

Letters From India and Malaya February 1941 — January 1942

R.A.M.C. Mess
Rawalpindi
26.2.41

My dear Eileen,

How can I thank you enough for your letter which reached me today. I have read it and re-read it so many times. Why are you so decent to me and why have I neglected you so much in return. How I could kick myself for not telling you long ago what I am now going to tell you in a letter – and the sad part of it is that this is in the nature of a farewell letter too. It is so very important that it must fly all the way to you Eileen; I cannot leave anything to chance – no submarine can send it of the bottom of the sea! You did ask me for a quick reply and I am sending one because you ask it and because I want you to know something before I leave India.

Yes, Eileen, I am leaving India in the near future and going off to the war. I do not know where I am bound for and you will understand that if I did know I would not be allowed to tell even you. So you will not be able to answer my letter for some time. When I reach my new abode I shall send you a cable, if possible giving you my address. I was expecting to be sent overseas long ago, so that it is no surprise to me now. I have been training very hard during the past few months – camp life, marching 20 miles a day and never feeling weary, actually using a pick and shovel (voluntarily!). It was all grand fun for me but I enjoyed the games best of all – football, baseball, cricket, tennis etc. Alas I have not taken to *your* game, Eileen, in India – I was much too fond of my tennis, cricket and football. I am No.1 at tennis and cricket in Rawalpindi. I promise to take up golf seriously when the war is over, *and* I promise to beat you after a couple of weeks practice!! If one did not play games in India one would go crazy and yet there are so many young lads who seem to do nothing all day.

I have not been happy in India, Eileen, and am not a bit sorry to be leaving it. There is no place like home and nobody knows that better than I do now. Life among Europeans in an Indian station is so terribly artificial, the people are artificial and insincere. There is that queer Victorian custom of calling on Mrs. So-and-so by dropping one's card in her Not-at-home box outside the garden gate. Then there are those eternal drink parties which people really abhor – everyone trying to make them *informal* but they only succeed in making them very formal! You may be sure that I am not a roaring success at these functions! I have only 3 *real* friends in India and these are – Major Paul Gleadell, his wife Mary and their daughter, Virginia (aged 3). They are wonderful Catholics and so very proud of it; he is an old boy of Downside Abbey though he was born in America (Virginia). They are quite young (30) and have been all over the globe. My Christmas night was spent with them and it really was the next best thing to home! We had *real* turkey and Christmas pudding. Paul is my idea of what a man should be and Mary is an ideal wife besides being the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. I do envy them – their love, their home, their happiness; and that is why I feel a bit sad at times when I have visited them.

And now may be I have enough courage to tell you what has been locked away within me all these years. I have thought of you and prayed for you every day since I first met you at a Céilidhe in Ranafast¹ so very long ago. I have loved you every day since then. Maybe it was a childish sort of love at the beginning and even at “Queens” it was still childish and romantic for the first two years. My dear Eileen surely you must have known how I felt about you – I followed you around everywhere, meeting you “accidentally-on-purpose” so many times. Everyone seemed to know that I loved you – everyone except you Eileen. You had strange ideas in those days and probably thought it all very wicked and did your best to discourage me. How on earth could it be wrong for me to love you? Then came Castlewella and our rare meetings at parties there. Frances² was a grand person and understood. I am not blaming you, Eileen, for not understanding. And then you gave a “lecture” one evening in Castlewella and advised me not to be so foolish. I know that I deserved that lecture because I was behaving very peculiarly and you were justified in warning me off, but it was my way of showing you how much I loved you even though it was a queer way. Do you remember the Friday morning we had fried eggs at McNabbs and then went off with Frances

¹ Ranafast is in the Irish-speaking Gaeltacht area of Co. Donegal and it is where Frank and Eileen met in 1929.

² Frances was Jane Frances McNabb, a mutual friend and “go-between” of Frank and Eileen's from Castlewella, Co. Down. During the war she met and married Roland De Meulemeester, the son of the Belgian, Arthur De Meulemeester, the organist at Clonard Monastery in Belfast.

to a nearby wood to gather nuts? That was the morning after the “lecture” and though I would have given anything to gather nuts by your side and tell you all the things that were in my mind, I had to keep away from you. Eileen, my dear, what conclusion could I draw from what you told me and how you behaved towards me. You could not know what it meant to me to know that the love was all one-sided. I saw you later at a dance in Newington but you were away up in the clouds somewhere and being Frank Murray and very much in love with you I would not allow myself to ask you for a single dance! In fact I was very jealous of a lad called Séan Bowe! And another day as we walked from Cherryvale to Castle Junction with Sean Fitzsimons – how I longed to talk to you alone that day in spite of the apparent one-sided love! And then I made up my mind to leave Belfast and never come back again to live in it – that is as soon as I was qualified. I could have had heaps of jobs at home but I wanted to get away and I didn’t stop to think of what I was running away from. Then came two years in Birmingham and all its sordidness. I did have some happiness in working for those poor patients but that was the only happiness I had. Oh, how could I be happy ever again? I had a girl friend in Birmingham – went to pictures, dances etc. – but she was only a friend because I was lonely in a strange city. My father had a terrible shock when told by Rev. J. Macaulay that I was married. Why must people say such things when I was the last thing in the world I could do. I am so glad, Eileen, that you did not believe it – and yet how could you know that many, many years ago I vowed that I would *never* marry any woman except one and if it could not be, I would not marry at all. Do you think that was a wrong thing to do, Eileen? I knew that I would never be happy without you and it would be madness to marry anyone else – it would not be fair. Then the war came and I joined up immediately; I knew it was my duty and I was still running away. I did want to go to France but instead I set out for India on January 9th 1940. How utterly lonely and sad I was that cold night as we set out in the darkness from Southampton to cross the Channel. Then the cold journey in a *cold* train across France to Marseilles; a glorious trip down the blue Mediterranean to Malta and Port Said; the Suez Canal; the Red Sea (which really is Red); Aden and its Arabs and quaint bazaars; Indian Ocean to Bombay – I think you would have loved it, Eileen. I spent hours watching the flying fish, the porpoises, and an occasional shark. Then came my train journey of 1,200 miles to Rawalpindi through dust storms and semi-desert country. Arrived there about 2nd February and worked at the Military Hospital until April 20th; then came 6 lovely months in a small hill station 10,000 ft. high. I was M.O. to a Battery of Royal Artillery and I enjoyed every moment of it even though it was very lonely. The scenery was wonderful – snow capped mountains all along the horizon etc. I came down to ‘Pindi on 20th October and have been here ever since.

The above, dear lady, is a concise autobiography of a very awkward and shy young man whom you used to know! I am not so shy now and have changed a lot since 1930! I have seen a bit of life and a bit of the world and now it seems I am destined to see more of the latter. My great fault was that I almost lost hope and that was fatal. That’s why we are so far apart today, Eileen, even though I still love you with all that I am. It is rather ironical that I should have waited until now to tell you all of this – now that I might never even see you again. Your letter today made me happier than I have been for many years; it has only made me love you more than ever. Eileen dear, how could imagine that your letters have annoyed me. I treasured every word you wrote, but can’t you see how hopeless everything seemed to me? I have not changed, Eileen, since I wrote that letter to Frances so long ago and I never shall change. Today has made such a difference to me, that folk around here just can’t believe that I am the same person. Please don’t worry about Censors; they are very different people to what you think. They never read personal matters and only look for names and places. Will you be terribly annoyed if the Censor should read this letter? He would not have the patience to read it through. It has only occurred to me at this very moment to wonder what *you* think of this letter and will you read it right through to the end! I have so many more things to say to you yet that I don’t know when I shall have finished.

You know that your letters will always give me pleasure, Eileen, so please write as often as ever you can. I shall need you with me always wherever I am going now. No matter where I may be sent the following address will always get me somehow: “c/o D.M.S., Army Headquarters, New Delhi, India.” I shall send you my exact address when I reach it. Your letter to me will not be censored so please write to me soon. I have written 6 long pages full of “ego” and never a word about you and your friends. I want to send you a cable tomorrow and yet I don’t know where to send it in case you should be embarrassed at the Convent by its arrival.

I am sorry about poor Sr. Bernadette being so utterly cut off from you all; you must have missed her terribly at your Christmas gathering. It will be wonderful to have Fergus a priest, but *please* Eileen do not run off and become a nun because if you do I should be lost. It was awful to hear about your uncle (R.I.P.); I do remember you speaking of him often. It is very good of you to pray for my mother even though you never met her. You are lucky to be near all your relatives and friends and know that you have their love. I cannot believe that I shall never see my mother again and I shall look for her when I return home again.

I am glad Felix³ has got a hospital job; it is so very important to do that kind of work before venturing forth into the wide unknown. I met an R.A.M.C. officer called Fletcher in Rawalpindi about a month ago who qualified with Felix. He was in France, Dunkirk and Norway – so you may be sure he had some adventures to relate. I met a Dr. McLaughlin and his wife here recently; he comes from Derry city and she from the Glen Road. Her name was Corr and she has a sister in St. Dominic's, Falls Road. She knew the Bowe family very well. It is a very small world, Eileen, but I do wish I could meet you somewhere in the Western Desert *or* in Palestine *or* in Eritrea *or* in Somaliland *or* wherever I am going! When you see Frances again please give her my very best wishes and tell her that her words have come true. Many moons ago she told me that you would change and that all would be well in the end. I hope she has all the happiness that she deserves and all that I wish her.

I cannot tell you how much longer I shall be in India but I shall write to you again before I leave. I am writing this in my tent and it is 12.15 p.m.! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Eileen O'Kane, keeping me out of my bed! I did want to write to you today and I wanted to tell you so many things and now that I have nearly finished I have told you very little. I could have written all these pages in one line – "I love you and I shall always love you and nobody but you, Eileen."

I am not living at the R.A.M.C. mess now but out in camp. I am not allowed to give you the name of my unit or what goes on here. I shall tell you all about it some day. "Oh, to be in *Ireland* now that spring is here." Oh, to see some green grass again; oh, to see my Donegal hill, and my Atlantic waves again. Should I never see them all again, Eileen, please go and see them for me and tell them that I have loved them too. You know I shall pray for you and love you every day of my life. I did need your love so much in the past and now I need it more than ever with 7,000 miles between us. What more can I say to you, Eileen, except God bless you and keep you safe from all harm. May we meet soon again and may we know each other when we do meet. Please don't let me go away again.

Ever yours,
Frank.

P.S. This is the longest epistle I have ever written in my life! Shall send you some snaps later.

Love Frank.

Secunderbad
Hyderabad State,
Deccan
7.4.41

My dear Eileen,

I have migrated to the South of India since I wrote to you last. You shall have a telegram before this letter reaches you and it will explain why I am moving about so much. I am leaving India soon, but before going away I wanted to tell you just once more that I love you now as I have never loved you before. I still want the whole world to know it and that is why I am not shy about Censors or anyone else who may read this letter. I still read your letter as if it had only just arrived and I do find such happiness from reading it. Now, Eileen, do you understand what *your* letters can do for me? I do need them and I do need your love. I have wanted you to love me since the first time I saw you and I know you could spare me just a tiny corner in your heart. I remember a schoolboy – a very shy schoolboy – tracing your name in the sands at Ranafast so many years ago! Every schoolboy has romances like that and dreams a lot. Maybe I still dream a lot, Eileen but my love is very real now. It has lasted all these years – surely it must be the real thing and not just a dream. I remember confiding my secret to my favourite sister (Una) – she was a Dominican nun in Dublin. Even she was satisfied that it was the right kind of love. She explained the different kinds of love – companionship, love of a pretty face etc.; but all these were not how I felt towards you. My love made me pray hard, so it could not have been bad, Eileen. If I could only talk to you now for 5 minutes I could explain it all so easily. You would understand without a word from me at all. I know and always knew that I could make you happy but in the old days I went the wrong way about it.

³ Felix is Felix O'Kane, Eileen's eldest brother. He was a G.P. and he had a practice in Ballynahinch. His wife was Mona.

I am now in very hot country where the daily temperature is 103° in the shade. My job is an out-of-doors one and though I feel the heat I have become more used to it. This is a native state and is ruled by His Exalted Highness, The Nizam of Hyderabad – the richest man in the world. The city of Hyderabad is a perfect combination of the old and the new. In ways it is more modern than any English city. The roads leading into it are cement; on either side are beautiful trees and flowers; the lighting is by means of two rows of huge globe lamps. You have no idea of the splendour of its buildings. Alas the rich are very rich and the poor, very poor. Yet the people seem happy and contented. They are a friendly race and much darker in colour than the Northern people. There are many more Catholics among the natives here than in the North – this may be due to St. Francis Xavier and also to the nature of the people themselves. The native costumes are lovely. You would have been amazed if you had seen what I saw in the Church yesterday (Palm Sunday). I was the only white person in the whole congregation! The priest was a native, the servers native, the nuns were native. There were no seats in the church as all the people sit upon matting on the floor. All the ceremony of blessing the palm, the procession, knocking at the church door etc. was carried out perfectly. The procession was the finest sight I have ever seen, Eileen; waving palms, a wonderful choir, the children (hundreds of them) reciting the Rosary – I just cannot describe it, but how I wished you were kneeling beside me. I wonder did you hear all the prayers I said for you, especially after Communion. An yet I would not have you come to live in India because it was not meant for white folk to live in. I have told you the hopeless sort of life people lead in the Cantonments (military stations) – I don't think it would appeal to you very much.

I was promoted to a Major recently and this is to date from February 15th. It was not any military genius of mine that earned these laurels, but sheer luck. Anyhow it is only a temporary affair and I am not a bit flattered.

It is now midnight and you have kept me out of bed! I have to get up at 5.30 a.m. and am usually in bed at 10 p.m. Please write often, Eileen, because I love your letters as I love you. Goodbye, and may God bless you always.

Ever yours,
Frank.

P.S. If you do not receive a telegram before this letter arrives you will know that only one thing could have happened.

Love, Frank.

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
May 1st [1941]

My dear Eileen,

I sent you a telegram when I arrived in this country but since then there has been that terrible air raid on Belfast and Northern Ireland⁴. You have no idea how awful it is to be away from home when such things are happening. How I prayed that nothing had happened to you or your people. I cannot imagine bombs raining down on Belfast and killing hundreds of people – people who could not defend themselves. Eileen dear, can you understand me wanting to fight against such cruelty and savagery. It makes me mad to think that German airmen may be killing everyone dear to me at home and everyone dear to you. It can not make sense somehow. I wondered if you had gone back to Omagh⁵ or if you were still in Belfast at the time of the raid. You know that no matter where you were or are at such times that I am always with you.

I have been worried about you because I haven't heard from you since I sent you that "trans-Pacific, trans-Atlantic" letter! I was in Rawalpindi then. I wrote to you later from Southern India and now I have changed my address again. It must be all very confusing to you Eileen, but all this wondering over the world is not of my own choice. I would give anything to be at home now and be near to you. There is a war on at home and no war in Malaya. You would like this country because everything is green and fresh. It is such a contrast to an Indian station (plains) where everything is brown and burned up with the sun, where the heat is stifling at this time of year, where

⁴ Belfast was first bombed by the Luftwaffe on the night of 7-8th April 1941 and then for a second time on Easter Tuesday, 15th April 1941. Two further raids took place on the nights of 4-5th and 5-6th May 1941. Approximately 900 people died in the bombing raids.

⁵ For most of the war Eileen had a position as a Geography teacher in the Loreto Convent School in Omagh.

the dust is appalling and the people dirty. Malaya is covered with trees and jungle; the country is beautiful, there is no dust *because* it rains *every* day *and* the people are clean. Did you know that most of the people are Chinese and the more I see of them the better I love them. They are really a wonderful race and much more civilised and progressive than Indians. When the war is over and we have some holidays you *must* see Malaya! It will take a lifetime to show you all the things that I have seen during the past year. I sometimes wish I hadn't so much work to do and then I might be able to see more of Malaya. I finish my day at 7 p.m. and have my afternoon tea at that unearthly hour too. However I like my job very much and its so much better to be working all day than doing nothing. The heat is nothing compared to India, the rain keeps the temperature down BUT the humidity is about 100% and so everyone is drenched in a continuous bath of perspiration. The nights are pleasant and cool. The planters (rubber) have a strange existence and lonely one too but they don't seem to mind being "buried" in the heart of their plantation. They have a glorious time every week-end in the nearest town – dances, pictures, etc. I have been to one dance but did not dance because there were no partners – all Chinese dance hostesses and it seems we are not allowed to dance with them. The local priest is a Frenchman with a long flowing white beard; you would love him, Eileen. His name is Father François and he must be a saint. His Chinese flock just seem to adore him.

I am becoming impatient waiting for your letter because it means so very much to me. You know that I love you and that I could never love anyone but you, Eileen; but I do want to know how you feel about it. I want to meet you again soon and tell you that I love you. You will see that it is real love and you will know that it is more precious to me than life itself. I want to go on loving you and I don't have to try very hard. I know that should you love me that in return I could never love you enough. I am useless at paying compliments, even when deserved, but you are everything that woman should be. You will never change, Eileen, and I shall never want you to change.

I cannot give you any news, nor can I tell you where I am stationed in Malaya⁶. In this ultra-modern there is a racecourse, golf course, tennis club, cricket club, hockey and swimming club. In many ways it is Americanised but that helps it a lot. I haven't a moment to spend during the day on any kind of sport *but* I have plenty of exercise. I have a little Austin 7 for my own use – of course it is an Army one but it's a grand little toy. My long legs are apt to get entwined among gears and clutches! I thought of a little blue Austin 7 you had once upon a time; I even remember the number (AZ 6079). I can never forget that number because I was ever on the look-out for it all over Belfast!

Please write to me soon and give me all the news. I want to hear about you, your work, your play, your people and your friends. Tell me about Frances and her Roland. I should like to see her settled down. Give her my regards when you see her again; but may be she does not love me any more. I forgot to tell you that I had a photograph of myself taken (for my father) and I sent you a copy too. It was taken in a small Chinese shop here and so do not expect very much.

And now, Eileen, I must bid thee adios again because mine eyes are closing with sleep. God bless you my dear and may you be always happy.

Ever yours,
Frank.

P.S. My letters are censored but yours are not.

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
7.5.41

My dearest Eileen,

I am very happy today because I have received a telegram from you. It was sent on from India. You have told me what I wanted to hear for so many years – there was nothing in the whole world I wanted more than your love, Eileen. And now that it has come it has made me happier than I ever dreamed it possible to be. I have loved you during all these years but you will find that I am only beginning to love you. I shall never be able to love you enough for making me so happy in giving me your love. I know so well that I could make you happy always. You

⁶ At this time Frank was stationed in Ipoh, the capital of the Malayan state of Perak.

have *all* my love and it will always be yours, Eileen, and I promise you that as long as I live you will have all my love. So many marriages turn out to be unhappy because people do not really love each other in the proper way. I know that out love will always be a sacred thing – it must be holy otherwise it is not love at all.

My darling, I hope you are praying so very hard for this war to end soon. It would save endless suffering and misery; it would mean so much to us. We could meet again and know each other as we have never known each other before. I want to be with you, Eileen, in times like these. You must be suffering mental agony and suspense since the air raids started. Your home is right in the middle of it all. I wish I could do something to help but I haven't a chance of seeing home again until the war is over.

I am writing this in haste because the Pan-American Air mail is due to leave soon. I have sent you two telegrams but I doubt whether you will receive my second one or not, *because* it contained my address. I have sent you an air mail letter from Malaya too but this letter will reach you first. The photograph will take months to reach Ireland. Eileen, could you please send me a photograph of yourself as soon as you can. I do want to talk to you *occasionally* because writing is not quite the same.

I have just come back from having dinner with some Chinese Generals who are visiting Malaya. They are grand people and I am quite sure the Japanese will be beaten eventually by a very well organised Chinese Army. This evening we had a Chinese dinner and I discovered my latent talent of wielding chop-sticks to perfection! I was also at a reception to the Generals in the afternoon and had tea with them. On the 3rd May I had grand fun at a garden party given by the local Sultan. He has a wonderful palace in the country overlooking the river. The royal jugglers did all kinds of acrobatics and tricks; the royal tennis coaches gave an exhibition of tennis on the royal court and we went home in a royal car which travelled at 70 mph! Yet in spite of *having* to attend these functions I am a very busy man since coming here. I had time, though, to fall in love with the fair haired, blue-eyed Bridget (aged 9) – daughter of the local doctor! A local Irishman from Mayo and his Irish wife came to visit me yesterday evening. He has an Irish face and a brogue; married his wife in New York! He has only been here 15 years! He has a good Government job out here. I met these people at Mass last Sunday. I really do go to Mass and Communion every Sunday, and I pray very hard for someone whom I love very much. It appears that he has answered my prayers at last. So you see that the dangers of an Eastern country are not dangers at all. They did not tempt me even a little bit – in fact they made me a better Catholic. I *should* go to daily mass, but the Church is far away and mass starts so very early in the morning *and* I am tired *and* sleepy *and* lazy at 5 a.m.! The climate is a bit exhausting but I like it much better than India.

Eileen, please keep up the prayers for me – and *please* write as often as you feel like it. *You* know what one of your letters means to me in this country or in any country. I shall love you every moment of every day; I could not be any nearer to you than I am now. When the war is over will you try to meet me at Southampton or do you want me to go to Omagh and seek you in the Convent there! If I could only tell you how much I love you and show you how much.

Eileen O'Kane you have *made* me miss some of my beauty sleep! Give my love to Frances and to your people and tell them that I shall meet them soon. Have you told anyone at Spring Villa about "us" yet? Good night, Eileen, and God bless you.

Ever yours,
Frank. xxx

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
18th May [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

I had another cable from you this morning – it was waiting for me when I came back from Mass. Thank you, my darling, for making me happy today; I was worried about you in case something had happened at home. It was quite a miracle, that cable ever reaching me at all because the only inscription on it was "67th Field Ambulance" – no name! So you may guess that many people read it before I did! The postal people do get mixed up nowadays and continually send wrong messages over the wires. Anyhow your cable reached me and that is all that matters. Well, Eileen O'Kane, how dare you ask *me* to write often to *you*! I have written you six long letters and so far have only had *one* from you (dated Dec. 29th 1940)! How I wish we were not so far apart – then there would be no long waiting for letters. It takes two long weary months for an Air Mail letter to reach you, Eileen – so you will have to

be patient. I shall send you an occasional Pan American Airways letter which should reach you in two weeks time – by ‘occasional’ I mean once a fortnight because it leaves Singapore once every fortnight!

Do you know young lady that I love so very much more today than when I wrote to you a few days ago? I shall go on loving you more and more because you can never be loved enough. I have often thought what would have happened if we had not ‘found’ each other; what would have happened if we had drifted on and never known that we loved each other – you, thinking that I had ceased to love you and I thinking that you would never love me. When you wrote to me last January I knew that you had come to the crossroads in your life and how I dreaded the thought of you taking the *other* road. What that other road was I do not know – may be you will tell me about it some day. It would have been an awful mistake, Eileen, if you had gone that way, while you loved me. And now that you have chosen I know that you will never be sorry. Our road through life will be broad and straight, my darling. We are sure to meet sorrows on the way but then everyone has sorrows; we can share them together as we will share our joys. No matter how badly things may seem to go with us we shall always love each other and we shall always have our love to pull us through. We are so very lucky to love each other as we do and to love as God meant people to love each other. We are lucky in having our religion because everything depends on that, Eileen; I want to be better for your sake because I know you are good. Sometimes I wonder if I shall ever be worthy of you and your love – I shall try hard my darling. Do you realise that during all these years that *you* have been a sort of shining light for me and that loving you made me want to love God better. I shall explain this all so much better when we meet again.

