

27th Field Ambulance,

c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,

6 P.M. CHRISTMAS DAY 1941

My own darling Eileen,

Is it too late to wish you, in thought, a very very happy Christmas with lots of fun and heaps of blessings. You are probably just preparing for a big Christmas dinner - Turkey, pudding etc; well, it makes me happy to think that you are having a good time with your dear ones at home. I have prayed that you will be happy in this day above all other days of the year, that you will not be troubled or worried in any way, that you will join in all the Christmas fun and that you will have little time to think of what is happening beyond the seas. Oh my darling I would give anything and do anything rather than have you suffer in any way; how I wish with all my heart that I am not causing you any unhappiness. Eileen, my dearest child, I do love you so very, very much that the thought of you suffering on my account fills me with shame; but how can I mend things. We love each other and great love can bring great pain as well as great happiness; God will give us both the grace to bear this cross. My only worry is that you will be hurt. I shall be alright here, my darling, and you must not worry; you will not worry if you place all your trust in God and in His Mother - they will not let you down ever. Surely you have faith as much as I have in the little miraculous medal which you have sent me and which is always next to my heart. We are both under Mary's special care. We are her children and oh how wonderful it is to have such a Mother as she; new love too is and always shall be under her protection. With

it be heaven for us when we are married and each evening we kneel down side by side and say Her Rosary. Eileen my dearest one, there has never been a love like ours before and there will never be a happier marriage than ours. Our happiness depends upon our prayer as well as our love, and never once will we forget our prayers.

And now let me tell you about my Christmas Day! As you know the setting was all wrong - it was very hot and sticky - no snow!! I awoke at 6 P.m. and wished you a happy Christmas - may be you were going to midnight Mass at that time; you looked very happy. I had a stiff morning's work before breakfast and I entered the mess to the strains of "The Rose of Tralee" in the radio; then came "The Mountains of Mourne". My thoughts turned to you and to Frances and the happiness I knew beside those lovely mountains. I know that those days will come again but they will be infinitely happier days than in the past, because now we know each other, understand and love each other so very much better than then. I sent off another 16 page letter to you by ordinary air mail after breakfast - I think it should get through all right. I am sorry to tell you that all personal telegrams have ceased to be sent from this place - that is breaking my heart because I wanted to keep you informed each week about my safety.

The only appearance of Christmas was cake and lemonade at noon with the sergeants in their mess; and I heard "Adeste Fidelis" played very much out of tune on an ancient mouth organ by my Catholic Waindler! This was sweet music to me under present conditions. And oh what a Christmas lunch we had - mince, hard potatoes, and hard peas! Still I did not mind these things a bit; I was happy in my own way and I was singing the whole day through. I was too busy to think very much, but all my thoughts were with you my darling one. Good night Eileen, and God be with you.

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FRIDAY DECEMBER 26th : I still do not know why it is called "Boxing Day" and I am a grown man of 29 years. Anyhow I have avoided boxing of all kinds today and I have not said the many unkind things that could have been said! And now I feel so thoroughly ashamed of myself about something which concerns you very much - your birthday. I have not wished you a happy birthday even yet and this letter will reach you months afterwards. I was depending upon the blipper and then upon telegrams and now both do not operate. Will you understand, Ellen, when no birthday greetings and no birthday present come from me; it was just not possible, my darling, to send anything. You can blame the Japanese for this! Oh why could they not have waited until your birthday was over before beginning their Far Eastern war - but maybe they did not know about it! You will know that when that great day comes to you in January 20th that I shall be with you every moment of it no matter what may happen to me in Malaya. It seems that the Japs are coming very near to my present station but they cannot do much harm in fact there is a warm reception awaiting them. I am not afraid of anything that is to come and my colleagues are the same; the men are really splendid. The Indian troops I have seen during the past few days - men who have been fighting for weeks without rest or sleep - are marvellous men; they never grow weary; they never give in.

I had a very busy time today, but I am not a bit tired think God. It is good to have plenty of work these days; all my work is prayer because of my morning offering and so I am praying hard always. My thoughts are constantly with you and each thought is a prayer in itself. My own standing, will you forgive me if I switch off now and say good night to you; I am on duty by the phone and things are happening. You may not even have a whole page to-morrow. God bless you, Ellen soon.

