soon, otherwise it would have finished long ago! No matter when it ends, my darling, I shall be loving you more dearly than ever. I never tell you that I shall always be true to you, Cateen, because it is not necessary and because I love you so much that I could not be otherwise than true to you.

A terrific storm blew up this afternoon and down came several trees and large branches around the camp. Your precious Frank was nearly killed on a couple of occasions! You will be pleased to hear that my room companion, the cricket, has left me and gone elsewhere to disturb the slumbers of my neighbours! I have not been outside the forest today and that makes my day is so dull, though it probably always is dull. I must not bore you longer. Good night, my darling and God bless you.

MONDAY 23rd June - It seems that you have been praying very hard for the war to end because today the papers are full of Germany's declaration of war against Russia! Surely that is the beginning of the end for Hitler and his mad ambition to become master of the world. If nothing else, the war has taken on an interesting aspect but alas it only means more suffering for another few million people. War is a horrible thing even though it becomes inevitable at times. I had a very dear friend in Birmingham and he was a refugee from Hitler's secret police. He was a priest in Vienna at the time of the German invasion and he had to flee for his life into Switzerland and thence to England. He was a close personal friend of Dollfus and helped him to build up an ideal constitution based on Catholic teaching. He became a patient of mine soon after he arrived in England - a complete nervous wreck, could not sleep, could not concentrate, and yet he was one of Austria's intellects. I was very proud to treat him and watch him slowly regain his strength. When I said Goodbye to him on a cold December's night in 1939 his eyes were filled with tears of gratitude. You should read his book on Dollfus; it is grand reading. His name is Ingr. Messner. He was very sad at leaving his mother behind in Tyrol; he was a real exile and felt it too. He only preached that Church should come before the State and for that he had to flee from Hitler. For that little man and his cause I would fight all the Genghis in the world! Among other things he was a saint.

And why have I wandered off and told you all about my little Austrian priest - it is because that same little man and his cause are well worth fighting for. Maybe I have told you all about him already, Eileen? I am sorry for repeating myself, if I have. This evening I have

been reading your letter again today - the letter you wrote on December 29th last year - and still I love every word of it. I even pictured the whole scene - "Spring Villa", its quaint shape and queer little path leading up to it, its high hedge which I tried so often to creep over; Lileen, sitting at a desk near the window overlooking your little garden, writing to someone she hadn't even seen for years. I wish I could write as you do, Lileen, you just put your heart down on paper and yet you did not once mention the word love. Your letter can still make me very happy even though it is 6 months old. You may think I am an awful sentimentalist but I do love you such a terrible lot, so please understand. Long ago, during my first year at Queen's I was a real sentimentalist who spent his day dreaming instead of getting on with some work; now you will find my love more practicable and reasonable - it can never interfere with my work because it helps me to work hard and do things well. You may not think me quite reasonable because I write to you every day, but that is a very sane thing for me to do under the circumstances - I must talk to you at least once daily from the wilderness. And yet it would be the same if I were in a large city.

Today has been glorious after all the rain but alas it is raining again now. I spent my morning in my office and that is what I hate most of all. I endured it till noon and then my patience was exhausted and I jumped in a truck with 3 men and went off for miles along open country roads. The air was wonderfully fresh and the green of everything was greener than usual. I took many snaps of the scenery and my companions (Indians). I had previously bought a

parrot in the local village as we passed through, much to the amusement of the local Chinese inhabitants! So the parrot figured prominently in the snaps I walked to the top of the highest local hill in the heat of the afternoon and took some grand snaps (I hope). I had two of my men with me and they were thrilled with the view but not as much as I was. I love being high up on a mountain and look down on a peaceful valley below - especially on a summer's afternoon when all the world (in Malaya) is asleep. In the distance I could see the blue hills of another land - may be you can guess where I am now. I cannot tell you any more. We had football from 4-5 pm and then scampered back to camp for tea. I have packed all the films and shall send them off for developing to morrow morning. You shall have the best of them, Eileen, if there are any "best" among them!

Young woman, do you realise that it is now 11.30 p.m. and you have kept me talking all this time! Good night, my darling, and God bless you.

Tuesday - June 26th - I really did send you a letter - telegram today, Eileen, and I hope it reaches you soon. I hope it will not be too embarrassing for you because I sent you so lot of love in it! I don't care who knows that I love you but you have got feelings to be considered also. I hope you will not misunderstand me wishing you luck in your exams - I really mean your pupils' exams; I shall pray that your lot will turn out most successful. I wonder how many of them will go to Kanafast this year and meet Schoolboys who will fall in love with them! I suppose I am or was not the only lad who fell in love at Kanafast; it probably goes on happening. You have no idea how happy I was to learn that you actually hailed from Belfast and not Dundalk as I feared.