I find myself day-dreaming recently. I dream of happy days in the future with someone whom I worship and always shall worship; I dream of long talks together about the past and the present, of long walks in the country, of summer days at Killough and Donegal; I dream of the day when I shall beat you at golf *and* tennis *and* swimming *and* everything else! Eileen, my own darling, we have so much time to pull up for; so many things to do that we should have been doing all these years, so many places to see. It will not be too late when the war is over. I could not have married you before the war began because I had not a practice of my own nor had I got money to buy one. You see I gave all my money to my father during my two years in Birmingham. I owed him that much thanks for all he did for me. So you understand, Eileen, that we have not found each other too late.

My darling, we love each other and we are sure of it because we are grown-up and no longer children. So will you *please* marry me, Eileen? It is not how I wanted to propose to you but at present it must be done on paper; some day I shall ask you properly. May be it is not fair asking you such a vital question since you haven’t even seen me for years. If you do not wish to become engaged just now, Eileen, I shall understand – I leave it all entirely to you. As we love each other, may be you do not consider that an engagement is necessary. In many ways I think it is not necessary – I know that I shall love you always and shall *never* love anyone but you as long as I live. If you do wish to have an engagement, do you think I should write to your people about it all. Oh, if only I were at home now it would all be so very simple. You will be the happiest wife that the world has ever known because I shall spare no effort in making you happy.

You will find me a very useful man about the house – you should see *my* darning an *my* sewing and *my* polished buttons! I still do all my own work because I still refuse to have an Indian sepoy as a batman. The Indians consider us poor Christians to have very low caste and so they are very loathe to work for us at all! I am very fit in Malaya because I have so much exercise. Today I had a game of football in the rain and mud. It reminded me of Queens and all the games we had there – I did enjoy my Queens days because I found the secret of using those days well. May be you were happy there too, Eileen; you loved your camogie – I was always so very proud of your prowess on the field, though why *I* should have taken it upon myself to be proud of you, I do not know because I had no claim even to your friendship – we were very *distant* friends and I had to worship from afar!!

A few nights ago we had a route march from 6.30 p.m. – 11.30 p.m. Well, the rain came down in torrents continuously for those five hours as we marched through jungle, marsh, and plantations – and yet it was wonderful. I love the rain and I love to feel it beating on my face and running down my neck! (he has got queer taste!). As usual I was in charge because my O.C. has handed over all the training to me. It was grand in the darkness of the forest – so many weird animal noises, there were fire-flies everywhere among the trees – in fact some were like Christmas trees lit up with fairy lights! I knew the way perfectly because my Baby Austin had done good work in that direction early in the day. Still, it was good to get back home, have a bath, and creep into bed! May be we’ll go trekking together some day, Eileen.

I have made a welcome discovery – a beautiful lake about 4 miles away from here. So when day is done, and shadows fall – besides dreaming of you – I get a lorry out, pack a dozen men into it and off we go for a swim. They do enjoy it and so do I. It is not very orthodox in the Army to go off swimming with Indian troops but alas I shall always be found doing the unorthodox! After all they *are* human beings and why shouldn’t I take them for a swim after a very sticky day in the sun. Most of them are excellent swimmers and have been swimming up and down their beloved Indus since childhood days.

I want to tell you more about my job in the Field Ambulance but I am not allowed to. Neither can I tell you about the situation in Malaya and what the prospects of war are here. I want to know all about Belfast and what happened during the air raids *but* I shall have to wait until the war is over before I can hear about it. My sympathies lie with people whose homes have been wrecked – it must be awful in Belfast during these days but people will get used to it all as they have done in England. I pray each day that you and yours will be safe from all harm. It must worry you, Eileen, to be in Omagh with so much happening at home. What wouldn't I give to be at home in times like these (I am always saying this). Maybe exiles are all like that – wishing to be at home always! And yet real exiles who are domiciled here love Malaya and never want to leave it. I am sure it '*grows*' on people because it is pretty country. I would like to see more of it but I have no time for gallivanting around even though my O.C. managed this long weekend up in the highlands!

My darling, what have you done to me! I start writing to you and I never know when to stop; I forgot about poor you reading it all and growing tired towards the end. I will not write any more *this morning* (1 a.m. Monday!). Before I crawl under my mosquito net I must tell you again that I love you and I shall always love you, and only you.

Good night and God bless you, Eileen. I never forget you in my prayers and I never shall.

Ever yours,
Frank.

P.S. My love to all at home and also Frances.

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
24.5.41

My dearest Eileen,

Do you mind very much if I make my letters a sort of diary? I want to write to you so very often while I have some time to do so instead of waiting for the fortnightly air mail. You see, my darling, the time may come, when letters may have to cease entirely and I have so very much to tell you before that should happen that I must write you a line or two daily. No matter what happens in the world, Eileen, always remember that I am loving you every day we are separated. If we should be cut off from each other by letter or cable, it cannot make any difference to our love – nobody can ever take that away from us. Poor Hitler himself could not stop me from loving you more and more! I want so much to write you a short note every day and tell you that I love you. I have loved you in the past Eileen when I thought it was so hopeless loving you, but I never dreamed I could love anyone so much as I now love you, my darling.

Life in the tropics is not easy but strangely enough I like it in many ways. Many officers miss the social life of India terribly and so they hate Malaya. My philosophy will not allow me to be miserable – I can be very happy in a crowd of friends and I can be happy without them. I have heaps of work during the day and when that is done I have my thoughts and they are mostly of someone far away from Malaya and she is dearer to me than all the world. So I really spend my spare time with you, Eileen. I have got something to live for and I am lucky in that respect – so many people nowadays have nothing. It puzzles me sometimes to hear men grumble about life in Malaya – some make the tropics a good excuse for hard drinking. Maybe I should be very thankful that drink never appealed to me; I have always disliked the taste – so I am no hero to be able to keep off it.

I have had another weekend similar to last one. I set out on a night march at 8 p.m. last night with the Field Ambulance. It was terribly hot and sticky – not a breath of air anywhere. We marched for 8 long hours and I did manage to get into bed at 5 a.m.! You see we have halts every hour for 10 minutes and at each halt everyone just lay down flat by the roadside and on the road and slept soundly! Heaven only knows why we were not devoured by mosquitoes or bitten by snakes! We covered about 22 miles and though we were all very tired, it was a pleasant night. The forest was so dark that we had to resort to matches to find the way – even though this is against all the rules! I had a '*sleep-in*' this morning but I was working all afternoon. *Then* came a football match, and that was grand too – we drew with the strongest team in the town! The men have wonderful stamina; they all played well in spite of the night march. Don't you think it's time I went to bed, Eileen – I am a *bit* tired. Good night my darling and God bless you. (I say good night to you every night of my life; and every morning I say "good morning, Eileen" – do you ever hear me?)

25th May

My darling, it is now 11 p.m. on a lovely Sunday night. I have been out to dinner with my Mayo friend and his wife; they live about 10 miles away from here. They are terribly decent to me because they know I have no friends in Malaya. We have the usual discussion on the Irish question and it would be settled long ago if we had our way! That reminds me to tell you that I met a Queens man the other night – name is Reid and he did law at Queens. I remembered him immediately; he was a very prominent figure as a student and was President of the S.R.C. one year. He is tall, thin and very dark. He is one of the very few non-Catholics I have ever met who holds that Ireland should not be partitioned. You would love him, Eileen, but he is married to Dr Mary Welch and soon he is leaving here to join the R.A.F.! It seems that Bradley McCall is now chief Public Prosecutor in a certain large Malayan town nowadays! It also seems that Irishmen are the leaders of everything in Malaya!

I had an interesting talk with a Major General (medical) a few days ago. Immediately he “diagnosed” me as North of Ireland and told me that Prof. W.W.D. Thomson’s⁷ son is not far away from me in Malaya! He is in the Army too and loves it! He is luckier than I am because he is in a Military Hospital and he sees lots of cases – while poor me has to do military work all day and all night! Still I don’t mind a lot, Eileen, because I love you – and I want to go on loving you. I have managed to love you just a little bit more today – how on earth I squeezed in another bit of love since yesterday I do not know! May be it is because today is Sunday and on Sundays I am always nearer to you. I need not ever tell you again, my darling, how hard I pray for you, that God may bless you and keep you safe from all harm. Surely He would not allow us to love one another now after such a long time. I hate to think what would happen to me if I ever lost you, Eileen. I must not think of such things when writing to you.

I wonder what you are doing now? Are you at home for the weekend or are you having a quiet time in Omagh? Sunday evening always fascinated me at home – it was so peaceful. Our whole family always *had* to turn out to evening devotions. I had a peculiar habit once-upon-a-time of walking all the way from Cliftonville to the Falls Road with one, Joe Tierney (whom I did not like!) every Sunday after Devotions! And I *always* travelled via Springfield Road and may be you can tell me why! I was usually unlucky and never caught a glimpse of you at all, Eileen. An yet if I had met you and tried to talk to you, the words just would not have come! I am not shy and timid any more – two years working in a Birmingham slum made changes; 1½ years in the Army made more changes; but I am still the same Frank Murray in that I love you with all my heart. I often laugh when I think of Mrs Savage’s parties and how hard she tried to “fix” things up between us! And what a failure she was! An now we have come together without any “match-maker” to help us along! I rather suspect that He must have had a lot to do with it – we can never thank Him enough for being so good to us. I don’t think there is anything quite so wonderful in this world as two people loving each other as we do, Eileen. You must be fed-up reading my *new* letters and all the things I write but I write down the things I think about. I wish I could tell you everything that is in my heart – everything about you that I love – but may be you would not like that. Anyhow it would take too long and the mail planes would refuse to take such a load across the pacific and the Atlantic! If they knew how much love I send you in each letter they would complain about it!!

And now to bed and my dreams. I read myself to sleep with a few pages of “Twenty Years a Growing” (Maurice O’Sullivan) and my “Golden Treasury of Irish Verse”! Good night, my darling, and God bless you.

May 26th

Another day has gone and how quickly it has vanished. Having to work hard can be a pleasure and yet you would scarcely believe the awful year of indolence I spent in India! Never had to work in the afternoon and although most people spent a few hours in bed each day I managed to escape that bad habit. And now working every afternoon is grand especially in Malaya, where an idle life would drive me crazy. I do pity European wives in this place – they have nothing to do all day long while their husbands are at work. However it is the same in most Eastern countries.

I forgot to tell you that I made a great discovery yesterday while scouting around in my “new” Austin Seven (I’ll tell you later about my “new” car!). I discovered a very wonderful mountain stream away in the hills outside town and several large pools deep enough to swim in. I hastened to get out four lorries, put 50 men aboard, and went off full steam ahead for the hills. We had a glorious time in that stream. There was a quaint wooden bridge across it – about 20 feet high – and in all the men dived or jumped. It was much deeper than we thought and

⁷ Sir William Willis Dalziel Thomson (1885-1950) was an eminent physician who was in the R.A.M.C during the First World War. In 1923 he became Professor of Medicine at Queen’s University. His son, Humphrey Barron Thomson, was in the R.A.M.C. and was killed in action around 14th December 1941 on the border between Malaya and Thailand (see <https://www.bmj.com/content/bmj/2/4328/797.4.full.pdf>).

could not reach the bottom; also much pleasanter than the lake we went to last week. I took some snaps and if any are good I'll send some to you, Eileen.

I wish I could tell you more about conditions and people in Malaya, but you understand that I cannot write a peace-time letter to you during war time. At present I am writing this letter on my knee at my bedside lamp and it gives only a very faint glimmer of light! I know well that my surroundings will not be so congenial but I cannot tell you about any changes until they have actually taken place.

Today I received my badge as Honorary Member of the local Turf Club; I shall keep it as a souvenir and show it to you some time, Eileen. I have always loved horses but have never been to a race meeting. There were races in Rawalpindi every week but I never bothered about them – I had heard too much about the dust!

Oh, why did you make me love you so much, Eileen! Now we are thousands of miles apart and I have to write to you all about it, instead of telling you all about it. Good night, my darling, and sleep well; God bless you.

May 27th

Do you realise, Eileen, that I am looking at you now as I write my letter to you? Yes, it is a good snap and I have kept it all these years and it looks nicer than ever before, tonight. It is a school camogie group and you are sitting at the beginning of the front row with your head bent coyly to one side! Mattie⁸ is standing just at your elbow. It is the only snap of you that I have ever had – and this one has a story. On one of my visits to Castlewellan, Frances gave me a copy of it, but not the negative. So I proceeded to have a negative *manufactured* and put on glass. I was a very poor student in those days and it cost me a small fortune! Then I had several enlargements made!! The *trouble* you gave me in those days, Eileen, and yet I loved it all! I have been thinking all evening about a certain trip to the Gaelic Football the Gaelic Football made to Dublin. I paid a visit to a small souvenir shop in Talbot Street accompanied by Brendan Murray. When I had finished my shopping Brendan remarked "You must be very fond of her!" and my reply was – "Yes, *very*." That same night I shared a room at the hotel with McQuaid, Cunningham and Gallagher. As we lay in bed in the darkness, the clever one (Joe Cunningham) suddenly suggested that each one should, in turn, describe the girl of his dreams! I was a simple chap in those days and so when my turn came I gave a detailed description of Eileen O'Kane – and of course they had a good laugh!

When, oh when is your letter going to arrive, Eileen Óg? You wrote me a letter on December 29th and now 5 long months without another – and I would give anything to read that letter now. Why *must* we be so *very* far apart; why cannot I jump aboard the Clipper and fly home to you for a few days at least. As soon as this war is over I intend doing this. All the mails are delayed nowadays since trouble began in the Middle East – how I dislike the Middle East for holding up your letter! I had a strange dream last night – I had sent you a letter by sea-plane and as the machine was flying over the waters of Belfast Lough it suddenly crashed into the sea and its tail went first – and down went my letter with it!!

I have had a picnic this morning with the troops. Actually we did a lot of work but I picked the mountain stream as the site of our operation. I led the convoy out of camp in my Austin. The "new" Austin is an old one, – sports model with no windscreen! But it is very cool to drive in and has much better speed than my old one. I saw dozens of marvellous butterflies today – up in the hills while we were out. Their wingspan was the same as any bird's; they were all black except for a red head and three brilliant green stripes on each wing. When I see something beautiful I always wish that you were here to see it with me. Some day we shall see everything together no matter where we may go. Do you think anything or anyone could ever separate us once we meet each other again? I am sure they could not. Today has gone and still I love you a little more today. Is it possible to be too much in love with somebody, Eileen? I must give you *all* my love and I shall always give it to you. Bed is calling once more! Good night my darling and God bless you.

May 28th

Well, Eileen, how is your heart today? Mine has been a bit heavy because I have had more time than usual for thinking. The "might-have-beens" have cropped up again! What would have happened to us if there had not been a war? Of one thing I am sure and that is, that we would be together now and probably married – if you would marry me, Eileen. I have been very unfair to you my darling in saying that you were the cause of our drifting – it was my fault for being so stupid in leaving home; for being so stupid at Queens and elsewhere in annoying you with my queer ways of wooing you; for being so stupid *and* headstrong in Birmingham when you tried to make things up again. You said that you wanted to be my friend but instead of seeing that that might grow deeper than friendship I was stupid enough not to accept *because* I wanted your love Eileen. How I thank God that everything has been cleared up now and that at last we understand each other and love each other. It is what I have longed

⁸ Mattie was Martha O'Kane, Eileen's sister. When she joined the Little Sisters of the Poor, an order of nuns, she took the name Sister Bernadette. She spent the war in a convent in German-occupied France.

for and prayed for all my life – at least since our Ranafast days. I used watch with lively interest any chaps in Belfast who were likely to snatch my Eileen away from me – while I did nothing about it! I was worried for a long time about my neighbour, Seán Bowe in case he should succeed; I even prayed that he would not! I did not want you to marry him because – well, because I wanted to marry you! I was glad to hear that Larry Higgins married recently and that his bride was not Eileen O’Kane. I knew he was very friendly with Felix and I thought sure he would fall in love with you. He must be very, very blind if he did not see in you, Eileen, everything that I have always seen in you and loved in you.

I should like to hear Frances’ opinions about love! Is she very, very happy? She was an avowed man-hater at one time and now she has even been won over by the “enemy”! I do want her to be as happy as we are going to be, Eileen, – even as happy as we are now. My darling, can you imagine how happy we shall be when we meet again after such a long time. I often try to picture it all and each time it becomes sweeter.

Do you really think Eileen, that this letter will *ever* end? You must have a headache by this time or else you are very tired of it all. If you would rather have shorter letters please let me know. I must tell you about today in Malay before I go to bed. It was pay-day for the troops and as I was in charge of the money I was kept on the alert. There was another football match in the evening at 5 p.m. and again we drew 1-1 with the same good local team. It was terribly hot and sticky. I did think of a certain football match at Corrigan Park – the Sigerson Cup Final⁹ – when I played so very badly and you were watching from the grand stand with the rest of the O’Kane family! If you only knew how nervous I was that day *because* you were watching. I was always surprised at the Murray family and how little interest they took in games. I have been in football matches, tennis matches, and big athletic meetings since I was a boy at school and never once did anyone from Cliftonville come to see their beloved Frank!! He probably was not worth watching anyhow!

I *really* must end this letter soon and I *really* must go to bed *now*! Good night once more, my darling, and God bless you.

May 29th

You will be surely glad to learn that this *really* is the end of my long epistle. It must be awful reading it – I would not care to read it through. I love you even more today, Eileen, and I love writing to you so please understand why my letter is so long. I shall write to you every day when at all possible and should I miss a day (and I shall *have* to) I’ll give you a double *dose* the following day! You shall have five letters per month – providing Pan-American Airways do not let us down. Eileen, my darling, write to me often, I need your letters very badly and soon I shall need them desperately (I cannot tell you *why* until next week). I wish it were peace-time, then I could tell you everything about my work, my daily routine, and my future moves etc. I *am* allowed to tell you that I awoke this morning in wonderful form and the result was that at noon when most of the work was done I was “*dripping*” in perspiration, I made a sudden dash for my bathing costume and away I went to *my* mountain stream. I had the pool all to myself and had a glorious swim; water was icily cold and you can guess what a relief it is to jump into it. I must show you my mountain stream some day, Eileen!

When you write to me Eileen, please tell me all about yourself - your thoughts, your work, your holidays, your friends. All these things I am interested in; I want to know you much better, though I know enough about you to love you forever and ever. Thank God there haven’t been any air raids recently in Belfast. Is all well at Spring Villa, Eileen? *And* just how much have you told them about *us*? *And* do they look with favour upon it all? Do you want it all kept terribly secret, Eileen? I don’t mind telling you that I want to stand on the housetops and tell the whole world about our love. Always remember Eileen that I have always loved you and I shall love you until death. I could never change; I could never love anyone else but you; and I shall be true to you, my darling, as no man has ever been true to woman before. I am happy even though I am so very far away from you, because now I know that you love me and that is what I have lived for all these years. The [war] may soon be over and we may meet again very soon but no matter how long the waiting may be I can only love you more by waiting. You have *all* of my love now and it will always be yours.

I hope this letter reaches you soon. Good bye, Eileen, and may God bless you and keep you.

Ever yours,
Frank.

⁹ The Sigerson Cup is a gaelic football competition between institutions of higher education in the island of Ireland. The competition began in 1910. A team from Queen’s University first entered the competition in 1923. Frank played gaelic football for the university and in the 1935/36 season the team played (and lost) against University College, Dublin in the final which took place at Corrigan Park in Belfast. This was the first time in the history of the competition that an Ulster team had reached the final and the first time that the final had taken place in Ulster.

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
30th May [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

I am still writing to you every day and I still love it. Today's diary will be short but I must tell you something which you have never heard before – I love you my darling, and I shall always love you! I could not love you anymore even though you were here with me now – being separated does not make any difference to my love for you. We have many weary months ahead of us – months of waiting, uncertainty, and, may be, disappointment – but no matter what is to come, Eileen, I can only love you more. I only live for the day when I shall see you again – I can never grow tired of waiting or become downhearted as long as I can think of that wonderful day. Will you be surprised if I just stand and look at you for one whole minute before I kiss you. Oh my darling, will you really not mind if I do kiss you. Long ago, when I was young, I thought it would be an awful crime for anyone to kiss you; and now that I am old and wise(?) and wicked, I think I should have kissed you long ago.

It is midnight and I have just come back from having a fish dinner (Friday) with Mr & Mrs Wimsey – the Mayo people I told you about. The husband came 10 miles in his car and collected me at 6.30 p.m., took me out to their home, and left me back at the hotel. You cannot imagine how decent they are to me – they consider that I am an orphan in the storm. I went out tonight because I needed it and *because* my nights out in this particular place in Malaya are numbered and soon the Wimseys will be left hundreds of miles behind me! I cannot tell you more!

Instead of soldiering this morning I downed tools at 11.30 a.m. and went off for a swim in my stream in the mountains. Two other officers and 40 men came along too. It was a very hot morning so you may guess how welcome the swim was to everyone. I “ducked” a few of the more playful of the men who wanted so badly to “duck” me – we had grand fun. *Your* Frank was one of the few who swam the whole length of the pool against the tide. Yes, I am *yours*, Eileen, and I shall always be yours no matter what happens. I have been yours ever since I first met you and I shall not change now.

I am very happy, Eileen. Good night my darling, and God bless you.

May 31st

Today should have been a “day at the Races” for me as it was for all the other officers and 50 of the men. I did not like the idea of spending a hot, sticky afternoon in the sun dressed up in uniform and perspiring profusely under the collar! So I spent my afternoon swimming with the men who were unlucky enough to draw a blank in the raffle for seats at the races. I bought them two large rubber balls to play with in the water. We had a grand time and spent a couple of hours playing around; then we had iced lemonade! On the whole I think we [had] a more comfortable afternoon than the racing folk! I am becoming rather well-known on all the roads and when all the small boys hear me coming they put up a wild cheer and salute very smartly – and I always salute and wave to them all! It is good to be alive sometimes, Eileen! At other times life is not so grand because I am so far away from you and yet one thing alone makes me very happy and that is that we love each other. That love can easily bridge over the thousands of miles that lie between us – we are really very near to each other, Eileen. I pray for you every morning and every night and I tell you so many times daily that I love you. Please don't think I am being ridiculous in all of this because I must love you like this and tell you over and over again about it. I am selfish in not thinking how awful it must be for you to read it so very, very often.

Eileen, my darling, I am still waiting for your letters. Only one has come as yet and that arrived last February when I was in Rawalpindi. I would give anything and do anything to have a letter from you. If only I could tell you in words how much I love you, you would understand how I am longing for your letters because letters are the only means we have of coming very near to each other. I know you have written many letters since your first one, and I understand all about the delays ‘en route’. How I wish with all my heart that there was no Hitler, then there would be no war and I would not be in Malaya, but in Ireland. Yet in a way it was Hitler and his war had something to do with bringing us together, but again I think it was God. My darling, will you please storm Heaven and beseech everyone up there to send me home to you in the near future. I would be more useful

as a soldier at home than I am in Malaya at present. You may think Omagh a dull place but first wait till you hear the tale of woe that I shall have to tell you very soon when I reach a new destination in Malaya! You have your golf, Eileen, and you seem to love it as you love all games. I have a tennis racket here but it's of no use to me even in this modern town!

I was *terribly* jealous when you told me about all the nice Queensmen you met in Omagh! No, my darling, I shall never be jealous – it is enough for me to know that you love me and nothing else matters. And you will never have any cause to be jealous of my female acquaintances because they are so very few, but they are decent, *and* I only love you, Eileen, and I could never love anyone but you. Do you mind if I write and tell my father about us? He would be terribly pleased to know that you are someone after his own heart and that you are a relative of his friends the O'Kellys. I want so much to tell him everything, but you must agree to it first.

Next time you write, Eileen, tell me all about Felix and what he intends doing with himself. It would be rather nice if he could get a practice near home instead of going further afield for one. Poor chap used to give me a pitying smile in the old days at Queens when I sent my *regards* to you through him. He must have thought I was crazy – and maybe he was right at that time.

Good night, Eileen, even though it is "Good day" in Ireland at this moment. God bless you and keep you safe from all harm.