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SATURDAY - DECEMBER 27th : - My own darling, I only have time to tell you that I love you more than ever before and that I shall always love you. I have had a hectic day and a hectic night, too, and the weariness and sleep have come upon me. You have been by my side all day long and I always felt you were there; I am well guarded by you and my Guardian Angel. I feel as if I can do anything and endure anything while you are both beside me. So please stay there always. I had a day dream to day in the hustle of my work - I saw you, Spring Villa, Beechwood, and all my dear ones. I saw you beside me as we marched along Royal Avenue and said Good bye outside the hotel. I can still see your face.

Good night and God bless you. Forgive this note.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 28th : - My dearest Helen, I have been thinking to day how very very happy I am in spite of everything around me - I am the happiest man in this whole District (and there are many men here). You know what the secret of happiness is - it is our secret. We have nothing to fear from earthly things, because they cannot hurt us; I am not afraid of earthly enemies but I am anxious for you lest you should be hurt. We can never be sad because there is no place for sadness in our love. When my darling please, oh please do not worry; put all your trust in God and He will not fail you. I shall come back to you one day and we shall have the happiest married life that any two people have ever had - our love will only have begun. Keep on thinking of our re-union and then you will never be sad. Think of the happiness we have already had during these months of separation; we have not known the joys that lovers find in each other's company; we have not even spoken to each other and known the bliss of such talks - talks of the past and plans for the future. We have had none of these things and yet we have been so very happy - do you see my dearest child, that our happiness has not even half begun. I love you so

much my darling that the world is a very small place compared to my love. God has allowed us to love much and He will give us the necessary grace to face with courage anything that is to come. We may have to suffer more than other lovers because we have such a great love, but we need not be sad; we can both turn our suffering into great merit in His eyes. I repeat my morning offering many times a day and offer all up to Him. I shall have many things to offer up to Him but this war has ended and so will you, my darling, but we shall do it all willingly and cheerfully. You have no idea of the great blessings He has sent to me during these days of trial; and I know that your prayers are responsible for this. He is an all-wise and ^{an} all-powerful God and we shall leave everything to Him, He is our best friend.

The Japs are moving very slowly in Malaya and in the north although Ipoh has been evacuated of women and children, the evening has not reached that lovely town yet. All the snaps I sent you from Malaya at first were all of Ipoh; the river in the mountains, the wooden bridge, the river bathing etc. These were the days of long ago when our love was quite young; but it was really 12 years old at that time and to day it is younger than ever. It is a glorious evening here as I sit by my open "window" on my camp bed; the trees are so green and so still; I can hear two doves calling to each other away down in the dale. You can see in one of the snaps what I can see now - latest edition of my new home. I do not wish you to be here this evening, but I know that you would gladly come if I asked you. Oh my Eden, my love seems so small compared with yours. I shall always love you with all the love of my heart and soul and self. If I could give you more I would - I want so much to give you that engagement ring and now I am powerless to do anything about it. My darling, will you mind terribly if you have to wait until I come home to you again; then we can both go off

to town and select a ring which you and I will love and treasure all the days of our lives. Yes, my dearest one, that day will come soon for us and oh how happy we shall be - we'll be like a couple of children going off on a great adventure. Somehow I think we shall always feel that way no matter where we may go or what we may do. Everything in life will seem grand to us - and everything will be grand. Things may look black just now but please God all will end well for us - and for the world too. In our great happiness we want everyone to be happy too.

Good night my dearest and God bless you. Many things happened since I began this diary early this evening; now it is late. My day now starts at 5.40 a.m. but my day is grand and I am happy.

Monday - DECEMBER 29TH : "And if anyone should ask you.... or even ask me which was the greatest day in our lives, we should tell them that it was December 29th 1960! Oh my darling, what would have happened to us if you had not written to me on that day; what kind of life would we both have gone on living, what misery and unhappiness would have been ours. Our whole future and our whole life depended upon your writing that letter which told me all that I wanted to know. You did not mention the word love at all and yet I knew immediately that you loved me (maybe I was vain); you only asked me to tell you if I felt the same as I did in the past, but that was enough for me. My dearest I have never changed; I have always loved you and I could never love anyone but you. If I had known that you loved me, Lillian, I would have gone to you and nothing on earth could have stopped me. But my darling I blame myself for all of this misunderstanding; I should not have been so stupid and so blind. Now I thank our Good God for bringing us together in His own way and in His own good time. We were thousands of miles apart when our happiness

same, but He has even greater happiness in store for us when we meet again.