It gave me some sort of hope for the future when leaving Ranafast. Little did I think that one day I would run away from Belfast and from you. Now I thank God that we have come together again, never to be separated - a mere 9,000 miles is very little, after all. You know that I shall always belong to you no matter how many miles may separate us; I gave myself to you so many years ago - and that meant giving you precious little. I shall always love you as tenderly as I do now and have always done.

It has rained hard since 4 P.M. and of course that spoiled all games for the day. I could not endure sitting in my wooden hut so off I went at 6 P.M. for a walk in the rain. One of my favourite pastimes is walking in the rain. I caused quite a sensation by walking out of camp with my parasol over my head! I must have looked a strange sight tramping along the wet roads with a long staff in one hand, parasol in the other, wearing boots, ankle socks, shorts, and sports shirt. The local Chinese and Malays just gaped at me in amazement. It was grand fun crossing open fields and streams. I met the local customs officer on my travels - a man who loves wide open spaces and games. We fixed up for a game of tennis tomorrow if it is fine. One of the mess servants killed a snake today just outside my hut, but it proved to be non-venomous. This place is alive with them and the rain brings them out in greater numbers than usual. It is very eerie walking outside after darkness because of the possibility of treading on one of these creatures. Most snakes are harmless and when they do not attack me, I think they should be allowed to live. They are doing no harm to anyone but quite a lot of good in many ways. I could deliver quite a speech on why snakes have every right to live, but you would grow weary of it!

Before I go off to bed, I must tell you that I do not love you any more today I can only worship you! Good night and God bless you.

WEDNESDAY 25TH JUNE : I have just finished trying to take some snaps in my room by torchlight! I shall let you know the results in a few days when the prints come back - if any. I do not expect any at all because I discovered to my horror that both lenses of my camera have opaque spots on them. This is due to the climate, the dampness somehow affecting all cameras and binoculars etc., leather work of any kind also gets into an awful mess even in 24 hours time!

My darling, I am terribly tired to night as I have had a very hectic afternoon in the jungle. I set off from camp with six men all Indian Sepoys at 2.45 P.M. for a quiet walk in the jungle. For an hour we got on fine and kept to the path but soon we decided to leave the path and stride out across the thick jungle hoping to reach the main road. At 4 P.M. we were lost! We just could not make out from the map where exactly we were; the compass showed that we were going quite in the wrong direction - we were actually in Thailand (I must put a small t). We got out of it as quickly as we could - at least we hoped we got out of it; anyhow we steered due west. We wandered up and down for a whole hour and had resigned ourselves to spending the night in the jungle. It was terribly thick and dense everywhere. My legs were bleeding and also my hands. One of the younger lads had tears in his eyes when he heard that we were lost. My Woolworth's compass saved us because it led us to a small stream and as you know streams are life-savers in the jungle. We found the stream on the map and within an hour we had reached the road. A few

of the men just lay down by the roadside exhausted; the others cheered! Along came one of our lorries and deposited us at camp. I am all alone to night again as the others have gone to that show again which they saw last Friday! I am still the Cinderella of the camp! The O.C. has not come back yet and so I am the boss of the Field Ambulance - that means holidays for the men because there is no training to be done while the others are absent.

Cileen, I must say good night early to night - it is now 11.30 P.M.! Oh my darling I am praying hard that a letter will come from you to-morrow - a mail is expected. I love you more to day than I ever thought it possible to love anyone. Some day soon I shall tell you all about it. Good night and God bless you my darling.

THURSDAY, JUNE 26th : The prodigals all returned to day and now there is noise in the camp once more; the mess is full again and everything is in full swing as usual. Things have been much too quiet and sedate around here for the past few days. Lying under trees is bad enough but a deserted camp is too much. I am a queer person, Cileen, and you are very silly to love me even a little bit! I can just jog along under any conditions or with any surroundings but it would be so much easier if I had a letter from my best girl! I have exhausted my stock of love phrases and now you will have to be content with my daily - I love you! I do love you such a terrible lot, Cileen, and it is a love that will last forever. Nothing can ever change it or me - except that I shall love you more and more. The angriest part of it

all is that I have to write to you all about my love instead of telling you about it. You would understand so much better how much I really love you and what your love means to me. I have lived only for your love all these years and I shall always live for it and for you. How can I ever make up to you the years of love that we have missed.