Whit Sunday – June 1st

Well, Eileen, the months are slipping by and now it is mid summer at home and you must be looking forward to holidays. I suppose you have chosen your favourite spot, Killough, or did I hear that once upon a time you went to Waterfoot one year. How I wish I were at home now and getting ready for holidays. May be we could arrange to go to the same place – then I would see you all day long. Just let me make plans for a single day with you at the seaside! I think we should arrange to meet at 7 a.m. every morning and go off for a swim before breakfast! After our dip we would have a quick walk home and would be hungry or would we? Would you like a round of golf after breakfast, Eileen? We should have another swim in the afternoon; another walk and please, darling, I want to climb up the highest sand dune with you barefooted and hand-in-hand I want to run down to the bottom as fast as we can run! Oh, my darling, we would be so happy together always. Would you like a game of tennis after tea? In the gloaming we would walk along the strand by the waters edge where everything is so peaceful and calm. Please do not talk, Eileen; just let us whisper, because talking would spoil everything at such a time. I have so many things to tell you and it's then you will hear them all. Don't you think it's time we said good-night – it's getting very late and the O'Kane family will be wondering what happened to their Eileen!

When you really do go on holidays this summer will you think of me often and just keep one day for me? I do miss the holidays out here, Eileen, and how I long for them once again – much more now that we really know each other and love each other. I have had no leave since coming out to the East and I shall never want any! I am much happier working and just now there is not a lot to be done because we have settled down in Malaya. You may have guessed as much when you hear of my almost daily visits to the mountain pool!

As there was nothing doing today we (five officers) decided to have a swimming picnic up in the hills. We set off at 11 a.m. all loaded up for our mountain retreat – we even brought a folding table and chairs with us! We had a *perfectly* wonderful morning and afternoon in our mountain stream – even though the sun has played havoc with my shoulders! We were ravenously hungry when lunch-time came – the cold chicken, ham, and duck quickly disappeared – as did the cheese, fruit and coffee! I *tried* to take some snaps and I wonder how they will turn out. I was sorry the troops did not come along with us but my pleading was in vain – the other (O.C. etc.) decided against it *because* they thought the men are a nuisance in the water!

After tea today I sent a telegram all the way to Springfield Road, Belfast, telling my best girl that I loved her and that I was sending weekly letters to her via America. I think you would like her Eileen, *because* I love her so very much and because you are a very dear friend of mine! I haven't seen her for such a long time and I am wondering what she looks like now! That's why I want you to have a photograph taken, Eileen, and send it to me. I want to see you as you are every day at home and not as the schoolgirl I now see before me – and yet I loved that schoolgirl the first time I saw her. So *please*, Eileen, have that photograph taken. I haven't changed about you since yesterday except that I *love* you a little bit more today! If you knew how much love I am giving you each day, you would never be able to carry it around with you all day!

Good night, my darling, and God bless you.

June 2nd

This being Whit Monday the holiday spirit prevailed in camp today, but yours truly was working all morning. Another swim we had in the afternoon. The O.C. and I were in charge of the party and when we saw them settled to their afternoon fun, the former decided to go off to a smaller pool further up-stream. Unfortunately there is

quite a current up there and the O.C. was almost swept away with it. I was sitting on a log at the time and my legs dangling in the water, when the "old man" approached down-stream all out of control. I managed to get him out somehow – and he was a bit exhausted. He really was in danger because he was travelling very fast and was on the brink of the rapids when I pulled him out!

It was our second-last visit to the mountain stream – Wednesday will find us far away from here! I shall probably have to finish this letter in my next station. It is really a move from "somewhere-in-Malaya" to "somewhere-else-in-Malaya". I hate all this moving about; I like to be settled in one place and get some real work done. This will be my 9th move in 16 months – and I am lucky not to have more! What a pity I cannot tell you about all the places I see in Malaya – you could look them up on a map and have some idea of the country I am living. It is not telling you a secret when I let you know that there are rubber plantations everywhere in Malaya and tin mines fill up the spaces in between! I am terribly interested in jungle and am longing to explore it in spite of the leeches, and snakes, *and* tigers *and* elephants! I met the District Forest Officer tonight and he has spent 18 years in jungle and loves it. He has been lost for days in it quite often, has shot big-game, has been up and down remote jungle rivers in a canoe, has met the aborigines of Malaya in the wilds, and is one of the characters in a book called "Four Frightened People".

Eileen, my darling, I was terribly disappointed today when no letter came from you in the Indian mail. I had a letter from my boy friend John R. Frank F.R.C.S.; he has been appointed as surgical specialist to a big district in India. You'll have to meet him, Eileen, when the war is over – he is a grand chap, and how he and his wife love each other. Poor lad does not know whether to leave her in London or bring her out to India – both are so very dangerous alternatives. I also had a letter from a little Welsh girl called Jones! I sent her a wedding present just before I left India – a jam jar!! She married a captain in the Indian Army and a more charming couple you could not meet. I have a soft spot in my heart for two young people who love each other! Little Miss Jones was very decent to me when I was in hospital in Rawalpindi – she was the Officers' Ward Sister. I didn't tell you about my *baseball* accident in India when I spent a week in hospital nursing a twisted knee! *Please* don't lecture me, Eileen, about rough games – I could not take it!!! Now don't be jealous of Miss Jones – she is safely married and very happy. She was engaged to her George before I arrived in India and she was very much in love with him always! And yet she could not love her George one thousandth part as much as I love my Eileen. My darling, I shall always love you and only you.

It is bed-time and I must go off now to my cot with my usual good night to you and all my love is with you.

June 3rd

I have just come back from having dinner with my Mayo friends; it was a farewell visit, because I am leaving here tomorrow and going off hundreds of miles away. I am leaving these good folk behind me and I shall never forget them. English people are not bad and neither are the Scottish but, Eileen, but there are no people in this wide world to compare with the Irish! I am so terribly proud to proclaim that I am Irish, no matter where I go – and I shall I always be proud that you are Irish, Eileen, and that you are a good Catholic. I met the Reids today and they were in grand form – Mrs Reid actually admitted that all the nicest people in Malaya are Irish! She did not mean this to be a compliment to her husband or to me!! They gave me a very strong invitation to come to dinner tomorrow night and I may have time to go as my train does not leave until midnight. Reid leaves on 6th to join the Air Force. He gave me a copy of "The New Northman" – the Winter edition – and it has been grand reading it again. I felt a bit homesick for my Alma Mater.

My snaps came today and they are quite good. I shall send them in another letter – if the weight will carry! We paid a rushed visit to the mountain stream today and this is *definitely* the last dip for many a long day to come! I may as well tell you, my darling, that conditions for writing will not always be so ideal as at present – in two days time I shall be in *my* wooden hut with *my* hurricane lamp. I shall love you much more when I reach my new destination and I shall need your love so very much more. No matter what the place is like, I shall always love you Eileen. Can I ever love you enough! I don't think it is possible.

I am looking forward to my trip into the wilds and wondering what it will be like. It will be a welcome change from living in a posh hotel with lots of comfort and luxury. I am on active service now and should be living accordingly! Eileen, *when* are you coming out to Malaya?? It's not so *very* far away and you could easily come for the summer vacation! And yet if you were here I would not be happy about you – I would see you very seldom. Once I go into the wilds it may be a year or two before I come out again!

Good night my darling and God bless you. I shall have to miss a couple of days in this diary but when I reach "beyond" I shall make amends.

June 6th

*Somewhere-else-in-Malaya*¹⁰

I am writing this from the wilds – the wildest jungle I have ever seen. It is 10 p.m. and there are hundreds of queer animal noises all around in the forest. I am sitting in my one-roomed wooden shack and you could not imagine that walls could be so bare! The roof is made of palm tree leaves and the patter of the rain is rather soothing after a sticky day – rain is always welcome because it cools everything so beautifully. I am sitting in pyjamas in my camp chair; my camp table is in front of me and a weird light is shed by a very bad oil lamp! My camp bed looks inviting at the moment draped with a mosquito net but I think I can resist it for another few minutes while I say good night to my best girl! In a corner you could see my very fine canvas wash basin and canvas water bucket; there are no windows – just a wooden shutter and the ever open door! There is really no daylight here – nothing but an eternal twilight. I should hate you to think that I am in a bad way because in fact I am very comfortable and I do like this life so much better than hotel life. As usual I cannot give you any details of the place and as usual it will have to wait. I have plenty of work because I am Mess Secretary among many other of my jobs – I do everything except cook the food here!

I have not written as I told you about my move and so you understand that writing was impossible. I had lunch *and* diner with the Reids just before I left my last station. At the evening meal I met a judge, a magistrate, and heaps of barristers! At 8 p.m. I had all the baggage loaded and all the troops on the train, when I slipped off to Reids' house. I had a lovely evening even though I was tired – you have no idea of the work entailed in a “move” by rail with troops and equipment. I was in my bunk before midnight and had some sleep *before* the train moved out at 2 a.m.! Spent most of the day in the train and arrived in this forest late in the afternoon; had to arrange accommodation for the men, fix up their food arrangements; had to organise the mess etc, etc. I almost slept at dinner last night. I saw a *bit* of Malaya en route and it is all pretty and green. I could be in much worse places than this and for that I am thankful. An now I have finished my first day in the wilderness *and* I have liked it. We are rather isolated from the outside world just now and in a way that is all to the good.

I still love you my darling, and I shall love you every day. I shall need your love, Eileen, and lots of it while I am in this forest – so please send plenty in your first letter! Eileen, my darling, why didn't we know about each other many years ago. It is my fault; you did try to tell me many times but I would not listen. Please let me love you and love you as you have never been loved before. I shall do everything for you. I just love you, my darling, and I can never love anyone but you.

Good night, my darling and happy dreams. I shall always love you, Eileen. God bless you.

Ever your,
Frank xxx

P.S. Love to all at home – and Frances.

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
7.6.41

My dearest Eileen,

I am still here in my jungle home and I am still liking it. We are still in the process of settling down and soon all will be put in order. I have even got a very nice blue bed-cover; a table cloth to match; and a small bedside mat – in fact my wooden hut is quite luxurious now! As I look out into the night I can see the moonlight streaming through the trees; everything is very eerie and the tall trees look like giant ghosts. The small animal and insect noises are in full blast and sometimes I wonder why the poor creatures never grow weary of making noise the long night through!

¹⁰ The new camp was in Keroh (or Kroh) located in northern Malaya, two miles from the border with Thailand.

I have had a pleasant evening listening to the band of the local regiment playing in the “village green”. My O.C. and I then went to dinner at the local regiment’s Mess – and *of course* the Colonel of the regiment comes from Magherafelt! I met a Wicklow Major who talked of Dublin, Galway, Donegal, Cushedall, Cushendun and Ballycastle for the whole evening!! Imagine meeting such people in the wildest part of Malaya! The local “King” was also at dinner and he left Dublin 50 years ago; he has promised me to have a very ancient tennis court fixed up! It would be grand fun to play again under these strange conditions and it seems that many officers are longing for a game. The trouble is that I won’t have time to play any games except on Sundays. Tomorrow will be Sunday and how I shall miss going to mass – the nearest Church is 50 miles away. I don’t like it a bit, Eileen, so you must pray hard for me. I always had so many special favours to pray for at Mass and Communion and I always prayed so much harder for you, my darling. I loved you so much more and felt so much nearer to you then – and now I must continue to spend the same time with you on Sundays and pray more for you. I do love you, Eileen, and nothing can ever change that love. I can only love you more and more as long as I live and I could never, never love anyone but you. Loving you is so easy for me, Eileen, and it has always been the same. You will always be away up on that pedestal I placed you upon so many years ago except that now you are not inaccessible! Eileen, *when* are you going to write to me?? You know that all air mail letters have been stopped except those going via America. I have been waiting and hoping for your letters to come and still nothing happens; again and again the post brings nothing and yet I know that your letters are lying in some mail bag and being delayed en route. One letter from you, my darling, would make me happy for weeks to come.

I have a date tomorrow morning with the local Colonel – we are going to tramp through the jungle for a few miles – at least we shall hack our way through. As it is fast approaching midnight I must leave you to sleep in peace and I must get abed ‘early’. Good night my darling and God bless you.

June 8th

Eileen, I want to tell you something *very* important – I am always telling you important things? – but please listen carefully to what I have got to say. You would never guess what it could be — I love you with all my heart and I cannot help loving you! It is so much more today and I know it will always be the same no matter what the future holds for us. It is too wonderful to know that I have not been loving you in vain, my darling; I thought you would never love me. I hope you have started making plans for us when the war is over. I want to know what you would like me to do, where you would like to live – it will help a lot if you would do this my darling. We are so *very* far apart (in distance only) and the war may drag on for years; things seem so hopeless now as far as you and I are concerned, Eileen – but they are not really so bad because we have got something to live for, something more precious than all the money in the world, something we must always cling to, something which will keep us always very near to each other. We should be very happy even though we are separated by thousands of miles. I must tell you again – I can never love you enough, Eileen, no matter how hard I might try.

Well, my first Sunday has come and gone. It was really better than I ever hoped it would be. We spent three wonderful hours in the jungle this morning – we only covered about 7 miles in that time but I shall never forget it. Jungle is much more exciting and interesting than any other place on earth for trekking in. It is dark, and hot and sticky; but it is all rubbish to say that jungle is impenetrable in places. You have no idea of the density of the undergrowth but most of it is decayed vegetation and that makes the going very easy. Still we had to crash our way through it this morning, but it was good fun. We were in a hilly spot and did a lot of climbing. All went well for the first half of the journey and then suddenly our leader proclaimed solemnly that we were lost. After careful compass and map reading we discovered a small stream nearly completely hidden by vegetation. We followed it for three miles – we stumbled, we fell, we crawled, we climbed through that vegetation covering the river bed – and all the time we walked in water ankle-deep! I led the way for this part of the journey and I had to fight very hard with hands, arms and legs to make a passage for the others. I loved it all, Eileen, but I did not want you to be in such a place. We met no wild animals even though we heard them in the depths of the jungle; however I did emerge with two leeches clinging to legs. My shirt was torn and so were my stockings; my hands were scratched. There were four of us – the two colonels, a captain and myself, and we must have looked a sorry sight when we emerged on to the main road again! I wish I could describe it all properly to you, Eileen; you would long to walk in a jungle! We have got to learn all about it – the secret paths etc.

I have just been sewing a button on to my sole remaining shirt – and this is Sunday; all my things are being washed somewhere by the Dhoby (washerman). Everything is so damp here – dry clothes are unheard of – and worst of all is the *wet* towel that I try to dry myself with in the mornings. I was out trying too *pinch* a chicken and a few eggs this evening – I was successful at a Chinese farmhouse but I had to pay for them. They would starve in this mess if it were not for me!! Still, Eileen, I refuse to do the shopping when we get *married*! I do want you to be the Queen of our castle; we could not be anything else but very happy together. I have fixed up a men’s doubles at tennis tomorrow evening after work, and I expect to play awful stuff, it has been so long since I played.

Good night, my own darling, and God bless you.

June 9th

I am beginning to wonder if you are bored, Eileen, with my egotistical letters – they seem to be all “I” and I never seem to mention you at all! Unfortunately in a diary-letter “I”s are very common and inevitable but you are not forgotten my darling for one moment. My letters must seem very, very disjointed and I would hate to be you (poor you!) having to read them! Oh, Eileen, how I long to see you once again and how mad I have been not to have seen you oftener in the past – and yet I *could* have not march[ed] boldly up to ‘Spring Villa’ and demanded to see you! I would have dreaded it *because* I did not know exactly how I stood with you – and yet all the time you were trying to tell me that we should be friends and I was stupid and stubborn enough not to realise this. Can you forgive me for all this, Eileen? I do not deserve your love at all and yet I send it and want it more than anything else in the world. You know how much I love you and how long I have loved you; I would do any mortal thing for you, Eileen, and dying for you would be the least of all. I know we can be so very happy together – nothing could go wrong between us because we have a very wonderful love to keep us together. When I was in practice and when I was in India, I met many married people and visited them professionally and I have found a lot of unhappiness in their homes. There were a few exceptions but they were very few. The reason for all of this is obvious – they never loved each other and so when trouble came they were lost, because there was nothing to keep them together. My darling, this could never happen to us while we have our love – and we shall always have that. You know that I can never change, Eileen, except to love you more than I do now. I only need your love – nothing else in my life matters because everything depends on our love. I do not pretend to be good but loving you, my darling, has made me better in every way.

Today has been a routine day in the Field Ambulance except for the game of tennis I had at 5.30 p.m. I had three long sets almost without a break and I wasn’t a bit tired after it. In my last station in this country, tennis was not possible because it was too hot – besides I had no time for it. It was quite cool playing here and almost like a summer evening at home. My partner (an Indian Medical Officer) and I beat our local opponents rather badly 6-1, 6-2, 6-3 (he is boasting again!). We have cleared a space among the rubber trees and made an open-air badminton court for the officers and a volley ball court for the troops. We have arranged a football match with the local regiment for Wednesday evening but I am doubtful about the result as we have so few men to choose from. Everyone needs this exercise because this living under trees makes one rather depressed if one allows oneself to think about it. However I have got you to think about and you to love, Eileen, and I know that I shall always love you. We expect to do some marching tomorrow morning and so yours truly must get to bed by 11.30 p.m. at least. I don’t want to stop writing to you, my darling, but I shall make amends for this and pray much harder than usual for you – and may be I shall dream much harder than usual about you. And just now you are enjoying a summer’s evening in Ireland and how I envy you. I must now creep under this mosquito net and try to get some sleep. Good night and God bless you.

10th June (Tuesday)

Eileen, my darling, may be you do not realise how completely I am cut off from the outside world here – I am 50 miles away from the nearest *town*! There is a local village here and in many ways it resembles a rural Irish village – they seem to sell everything in very small shops and yet they really sell *nothing*. The shopkeepers are mostly Chinese and a few can speak pidgin English. I have not so much shopping to do recently as we laid in a good store of food a couple of days ago – including a dozen live chickens. It is quite like a farm to see the chickens trooping around the huts! We are lucky to be living on the edge of the jungle which is comparatively near to a few wide open spaces where one can see real sunshine and breathe real air – and unless one visits the said wide open spaces at least once a day one is liable to go crazy! This morning I went out with the men on training and we spent two glorious hours working beside a very lovely lake near our camp. The surroundings are very pretty – lakes, wooded hills, green grass, palm trees, and beautiful flowers. It is quite a contrast to the gloom of the forest where everything is so stuffy and dark. I do not miss pictures or dances or shows *because* I know I have to do without them and so I am happy in my own way. So many of the lads are inclined to miss town life and all its gaiety, that they have become quite miserable here already.

I did not have any tennis today because the work did not finish till late in the afternoon. However, I managed a game of badminton with 3 other officers. I have never played before until I came here and I find it is a grand game. To amuse the troops I joined in their game of volley ball; it is a queer game but the Indians are expert at it for some unknown reason.

Did I tell you today that I love you? Well, Eileen, I have been telling you this all day long and you don’t appear to hear me at all. How can I help but love you. I was meant to love you from the very first and you were meant to be loved by me, Eileen. I should have loved you much more in the past but I am making up for lost time

now; it is so very different now that I know you have changed. Things are so different; I am so much happier. If I were to love you ten times more day by day for the rest of my life I could never love you enough. I wonder did our parents love in the same way as we do or did they have a different love; does Frances love Ronald in the same way as you love me, Eileen? Somehow I think there is no other love in the world quite the same as ours. I shall always be so very proud to tell anyone that I loved Eileen O’Kane and come what may I shall always love her.

There have not been any air raids on Belfast recently and for that I am thankful. They were awful while they lasted. In some ways the raids may do some good but I am sorry for the many homeless people of the city. Won’t you please pray that I may be sent home in the near future. I am not in any war here in Malaya and I could be doing some work at home. I long for that one day when I shall meet you again, Eileen; I live only for that day and I cannot be really happy until I see you again and tell you what I have wanted to tell you for so many years now. It will not be too late, even when the war is over. I can only love you more when that happens. And now I must away from my oil lamp and my crouched position and go to dinner. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

June 11th (Wednesday)

Today has been glorious in _ _ _!¹¹ I cannot even give you the first letter of the place, Eileen! I spent my morning with the troops running up and down a nearby hill. Though it is only a small hill of a couple of hundred feet high it commands a very fine view from its summit. Can you picture it, my darling? A tiny road winds along the foot of the hill, passes away to the left of the village, a mile away. A green plain stretches straight in front of you and is about 2 miles square. A very pretty lake runs parallel to the road for ½ mile near the village; and enclosing all are these wonderful trees – they really are nice to look at from above but alas not so nice to live under! Trees everywhere as far as the eye can see. It must have been tough work for the troops carrying “patients” up and down that hill; it was bad enough for me going up and coming down without any burden (except my 12 st 10 lbs!). However I gave them plenty of rest *and* a smoke occasionally. They sat and gazed at the peaceful scene below – Indians can sit for many hours on hilltops and look down into valleys without moving a muscle. I used study their impenetrable faces when I worked in the hill stations of India, but I could never quite fathom what they were thinking of. You would have loved this morning here, the quietude of the little valley on your right where a dozen cows were browsing quietly. When they saw the men descending upon them, they stampeded away down the valley – they must have seen me! Anyhow they heard me yelling orders to the stretcher-bearers! The men were happier than usual because they had forgotten the darkness for awhile. I make all my men write home to India very often because I know how anxious their mothers and wives are about them. I know that every man in the unit sends 9/10ths of his pay home to some relative or other. Some of the men are very lovable characters; many are plain, stupid lads from Indian villages; others are clever boys who have actually matriculated. We had a grand football match today with the local regiment and drew with them 1-1. We have entered the local cup competition *and* we mean to win it!

Yet another disappointment today; another mail and nothing from my Eileen. It has only made me love you all the more and made me look forward to a letter in the near future. My darling, you know that I am *all* yours, that I belong to you as no man has ever belonged to a woman before or ever will. I don’t *imagine* that I love you, Eileen – it is real and it will last. I shall never regret loving you so much no matter what is to come. You and I have changed with the years, but I know that we shall be happy together always and nothing can ever mar our happiness. We must always love each other as we do now, Eileen, and nothing can go amiss with us. You do know that I shall always worship you and everything about you – as I have done in the past. Some day all this endless waiting and suspense will cease and you will find yourself in my arms. Never again could I allow you to leave me and never again could I leave you. I think I shall I carry you around with me when we meet again; I am so scared of losing you! And yet I would trust you as I have never trusted a human being before – and our trust will be mutual. *Please*, Eileen, I must go to bed and dream. Good night and God bless you, my darling.

June 12th (Thursday)

Another letter nearly finished and still I love you more than when it started. Eileen O’Kane, are you not ashamed of yourself *making* me love you as much as I do and I must write to you often *because* I love you so much. If you know of any way in which I could love you more than I do now, will you please write and tell me all about it because I want to love you more if that is possible.

I should not have any time to write to my best girl nowadays – I should be too busy! My official jobs are – Second in Command, Adjutant, Officer Commanding H.Q. Company, Quarter Master, Sports Officer, Mess Secretary and general handy man! I have actually being *painting* today *because* no one else can do it – it was really printing sign boards for our small hospital. I am no expert and the brushes are awful – the results were worse! Today was a half holiday but I was working all afternoon on my painting. I had some tennis from 5–6 p.m.;

¹¹ Kroh.

badminton from 6–7 p.m. You may not realise that it becomes quite dark in these countries at 7.15 p.m. Malaya is queer – no seasons; this is said to be the “dry” season but of course it rains every day!

I am due for another trek in the jungle in the near future and next time I am bringing the troops with me. Would you have laughed very much if you had seen the Mess Secretary searching the local bazaar (village) at an early hour this morning for eggs for our breakfast. I have got some queer jobs to do, Eileen, and food hunting is the queerest and most heart-breaking of all! I shall be quite a help to you some time when you need eggs for breakfast!!