You will say that I am surely in a strange war in far-off Malaya when I tell you that I am reading a book by G.K. Chesterton called "The Man who was Thursday". It is the funniest book I have ever read in my life. Some days I read a few pages of it when I am in phone duty, but today I did not manage very much reading. I heard on the radio to night that Ipo has fallen into Jap hands, but they never seem to be able to do much in this area in spite of bombing and machine gunning. It seems almost incredible but there has not been a single casualty from air raids in this place and the damage has been nil.

May God bless you especially today on this our first anniversary and may our second one be spent together. Good night Helen.

Tuesday December 30th - I love you my darling!

Wednesday December 31st - No sleep last night; working at traffic pace yesterday, all through the night, and today. The war does not frighten me a bit - I mean bombing and machine gunning. I have seen and heard the horrors of war recently. Thank God I have the strength and courage to carry on. Your love is always my sheet anchor; I always see you before me and I am happy in the jungle. I am far from my late station and all the comforts have gone, but I am thrilled with it all - you know how I love "roughing" it. I have never loved you so much as I do this evening, Helen. Oh my darling, do not worry, because there is no need to worry. I am sorry about yesterday and not writing to you, but I did not sit down all day. I am much nearer to you than ever before - in every sense. May Helen, you know that I shall always love you no matter what may happen. I could never live without your love. Thank you for the happiest year of my life. I am not receiving any letters or telegrams from you because

nothing is allowed by cable and air mails from home are rare nowadays. Good night
And God bless you my dearest one.

Thursday January 1st 1942 To wish to a happy new year, my darling
one. It is a strange one for me kneeling here in the midst of a swampy jungle.
I love you, I love you. God bless and keep you Eileen.

Friday January 2nd My dearest one, I am still in the jungle but I do
not mind that at all. I am happy and you are the reason of my happiness. I
have never needed you as much as I do now and you have not failed me. Your
love and your prayers mean so much to me. I have not time to write much but
please let my father know that all is well. Last night I got some sleep at last after
two nights without any, so I feel grand now. We live on tea, dry biscuits and
Corned beef but one does not think of food with a war on all around us. I am
standing writing this against a large stone in the jungle. Oh the stories I shall have
to tell you when we meet again! Last night I slept in the open with a stormy sky
above and a full moon; of course I never undress - and never have a change of clothing!
I washed, shaved, and bathed this morning ^{with} a small tin of water! But I love
this life, and I adore you. Please God we shall be together soon again and then you will
have no more worries. Oh, my Eileen, I am not worth any worry at all and I am
sorry if I am causing you any worry. God has His own reasons for everything and
we must leave all to His Divine Wisdom. What is happening today is all for the
best.

We get no news here of the outside world - no papers no wireless.
I am like a hermit at the moment - I have always envied hermits, especially before I met
you but then you came along and changed all that! I am not with the main
body of the Field Ambulance but am here on my own with a small party of Ambulances

and nursing repairs: I have my own little "show" and we move about behind the fighting lines from place to place. The men are happy and I try to make them so.

Keep your skin up, darling. God bless you and keep you

SATURDAY - JANUARY 3rd - Still in the same place - Somewhere in a Malayan jungle - and still liking it. Yesterday evening we discovered a crystal clear stream about a mile away, so we all had a bath. Of course we have to slip away from here in pairs so that there are plenty of men to treat the casualties when they arrive. The water was icy cold and wonderfully refreshing. As I walked back to camp through the jungle path, I felt happy and thanked God for giving so much to me; He has given you to me; He has given me faith - and what more could one ask. I picked up my book "The Man Who Was Thursday" when I got back and re-read a passage in the last page - "He could only feel an unnatural buoyancy in his body and a crystal simplicity in his mind that seemed to be superior to everything that he said or did. He felt he was in possession of some impossible good news, which made every other thing a triviality, but a pardonable triviality." These were the feelings of a Catholic; and my dearest one, these were always my feelings. Somehow I feel that there is nothing on this earth to be afraid of except sin; God created all things and all human beings, so how could they harm us. Oh, kismet, if I could only explain the things that are in my mind and heart; my love for you and my love of God are inseparable and always shall be. I shall always love you, my darling, and that is why I shall always try to be good. If you could only see a real jungle - those towering trees, the massive underground, the strange animals and insects, then you would realize how infinite God is. I saw a hornbill in the evening perched in top of a tall tree - a large yellow beak tied on to a small body!