Today has been rather idle because we spent the day welcoming home the other officers and men; listening to their tales of valour in the field and how they routed invaginary enemies. I was glad to hand over the reins of power to their rightful owner - my O.C.! Alas for me I take responsibility very lightly and I have found it the best way; instead of bullying men into working hard I have a trick of encouraging them with friendly shouts - they will do anything I ask them to do because I ~~so~~ always let them see me doing likewise and so they try to imitate! I rarely have to punish the men and when it does happen I am forced to do it - punishment only means some extra fatigue duty.

A couple of my enlargements arrived today from my last station and they are grand. The scraps of my mountain stream were really first class; I shall send them to you soon. I went to a meeting of the local football committee and there it was decided that the local police team would wear heavy boots while we wore bare feet or canvas shoes!! It seems the Copper cannot play unless they are well and truly shod; while our men cannot kick a ball if they wear boots! I still think we can win the cup and you will please start praying to the patron saint of games(?) for our victory! Once upon a time when I was a student at Queens, I was asking slowly for a tennis racket but

My father always refused because he considered it a waste of time and money. My sister (a Dominican) came to my rescue and gave my father a long lecture about the patron saint of lawn tennis (St. Philip)! This saint always insisted that his pupils should play tennis every day - he found they became holier and better students as a result! Anyhow I got my tennis racket. I played a set of tennis with three other chaps late this evening but I could scarcely hold the racket my hand was so badly cut and bruised. Would you have laughed at me early this morning, clad in pyjamas, as I sat on my door step removing thorns from my legs and hands! Let me tell you, it is no joke but is a very painful process indeed. I have become a very proficient stant tennis player! We have stants every night before dinner and I have been declared the Champ - not beaten once yet. I am boasting again, Eileen, and you must stop me! I crawl into bed at night now and read a few pages of my Spanish Raggle - Raggle and my light is a torch as the oil lamp is useless for reading with a mosquito net up. I must start my Golden Treasury of Irish Verse again and read "Clean Shaven" once more. Aft I love it best of all because it is about you, Eileen.

No letters came today and so I look forward to tomorrow and what it might bring. I live from day to day waiting for your letter and when it does come I shall be the happiest man in the world. The local population must be having a party to night because the Monotonous Drone of the town-bells has been going on for many hours now. I must try to get some sleep amid this awful din! Good night, my Darling, and God bless you.

FRIDAY - JUNE 24TH

Eden, my darling, I wish you could see the Snaps which arrived today from the local town - they are simply wonderful. The scenic ones are really fine - you can see the trees, the clouds, and the quaint houses. I just cannot describe them to you and yet I cannot send you the best ones because they would be of value to the enemy! I have a good one of an Indian Officer (medic) posing under my parasol - it is almost perfect. I shall send you as many as possible in a separate letter very soon. The Snaps of my interior decorations have not come yet; however I can show you the view from my front door and so-called back window! The jungle Snaps came out well even though it was so very dark. I want to send you all these Snaps so that you may be able to get some idea of what I see in my daily life in Malaya. Somehow just writing about it can give you little conception of what the country is really like. I want you to see it with my eyes and love it as much as I do. I want to share it all with you, Eden, just as I shall always share things with you.

I am posting this letter to morrow but alas it may not leave Malaya for a couple of weeks yet. In a way this is a good system because then you will have several letters with each post. Is there anything special you would like from Malaya, Eden? I can send you anything in the world you want. Be prepared, young woman, to be thoroughly spoiled by me when we meet again - and yet I think it would be impossible to spoil you. Nothing will ever be good enough for you, my darling. I can never change my opinions about you; they have always been the same. I am not trying to flatter you, Eden, but I have never met anyone yet who corresponded so closely to you as to my ideals - you are everything

that woman should be. The things that I want to say to you and yet I must wait to tell them to you in person - they would appear too common - place if put on paper and would give you little idea of how much I do love you and respect you.

The events of the day were few. There was great excitement among the men this morning as I gave out Red Cross things to them - Soap, oil, torches, combs, brushes etc! We had football in the afternoon and I ran with the best of them - I am not so old yet. After tea we had some strenuous basketball; after dinner came plans and news my letter to you. And so another day has slipped away - I know not where.

I have wanted to ask you a very awkward question, Celine. Is your age really 24 and is your birthday really October 17th or 19th? It is all written down in a little book in my trunk in Kowloon! I have never asked you your age before - because age does not matter. I love you my Celine and I shall always love you - that's all that matters to me. I am all yours now and I am yours forever.

Good bye and God bless you and may he protect you. May Our Lady continue to love you as she always has done.

All my love,

Ever yours,

Frank x x x.