Eileen, my darling, for the second time – will you marry me? I have asked you once already and I know it is an awful way to propose to anyone but it is the best I can manage now, Eileen; so please understand. Do you ever receive *any* of my letters at all? I write every day and send off a letter every 6th day. So you can easily check up on them and see if any one is missing. I don't expect you have received that rotten old photograph yet – it will be many months yet before you get it. And please, Eileen, send me your photograph. I want to have it on my camp table in my wooden hut.

An off I go again still wanting to write and write to you and never growing weary of it. May God speed this letter on its way to you, Eileen; may he always bless you and keep you safe from all harm.

Ever yours,

Frank. xxx

P.S. Love to Frances and regards to Felix and all at home.

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance

Malaya

15th June [1941]

Eileen, my darling,

I am starting another six-day diary and still there has been no letter from you. I have been waiting and expecting that letter for so many months now and each mail has brought nothing but disappointment. It is five months now since your first letter came, Eileen, and nothing has come since then. I hope and hope that the next mail will bring something but my hopes are always dashed. We can only blame Hitler and the Germans for this awful delay in the mails. Normally in peace time a letter should reach Malaya about 9 days after leaving home, but now it is a matter of months. I love you such a terrible lot, my darling, that it is almost unbearable waiting so long for a letter from you. You can now realise what one single letter from you means to me; it is the only thing that I can see and touch and read that has come from you. Oh, Eileen my darling, it would not be so awful if I did not love you so much.

I am sorry now that I have written in this doleful strain. I am normally happy especially at my work but today I have had too much time to think and that has made me sad. I should never feel sad or depressed *because* I love you and, more important, you have given me your love. That is enough to make me happy all day and every day. I have lived for the day when you would give me your love and now that it has come, I am really the happiest man in the world. I have always worshipped you from afar, Eileen, but I never dreamt that it would be as far away as Malaya! This war must end sometime and somehow and when that time comes we shall be united again *never* to be separated. How can I love you enough for the happiness you have given to me; how can I give you enough when you have given so much to me. I shall never betray your trust in me, Eileen; I shall never cease loving you as long as I live. All my love, all that I am or have are yours and they will always be yours and never anyone else's but yours. If I could only give you some idea of how much I love you, but it was not meant to be put into actual words – you will *know* it when we meet again.

Today must have been glorious *outside* the plantation but I saw little of it. I had a big inspection today by a General and so I spent my whole day hidden away from the sunshine and the wide open spaces. I sent off my weekly (six day) letter to you this morning and if the Clipper does not speed all the way with it to you I shall be furious! Some day I shall stop writing letters to you and instead I shall fly home to you – then you will not be troubled ever again with my awful letters! I still haven't got the courage to read a single letter over once I have written it – I hastily put it in the envelope and send it off, and if I didn't do this I would tear up all my letters to you. They must make awful reading for poor Eileen. I take 12 whole pages to tell you a sentence of three words – “I love you”! That is all I want to say in my letters to you and what a way I have of telling it to you. Can you

understand and forgive these lengthy epistles. I must get into bed now, Eileen because it is later. God bless you, my darling, and good night.

Saturday – June 14th

Another long weary day in the tropics and nothing to tell you of note. A game of football with the troops was *the* event of the day – so you may guess how exciting my day has been! I have been in this station about 10 days now and I haven't had time to even read a line of Starkie's "Spanish Raggle-Taggle". I love reading good books and it makes me furious when I cannot read them for want of leisure – and yet I can always find a few minutes each evening to write to someone whom I love very much. I never thought I could love you so very much, Eileen, as to want to write to you *every* day. I have always been a very erratic and inconsistent letter-writer as all my people at home can testify and now you have changed all that! I do want to tell you about my day when it is done; I want to tell you my thoughts of the day. I want to tell you over and over again that I love you and that I could never love anyone but you my darling. I feel that you should know everything that has happened to me – so many things that I write are for your sake alone, Eileen, and nobody else.

I am so very sorry about yesterday's diary; I am really ashamed of it now. I was a bit depressed but not much and today all is well again. Please do not misunderstand me, Eileen; I am not grumbling about getting no letters – I know there are several letters on their way from you and you are not to blame for the delays in transit. I shall *have* to have more patience and wait. The very thought that your letters are coming nearer to me every day can make me so happy because it is something to look forward to. I am living now for the day when your next letter will arrive. It must have gone to India and been delayed there somewhere.

I have planned a trek in the jungle with other officers tomorrow morning; I intend to get lost if *possible* and then trying to find our way out of the place. I am in charge of the party and intend leading them a dance! Do you remember our dancing days in Ranafast, the Ard Scoil¹² and Queens? Do you remember how I used almost pull your arms out when swinging you around in the Cór Seisear Deag¹³? I had better tell you now, my darling, that I am not very keen on dancing; you will find me doing long walks, playing golf, tennis, etc, etc or any outdoor game. I would be content with one dance per month but Eileen, if you should want more dancing you will always find me ready to go dancing too. No matter what we do together, my darling, no matter where we go together, I shall always be happy with you. We shall always share our spoils, Eileen, whether they be joys or sorrows. That is why we *must* be happy because we hold the secret of happiness. We have true love and everything else follows automatically from that. Let us make a bargain now to have all our undertakings on a 50-50 basis – there will be no rows, there will be no "boss". Life is much too short for quarrels and so we must have none my darling. I shall always love you no matter what happens. Should I find myself in the fray soon, please remember that my last thoughts were of you. I love you because you are a lovable person and because you are Eileen O'Kane whom I have always loved. I shall love you much more when you send me that photograph you *promised* to have taken!! Please write me many letters because I do need them just as I need your love – and I can never do without that. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Sunday – June 15th

I have had a real day of rest today, my darling. I actually had a "sleep-in" till 8 a.m. because it was raining so hard. It is rather nice lying in bed with rain beating in through the open window on my face – of course there are no *windows* in my hut, nothing but a large square hole in the wall! I went trekking in the jungle with a few other officers for two hours this morning and it was *deliciously* cool after all the rain. I led the "expedition" and I had grand fun watching the wild animals scurrying away into the undergrowth as I approached. I collected my usual souvenir on my leg – a leech; it had penetrated through my hose-top and thick socks! I was bleeding for many hours afterwards. Another Sunday and still no signs of Mass or a priest. I must write to my last station to the French priest there and ask about it. Of course, I am about the only Catholic in these parts and priests are busy enough elsewhere without coming up here to see me. I indulged in a lot of sewing and darning in the afternoon (not more than one hour!) and I considered myself excused because Sunday is the only afternoon I have free. If I ever get back to civilisation again I shall never sew another button on a shirt or darn another sock as long as ever I live! I don't like it much but it has got to be done. I have now got an Indian sepoy as my orderly but he would be useless at minding my things. He brings me tea every morning in bed at 7 a.m.; then comes my hot water – in fact I am living like a King here!

¹² The Ard Scoil (translation: High School) on Divis Street in Belfast was known for holding evening classes and dances.

¹³ A 16 hand reel.

My darling, I have been thinking of you *all* day today – because I had more time for thinking than usual. I was trying to picture what our next meeting will be like and it has made me happy. My darling it will be a wonderful day for us – seeing each other again after so many years and seeing each other as we should have done long ago and now loving each other. Eileen, I have loved you in a very special way today – more tender than ever before and more true. I live only for you and for our future together. I shall try so hard to be worthy of you and never could I stop loving you for a moment in my life.

When out walking this morning I was thinking about your letter and would it be waiting for me at the camp on my return. I knew it would not but still I went to see if it had come but alas it had not arrived. I live from day to day waiting for a letter to arrive by the next post. I would go crazy in this place, Eileen, if I had not got your love – it keeps me alive. My darning time is a good thinking time and today I have been planning a caravan tour of Ireland with you, my darling. Do you like the idea or not? We must buy one sometime and hitch it to the back of *our* car when we get married. I am very presumptuous in assuming that you would ever think of marrying me but, Eileen, love only means one thing to me and that is, that its natural sequence leads to a happy marriage. I *can* make you happy, my darling, and I *will* make you happy as no woman has ever done before. (I am boasting again! You must not pay any heed to me when I boast!!). I shall always love you in the same way as I now love you; I cannot change now after so many years. Loving you, Eileen, has been the only thing in my life that has ever mattered or ever will matter. I can only love you more the longer I am alive. Good night and God bless you my darling.

Monday – June 16th

It is now mid-summer at home and my Eileen is in the thick of her exams - but the happy prospect of holidays is looming up before her eyes too! May be you think that mid-summer in Malaya is terrible hot; well, it's not a bit! I have not realised it, but this station must be the coolest in Malaya. A blanket is actually needed at night on my bed; the day is not hot even in the sun; the trees do afford lots of shade but they are depressing. This *evening* as I walked down the road from my *evening* tennis, I stopped and looked around me. The sun was setting behind the hills and the sky was a wonderful blue with lots of fleecy clouds scattered around. Everything was fresh and green and cool; the slanting rays of the sun made the trees look their best. I met another officer on the road and we agreed that the scene was perfect and that we were very lucky people. I have no yearning for a large town or a dance or a cinema as long as I have this beauty to look upon daily. I came back to my wooden hut very happy. The secret of keeping fit in this place is to get out of the trees as much as possible. Before our tennis today I had football with the troops and it is good to see them dashing around like children; they are so full of life. It is the only fun they have and they do make the best of it. By the way let me introduce you to my tennis colleagues! This is Police Inspector "So-and-So" (a Malay); this is the A.D.O. (asst. District Officer), Mr So-and-So who is quite a famous tennis player in Malaya. Tomorrow evening we have fixed up for a good men's doubles match and I am eagerly looking forward to the fray.

Can you picture a long wooden hut but with a verandah; it is raised up from the ground by bricks? Three officers are sitting in canvas chairs around a small folding table drinking lemon squash – they are the O.C., myself, and another officer. The wooden hut is our Mess and we are waiting and expecting somebody. An ambulance car wends its way among the trees and approaches us; an officer emerges from it and he is laden with parcels! He is a welcome sight to us because we have been away from civilisation for two whole weeks and here, at last, is a link with the outside world. We eagerly open the parcels and each man claims his share – it reminded me of Father Christmas! A patient was sent to a large city many miles away early this morning and he was accompanied by one of our officers. Poor chap was given long lists of things required in the city. When he arrived back this evening he was exhausted – had spent the whole day in shops and didn't get any lunch! We asked him many questions about the city and its people, but he did not have any time to see it at all! And still I like my home in the trees; and especially the wonderful scenery outside the tree line.

You thought I had forgotten you today! Well, my darling, you have been loved more today than any other woman in the world could have been loved. It is so easy and so nice loving you, Eileen. I can always love you no matter where I may be but in my present surroundings I am nearer to you than ever before. I have given up the idea of ever being able to tell you how much I love you and yet you must know without being told. I have never loved anyone but you, my darling; I never shall love anyone but you. We have got something that will last the test of time – it is a very wonderful love and we should be thankful to Him who gave it to us. Oh, my darling, I feel that I can never love you enough no matter how hard I try. And now I must try to go to sleep. God bless you again and again, Eileen, because you deserve all His blessings.

Tuesday – 17th June

It is very late, my darling, and I am very tired and sleepy. I have been out with my O.C. to see a Chinese “show” in a small town about 10 miles away (a one-street village, actually!). I was more or less dragged into it because I knew it would be a wash-out. We set out in the rain at 9.15 p.m. and reached the place at 9.45 p.m. – what speed! It corresponded to a village travelling show at home – a large tent, improvised stage, oil lamps, wooden forms etc. When we entered there was a very fat and awkward Chinese girl trying to do a modern tap dance, and she was not succeeding! Then came a Chinese juggler who was mediocre; then a one-act tragedy which ended with four young men and a young lady all lying dead on the stage; another young lady sang “Good-night my love” in many languages and thank heavens it was good night. The “show” was so very bad as to be laughable; if it had only been *fair* I would not have looked at it. The only other Europeans present were the local district officer and the local “king”. I should explain that each village, town and district in Malaya has an unofficial “king” – usually the richest man in the place and he either owns a tin mine or a rubber estate! Well, we were invited up to the King’s “castle” which is perched on top of a hill above the village as all medieval castles should be! The road up to it winds like a corkscrew for over a mile. However we found the “king” had a palace and not a castle. There were incredible floors; glass doors; wonderful woodwork and furniture – everything ultra-modern and new. We just gaped at it all in amazement. We listened in to the news from London at 11.20 p.m. – the radio set, of course, was a super deluxe model! And so we said goodnight to the “king” and his guest and sped *home* at 18 m.p.h.! The rains had caused a tree to fall across the road and we spent quite a time dragging it to the roadside. And here I am writing to you – you *terrible* girl; you who keep me out of bed, night after night writing long letters to you; you whom I love with all my heart and whom I shall always love no matter what the future may hold. Eileen, my darling, I could not love you any more than I do now no matter how hard I might try. Loving you is the only thing in my life that really matters to me and it will always be the same.

I had lots of good tennis this evening – six long sets without a break or a rest *and* I felt very fresh when it was all over. They were all grand games and it was the best tennis I have had since leaving India. My partner and I beat the D.O. and the A.D.O. and that was quite an achievement! I have arranged for more tennis tomorrow evening – a men’s doubles. Please don’t get the idea that I am not working at all but spending my time at tennis. I have *all* the work to do and my tennis is played “after hours”. I miss my swimming more than anything else. I had thought of entering for the Singapore Amateur Athletic Sports because I feel much stronger now than when I was at “Queens” but I suppose my O.C. will turn down the idea because! I cannot give you any secret information!!

Whether my best girl likes it or not I am going to bed to dream about her. God bless you, my darling, and sleep well. Good night Eileen.

June 18th – Wednesday

Eileen O’Kane, do you know what I am doing now? I am sitting on my wooden floor writing to you! My oil lamp is blacked out tonight, so I have put it on top of my suit case, cut a tiny chink in the paper and propped myself up against the wall! You are *not* a terrible girl after all – you are an awful person to make me love you so much that I cannot go to bed at night without writing to you! You know, my darling, that I would do anything in the world for you. I only hope you are receiving my letters regularly and that they bring you some joy (but I doubt it!). My letters must make frightful reading and yet once upon a time my sister in Dublin¹⁴ said that I wrote her very good letters!

My darling, there is an invader in my room and he has been here for several days now! He is making an infernal row just at present and I cannot see him in the darkness though I have thrown my pillow and tennis racket in his direction tonight. *He* is a cricket but I don’t think it’s “cricket” to keep me awake at nights with his noise! There is a black out tonight and I have just come slowly across from the Mess from dinner. We could not see what we were eating and just hoped for the best! I like camp life so much that I am dreading going back to civilization again; a feather bed has no attraction for me because I have become used to my camp bed. Have you ever had Bully Beef, mashed potatoes, and onions for lunch? Well, I did today, Eileen, and it was grand! You are missing all the good things in life and I am having them all!

The tennis was called off today because the ground was rather soft after the morning rains. The rains were torrential today and I thought we would be washed away. Another mail today and another disappointment for me – no letter from Eileen. I am used to it now but still I look forward to the next post with quiet confidence that your letter *must* come. You see, my darling, I love you so very, very much that one letter from you means an awful lot to me. I can read and re-read it; it can keep me alive for months afterwards. My letters could never make you

¹⁴ This is Una Murray and she was Frank’s favourite sister. She became a Dominican nun and took the name Sister Mary Villana. She was based at Sion House, Dublin where she died of endocarditis in 1944.

so happy as your letters can make me, Eileen. So please take pity on me and send me heaps of letters! I want letters all about *you*, my darling; your work, your play, your dances, your thoughts and your love. I need you and I need your love. I want to know that all is well with you and all those dear to you. The war seems to spread and spread Eastwards, but soon it will stop spreading and then it will all be ended. Then you will find me rushing back home to you my darling and never to leave you again.

I love you even more tonight Eileen and I shall love you a little bit more each day of my life. God bless you and may He keep you safe from all harm.

Ever yours,

Frank xxx

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,
Thursday 19th June [1941]

Eileen my darling,

I'm still in love with you and I'm still writing to you every day! When, oh, when is your letter coming? It seems like years since February when your last one reached me in Rawalpindi. A letter from you can make such a difference to my life in this wilderness where nothing ever happens. If I had not a lot of work to do in this place, life would not be worth living and yet life is always worth living no matter what it is like. I have so much to live for because I live for you and the day when we shall be united again. How could I ever love you enough when you have given me your love – the only thing I have wanted in life. We shall always be happy together, Eileen, and we shall not have to try very hard to be happy because it will all come naturally to us.

I have spent most of the day in green fields training with the men. And I have discovered a lovely country lane in nearby and I make it the training ground. It is well outside the jungle and just like home – winding, partly overgrown with grass, overhanging trees on either side, and beautiful flowers everywhere. The rains came at 1:00 p.m. but one welcomes the rain in Malaya because it is cooling and refreshing. However all games were spoiled for the evening and so here I sit in on my door-mat in the gloaming dashing off a few lines to my best girl. I must hurry as the black-out will soon be upon me. Can you please tell me if the hills of Ireland are still as green as they were when I last saw them? The hills of Malaya are green and pretty but cannot compare and to our Irish hills. Some day I hope to see them again and I shall never leave them or you, Eileen Aroon, as long as ever I live.

Eileen, there is actually a small golf course a few miles away from here! And of course I have no clubs and if I had I would not have time in the evenings to play. However, I am going to have a try because I must beat you at golf next time we meet! Can you guess what my latest idea of sport? Well, it is getting up at 6:15 a.m. and running around a field for ½ hour! I am trying to train our football team for the local cup competition. It is not a joke getting up so early in the morning, Eileen, but I suppose you get up early every morning.

My darling, it is now dark and I am indoors crouched on the floor beside a very very dim lamp. The jungle insects and animals have begun their noise and so has this awful cricket in my hut! Do you have black-outs in Omagh and is Omagh considered a military objective? All seems quiet in Belfast nowadays and I pray that it will continue. They must have had a dreadful time during the air-raids. I have heard nothing from my people in Belfast since the air-raids began and I am worried in case something has happened to them.

My day is almost over and I have loved you so very much today and thought of you. When I see something very nice, such as my country lane today, I think of you and wish you were by my side. I must away and dress for dinner (trousers + shirt only!). Goodnight Eileen and God bless you – “See” you tomorrow!

Friday, June 20th

Eileen Alannah, what shall I call you next? I've been calling you every day in my diary but you never seem to hear me. Writing like this is almost the same as talking to you every day and it makes me happy doing it. You would smile if you saw me now sitting out on my verandah with my oil lamp at my elbow (the blackout is over). I am clad in pyjamas and I am as happy as it is possible to be under the circumstances, so far from home and you. I can hear the low murmur of the troops voices chattering in their native tongue and singing their Indian songs. They must feel sad and homesick but they always seem cheerful. I have just returned from visiting them at 9:30 p.m. and I always love this part of my day. I have made at least two of them happy today and that means a lot to me, Eileen. It is so peaceful tonight because all the officers have gone off to another “show” in a small village 9 miles away. I decided to have a quiet evening with you, my darling, because I can love you so much more when we are

alone together. And I had quite enough of “shows” last Tuesday night when I went to one with my O.C.; I had to be very firm this time and refuse. I find that I can be quite happy and contented with an evening at home; besides it is such a waste of time could lead to a rotten show, coming home late with a sore head, and feeling very bad at 6 a.m. The following morning!

I really did get up at 6:15 a.m. this morning. It was an awful struggle but once I got out of bed all was well. We had a grand time chasing a football up and down the field for ½ hour. I had a cold shower when I came back again and the bacon and eggs tasted so much sweeter than usual (sorry I have to leave you for a moment ago and see a patient!). I have to trot across to the camp hospital to see a not-very-ill man – and of course I was clad in pyjamas. Not much medical etiquette about that, but I have done it so many times when in practice in Birmingham. I have had rather a “sticky” day among the trees and it was hotter than usual. However I did manage four hectic sets of tennis with the other chaps later in the evening. I always intend taking snaps for you and the day has gone before I can look around. I must take a few of some Malay kids who chase the tennis balls around; and also some Chinese people in the district. The trouble is that I have to send the film’s 65 miles away for developing and printing. I am still waiting for your photograph; it is all I need to complete my wooden hut! I am still waiting for you and you will always find me waiting so because I could never change. I shall always love you and only you, my darling. You know that I am all yours and I shall be yours forever and ever. For the thousandth time, Eileen, will you please marry me? Yes, I have proposed once again and I don’t care if all the censors in the wide world are reading this proposal because they will have many more to read in my letters. If you are getting tired of all my proposals, Eileen, please let me know and they will cease forthwith! If you are growing weary of my long and boring letters, I could change them and make them shorter but I could not make them less loving! I love you more dearly now than ever before and I shall go on loving you more each day I live in. The war will soon be over and we shall meet again. I may be detained out here for a year after the war has ended and if so you are going to fly out to me, young lady, during your vacation! You wouldn’t mind very much would you, Eileen? I want to see you again, my darling, and it cannot be soon enough. Good-night and God bless you.

Saturday – June 21st

Another post came from India today and still no letter from my Eileen (one would think that I owned you). As the “Clipper” is leaving Malaya for America on Monday or Tuesday I must post this letter tomorrow (Sunday). It will not be the usual 12-page epistle and you will understand why. I must send you as much love in this letter as ever I can. You know that you have all of my love, Eileen, and you will always have all of it and all of me. I wonder will the “Clipper” be able to carry so much love on board all the way to you in Ireland – it is a terrible load to have to carry! Many things will happen in the world before this letter reaches you and that should only be about 2 weeks – but no matter what may happen I shall be loving you the same as I’ve always done. Please do not imagine that I am the same idle dreamer of many years ago. I shall not haunt you by day and night and claim you as my private property! My love for you Eileen is deep and sincere and not meant for public show. What I mean is that you will not find me going to dances with you, clinging to your side and dancing only with you; you will not find me gazing at you adoringly at parties and having eyes for nobody but you! I have changed a bit in that respect. Our friends will sense and know that we are very happy together and that we love each other as two people have never loved before. Our love will never be cheap, Eileen; it will always be sacred and holy and so very personal between us. It is when we are alone together that you will know how much I love you; it is then that I can say to you everything that is in my heart. You will hear of my joys and sorrows, of my love for you, of all my successes and disappointments. Poor, Eileen, will have to listen to all of this because she is the only person in the world to whom I can tell all these things. I am warning you not to marry Frank Murray; he would give you too much love and anyhow, why should you have to listen to his tale of woe each day of your life?? I shall always want to lay everything at your feet, my own darling, because everything in my daily life that I think and do, belongs to you. They really belong to God first and then to you because I love you as He wants me to love you. And when we meet again I shall not have to tell you every few minutes of the day that I love you. May be I write about it too much in my letters to you, but Eileen, you must realize that that love keeps me alive in the wilderness. I am happy here while so many are miserable and it is because I love you that I am happy. It is a natural thing that happiness should follow a love like ours. I can be happy no matter where I may go in future. People around me do not understand why I have no desire to spend a weekend in the nearest large towns or city “beating-it-up” as they call it. It is so easy been happy while I have got your love, Eileen.

I am the commanding officer for a few days as my O.C. has gone off on special duty. I take my responsible job rather lightly and spend very little time sitting at a desk in a hot, dark, wooden office! I have made two more men happy today – I really must start chalking up the score!! Alas in making two men have I have caused one man to be rather bitter and resentful, but that will not last very long. I have been busy all day long and instead of a half-holiday, I had more work to do than usual! I had some good tennis with another doctor here – we were playing

hard for two hours and only managed two sets! I had my usual morning training in the dewy grass of the football pitch. Thank heavens I did not go to the "show" last night; it was awful, I heard; it ended at 1:00 a.m. and the lads reached camp at 2:00 a.m. this morning! They looked a sorry lot this morning. What I hate about a late night is the following morning!! I had good news today that a priest may come up here some day in the near future to say Mass – that is if there are enough Catholics in the units and in the district. Tomorrow will be another Sunday without Mass. I shall soon become a Buddhist if that priest does not hurry up! I pray hard for you every day, Eileen, and I shall never forget to do so as long as I live.