As you can see I am not very busy at the moment; it is my turn to rest now. I had my usual canopy of sky and stars last night! Again I wander

Shall I ever get used to comforts again? My darling, when I return home to you again you will have to annoy me because you have promised; but you will have a queer husband - and I warn you in time! You will find him eating only corned beef, any biscuits and water (to drink), at least you will have no looking problems trying to satisfy him! You may even find him sleeping in the garden at night on a blanket - and then your lovely pinched bolster case will never be used! My darling, would you allow me to use it if I did sleep in the garden? Would you allow me to use mamma's bed-down if it was cold at night?? My darling, we have no much happiness ahead of us when we get married, that the present seems so insignificant. I shall be back again with you soon - you must believe this as I do and then you will be happy too. I expect you are now at Killybegs by the sea and oh how I wish that I were there too; but each day that passes brings me nearer and nearer to you. Hope you have had a wonderful holiday and that all your dear ones were happy in your reunion. I want you always to be happy and have a good time. I wish I could send you a telegram to tell you that all is well, but all that has stopped now.

How are mamma and daddy? Do you have many week-ends at home to see them. Give them both my love when you go home again. I trust that Felix and Mona are very happy at Ballynahinch and that the practice is going well. The little Frances and Roland will soon be married now and so please wish them lots of happiness from me.

God bless you Helen

Sunday January 4th. :- I have left my home in the jungle, my job is done and now I have joined the others. I am sitting on the ground in my small bivouac and oh how happy I am. My thoughts have been with you all the day

and yesterday too. I had real adventure yesterday in getting to here but I cannot give you details. I was in wonderful form and my energy seemed inexhaustible. I spent hours in the evening by the wayside making tea for poor people who had travelled all day without a meal; I managed to scrounge some biscuits for them too. I had a crude meal in a Malay Kampang but it tasted good.

My darling, I dreamt about you and Frances last night and it was a happy dream. I dreamt that I was at some function at the Students Union and you came in with Frances and sat down - she was between us. I was too shy to kiss you so I kissed poor Frances on one cheek and at the same time you kissed her on the other! We had a wonderful time together - but there. My darling, don't you see how much Frances comes into our love; it was she who helped to let you know that I loved you - it was she whom I liked best next to you in all the world. So in my dream I kissed you through her and that is how it was set forth. I have loved you to day my Celine more than any man could ever have loved a woman before and I know that I shall always feel the same. Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

Monday January 5th :- My darling, do you love me just a little bit still? I need your love so desperately now more than ever before and I need your prayers. How have I lived without your love for such a long time I cannot understand. I have always wanted you and only you my dearest one. What you can see in me to love I do not know; you must be blind, my darling, or else you would not have given me your love.

You may notice that after a month of war, I have not much to tell you about the war here, but you will have to read between the lines. The brave men that I have met, their courage and pluck - well it's beyond praise. The Japs always get the worst of things but manage to advance through sheer force of numbers. I

Saw an officer yesterday with a shrapnel wound - he shot his legs before going down. War in this type of country is a test of endurance. I am waiting this in spasms as I am busy at my new place. There is a roof over my head tonight but that's not much use as there will be little sleep. I think my bed will be a stretched and blanket in the lovely garden home - even the rain will not deter me. Last night I waited up till 1.30 am. to welcome an officer and some men who had been away in the forward area and many times I dozed off to sleep as I sat on the roadside and looked up at that heavenly sky of moon and stars. Later I crept under my bivouac and fell fast asleep. While waiting by the roadside I met, at last, my great friend of India days - Capt. Persson. Do you remember I told you about him, his wife, and baby whom I liked so well in Benares. Along he came at 1 a.m. with his guns and men; he was so pleased to see me - and I to see him. His gunners had done wonderful work everywhere they went; they didn't lose a man or a gun.

Dozens of men are swarming around me and casualties are due at any moment. So I must be off but before I go I must tell you that I love you with all my heart and soul, I shall always love you my darling and nothing can ever stop me from loving you. We shall be together soon again but in the meantime do not worry about me - all will be well. We shall have happiness untold when we meet again and you will be brave until then.

May God bless you my own darling and may He give you courage. May our mother watch over you for
Your loving Frank.

P.S. Love to all. Am sending this letter now while there is time.
Frank.