I am ashamed of my seven pages when you deserve so many more, my darling. I shall go on writing every day as usual but this letter must reach the "Clipper" not later than Monday morning and so it must be ended tonight. Give my love to all at home even though they have never met me. When you meet the little Frances again give her my best and tell her that I wish her all the happiness in the world. I can never thank her enough for being so disloyal as to show my letters to you!!

Good bye, Eileen, till the next time. You have all my love and I am all yours. God bless you now and always. May your pupils come out on top in the exams and may you have a very happy vacation.

Ever yours,

Frank xxx

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,
22.6.41

Eileen my darling,

I sent you a letter this morning which should reach the "Clipper" tomorrow 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 specialty duty. As this is Sunday and no mail is normally sent out of camp today, I made an exception and sent a special dispatch 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 tomorrow if possible because I cannot bear not hearing from you. No letter has come yet, Eileen, 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 and, Eileen, 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 which 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 leaves in the Army – but so far I haven't had any. I could manage a few days at the seaside somewhere in Malaya but 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, Eileen? I imagine it would be grand fun. we must try it together some time, 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, Eileen, 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'll be pleased to hear of that my room companion, the cricket, has left me and gone elsewhere to disturb the slumbers of my neighbors! I have not been outside the forest today and that's why my diary 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 that close personal friend of Dollfuss¹⁵ and helped him to build up an ideal constitution based on Catholic teaching. He became a patient of mine and soon after he arrived in England – a complete nervous wreck, could not sleep, could not concentrate and, and yet he was one of Austria's intellectuals. I was very proud to treat him and watch him slowly regained his strength. When I said goodbye to him on the cold a December's night in 1939 his eyes were filled with tears of gratitude. You should read his book on Dollfuss; it is grand reading. His name is Mgr Messner¹⁶. 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 Nazis 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, it's high hedge which I tried so often to peep over, Eileen, sitting at a desk near the window overlooking your little garden, writing to someone and she hadn't even seen for years. I wish I could write and as you do, Eileen, 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 Queens 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 so very same 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 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 steps of the scenery and my companions (Indians). I had previously bought a parasol in the local village as we passed through, much to the amazement of the local Chinese inhabitants! So the parasol 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 to of my bed 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 land¹⁷ – may be you can guess where I am now. I cannot tell you any more. We had football from 4-5 p.m. and then scampered back to camp for tea. I have packed all the films and shall send them off for developing tomorrow 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 24th

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 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 need your pupils' exams; I shall pray and that your lot will turn out most successful. I wonder how many of them will go to Ranafast 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 Ranafast; 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

¹⁵ Engelbert Dollfuss was Chancellor of Austria between May 1932 and July 1934 before he was assassinated by Austrian Nazis.

¹⁶ Frank's patient in Birmingham was Johannes Messner. See Postscript for further information.

¹⁷ Thailand.

when leaving Ranafast. Little did I think that one day I would run away from Belfast and from you. 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 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 4:00 p.m. and of course that spoiled all the games for the day. I could not endure sitting in my wooden hut so off went at 6:00 p.m. for a walk and 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-poisonous. 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 those 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 a good 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 of a few deaths 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, a 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 tonight 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 strike out across the thick jungle hoping to reach the main road. At 4:00 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 hope 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 are 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 and just laid down by the roadside exhausted; the others cheered! Along came one of our lorries and deposited us at camp. I am all alone tonight again and 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.

Eileen, I *must* say good night early tonight – it is now 11:30 p.m.! Oh my darling I am praying hard that a letter will come from you tomorrow – a mail is expected. I love you more today 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 return today 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. Living under trees is bad enough but a deserted camp is too much. I am a queer person, Eileen, and you are very silly to love me even a little bit! I can just jog along under any conditions or in 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, Eileen, 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 awful 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 imaginary 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 asked them to do because I always let them see me doing likewise and so they try to imitate! I really 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 arrive today from my last station and they are grand. The snaps 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 peace team would wear heavy boots while we wore bare feet or canvas shoes!! It seems the coppers 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 daily for a tennis racket but my father always refused because he considered it a waste 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 in 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 dart thrower! We have darts 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 my bed at nights and read a few pages of my “Spanish Raggle-Taggle” and my light is the 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 Eileen Aroon once more. Yet I loved 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 tonight because the monotonous and drone of the tom-toms 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 27th

Eileen, 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 quaint houses. I just cannot describe that 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 off an Indian officer (medical) 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 views from my front door and so-called back window! The jumble 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 and give you a 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 with all with you, Eileen, just as I shall always share things with you.

I am posting this letter tomorrow but alas it may not leave Malaya for a couple of weeks yet. In away this is a good system because then you will have several letters with each post. Is there anything special you would like from Malaya, Eileen? 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, Eileen, but I have never met anyone yet who corresponded as closely as you do 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 that to you in person – they would appear too common-place is 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 give out Red Cross things to them – soap, oil, torches, combs, brushes etc.! We had football in the afternoon and I ran with the best them – I am not so old yet. After to the we had some strenuous badminton; after dinner came darts and now 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, Eileen. is your age really 27 and is your birthday really October 17th or 19th? It is all written down in a little book in my trunk in Rawalpindi! I have never asked you your age before – because age does not matter. I love you my Eileen 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 xxx.

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
28.6.41 (Saturday)

Eileen my darling,

Another Indian and European mail arrived today and still there is no news of you. What on earth has happened to your letter? How I hope and pray that it is not been lost en route – it would break my heart to know that I had lost one of your letters. You know how precious they are to me so far away from you. I sent you another long, boring 12 page letter this morning but heaven only knows when it will leave Malaya because the “Honolulu Clipper” is not due in here for another two weeks yet; then it will come and carry off about four letters from me to you!

It must be very near your vacation time, Eileen, and your poor students will soon have finished their exams. I want you to write and tell me all about them – if they have done well; I want to hear all about your breaking up day at Omagh and what an animated scene it must present. Somehow on that day one always gets the holiday feeling. Have you got any *really* nice girls in your form? I might fall in love with them if you should ever be so foolish as to show them to me! My darling, I could never fall in love with anyone but you. I shall always love you, Eileen, and only you. Your love is to dearer to me that I should ever risk losing it; all my love such as it is, is all yours and it will always be yours. I am all yours and I shall always belong to you. I have so little to offer you in return for your love, but you shall everything that I can give you.

At last we have succeeded here in getting in touch with a priest (Frenchman) in the local town 50 miles away. Normally he visits this district three times each year but now he has promised to try to come up at least once monthly. It is good news for me, because I have never had to miss Sunday Mass in my life before.

I was working hard all day today and did not emerge from the eternal twilight until 5:15 p.m. It was pay-day and the day I like best during the month. It seems that I am Paymaster of the Unit in spite of my numerous other jobs in camp. If I were really efficient I should not have time to be bothered with the men's pay! But I cannot endure seeing chaos and confusion and missing money during pay-day! I had some grand tennis today – played six sets without even sitting down once! I feel so wonderfully fit, Eileen, and I do not forget to thank God for it. It is a very special favour always to be in good health and have the facilities for keeping fit. They were all men's doubles and my side won each time by 6-0; 6-0 etc. We were fed up with our cook and so we had decided to dine out at the local “rest house”. We had a wonderful meal and I have just returned “home” from it. We are living on Army rations here because we are on active service and we find too much bully beef in the menu! Our Cook is a shocking fellow and can produce amazingly bad dishes. He makes gravy twice a day and then has the nerve to call it soup; our beef is like leather because he cannot cook it properly. So tonight we had our first decent meal since coming here! It is good to get away from the huddled mess for a while! Good night and God bless you, Eileen Aroon.

Sunday June 29th

Sunday can be quite dull in the wilderness as there is not much work to do. However it was quite hectic enough for me – I was slaving all day till 4 p.m. Then I rushed off to play a football match. Wonderful to relate *my* team won by three goals to nil! The regiment we beat got quite a shock because they had been the local “giants” and we were an unknown quantity. Immediately after the match I had two hours tennis; rushed back to camp and had tea at 7:30 p.m.! And now, Eileen, you have my whole day in précis and it was quite thrilling – yet I have not told you what I was thinking about.

Everyone had decided to have a sleep-in this morning and so I did not get up at 7 a.m. as arranged but slept soundly till 8 a.m.! I hate lying in bed till that unearthly hour, I feel quite dazed for the rest of the day. I had my usual dream about home and you, my darling – the dream that I want to come true. We had met again after so many years of separation and I dreamed that we were so very happy together. I dream about you and my dreams are always happy ones. Nothing on this earth could ever make me change my love for you; I can only love you more, the longer we are parted. How I pray and hope that we shall meet soon again and never be separated again. If I did not love you so very much it would be easy but Eileen, loving you has become the only thing in my life

which counts. Here I am writing and writing – and nothing ever happens. Eileen my darling I love you a terrible awful lot and yet it can never be enough even though you are a terrible awful girl!! If I could only see you now just for a moment or two; if I could only hear your voice – but what is the use of wishing my life away? If the war should end while I am still in Malaya do you know the thing I would do would be to rush off to Singapore and ring you up on the phone. Then I would get out of Malaya as quickly as a plane would take me and fly home to you. I want day to come quickly, Eileen; it can never come soon enough for me. My darling, I do need your photograph very badly; I want to see you as you are today. I only knew you when he were a schoolgirl and yet I loved you as such; but now that you have really grown up I love you so much more. There was a time when I was on the borderline of becoming a cynic and despising love as a stupid thing. How near I was to this you may never know, Eileen. That phase of my life only lasted a very short time after I had left Ireland for the first time. And now there is no man in the whole world who loves a woman and as much as I love you, my darling.

The snaps did not come today as this is Sunday and there is no post. I wish this were India from the postal point of view because there are deliveries on Sundays there! I have discovered that a very good friend of mine is in Malaya and I must write to him. He is a captain in the R.A.M.C. and one of the nicer people whom one rarely meets with away from home. He would love a holiday in this station and I must write to him to stay here for a week or two. I don't feel quite so much alone now that I know of my friend's whereabouts.

Please write to me often, Eileen. I do need your letters as much as I need your love – and I need the latter desperately. I don't care what you write about – all I want is a letter from you, my darling. It will make me very happy for many moons to come. God bless you, Eileen – Good night!

Monday June 30th

Eileen, my darling, I did not think that I could love you as much as I do tonight. What am I going to do about it? It just grows and grows as the days roll by and I am wondering what it will be like when this war is over and we meet again. I cannot help myself, Eileen. They beat you think I am over-romantic and let my imagination run away with me, but it is not so. I do not love you because you are only a dream of the past. It is very real and I have thought it all out years ago with care. My darling, I love you because you are my Eileen; because I have always loved you and could never manage to love anyone else but you. To be a very honest I have tried to love other people when I thought that you no longer cared for me, but I just could not do it. I always found something want – I have never found another “Eileen”, because if I had to, I would have loved her and married her. I know that there can only be “one” you and I love you! So many people must have loved you, Eileen while I have been away from home and I like them for it; but why you did not get married, really surprised me. I do not say this in a vain mood, Eileen, but I could have been married long ago. Somehow I thought it would only bring unhappiness because I could not have loved my wife properly. It would have been unfair to all. How I thank God that He has always made me do the right thing and given me the only thing in life that I wanted. I have prayed for your love, Eileen, and my prayers have been answered. A for a long time I thought I was asking too much, because and I know it would make me happiest man on earth.

Please do not think me *quite* mad to have written all the above to a very sane young lady, but I *have* to tell you all my thoughts because there are all of you.

It is a hot night (10 p.m.); not a breeze stirring in these trees. I am having another quiet evening as all the officers have gone off to see a Chinese “show”. The said “shows” are not worth looking at, otherwise you would find me at them all! I am happy sitting here on my verandah writing to you – I would not be happy at the “show”. Eileen, my darling, I can enjoy *real* fun much better than most people. You should have seen me at the Bertram Mills Circus at Olympia in January 1939! I did the wildest maddest things at the Fun Fair there – you would not believe it was Frank Murray at all! I should warn you in good time that I am always liable to do wild and mad things occasionally; I also do very unconventional things. So now you know the person to whom you have given your love. However I shall try to improve for your sake, Eileen!! I would change all my bad habits for you, my darling, but you would not love me then because I would not be natural or human at all.

I have spent my whole day in the wide open spaces and though it was quite hot in the sun I loved it all. I had a very big job on with my men and thank heavens it was very successful. I had time to rescue a very young quail from the clutches of a sepoy and set it free among the long grass! I had no time for tennis today and besides and I felt too tired. I wrote away for some more prints and enlargements – the whole camp is in an uproar about photographs. Every man and now wants a snap taken. They love to send them home to India to wives, parents and all their relatives. Please teacher, may I go off to bed now, ‘cos I is very tired! Good night my darling and God bless you for making me so happy.

Tuesday July 1st

We had a big inspection today by a very important Army medical man called O'Dwyer. Everything went off well and of course being a Dublin man he got on famously with me. We tramped for miles around inspecting drainage and water supply etc. I must have seemed very tall beside him 'cos he is only a 5 ft. high! He knows many of my friends in the medical and sporting world. It seems that a Cork doctor in the army here (called the inevitable "Murphy") claims me as a close friend and sent his regards to me today per O'Dwyer. He was president of the Irish Students Association in former years and remembers me at Cork and Belfast playing football. The world becomes smaller and smaller – and some day soon I would not be surprised at meeting a Queensman in the middle of the jungle!

I am terribly busy just now as our training is in full swing. I spend all my day in the field and then home I come to Mess accounts, bills, rations, quartermaster work, and plans for the following day. I had a glamorous trip this evening in a lorry with my O.C.; we set off at 5 p.m. and did a 25 mile trip of reconnaissance. If you could only have seen the purity of Malaya as I saw it today and – mountain peaks 2,000 ft. high rising straight up from the plains; all solid rock and yet covered with trees; mountain streams that looked so cool and inviting; glens and valleys full of wonderful vegetation; The padi fields submerged in water with the Chinese coolies toiling away, knee deep in water and mud; strange wild looking natives clad in loin cloth gazing vacantly at us as we sped past; Chinese and Malay children smartly saluting us on – and I always there salutes, even though the O.C. does not like it! Oh, Eileen, my darling, I was very happy and I wanted to share my happiness with you. If I am so happy now what will it be like when I meet you again.

My "indoor" snaps came back today and I am very pleased with them. Now I can show you everything in my wooden hut; you will see my table, my side board, my clock, my rickshaw, my calendar, my Players, my Dettol, my washstand, my chair, my bed and the mosquito net – and millions of other things. You will see my front door and my back window and the view that I can see each day from them! In fact to you might as well be "Frank Murray" though I hate wishing you such misfortune! Yet another post arrived today and still no news of my Eileen. It is now July and the months seem to slip by. Someday your letter really will come and then I shall be so terribly happy after waiting so long. When it comes I shall begin all over again waiting for the next one; and then I shall be waiting for that wonderful day when we shall meet again. Imagine what it will be like, Eileen, after so many years – all the love piling up will suddenly break forth. The thought of that day alone keeps me alive and makes me realise that life is worth while. It makes me realise how much I love you and how much more you deserve to be loved. My friend the small lizard who comes to see me each night as I write to you, he agrees with me in everything I think about you. The crickets have deserted me and I do miss them at night! Tell me, Eileen, when you write again are you really bored with my letters – tell me how you would like me to write. Good night and God bless you my darling.

Wednesday July 2nd

Eileen, with you please tell me whether these letters are too long and uninteresting for you? I should hate to think that they are boring for you to read. I never have anything exciting or interesting to tell you or really good snaps to send you, because all such things are more or less concerned with the war and the censor would not pass them. You do realise, my darling, that nothing *ever* happens in a place like this! I want to tell you all about my work and yet I am not allowed to because it would give information away. I can tell you this much – a field ambulance is the best medical unit that one could be working in during the war or even under peace conditions. It is a sort of happy medium between all the jobs that one could have. A regimental Medical Officer has rather a dull time because he has never enough work to do; a job in a Field Hospital would be very monotonous – either too much routine work to do or else nothing at all! A field ambulance is quite a big affair and the work does show some variation. It is grand fun for me just now because my company is training hard and we get out every day. I have to organize the whole show and I find it very absorbing work. Today I must have what about 10 miles on our training – I have to see that everything is running to plan, that all hands are working. It is a fine healthy life and it *suits* me fine. After a hard day's work we had a football match from 4-5 p.m. – the men love to race along on the green turf; they all rushed wildly around the field and follow the ball like a lot of sheep! I had two sets of tennis to end my day with and I was just a tiny bit tired.

Tomorrow we have ambitious plans for a field day. We shall have all the Mess staff and utensils out with us on training and all meals will be taken in the open or under canvas. I am looking forward to it all because it is really as a pic-nic for me and not terribly hard work. How do I thank God that I have things to occupy me all day long – both sport and work. It is an awful thought to me that some day there will be no work to do in this country. I would not know what to do with myself. I am not how work fiend, but I like to be doing something or other. I can't quite imagine that that you feel the same way about things? I want to know whether you like a sewing darning or not – I have lots of things that want repairs and I might send them to you. I found my orderly darning my

socks with thread yesterday, *and* my housewife is full of wool! I wish I could find time to do these things myself. The weather has been dry recently and I take full advantage of it by keeping out of doors as much as possible. Nichols when the rains come I shall have enough time to spend in doors, on my socks and shirts and! I have heard ugly rumours that we might be removed from this "heaven" soon and put down on the planes again in a hot, sticky city. How I am hoping it is not true – I never wish to leave this place; it has the best climate in all Malaya.

I am sending you a letter full of snaps along with this one and I hope you will like them. The air mail via Durban has begun again and you will have an occasional letter that way; but I want to send them all via America because then you will get letters almost weekly and they only take two weeks in transit. I *is* weary tonight, Eileen and I *has* to get up very early tomorrow morning. Good night and God bless you.

Thursday July 3rd

I have had yet another hectic day in the field and now I am pleasantly tired. We set out early and when the morning's work was finished we had a glorious lunch awaiting us in our tented Mess. We even had iced drinks! The day ended at 5:00 p.m. when we returned to our camp in the trees. I had a cold shower and dashed off for three good sets of tennis at the local court.

I want to tell you something, Eileen, before I close this letter. You have read it *millions* of times in my letters and I never grow weary writing about it. The trouble is that you might grow tired of it! I love you, my darling, more than any man has ever loved before. I shall always love you and nobody but you. I am all yours, Eileen, and I am yours forever. There is just no end to my love for you. I cannot believe that it is 11 years since I first met you in Ranafast and fell hopelessly in love with you. At that time "I wanted to carve your name on every tree" – that was the kind of love it was then. It has grown deeper than that now and so much stronger; it is real love. I mean, my darling, no letters have come from you as yet and I need your letters so desperately now – as much as I need your love. Would you please write to me as often as ever you can. A letter now would make me happy for about a year! Tell me all about yourself. I do want you to have a really grand time during vacation and I know that you can enjoy yourself when on holidays. Tell me all about it when you have time I want to hear of your golfing successes and that your handicap is now +2. tell me what you do all day long and what you are thinking about all day long. I love you so much, Eileen, that all of these little details are very precious to me. My darling, won't you please send me that photograph soon. I was not vain when I sent you mine. I know that if you loved me as much as I loved you, then if you would want a photograph of some kind. It has always been you whom I have loved and I knew so well that I would always keep my vow never to marry anyone except you. Do not think that I am bestowing a *great* honour on you by asking you to marry me – it is quite the opposite and because you have given me your love and nothing that I can ever do for you or give you, will we repay that love.

Give my love to your people – I shall know them soon and love them as much as you do. I shall have a very special love for your mother, Eileen, because I have lost a mother who was very dear to me. I shall always love the little Frances in a very brotherly way and I can never thank her enough for bringing us together again. Little did I dream that her words would come true when she said that all would be well in the end. Give her all my best and tell her that I still love her!

It has come to the end of another "diary". I have thoroughly bored you again but like a very selfish man I can honestly say that it makes me very happy when I write to you.

God bless you, Eileen, and may He keep you safe from all danger.

All my love,
Ever yours,
Frank xxx.

27th Field Ambulance
Malaya
4.7.41
(Friday)

Eileen, my darling,

You need not expect very much from me tonight as I am sitting on Mother Earth inside my 40 lb tent! We have been out in the open spaces all day long and we are spending the night under canvas. However I wish that you could enjoy all of this as much as I do. There is a very wonderful moon out tonight, the stars look lovelier

than I have ever seen them look before. I wonder are you looking at the same moon and stars tonight? Everything is just perfect – except that you are not here to see it all with me.

And how are you today, my darling? I hope the hols have begun and that you are having a hectic time and not worried about old exam results. I know that your young ladies will come out on top in the exams – they could not let you down. Teaching must be a grand profession in its own way. You meet so many different types of girl; you watch their character developing day by day; you remember their first days at school and then they leave the convent walls and go out into a very unkind world where so many are struggling to exist and so many are thinking only of SELF! I have often thought that many boarding schools in Ireland are not ideal institutions – especially boys schools and seminaries. The lads are usually subjected to too much discipline. Then when they leave school and go to a university, they just run wild. They imagine they are free at last and must have their fling. These ideas of mine may be quite wrong but that's what I think about it all – but why I should tell you about it under this starry sky as I sit in the middle of a field, I know not. I only know that I love you, Eileen, more tonight than I have ever loved you before. How can I help loving you, since I gave myself to you so many years ago.

As I sit in my very uncomfortable position I can't see that I shall have trouble keeping my equilibrium tonight as the camp bed is leaning all over the place. I am sure to fall out of it! Why should I write to you at all tonight, Eileen? It is because I love you so much and I want you to have some idea of how much it really is. I just have to write to you every night, even though this stuff I write is not a bit readable! Unfortunately it is *poor you* who has the worst of it as you have to read it. I would quite understand you did not read the half of what I write to you! I had better go to bed and dream about you. Good night and God bless you my darling.

Saturday July 5th

My very own darling today has been the happiest day of my life – and I have had my share of happy days. About an hour ago I received *two* telegrams from you and one said that “the answer is yes”. My darling that is the answer I have been waiting to hear for so many years, and now that it has come you may guess how happy it has made me. It seems so useless trying to thank you, Eileen, because words mean little on occasions like this – they are out of place. All like and do is to give you *all* and that is so very small. You know that you will always have all of my love; you know that I am yours entirely and I shall always be yours; you will have my every thought. I shall never grow weary of giving, where you are concerned. Eileen, my darling, I just cannot express my feelings tonight – I don't know where to begin, and heaven knows where I shall end. In all my happiness I shall not forget to thank Him for it all; He must have made you say that you would marry me because I have been asking Him for this favour for 10 years! He must have grown tired of me and decided to end it all. I know that I have not much to offer you but what I have will always be given freely. I shall spend my life making you happy, Eileen; I shall live only for you – And yet there will never be any suggestion of me being your slave! I have mentioned in another letter that we shall share everything; there will be no “head of the house” – we shall be *real* partners. As well as being in love, we shall be *friends* – and that is so vital in married life. We shall be *the* good companions and shall always be happy together no matter where we may be. It will be so easy for us to be happy when we are married because we shall always be in love with each other, and nothing could ever shake that love. Is it really true, Eileen, that you love me and that you will marry me? It is just too wonderful and it will take another day until I fully realise what has happened! Please forgive this awful letter tonight; it is just a jumble of words but you may be able to have some little idea of how thrilled and excited I am today.

My darling, now that we are really engaged, we have got to make plans about the future – the very uncertain future. I want you to tell me what your ideas on the subject are. There is war on at present and unless time sent home, we have not got a hope of being married until the war is over. It is an awful thought so long, but it is inevitable and we shall have to put up with it. Eileen, you *must* have the nicest engagement ring that was ever made and I can arrange that easily if you send me your size. You cannot be engaged without a ring even though I shall not be able to put it on your finger. I do not want anyone to come along and steal you away from me, now that I've found you! And yet a ring is simply a symbol of something much deeper and more sacred than mere show – it means that we love each other, that we are united as two people have never been before, and that we are pledged to each other. You must tell me what kind of ring you would like so that I shall know what to send you. It is a shame that I cannot see you now and tell you everything that is in my heart. When that ring really does reach you and you put it on your finger, will you remember that I am by your side.

It is been a strange engagement, my darling; I proposed by letter and you replied to by wire! We are 8,000 miles apart and yet that made no difference at all to us! We shall be the happiest couple in the world – maybe we are the happiest couple now. I am so terribly sure that I love you and I have always been sure about it – That's why I could not even wait for your letters before proposing to you. If we had been two very sane people we would have waited until we had met again before deciding such a serious question; but we are sure of each other and trust each other, and we could not wait. Eileen, do wish me to write to your father and mother now that you have

promised to marry me. I expect you have consulted with them and talked things over. Will they be *very* furious when I take you away from them because they must love you very dearly unfortunately I have got nobody with whom to talk things over but I must write and tell my father the news. I know he will be very happy about it all. He has always prayed that I would marry someone like you, Eileen; I have always wanted to marry you!

My darling, should I find myself really *in* the war soon you may not get many letters; but I promise you that I shall write to you whenever possible. Only one thing can stop me writing to you and that would be death or serious injury – so always remember this, Eileen. It is then that you must get in touch with my father in Belfast, because he is my next-of-kin and he would be cabled about me immediately. You will find him at 95 Cliftonville Road or 155 Old Park Road (shop). Do not think that I am being pessimistic, Eileen; I am only thinking of you and how you might be unduly worried. I shall come back to you my darling, as soon as ever I can and we shall be married *immediately*!

I am back again in my wooden hut tonight and though it is more comfortable than a small tent, I would rather have the latter. It was grand sleeping out of doors last night – it was actually cold, if you can imagine it in the tropics. I had a look at all the men before they went asleep and they all seemed very contented with life! You miss all the joys of life in Ireland by being in *real* houses! It is wonderful to wake up at 6.30; everything so fresh and the air so cool; a thick dew on the grass; all nature very much alive – birds singing lustily, monkeys chattering in the nearby jungle; the men getting there early morning tea ready. I made a ‘round’ of the tents at 7:00 a.m. and 8 a.m. tucked into a large breakfast of bacon and eggs. The mornings work was terrific – the sun was placing down from a cloudless sky. We got back to are hunted to camp at million, unloaded, and had lunch. It was our half holiday and I spent it cleaning up my camera, my clock, my calendar, and my leather dressing case! My batman is useless and I have to do the special jobs myself however he is very welcome each morning at 7:00 a.m. when arrives with my early morning tea (chota-hazri)!

I had a surprise when I opened your *first* telegram this evening and it read and “9/93/32”! I still do not know what it means, Eileen, and the awful part of it is that I have to wait till Monday before I can have it decoded at the post office. I haven’t had time to send you some more snaps yet, Eileen, but as tomorrow is a day of rest I should be able to manage it. I have arranged a trek in the jungle for tomorrow morning with my O.C. and a few Indian officers. The route is quite unknown to us but that only makes it all the more thrilling because we can now look forward to been lost for a few hours! I sent my tennis racket away yesterday for a few new strings – the town is 140 distant from the spot! It is the nearest ‘tennis racket’ town! It will take about a week to come back again and that means little exercise for me for many days to come. However there is always football twice a week and some badminton to keep me going. I was worried today when I read in the papers about a mail boat being sunk on its way to the British Isles from the East. My last two letters written to you from India may have been lost on that boat. Please let me know how many letters you received from me while I was in India.

I am going off to bed now, Eileen, and I am terribly happy. How I do love you so much more tonight. God bless you, my darling for everything.

Sunday July 6th

At last it has penetrated my thick skull that you have really promised to marry me and I am even happier today than I was yesterday. I am not boasting or being vain when I say that you will never regret it, Eileen. I *know* and feel that I can make you happy. Our home will be built on very solid foundation of true love. Have you ever thought what our home will be like? Have you dreamed about it as much as I have? It will be a little world of our own – you will be the queen of it and I shall be its king. To we shall rule with kindness and we shall pray for wisdom to rule it as God wants us to rule it. May be you have seen it all as I have so often visualised it – it will be a very nice house in the suburbs of some city, not a big house but just large enough for comfort; it will have bay windows and very pretty curtains (selected by you); the front lawn will have many flower beds and there will be roses all over the garden; a very need to hedge will surround us, not high enough to cut us off from the outside and yet not low enough to let the universe see us having tea on the lawn! we must have at least a half dozen trees surrounding our house – lime trees, beech trees, and chestnuts. We shall have friends coming to see us in our paradise and they will marvel at our home and our happiness. However I have dreamed about our home for years and yet and thought that it would never materialise – I thought it was a castle-in-the-air. So very, very important to me, Eileen, is the fact that we are both Catholics and I know that we will always live up to our religion in every way. It will bring us untold happiness and contentment. It does not follow that we shall be discussing religion all day long and saying prayers at all times – we can be good without all of this. My darling, we shall lead a very ordinary life except that we shall be extraordinarily happy! Well, Eileen, have you heard enough about our home or would you like many more pages on the subject. I can promise you one thing and that is – we shall say a family Rosary every evening of our lives in that home. To we shall never be could be “goody-goodies”, but we shall always love our religion and be proud of it. Our married life would be a failure if we did not have Catholic principles to

guide us. We would not love each other properly and we would not be happy. When I was in India my very great friend Mgr. O'Donahue made me very happy one day when he said that a good Irish Catholic girl would be my wife some day and would bring me great happiness. I knew in my heart who that girl was and now she has promised to become my wife. Can you have any idea of the joy that your telegram has brought to me? It is too much for words to describe. I have always known that if I did not marry you, then I would remain a bachelor.

We had a wonderful trek in the jungle this morning. We set out at 9 a.m. and soon we were in the thick of it. I was terribly disappointed at not being lost but alas the other three were too well armed with compasses and maps! The result was that we kept to paths most of the way. I took a few snaps on the edge of the jungle also a few of native Malays on the main road. We had a grand game of football in the afternoon in the heat of the sun. Result was a scoreless draw and we should have won by at least 10 goals! I had some badminton after tea but I do not like the game very much because I keep imagining that I am playing tennis and so I have frequent misses! I cannot say that it's boys my tennis, because I have no tennis to spoil! Still your P F M telegram remains un-coded and I am dying to know its contents. I'm going shopping tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. to the nearest town 50 miles away. It will be my first time there and I shall not have time to enjoy it; have to be back in camp for lunch. I have to pay all of the Mess bills to the traders and buy lots of things for the troops.

Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Monday July 7th

My darling, I have had your telegram the decoded and it was wonderful. You are spoiling me with all these telegrams and you must not because I am not worth all the money you spend on me. It was grand to hear that you are writing fortnightly and how I am looking forward to them all. The first one has not arrived yet, Eileen, but really I am not grumbling pickles and I have nothing to grumble about – I am the happiest man in the whole world tonight. I am more in love with you now than I have ever been before and it is the least I can do to give you all my love and all myself in return for what you have given me. Loving you is so easy to me because I have loved you for such a very long time and yet when I look back on those years they have passed so very quickly and Ranafast does not seem so far away. I have just been thinking, Eileen, that you must trust me an awful lot to say you would marry me without even having met me for many years. I shall never betray your trust as long as ever I live, my darling. I might be a very wicked person and yet you have become engaged to meet without hesitation. What must the O'Kane family think of their Eileen! My darling, I know that we have not made a mistake and only time will show it to others that we were meant for each other. You must feel as I do, otherwise you would have waited. Never, never will you have cause to regret it, Eileen.

I have spent the evening making up a very light "album" of snaps for you. I am sending you hit by air mail and they weigh less than ½ oz. There is my front door view, my back window view, for interior views, a jungle few, and in Malaya view. You will now be able to picture the condition under which I live in this country. I *should* send you my masterpiece panorama but alas it would not be allowed to pass the sharp eyes of the Censor! You will see them all, my darling when the war is over. I seem to be the official photographer to the 27th Field Ambulance. I have spent some of my afternoon in taking snaps of troops who want to send their portraits home to India. I do not find my job very lucrative! And may be I am happier with such a job. Eileen, my darling I must tell you now about a failing of mine – money means *nothing* to me. You will have to take me in hand and teach me the value of money even though I have an idea that your teaching will be in vain. I know from experience that I *must* give money away – to my father, to my people or somebody. I cannot understand why people make such a fuss about it and fight over it. When we get married you will have to take over our finances, otherwise I should make a mess of things. So, my darling, whenever I buy you anything, do not pay any attention to the cost of it, just remember that the thoughts behind it are of much more value. May be my sense of values are all wrong, but I shall never change. Another fault of mind is to side with *all* underdogs and alas they have let me down badly on many occasions in this Field Ambulance, but I shall go on doing the same thing over and over again. It is very bad for discipline but I cannot help my feelings.

I have a wonderful 100 mile drive this morning to town and back again. It must be the prettiest port of Malaya. As I sped along at 7 a.m. this morning in the cool air, I thought of you and how you would have loved it all. I even thought of holidays for us here sometime or even joining the Malay Medical Service. I had a hectic morning shopping and came back laden with chickens, biscuits, beans, fruits, fish, sardines etc, etc. I was back in camp at noon and got some work done before lunch. The lads were very pleased with my purchases. So tonight we had a royal banquet – a seven course dinner! And I am on active service. We had football again this afternoon but I was lazy and was content to be the defence! I am off to my bed now. Good night, Eileen, and God bless you.

Tuesday July 8th

You are a terrible girl! You have made me love you to distraction and you have made me so happy! I never knew that anyone could be so happy as I have been since Saturday. This letter has been the usual disconnected string of words and phrases but my darling, try to understand how I have felt since you said that you would become my wife and that you would give me all your love. I have lived for years for your love, Eileen, and now that it has come I live for the day when we shall meet again. Waiting for that day may be a matter of months or years but it can only make me love you more and more each day. I shall love you every moment no matter where I may be or under what conditions I may live under. I may be in the thick of the war very soon, my darling, but that will make no difference to my love for you. I shall always love you, Eileen, as I have done for so many years. There just could not be anyone but you. I am all yours and never could I belong to anyone but you. This war seems to be an interminable affair but it must end *sometime* and when it does you will find your Frank homeward bound by the first plane available. If I cannot come to you, then you must fly to me wherever I may be and we shall be married on the very day that you land. May be you had better not risk a plane, it would be pleasanter and safer by air. I make plans about you, Eileen, without even consulting your wishes at all!

I have spent a whole day in my forest and not once have I seen the sun. It was inspection morning and I spent *four solid hours* going around the camp with the O.C. It feels rotten when I spend a whole day under *my* trees. I have been wondering where my day has gone to and now I vaguely remember one hour "darning" between five and 6 o'clock. You should see my vain attempts at mending my socks. I have to do it myself or all my things would be ruined by my Indian batman! It is *cold* tonight and I intend using my blanket for the first time in Malaya. You may guess how lucky I am to be in this cool spot because blankets are *never* used in Malaya. I sent off the snaps today but heaven knows when they will reach you. I was glad to read in the papers today that my letter sent by air mail on June 10th reached Britain on June 26th.

I must bid thee adieu again, Eileen, but it is only for a short time because I shall start another letter tomorrow. Please send the ring size very soon and also the photograph you promised me! Give my love to all at home and also to the little Frances whom I *adore*.

Good bye and God bless you, and keep you safe from all harm.

All my love,
Ever yours,
Frank xxx

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,
Wednesday July 9th [1941]

Eileen, my darling,

Do you still love me or have I been dreaming that you love me? Are we really engaged to be married or is that also a dream? If you could only know the happiness that you have given to me, you would not believe that there could ever be such happiness in this world. Oh, my darling, how perfect it would all be if I were only at home again with you, seeing you and loving you more and more each day. Alas there is a war on and it must be finished first before I can go to you and tell you that I love you. It will be a very long story telling you all about and may be it will take years trying to give you some idea how much I adore you. May be you know it already and are tired reading it hundreds of times in my letters. To my letters sound very dull to you, Eileen? They all seem crammed full of love. You see my darling, I love you with everything I have got and loving you is the only thing in my life which matters—that's why I can write about very little else.

Won't it be wonderful, Eileen, when we meet again for the first time after being so long apart. All that the love that we have stored up for so long will then be poured out in those few moments. I know that our love will always remain young and real and good; it will be a spontaneous and yet it will never die. My darling, the happiness that we shall know together will more than compensate for all the love we have missed during all these years. We shall never be a staid, sober couple when we are married; it just would not be in keeping with the love we have for each other. With a love like ours we shall always be happy and carefree. I want to share my happiness with others—somehow I think that everyone should know how to become happy. But, then, everyone would not see love and life as we now see it.

My darling, a letter must come this weekend. How I have waited and waited and still not a letter. You may have sent one to India as I told you and it would be delayed there for weeks. If only they knew how very

urgent it was, they would not keep it for a moment in India. I am so very glad to know that my letters are reaching you, Eileen, and if they make you happy that is all I want of them. I sent off to letters to you this morning by Pan-American Clipper. I must have sent about 20 letters since coming to Malaya; you are being slowly spoiled with all these letters! I am sending as many as ever I can so that you may have something to read should the time come when my letters would have to stop. You do understand what I mean, Eileen? I have a soldier now and my job is in the war, so it is not asking too much off me to do some fighting. I think I would prefer a job fighting in the war instead of "doctoring".

Like yesterday I did not get out of the forest today and it has left me rather dull, so please excuse my battery today and-it is sure to be in heavy stuff. I am going away on a "scheme" all day tomorrow at a place 60 miles away. I love these Field says because they are in reality picnics. I am only going as an observer looking for "tips" from other Field Ambulances. I have to get up very early tomorrow and so must be off to my bed. Remember that I love you and that I shall always love you. God bless you, Eileen; good night.

Thursday July 10th

My darling, I am very tired tonight, but not too tired to love you and to write you a short note. I got up very early this morning before 6a.m. while it was still dark and we set off down the hill at 7 a.m. to the "manoeuvres" below. I had a grand time pottering around the place and peeping at all sorts of novel "shows"; in fact it was all very instructive to my 'civil mind'. However I enjoyed the lunch best of all because it was really a picnic-we sat down under a tree opened our tin of bully-beef, had our cheese sandwiches, fruit and coffee-and oh, it all tasted good after a strenuous morning. On our way back I did some shopping for the Mess and then we sped on our way home at 5:30 p.m. Do you know that I've been thinking of you all day long and praying for you? Don't you ever hear me thinking about you and don't you know that I love you and only you above all else in the world? Don't you feel terribly guilty for making me love you so much that I spend my whole time loving you – I have little time for anything else! Eileen, you know that no matter how long I may live, I shall love you until I die. Should anything happen to either of us before we have a chance of meeting again, I know that we shall love each other just the same. It would break my heart should anything happen to you, my darling, because you are more precious to me than life itself. It would only make me love you all the more.

Will you be terribly hurt to tonight if I can only manage one page with you. I shall make amends tomorrow night. Poor you have to read all my love letters but I am worse off because I have no letters at all to read! I have great hopes that this weekend will surely bring something. And now that I am half asleep I must say good night to you and God bless you, Eileen.

Friday July 11th

My darling, I am sorry I could only manage one page yesterday. There were so many things that I wanted to tell you and now I have forgotten them all! I want to tell you now that I love you more than ever before. Another mail came today, Eileen, and no letter from you yet! Can't you please write to the Home Secretary or somebody about the delay in your letter reaching me! Here I am just longing for a letter and it just does not come. I do not really mind, Eileen, one but I love you so terribly much that I must have a letter from you soon and yet a letter could not make me love you any more than I do tonight. Why should I need letters, anyhow? I am the happiest man in the world because I have found the love that I have been waiting for all my life. Eileen, my darling, if I am so happy now, what will it be like when we meet again. I have about a million things to tell you and a million questions to ask you! I often tried to picture what you are like now, Eileen – whether a very sedate young lady teacher or still the same gay person I have always known you to be; I tried to imagine how you dress your frocks and hats and shoes. That is why you must send me your photograph; I want to see you and talk to you again.

I have an awful cold at present and so my gray matter does not function too well nowadays. You will find that this letter will be awful throughout – I am making grand excuses! It is very cold and wet tonight and I can hear the rain drops pattering on my thatched roof. I have worked hard all day in "mein kamf" (mine camp) and then played a hectic game of football against the local police team. We are still unbeaten in these parts! The rain started late in the evening and has kept on all the time without a break – I actually have my back window shut tonight! My darling, I shall send you a small box of my snaps soon and I want you to keep them in an album at home if you can – just call it Malaya and then I shall remember it all when I get back home again. We have so very many the things to do when I see you again. We are actually engaged to be married and we haven't even kissed each other once yet! I think it is disgraceful and something should be done about it. I discovered yesterday that I am not allowed to even send you any cases and at the end of my letter as I have been doing recently because the Censor considers that there might be a code among all the crosses! You may have noticed how worried I have been about what the Censor thinks of my love letters. I have started a new scheme of registering all your letters, Eileen,

because in some cases you might not get my letters as the stamps are removed and the letter destroyed. I may tell you that that is quite common in India.

Did I mention to you, Eileen, that in a section of this Field Ambulance there is an officer who has longer service than I have and still he is not a major. This section is in another part of the country but great efforts are being made to put to him in my job, promote him, and *demote me*. Actually this would be quite fair and just because the most senior of the junior officers in a Field Ambulance automatically becomes second-in-command and is made a major (acting rank). So your Frank may find himself a mere Captain in the near future! Would you love me just the same, Eileen!!! I know that I would love you as much as ever no matter what happens. My O.C. is making great efforts to keep me in my present job but the powers above think it is very unfair to the other chap who is very good at his job. I can only wait and see what happens. To me, rank means precious little in the Army – the higher I go the more I hate *snobbery*!

My darling, the mosquitoes are biting hard tonight as the rain has made and them come indoors. If you do not wish me to get malaria you will send me off to bed now! Good night and God bless you my own darling. I shall always love you.

Saturday, July 12

This day is called the Grand and Glorious Twelfth at home but Eileen, today it has been the most glorious in my life. Your first letter has reached me at last and I am so terribly happy that I want to tell everybody about it. It was dated *April 27th* and addressed to Rawalpindi. my darling, why cannot I write letters like yours. Mine are so disconnected and sketchy – and now you have made me thoroughly ashamed of them when I compare it to yours. Never did I dream that you would write to me as you now do. I am terribly sorry that my first letter was lost. I sent it from Rawalpindi and I just poured out my heart to you in it for the first time in my life. I have to happy to write coherently tonight! How can you expect me to ever love you enough in return for the love that you have given to me. How could you say that you had ever treated me badly when you know how awful I have been to you in the past – it is I who am to blame.

Have you realised, Eileen, that we owe all our happiness to prayer – to your prayers and the few that I have stormed heaven with. It has been a miracle and we must always thank God for it as long as ever we live. How I thank him for making you write to me last December. What an awful tragedy it would have been if either of us had ever married someone else. I could never have been happy with anyone except you, Eileen, and I have known this for years. My darling, we have had a narrow escape and we almost missed each other on the road of life. I knew in my heart when your December letter came that you were in a quandry and that you had some vital decision to make. It was a dreadful position to be in – you had to choose between someone whom you loved and saw very often at home, and somebody else whom you had not seen for many years and whom you loved too. And I have been lucky, Eileen, so terribly lucky. All I can do is to give you all my love – and you have always had that, my darling, it will always be yours. I shall never change as long as ever I live.

I was charmed to hear that you have taken up cycling – I have liked its always. Do you remember my cycle trips to Castlewellan? How I wish I could accompany you on your cycle tour of Donegal. I hope you are now having a wonderful time amid the beauty of those hills I have loved so much. If you go to Lough Derg do not forget to pray hard for me and remember that I have trod to the same stony ways of that island at least six times. I was there when there was no Grand Basilica and nothing but a cold wooden church built out on the water's edge! If you were to see my bathing costume you would spot my large St. Christopher medal sewn on the front of it with the words – a souvenir of Lough Derg. Many people examine my medal because they think it is the badge of some famous swimming club!! Anyhow, I hope you are having a grand holiday no matter where you may be.

It was good news to hear that your family had left Belfast before the raids began; it will be such a comfort to you to know that they were safe. I suppose your father must stick at his post in Belfast. Surely he must know all about our love as well as your mother, Felix, and Frances. You have got so many people, such as your Rev. Mother at Omagh, to confide in – I have got nobody, so I'll just have to burden you with everything. You may be sure that when I tell my father about it, he will confide in your Uncle Eddie! The latter will have to give glowing accounts of you before my father will be satisfied about you! I don't really mean this, Eileen, because I know that he would never ask a question about my future wife.

Would you please tell Frances that I love her very much and that her Roland had better beware of me as a potential rival! Just tell her that all the girls *fall* for me and eventually she will too!! Don't you like my modesty, Eileen? I was sorry to hear of Gerry McCloskey's death (R.I.P.). It seems such a short time since I spoke to him on the Liverpool a couple of years ago. I am sometimes glad in a way that we are not married, Eileen, because should anything happen to me and you were left to fight alone – it would be awful. But we must not and we shall not lose each other now. I shall come back to you soon again and we shall be so very happy together. Already I am looking forward to your next letter, Eileen, because I know it will soon be here. Life is grand just now since your

letter came. I tried to send you a cable this evening when I had finished work but they would not accept at after 5 p.m.! I shall send you a long cable on Monday with lots of love in it. I have spent weary ours today and yesterday “de-bugging” the barrack rooms! I thank heavens these creatures had not invaded the officers’ quarters as yet! We have all been out to dinner tonight at the local Rest House and we had a meal fit for kings to eat. And now it is 12.30 a.m. on Sunday morning and no Mass to look forward to. Please pray hard, Eileen, that I may have Mass more frequently in this place – not even once yet and I have been here five weeks. I think the priest is on Retreat but he has promised to come. Good night and God bless you, Eileen. I am very happy.

Sunday July 13th

Tell me very soon, Eileen, what is you think of these awful daily letters. May be it gives you some idea of how much you are in my thoughts each day of my life but it must be poor reading for you. Nothing much happens to me in my daily round; it is mostly routine; there are no friends to tell you about, no real news to give you. So my letters are mostly thoughts and not events of interest to you. Evened the snaps I have sent you may give you little idea of what life in Malaya is like. My darling, won’t you please pray very hard for me at Mass and Benediction on Sundays, because I sorely miss it all in the wilderness of beauty. When you receive Holy Communion remember me very especially because I am losing so much grace and merit. It is now about five weeks since I have been to Mass and I would give anything to be able to go. It is really only when one cannot have Mass that one fully appreciates it – at least that’s how I feel about.

I have just come back to camp from tennis – had five good sets with three other chaps (two Indian and one Malay). It was my first game for 10 days as my racket was being repaired and now I feel fit again. I have been very seedy without my favorite “hobby” or game. You will never be able to convince me that golf is a better game than my tennis – I have found golf *the* most aggravating game that exists! However I am willing to become a convert to your side and soon I may be able to start in real earnest. Alas there is no professional to put me right when I make mistakes and it is fatal to start called and develop bad habits which later are difficult to eradicate. You would be very annoyed with me if I were your pupil – I cannot concentrate on that little white pill on the ground and think all the “don’ts” at the same time! One should not have to concentrate on games, and yet in a way I concentrate a little on tennis.

Have you ever realised, Eileen, that you have been a sort of guiding angel to me for so many years. You know well enough that life in Eastern countries is not good – it is so easy to go astray – but *you* have always kept me right. I am not good enough for you, Eileen, in many ways but I have never gone to the dogs in any way while I was in India or in England. How you must of been praying for me or else I could never have done it alone. You were always in my mind and so I always did the right thing. Long ago my sister Una (a nun in Dublin) sent me a short poem and I think it should have been given to you Eileen: – “Not want you get, but what you give Not what you say, but how you live Giving the world and the love it needs Living the life of noble deeds. Not whence you came, but whither Not what you have, but whether found. Strong for the right, the good, the true. These are the things worthwhile to you.” And yet I must not tell you what I really think of you. To me you have always been everything that is good and true. I need not say any more because you must know what is in my heart. I was a very, very lucky to begin life by meeting you because in after – years I naturally compared others to you and they all fell short. Now I am *the* luckiest person in the world. I shall never have to swear that I will be true to you always and I shall never have to ask you to be true to me. That is the beauty of our love, Eileen; it has good foundations and it will outlive time. I *could* not break faith with you for anything in the world – no inducement however strong could make me do it.

I shall now to tell you how I began my Sunday morn’. I discovered a large brown rat this morning in a small building near the Mess. Armed with a stick and clad in pyjamas I tackled it in its nest! All the officers and servants were waiting expectantly *outside* while the battle was proceeding within. The rat escaped by the back entrance and coolly ran between their legs and off into the jungle! I was glad in a way that it escaped because I hate hurting animals even though they are dangerous. Today I have even been happier than yesterday and people have noticed the change in me, tomorrow I shall be happy too (D.V.). You have brought me more happiness in the past week than I ever dreamed could exist. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Monday July 14th

I sent you a telegram this morning, my darling, and I hope it reaches you safely. I have an idea that you are now in the wilds of Donegal and I would not wish you to be in a better spot. Maybe you will say that there is no place like Killough¹⁸, but somehow Donegal is *different*. May be we should have a special corner in our hearts for that county – it was there we first met and that is reason enough why we should love it. I hope and pray that you are

¹⁸ The O’Kane family frequently spent their holidays in a rented house in Killough, Co. Down.

having a very happy vacation no matter where you may be, that you have lots of good friends around you, and that the holiday will not pass quickly for you. You know that I am with you every day in thought. I only want to know that you are happy and that will make me happy too – my one job in life now is to give you all the happiness possible in this world, and even then I shall not be satisfied.

I am glad you have confided your big secret to Felix as well as to your mother. He was one of the nicest lads I met at Queens and at times he must have been fed-up with me asking him to convey messages to you. Believe me he did a very wise thing in leaving the Samaritan – experience can *only* be gained in general practice and the latter is the finest job in the world without exception. A doctor's life can bring happiness and satisfaction that no other can bring; he sees results for his work; in most cases he earns gratitude instead of money and to me that is infinitely better. The poorer the patient the greater should be the care and attention given to them. I am not just an idealist, Eileen; I have tried it out for myself and I know the joy it can bring.

My darling, can you make any suggestions about an engagement ring? Can you tell me what exactly you would like? I have asked you to let me know the size. The problem now is – *how* am I going to send you the said ring? I had thought of sending the money to my father and asking him to purchase one in Belfast; if you have any objection to this, Eileen please let me know. Another thought was to ask a London firm to send you a selection of rings and let you choose for yourself. My darling, I want you to have a ring and I want you to wear it when you think you should. If you would rather wait until I can put it on your finger, I am agreeable – I only want you to be happy.

I have had more tennis today with the local police inspector, the District Officer, and another chap (all Europeans); I feel much better for it. It was good to have a decent night's sleep last night and wake up very fresh this morning. I did *work* today until 5 p.m. so you need not think I am having an easy time! I had a letter today from my Mayo friend and his wife whom I liked so much at my last station; they have given me a standing invitation to their home whenever I care to visit them.

Always remember that I love you dearly, Eileen, and that I am all yours. *I shall never change.* Give my regards to your parents, Felix, Frances, and all at Castlewellan. Good bye, my darling, and God bless you.

All my love,

Ever yours,

Frank.

P.S. Not allowed to put any crosses at the end nowadays!

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,
15th July – Tuesday [1941]

Eileen, my darling,

I have some tidings for you – You are hereby condemned to the awful fate of having a letter from me every day until the war is over and we meet again! I do offer you all my sympathy, because you need it all! When we meet again and get married you will have these daily “letters” for the rest of your life but they will not be *written* letters, I shall *say* them all to you. You will have to *listen* to my diary each day – my successes, my failures, my work, and my thoughts. You may even grow weary of my tale each evening, but I promise you that I shall make you smile every day and you will be happy, because I shall do everything to make you happy. Oh Eileen, my darling, have you ever tried to picture our home – the peace and security of it all. We are so very lucky to have a love like ours that will bring us nothing but happiness. We shall pray hard that God will bless our married life because a lot depends upon prayer – it is stupid to ask for happiness unless we make our home a sacred place. Surely He will give us all the happiness we need in life when He knows that we love each other as we do. I have told you so often, Eileen, that loving you has always kept me right; it has been a wonderful blessing to me. Once upon a time you had the worship of a dreamy, self-conscious schoolboy and now you have all the love that he can offer you as a man – how deep and strong that love is today, you can have very little idea. He still dreams a bit but the self-consciousness has all gone and now he thinks himself a very important army officer! No, Eileen, I shall never get a swelled head over success or promotions. The latter mean nothing to meet and the former I shall always pass on to you because all my successes are yours. May be you do not like Byron's poetry, but when I was in my last year at school and very much in love with you, I learned something about it and applied it to you. You must have read it and the ‘Golden Treasury’ – “Oh, fame if ‘ere I took delight in thy praises; ‘Twas less for the sake of

thy high-sounding phrases, Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover She thought that I was not unworthy to love her." I am dreaming and boring you with Byron, but I wanted to tell you how I felt about fame.

I am still in the same spot in Malaya and unlikely to move from here for a long time. I have become very attached to my home among the trees. I consider my wooden hut a palace fit for kings to dwell in. My tiny lizard stares at me each night with two very black eyes – I almost think he can read what I am writing to you. My room is just the same as in the snaps I sent to you – I hope the said snaps have arrived. You would love this place, Eileen; it is beautiful and peaceful; it is *the* coolest military station in Malaya and I should hate to leave it now. The mornings are glorious – everything is fresh, the air is pure, and the birds are singing. It is pleasant in the evenings listening to our Hindus chanting their prayers – the music is really marvelous; while the Mohammedan 'priest' sounds the calls to prayer at dusk. I had a strenuous game of tennis today with one of our Indian officers and I actually won by three sets to nil! I was lucky. Will you please give me some tips about driving in golf, Eileen; I want to know about the theory before beginning on the real thing. I am still very happy since your first letter came a few days ago. Good night and God bless you.

Wednesday July 16th

I often wonder, Eileen, are you as happy as I am. If you love me as much as I love you, that you must be. No matter how far apart we may be it cannot stop me from being very happy. My darling, I never want you to be unhappy for a moment as long as we are separated during this war; I want you to keep looking forward to the day when we shall meet again. That will be a day in our lives we shall never forget because it will be a day of joy for us. Some day when we grow old and grey we shall recall it and the happiness we had then and every day afterwards – or may be we shall never grow old! I know that our love will always be young and as pure as it is today. How could we ever have any unhappiness in our home – that word will be unknown. We may have our share of sadness and disappointment but we have so many 'antidotes' to counteract these. I have been thinking about the 'someone' to whom you had to give an answer at home; may be he loved you as much as I do and yet you took the awful risk of choosing me instead. You may have been very brave, Eileen, and some people may question the wisdom of your choice. You know that you haven't seen me for many years and I could have changed a lot in that time – two years in England and almost two years in the Army can make changes in a man. I do not mean to flatter myself, Eileen, but I promise you that you will never have to regret your choice. I know that I can make you happy just as I know that you have more love from me than any woman has ever had love from a man before. I shall never cease loving you for the rest of my life.

Eileen, I shall never forgive myself for the way in which I ignored your letters when I was in England. You wrote and told me all about your illness, about Dan McSparran, and how W. W. D. Thompson came to your rescue. Then you asked my advice about your proposed visit to America; you went to U.S.A. and when you came back you tried to reach me again. I was such a stupid fool in those days not to have understood you. You even want to give me golfing lessons – as a *friend* of the past! How I wish I had taken those lessons – we should have been married by this time if I had. And now that I cannot even see you or speak to you, we have become engaged after a very awkward proposal by letter – a letter which flew more than half-way around the world to reach you! Oh Eileen, my darling, I do not deserve your love after the way I have treated you. Please tell me just once that you forgive me.

Are you receiving *all* my letters? Surely some of them must get through – may be they have all reached you safely and I pray that they have. I have made it easy for you to check up on missing ones because I write every day. May be some day you will send my 'diary' for publication!! Wouldn't it make *wonderful* reading!!! I fear that I could not change my letters now, Eileen; I just write down my thoughts and tell you what happens to me daily. I cannot sit down and compose elegant essays in the King's best English, but I'd jot down whatever comes into my head during the day – maybe that is unfair to you who have to read my poor jottings. Do you ever show the said jottings to anyone? My darling, they are all meant for you, but you know that I would not mind you showing them to Frances or your mother or anyone whom you love.

At last we have had a route march. I love marching and this morning as we set off at 8 a.m. with the troops, I was walking on air! We only had a short march of 3 ½ hours but it was grand; the weather was glorious, the surroundings beautiful, and everyone was happy. We started off on the road, after two miles we left that and waded across a river, then into a jungle, then open country, then through a tin mine and home by road again. In the afternoon and I had a dull time in my office as I was President at a Court of Inquiry – I almost went asleep at times, the proceedings were so dull! After tea I had plenty of tennis and that made amends for my cloistered afternoon! I forgot to tell you that I began my day by praying much harder than usual for you; I also took some snaps on the march today. I *must* send you a load of snaps for *our* album! Good night, Eileen, and God bless you.

Thursday July 17th

My darling, I met a very important person today and had a chat with him. He is Sir R. Brooke-Popham (Air Marshal) who is C.-in-Chief of the Far East. I have now met all the notable military men in Malaya – three generals included; I must say they were all very keen men and very interested even in our small “show”. It has done me lots of good (as they say in Belfast) to have met such men as these; I could talk to them all quite freely without “shaking at the knees” in sheer terror! You know that there was a time when your Frank could talk to very few people and now that has all changed. It was not really my fault because in our home at Belfast we did not entertain, we never had visitors, and never met people as we should have. My people just did [not] believe in it; they did not mean to deprive us of any social life or give us a chance of meeting people. Yet I can always say that I had a good father and mother and think there could not have been parents in the whole world to compare with them.

Last night I suddenly decided to have a trip to the nearest town this morning on a shopping expedition and for some fresh air. I went off at 7.30 a.m. in the early morning mist. It was chilly for a bit but suddenly we found ourselves at the edge of the bank and soon we were bathing in the bright morning sun. It was the same glorious trip as before and as usual I was think of you, wondering where you were at that moment, wondering if you had received my telegram or not. I made some welcome discoveries during my shopping tour – tinned prawns and tinned sausages! You can well image what a cheer went up when I returned to the mess at noon armed with all the dainties! This afternoon I did some painting of new sign-posts for the Ambulance. I managed a couple of sets of tennis with two other British officers of the local regiment; the fourth was an Indian officer from our unit. I am half-asleep sitting in my camp chair by my table and dim light – dinner was good tonight! The O.C. and I dined out at lunch with the C-in-C at the local unit's mess.

Before I go off to bed I must tell you that I love you even more today, if that is possible. I could never love anyone but you my darling no matter how long I might live. I am longing to see you again and I shall never rest contented until I do and tell you myself all about my love for you. Only then will you have some vague idea of how terribly much I love you. I am looking forward to next week and the coming of the priest to say Mass in the district. I am asleep, Eileen! Good night and God bless you my darling.

Friday – July 18th

I have some bad news for you today, Eileen, and yet it is not unexpected. Our Brigadier came today on inspection and he had a special interview with me during which I was told that as there was now another officer attached to the Field Ambulance who has got more service [than] myself he would have to be made a major and I would become a Captain again. You see, my darling, it is all fair and above board. My successor to the ‘crown’ is a very keen man, he was in the Army about a year before war started; he is with a company of our Field Ambulance in another part of the country but thank heavens I am to be left here and not transferred to his company. I am still second-in-command, and have all the same jobs as before; the money side of the question does not matter at all to me. I knew that all this was coming and it was just bad luck for me that a more senior officer joined the same Fd. Ambulance as mine. I am very pleased really to be allowed to remain in charge of H.Q. Company and remain in this beauty spot. Do you love me as much as ever, Eileen, even though I am a mere captain now?? My darling, you are not in love with Captain or Major Murray!! I am very happy because you love plain Frank Murray. I know he is really a ‘nobody’ with more brawn than brain, but he loves you and he will always love you through thick and thin. I know how very, very lucky I am to have your love and I shall always try to be worthy of it. I shall never understand why you could ever be bothered with me at all, Eileen; I am not worth it. All I can do in return is to give you everything – my love, myself, and all that I have. You know that these have always been yours and yours alone.

I wrote a long letter to my father this evening and also sent him a few snaps of Malaya. He will be terribly disappointed about my de-motion, because he is rather inclined to be too proud of his offspring's successes! You should have seen him on the day I passed my Final – he was terribly proud of me that day and I was glad for his sake because it was one of his life's ambitions to make me a doctor. It would have hurt him very much if I had failed him. How I prayed that would never let him down – and how I worked too for his sake. Now you understand why he will feel my de-motion so much. I should mention that the Brigadier informed me today that I would be in command of a Field Ambulance soon and be promoted to Lt. Colonel! However, I took that with a grain of salt!

I told my father our secret and he is the only person I have confided in. I said that you were everything that he wanted my wife to be, that you were everything that I wanted in any girl – that I loved you and that I would never change. I did mention that you were a niece of Eddie O'Kelly's, that you were many things (which I must not repeat to you!). I know he will dash off to the said Edward and ask for a detailed description of you and heaven help Eddie if he gives you a bad character! I hope you don't mind me telling my father about our engagement, but I think he ought to know that his son is engaged!

The big parade and inspection went off very well this morning and I was complimented on the smart turn out of my parade. All my equipment was in good condition and so as Q. master I got another "pat-on-the-back"! I produced a very good lunch for the visitors and they went away very pleased with their day – and with the Field Ambulance! I tried to do some painting in the afternoon but the wretched brush held up the good work! I sent lots of negatives and two films off for developing and printing. There was no tennis this evening as the heavens were opened at 5 p.m. and the deluge came down for about an hour. I like the rain to come occasionally because then I have time to write home – I reserve all your letters for after dinner and that's why my letters are so happy and dreamy! I can hear both of my neighbours snoring just now and so I am tempted to go off to mine bed! Before I go I want you to tell me all about your new black frock – a really detailed description of material, plain or not, does it suit you; what shoes you wear with it; and whether you wear any jewellery with it. You must remember that I had five sisters once upon a time and I have seen them all in new frocks getting ready for big dances. I was not much of an asset to them at dances – I only ruined their pretty shoes! Good night, Eileen, and God bless you.

Saturday – July 19th

I have had a weary day and did not finish work till 8 p.m. – I started at 7 a.m. It has been a very happy day and I owe all my happiness to you, my darling. I read your last letter once more today and I love it more than ever before. What rubbish I write in my letters compared to yours – I can never really explain matters as I would like to. How can I put down on paper everything that is in my heart; it is not possible, Eileen, and so you will have to wait until we meet again and hear it all from me.

Tonight I am dead tired and sleepy. I had a big P.A.D. (A.R.P.) scheme on this morning and I had to organize the whole show; it meant lots of running about. I made it very realistic by partly covering a 'casualty' up with earth and making the rescue squad dig him out again! There was a court martial of some kind on too and I had some part in that. At 3 p.m. I went off in a truck to have a look at the recent accident to one of our cars. As that was 50 miles away and I had to spend an hour making sketches of the place and even taking photographs of it, I did not get back here till 8 p.m. I have been 'appointed' as the unit's official photographer!! We had dinner at the local Rest House at 9 p.m. and the goat did not taste so good! And now I am finished and ashamed of my effort tonight. Good night and God bless you, my darling.

Sunday – July 20th

Please forgive me for only writing a few lines last night, Eileen, but I had to jump into bed quickly else I should have gone to sleep over your letter! It is now 6.30 p.m. and I shall not go asleep at this hour. It is growing dark and I am sitting on my favourite place – the steps of my verandah. It has rained continuously all day long and it is still very dull – and I have worked continuously all day long and I am still very dull because I have not been outside the shadow of these trees today! That did not prevent me from thinking about you and being very happy – and yet I must tell you that no matter how happy I may be there is always a pang within my heart that makes me long to see you again and tell you everything that you should hear from me. Surely that day cannot be so very far away now. As the days slip by I always thank God that each day is a step nearer to peace and one day nearer to you, Eileen, and to the happiness we shall know in our re-union. We shall both find each other changed because you are no longer the very frightened schoolgirl I knew in the past and I am no longer the very self-conscious schoolboy who once upon a time pursued you so ruthlessly! May be you have noticed how happy little Francis is with her new-found love, but, my darling, I shall make you much happier than that because we shall be the happiest couple in the world. It is not premature boasting, it only stands to reason that this should be so because we love each other as two people have never loved before. We must pray very hard that God may bless our love and keep it always holy.

I have been thinking of your mother today and how proud she must be in having one child a nun and another a priest in the making. My dear mother always wanted to have one of her sons a priest but alas it could not be but she did have the consolation of having four daughters nuns and a fifth very probable one too. Having lived in England for two years and having met all classes of people there and in India too, I realise that we are the luckiest children in the world because Irish parents are the best in every way – there are no parents like them anywhere.

Eileen, have you ever considered me a very deep person? At school, at "Queens", and out in the big world people always thought I was a very great thinker as I never had much to say for myself! The art of conversation had never been developed in any of our family and that had its disadvantages later in life when I came to live in England. When I was studying medicine, Dr McLorinan always called me "the wise old owl, that lived in an oak"! I have got only one gift and that is of knowing people's real worth on very, very short acquaintance. I knew you, Eileen, the first time I met you and I have never changed my opinion of you since then. I have loved you since then and never once have you been forgotten – and you never shall be.

You will have to give me some lessons on sewing, mending, and darning! I must have spent over an hour putting a patch on my shirt this evening! I cut out a neat square and covered up the hole, sewed around the edges with blanket stitch and another row of plain stitching around the perimeter! Please tell me the proper procedure. I am hopeless with socks and can never make a darn look like a darn!! I still have to do my repairs on Sundays as I have no time during the week. When we get married, my sewing days will be over – that is my chief reason for wanting to marry you, Eileen. I warn you in time that I shall have very large holes in my socks and you will have to darn them! Will you promise me one thing, my darling? Let us both go on shopping expeditions occasionally – I want to see all your new frocks, coats, and shoes. I am very bad at shopping especially for myself – I don't believe in bargains and never argue about prices; so usually the shopkeeper finds me easy prey!

When I have finished this awful letter I intend reading it through just once as an experiment! If I find it is not readable, I shall tell you in my "P.S." and in future shall try to make amends. I hope my telegram reaches you in the wilds of Donegal and that you are very happy there. I shall love you every moment until we meet again and then my love will only have begun. Nothing could ever make me stop loving you. I am yours, Eileen, and never could even a small bit of me belong to anyone else. Do not forget to send the ring size – I shall manage the rest somehow. Please send your photograph as soon as ever you can. Give my love to everyone at home also to Frances and all in Castlewellan. Please God I shall see you all again in the near future.

God bless you and keep you safe from all danger.

All my love, Eileen.

Ever yours,

Frank.

P.S. This letter is awful! I am sorry.

Frank.

P.P.S.! Do you still love me, Eileen?

F.

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,
21.7.41
(Monday)

Eileen, my darling,

Here I am again doing my "daily dozen"! It is 24 hours since I wrote to you last and that seems so very long ago; in fact it seems ages since I sent your letter off this morning! I am still in my wooden 'palace' and I should hate to leave it now that I have grown to love it so much. Alas there are many rumours in the air that we may be moved to another station in the very near future – in fact it will probably happen before this letter reaches you. How I shall loathe the plains and all its horrible stickiness and unpleasantness – not to mention the awful air down there. Up here everything is so lovely, the air is so bracing; the birds actually sing here; there are games and walks. Won't you please pray very hard that we may be left up in this heaven that so many other units do not like because it is so very far away from "life" as they call it. Yet this place is teeming with life – real life as God intended it to be; nothing artificial about it. By the way, Eileen, my address will remain the same no matter where I shall go in Malaya. I am still a major but as you know it will not be for long – "What care I for wreaths that can only give glory!" (more Byron!). My successor is not really my successor because my O.C. has decreed that I shall hold all my present jobs in the Field Ambulance, so that my position is not a bit changed except that my crown must go!

And how are you my darling? Do you still love me and do you still pray hard for me? I need your prayers as I have always needed them in the past – I am sure that your prayers have got me out of many troubles. I have always felt your prayers and have always sensed that something was making me do the right thing. You must be asking God as I am asking Him to pour down all His blessings on our love; you know that it could never be a success without his blessing. I still love you, Eileen, with all my heart and everything that I can give to you and I know that I shall always love you. If only I could see you for a moment now and tell you all about it – that would be better than all the letters in the world. I never could write letters, Eileen, and it is a bit late now to learn. Do you remember the first letter you wrote to me while you were at St Louis, Kilkeel? Do you remember how you

signed it – “grádh go leor, ó Éibhlín”¹⁹? My darling, you cannot imagine how thrilled I was to read those words from you whom I worshipped in my own romantic schoolboy way! And now I worship you in a very many way, I hope; my love is very grown-up and it is so very deep and true – it could never weaken or change.

This week is going to be a hectic one for me because my Company (H.Q.) will spend every day in the field doing intensive training. Still it is grand fun and I can still make it seem like a picnic for the men. I cannot give you any details of our daily programme but I must tell you about the score of lads who came to see us perform. They were all Malays and they looked perfect in their multi-coloured sarongs; they laughed at us in our respirators and thought it all very strange that we should come and perform near their colony in the valley. Their colony is like something in a story book; it is a world all of its own – fenced in, in a crude fashion. They are self-supporting – they have herds of cattle and goats grazing all around; have their own school etc. And yet I have not described them to you at all, Eileen! I am hopeless! Good night and God bless you my darling. P.S. I managed two sets of tennis this evening and now you must listen very carefully. I came across two lads with golf clubs this evening out near the football ground. I borrowed a No.5 and sent three perfect iron shots down the fairway! So look out, young lady! I love you.

Tuesday – July 22nd

I am so very happy tonight and I have been happy all day long. And now you will hear all about it. This morning a very welcome visitor arrived at the hospital and asked for me – the messenger gave me a weird message in Hindustani which I did not understand. I was all dressed up in my battle kit ready to move out of camp at the head of the column. I rushed over to the hospital and found a very charming French priest awaiting me. I liked him immediately I saw him and we had a grand chat together. He informed me that Mass would be at 8 a.m. tomorrow morning; that he would be able to come to this district once every three months. I arranged to meet him at the Rest House tonight at 8 p.m. as my guest for dinner there. And now I have just returned from dinner and we have had a lovely evening together. We had a good meal and then set off in our respective cars to his hut in the village. He showed me the small wooden chapel and really, Eileen, it was beautiful without being ornamental. It was built by a Catholic District Officer once upon a time; later it was enlarged and now it can hold up to about 30 people. You would love everything that I have seen tonight – the little grassy lane leading up to the chapel, the quaint little compound containing the chapel and the priest's hut. I went to confession tonight and it was made in the strangest of surroundings – a tiny wooden hut with two of the smallest rooms inside it that I have ever seen. I cannot tell you how happy I was. And now here is something for you – I have arranged with Father to say Mass tomorrow morning for my special intention. Need I tell you what that special intention is? Well, it is to ask God's blessing on our love, that He may bless us now and that he may bless our marriage. How I shall pray for both of us tomorrow morning especially after Communion; I can always pray best then. Oh, if only I could get to Mass more often. That's why you must never forget me in your prayers for a single day, my darling. So very much depends upon you and I know that you could never let me down. I trust you as I have never trusted anyone before.

Father (no names) hails from Brittany and has a sister a nun in Paris. His brother was captured in the Maginot Line during the war and taken prisoner. He never hears from either of them. He has been 12 years in Malaya and has many interesting tales to relate. I shall only have time to have a word with him after Mass tomorrow and then dash off to camp and lead the column out on our daily exercises. We had a glorious day in the wide open space today and the men can still treat it as a pic-nic. We are working hard and have reached the stage where we are just polishing up the very small points. I think we are well ahead of anything else in Malaya at the moment – and that is not boasting! My darling, our football jerseys arrived today and the colours were my selection – green and white stripes across!! So please tell Felix that Belfast Celtic²⁰ is going strong in Malaya too! May I say good night now, Eileen. God bless you and keep you safe. I do love you so much more today; and I know that tomorrow will find me loving you still more. I must tell you before I go that I have been selected as this District's No.1 tennis player in an inter-district match to be played shortly at a place 30 miles away from here!

Wednesday July 23rd

Well, my darling, today has been wonderful. I got up very early this morning, collected *all* the Catholics in the camp together and off we went to chapel in a truck. We found all the natives already there saying their prayers aloud as they sat on the floor; it was a lovely picture, Eileen. The priest was hearing confession at the end of the altar rails and he looked like a saint – and he probably is one. We found two forms near the back of the chapel and thither we were ushered by the native warden. We were the first military people who had ever been to Mass

¹⁹ lots of love, from Eileen

²⁰ Belfast Celtic was Frank's favourite football team. They played at Celtic Park on the Donegall Road and had the same green and white strip as Glasgow Celtic. The club withdrew from the Irish League in 1949.

in this district and we created quite a sensation among the natives. I should mention that by natives I mean Tamils who come from Southern India – no Malays or Chinese were present. Can you imagine how happy I was during *our* Mass; how hard I prayed for you and for me. After Communion I asked and prayed for so many blessings that God could not grant them all at once! When Mass was over it was 8.40 a.m. and I had to rush back to camp, change, have breakfast, and lead the convoy out of camp at 9 a.m. Strangely enough I managed it, with a minute to spare! Maybe I do not deserve to *be* so happy, but all day long I have been walking on air. The O.C. came to inspect my “show” in the field today and could find no flaw in it anywhere. My men worked like heroes and they liked it. The rain came down in torrents at 3 p.m. but today the rain could not wet me even though I was drenched to the skin! I always make it a point to get much wetter than the men because then they can have no cause for complaint; I make them realise that I am willing to do the same as I ask them to do. Well, it has rained ever since 3 p.m. and so tonight is really cold and damp.

I have a big “show” laid on for tomorrow morning. I am taking the company out to a spot 15 miles away, setting up camp, and we shall be receiving and evacuating ‘casualties’ for hours without ceasing. Tomorrow is also pay day and as usual I have to pay out at 2 p.m. Then we should have football at 4 p.m. The lads are very keen to wear their new green and white jerseys – I wonder how many of them know the sentiment that lies behind my choice of the colours! It reminds me of the “wearin’ of the green”!

I have been surprised at some local news I heard today. A large bear was shot about 200 yards behind the village a couple of days ago; the rest House Keeper bought it and cut out the heart as a lucky charm! A tiger has killed some cattle recently about 10 miles from here. Did I tell you about the Dublin man whose wooden house was nearly wrecked by a herd of twenty elephants a few nights ago? He is district officer of a neighbouring area and is the only white man around the place. The stampede occurred at 4 a.m. in a bright moonlight night and though very terrifying it was a lovely sight!

I would give anything to know where you are this evening and what you are doing and what you are thinking of. I only hope that you are very happy – that is all I can wish you. May be I envy you if you are now among the ‘Hills of Donegal’. Some day, Eileen, we shall see all the beauty of Donegal together and I promise you that it will seem more beautiful that you have ever seen it before. We shall cycle and walk and drive through it; we shall play golf at Rosapenna and Bundoran; we shall swim in the Atlantic – there are so many things we must do together when I come back to you, my darling. God bless you and keep you safe from all harm.

Thursday – July 24th

My darling, after due deliberation and careful thought I have arrived at the inevitable conclusion that I love you even more today than yesterday! You must never tell me that it is possible for me to love you too much because I know that I can never love you enough no matter how long I may live. I am wondering if all is well with you at home? I sent you a telegram about two months ago and there has been no reply as yet. I am only being stupid because you must be in Donegal just now and probably out of touch with things. I still write to you every day and send a letter off by the trans-Pacific air mail on every 6th day. Are you receiving these dull and uninteresting letters or have they met their deserved fate floating on the Atlantic waves! I am longing for your next letter, Eileen, and to hear from you what I have wanted so badly to hear for such a long time. I have only received one of your letters since I came to Malaya – that came about 2 weeks ago and was forwarded from Rawalpindi. I only tell you this, Eileen, to let you know how long it takes letters to reach the East nowadays. I have promised to send you lots of snaps from Malaya but so far I have only sent about a dozen in all. I have collected about 20 more for our album and some day when I have time I shall send them all to you. I seem to be working all day long and have no spare time at all – except after dinner and that is always reserved for your letter. My O.C. has just peeped around the corner of my door and asked me “What on earth can you find to write about every night”! He complains that although he writes home once a fortnight he is always stuck for something to say! May be you find me too long winded and boring – and I am sorry if it is so but also it is the only way I can write to you and tell you how much I love you. I read through my last letter to you just once and I found it was really awful but all my letters are the same – at least they all mean the same thing and that is a very short three-worded sentence! I am looking forward to your “vacation letter” telling me of all the wonderful times you had. I want a very detailed description of Lough Derg, Donegal and Killough – it will be as good as a holiday for me! Have you ever met, in your travels, a very good friend of mine called Dr. Duff who has a practice in Portaferry? His name is Frank and I wish I were as good in every way as he. He taught me a lot when I was a student in hospital and he was house-surgeon. I have not written to him for a couple of years now but he may remember me still. You should meet him sometime, Eileen.

I had a hectic morning dashing all over the countryside on my ‘manoeuvres’! All went off without a hitch and at last I can say that we are really ready for anything that may come. I paid out a couple of hundred men in less than an hour this afternoon. We had grand fun with our usual weekly football melée – the lads love it. It was

too late for any tennis – besides I was too tired for such frivolity! I am going to bed now with a prayer for you. God bless you, my darling, and may you always be happy.

Friday – July 25th

As it is now 1 a.m. it must really be Saturday! I have just returned to camp after a strenuous day in the field – you may have guessed that we did lots of nightwork too. My darling, please excuse the awful mess that this page is in but I'll explain it all now. I took my writing pad along with me on the exercises today. I visualised a quiet evening in my small tent doing a spot of writing. We had settled in for the night at 9.30 p.m. and I sat down to my "dinner" on the floor of the tent (mother earth) – my wonderful dinner of bully-beef and cheese sandwiches, when along came a string of 'casualties' for treatment and evacuation. Your letter and my dinner were left unfinished in my tent for the rest of the evening; but I have just finished my dinner and now your letter comes second to my awful greed! I am very selfish, Eileen, and you will have to cure me of it. However you will never cure me of my habit of loving you no matter how hard you might try. You know that my love for you has become a part of me – the most important part. Some people think that their work should come first above all things but I could never think that way. Loving you, Eileen, comes before all else except God; in loving you I have to do my job well and I have to love God better. So you see that your love is all-important to me. I have got other loves too, my darling. I have spent today with a hundred men and they say that they love me too (said he shyly). I was lost for an hour this evening in the darkness and when I reached the path again I found 100 men armed with torches, lamps, and matches making good efforts to recover the dead body they expected to find! When I met them they all gathered around me and touched me very quickly to make sure that it really was me. Poor lads had been slaving all the day and then they had to hunt for me! This afternoon a snake passed about a foot ahead of me in the grass and it was in a real hurry. It was about 5 feet long and one is supposed to kill snakes but that never appealed to me. The poor old snake was frightened, so why should I be afraid of it.

My darling, please forgive me if I go off to bed as I have to get up early this morning. God bless you and keep you.

Saturday – July 25th

I have been so very, very happy today and you are to blame! Sometimes I wonder if it is quite right for anyone to be so happy as I am – I know that I do not deserve it at all. Your wonderful letter dated May 23rd arrived today. At last I have read what I have wanted to read or hear for such a very long time – that you love me. Oh how can I ever love you enough for all that you have given to me – the one thing that I have put above all else in my life has been given. We shall never cease thanking God for the love he has granted to us – never as long as we live must we forget. Please always write me letters like the one you sent me today. You would blush if you but knew how many times I have read that letter. I know that we shall meet again soon and that very thought must surely keep us alive in the meantime. Letters are really our only way of communicating with each other and though they take months to reach their destination, they can play such a very important part in our romance. All letters may have to cease in both directions in the not too distant future; so my darling we must put as much love as ever we can into them. My darling, you must know that I shall always love you and no one but you no matter what happens. Should we have to wait months or years before we meet again, it can never make any difference to my love for you. I shall write the usual daily letter (or diary) even though I may not be able to send it; but some day you will be able to read it all. No amount of writing can ever give you any idea of how very much I love you, Eileen. Nothing in this world could ever stop me from loving you. Please do not love me too much, Eileen, in case something should happen to me – you would then suffer a lot and I never want you to be unhappy.

I am so sorry about the tattered envelopes you have been receiving from me but I hope the present lot are an improvement. I have never sent you any snaps of myself because I have not got any, but I did send the photograph without you asking for it (such presumption of vanity!). I wanted you to have it and I hoped it has arrived – parcels usually take about 3 months to reach their destination. My darling, you must not forget to send me a large photograph of yourself – I need you very badly in my wooden hut. I want to feel that you are with me always and praying for me. All those 7,000 miles will disappear and mean nothing because we shall be very close together always.

I must take more interest in Malaya – for the sake of your pupils! I shall redouble my efforts with snaps of the country and all the types of people living in it. You know that the Malays are not the original inhabitants of Malaya – the aborigines are called Saachais (that's how it is pronounced!). There are only a few thousand of the latter remaining in Malaya. They are a small race, very dark skin, black woolly hair, and African negroid features; they are nomadic and live in the jungle. They hunt wild animals and their dress is a loin cloth only. There is little record of how they came to Malaya but many believe that they are African in origin. The real Malay has a dark yellow complexion, slightly Mongolian features, and usually small in stature. They are very picturesquely dressed

in long coloured sarongs down to their feet and a quaint little fez hat on top of their heads (excuse bad English!). They are a bit lazy and are never in a hurry. They are shy of strangers but not as shy as the aborigines. I have failed miserably to give you any idea of what these people look like – so I shall have to supplement it with snaps!

Eileen, would you mind going to see my father. I have written and told him all about our engagement and all about you. You will find him just a plain country man with very little education but with a shrewd brain and a heart of gold. You have asked to meet my sister too and I want you to do so next time you are in Dublin. You will find a very great welcome awaiting you from Una, my favourite (Sister M. Villana O.P., Dominican Convent, Sion Hill, Blackrock, Co Dublin; Charles Murray Esq., 155 Old Park Road (shop) or 95 Cliftonville Road, Belfast. Try Eddie O' Kelly as escort!) She was one of the few people at home who really understood me at all – and that was no easy job. I shall write and tell her that you are coming to see her sometime.

I am very tired tonight, as I have had another hard day, not to mention my five hours sleep last night! I was actually sad yesterday for the first time for ages but today it has all vanished thanks to you. I had to pray very hard yesterday evening and I wish I could tell you all (ink!) about it. I wish you were near me Eileen; there are so many secrets I could tell you and I know you would understand. Yesterday's affair was concerned with my job and for a moment I was tempted to say "What's the use?" – that is an awful expression and I must never say it. Please pray very hard for me, Eileen; always stay near to me. You see, my darling, I have worked so very hard with this Field Ambulance and I helped in a way to make it the best that ever came out of India. You should have seen the mean when they first paraded in Rawalpindi!

I must say au revoir once more, Eileen, otherwise I shall write 15 pages instead of the allotted twelve! Give my love to all of your people and also my sympathies in having me as a future son-in-law! I am longing to see them all and also my little Frances – she might give you her Roland for an Olivier like me! Give her my love.

May God bless you my darling, and may He hear all your prayers. I shall love you forever and ever.

All my love,

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
27th July (Sunday) [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

You must be weary of me calling you a darling so often and so it is 'dearest' for a change today! I want to explain about my new address. I am still in Malaya but we have been ordered to use the above as our address in future. It will delay the delivery of your letters to me but 'orders is orders'! Should I be changed from Malaya to another country I can always let you know of my destination.

I am still reading your wonderful letter which arrived yesterday – it was dated May 23rd. Your letter of May 8th has not arrived yet but I know it must come eventually as you may have addressed it to India. I finished my usual 12 page epistle last night but I cannot send it till Monday. I want you to have this note along with it so that you may not be confused about my address. Please do not laugh at me, Eileen, for enclosing a lock of my hair. It may sound silly and sentimental but I only wanted you to have one little part of me because I belong entirely to you. I am sorry that I cannot send all of me to you by post but if we have patience that will come too. All this waiting must come to an end some time and may be it will be sooner than we expect. I know and feel that we shall meet again. Surely God could not allow such a love as ours to end in tragedy. You know that I am not afraid of death, Eileen; I am only afraid for you and what you might suffer. For your sake and because you ask me I am being careful about my health – I take all anti-malarial precautions and I am making doubly sure that I shall not get Typhoid or Dysentery by having all known vaccines injected into my poor arms at regular intervals. I take no risks when driving a truck or car because I love you. And yet my darling(!) I know no fear of anything on earth and may be you know why. What more could I ask of life that to have two such loves. I have felt much more contented since you told me that your home is now in Killough and that all those dear to you are safe. However I am sure that Spring Villa will always be regarded as your home. I intend addressing all my letters to Springfield Road and then your father could forward them. I sent you a reply-paid telegram about 2 weeks ago but have had no reply as yet; there was nothing of importance in it but I fear that it has reached Spring Villa and returned as there was nobody at the house.

My quest for knowledge about Malaya has already begun because your young ladies at Omagh Convent are relying on me for first hand information about this country! I shall send you a copy of the Straits Times Annual

when I can get one; you will find it very absorbing and contains lots of fascinating pictures of life in Malaya. I shall write away for back numbers too and you shall have them all. I have also heard of a very good book (periodical) on the geology of Malaya and you shall have that too in due course, if available. I have collected plenty of snaps and they are ready for dispatch to you tomorrow.

And now I must tell you of a very interesting day I have just spent. The O.C. and I set out at 9.30 a.m. this morning in his car (V8) bound for a small town 32 miles away. The District Officer resides there and it was on his invitation to me that we went on this expedition. Every inch of that 32 miles is through jungle. The first 9 miles was easy because the road was good but the rest of the way was really nothing but a narrow path – just wide enough for us to pass. We crossed over about 20 very narrow bridges, but it was all new and exciting for me. When we emerged from the jungle at the other end we found our destination to be a very pretty town²¹ nesting in a valley between two magnificent peaks. The town itself is amazing because it is a miniature London in its design – there is a Rotten Row, a Whitehall, a No.10 Downing St., and a Berkley Square! The District Officer, of course, lives at No.10 Downing St. Alas when we reached his house we found that he had gone away on tour for the week-end and was not expected until tomorrow. I left a note for him. We had a look at some of his books and it was there I noticed the Times Annual and the geology book. To my surprise I found his library full of Catholic books – this was a very welcome discovery for me because there is not another Catholic European in these parts except myself. Eileen dear you should have seen his house – it is perfect in every way. It is the essence of comfort and yet there are no luxurious settees; it is decorative and yet there are no ornaments; the rooms seemed full of books of all kinds and yet there were only a few altogether! There is a grand tennis court and a swimming pool. I just cannot describe it all. We had a good lunch at the local rest house and came back home in time for the football match in which our green and whites were successful by 2-1.

You would have loved it all my Eileen – the quaint little villages in the jungle with their wooden huts raised high above the ground on blocks, the shy children peeping at us around the door posts, the Malays waving a friendly hand, the coolies (Tamils) uncovering their heads as we approached and bowing to us, the open school (sekul Malayee) house with crowds of dusky smiling Malay children at their lessons, that Chinese mother with baby in arms pointing to the green coloured car as it flashed by at 10 m.p.h.; and then that old Chinese man by the roadside beating a snake to death. These are a few of the things that I have seen today, my dearest, and I wonder have you seen them too with me or has my hopeless descriptive power let me down again?

It is 11.30 p.m. young lady, and I have a hectic day ahead of me tomorrow. So it is good night again until the next time (24 hours hence!). God bless you, my darling, and may He protect you from all harm. I shall always love you, Eileen, and nobody but you.

All my love,

Ever yours,

Frank.

P.S. I still write every day. Love to all.

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o/ base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Monday 28th July [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

Again I must ask you – what have you done to me? I actually sent you two letters today – one was my usual 12 pages and the other was only a few pages but it contained a lock of black hair and a snap of yours truly! I call it the height of vanity and think that you should stop this failing of mine. You have got a very great influence over me even though you are 7,000 miles away; and I know that your influence for my good will always last. I have loved you today more than ever before but you must remember that this is inevitable as it happens every day. Have you ever wondered, Eileen, what an amazing thing love is – I mean real love. Take my poor case now. I start my morning by praying for you and I end my day in the same way; I think of you at all times whether working or playing, wondering what you are doing and all the time wanting you to be very happy. I would be a

²¹ This is the town of Grik.

very wicked person if I did not love you as I do. May God grant that it be always so. I am so terribly sure that I shall love you forever no matter what happens – nothing can ever change me.

You may have noticed that there is a crisis on in the Far East – and that crisis concerns me very much. This may be my last letter to you, Eileen, though I hope and pray that it will not be. If it should be my last, you must know that I shall be loving you just the same though no letters are reaching you. I am not exactly a knight in shining armour, but I can promise you that I shall never shirk my duty – and yet it will be so easy for me to be brave while I have got your love to strengthen me. You understand that I command the largest company in the Field Ambulance and a lot is expected of me. I shall never do anything spectacular but I would rather die than ever be dubbed a coward. You know that the Red Cross means nothing nowadays and it means less to the Japanese than any other race; so I am not seeking any protection under its banner. Eileen, my darling, I cannot live now without your love now that I have found it at last and caught a glimpse of it in your letters. Writing about love can give very little idea of how deep a love it may be.

I had a really hectic day out of doors today and it rained almost continuously and I had no raincoat! The day began in a rain-storm as I set out for my training ground 14 miles away – no such luxury as a windscreen on army trucks or lorries! So before I ever reached the place I was wet through to the skin – and re-wet! Then I tramped around for hours in heavy rain and I loved it all. Do you like tramping in the rain, Eileen? I had my usual lunch of sandwiches and tea. I rode a large motor cycle all the way back to camp in the evening when work was ended – I led the convey. I wrote away today for the Straits Times Annual to be sent to you but I expect it will take years to arrive in Ireland. I wrote to my bankers and to my film expert for more snaps – they are all for you, my darling. What a boxful I have collected for you now! The day is done and a new day is at hand – in fact it will be here in five minutes time! I must away with me to mine bed. God bless you, Eileen, and keep you safe.

Tuesday July 29th

My darling, as I write this diary tonight I am very sad. We have got orders to leave and proceed to another station 470 miles away. It is awful to think of leaving this beautiful spot in the hills and going down to a strange place in the plains where everything is so hot and sticky. There is a war on and so these things must happen. It will take about four days by road to reach our new house and during that time I may not be able to write to you – and yet I know in my heart that I shall scribble some short note to you daily even though I should be sitting in an open field. Nothing can ever stop me from writing to you, Eileen, just as nothing can ever stop me from loving you with all my heart. I shall always be yours, my dear one. Do you know that you are nearer and dearer to me tonight than you have ever been before?

We are to join up with our other company at our new station. There I shall meet my successor to the “crown”; one fine day in the near future he will parade as a major and I as a captain; he will take over my company because he is entitled to do so. Heaven alone knows what will happen to me or where I shall be pushed next I do not know. The “crown” never meant a thing to me, Eileen, I just carried on as if I were still a lieutenant; what does matter is that all the work I have done in this unit ever since it began seems to have been in vain – another man steps in by accident and takes over everything. The O.C. is furious about it all but can do nothing about it. Pray very hard for me that I may be granted the grace of carrying on with my job no matter what it might be. I shall have very much less work to do when I hand over to my successor but I do not ask for a lazy time. My men have heard rumours about my impending change and each day they come to me for confirmation of their rumours but I never give any. They swear that they will come with me no matter what where I may be sent but I have to calm them down and say that that is impossible – I even boost up my successor as a very good officer even though I have never met him. I have grown to love each one of these 100 men; that is what will really hurt me at my next station – losing them. I have never been very soft with them – they worked when they should have worked, they played when they should, and they rested when they needed it. During my spare time I went among them and talked to them as equals – and yet they always respected me as they did no other officer. The lowest among them in caste had a smarter salute from me than I have ever given to any general. Eileen, are you tired of reading my self-praise? I think you must be and so I will tell you all the events of the day.

I had a long jungle march today with the men – 13 miles in all – and it was really hard work plodding along in the mud and undergrowth. We began our march at 8.30 a.m. and reached camp again at 2 p.m. – very slow marching! My shirt had not a dry spot on it at all, so you may guess how one sweats in this country when laden with all this equipment. The men had their morning meal at 11 a.m. and I picked a lovely spot for them to rest in – on the banks of a jungle stream beside a waterfall. I sat for a full half-hour on a large rock above the falls and thought about you and how much you would like it all. I was sorry that I had neglected my knowledge of trees and flowers and plants other-wise I could have described them all to you in detail. I “collected” a couple of leeches on my legs today and at 5 p.m. the punctures still bled a little! I had lots of work in camp to do on my return from the march – and all in a hurry with no time to change or have a bath. I love you, Eileen, but “I am

tired and want to go to bed!" Good night and God bless you. I have packed 61 snaps and 25 views of Hyderabad in a box and all are ready for sending to you tomorrow.

Wednesday July 30th

I am not sad any longer, Eileen; in fact I have been very happy today. I have no reason for ever being sad now that you love me and that you have promised to become my wife. I should be the happiest man on earth and I would be if only we were together again. My darling, I am living only for that day to come and we must pray hard that it will come soon. I love you with everything I have got and yet that is nothing to the love you will have from me when we meet again.

Can you advise me what to do about your address, Eileen? I have sent the parcel of snaps today to Spring Villa. What will happen to them should there be nobody there to receive it? What happens when I send a telegram to the same address and no one receives it? Would it be better if I addressed all correspondence to Killough? I am sorry to have bombarded you with so many questions all in a row! You see, Eileen, I love you and I want you to have all the love that I can send to you – you must not miss any of it, because it is all for you. Do I squeeze too much love into these serial letters of mine? As you know I have only read one of these letters over when it was finished and it made the most awful reading imaginable! What you have to endure until the war is over – I am sorry for you Eileen, but it's all I can manage. I have never been a prolific writer. I hope the snaps will reach you safely my darling; they are the pick of my snaps even though they are a poor lot. However I am improving slightly as the years roll by! It is a grand hobby and I love it – this does not mean that loving you is another of my hobbies!! Thank God it is something deeper than that. When, oh when is your photograph coming?? I am longing to put it on my camp table and I shall then feel that you are so much nearer to me than ever before.

Today has been a busy one. I have arranged all the stops on our long journey, and fixed up all the feeding arrangements. I spent many hours at the nearest town (50 miles away) buying food for the officers' mess. I am rather looking forward to this trip as it reminds me of a long journey in the old covered-wagon days of the Americas! It will be fun cooking by the wayside and sleeping in our tents at night. I would rather sleep in the open but alas that is not possible in Malaya where mosquitoes abound in areas beyond reach of modern anti-malarial squads; so one has to sleep in a tent under a mosquito net! While shopping today I met a Chinese boy of four years old – a refugee from Shanghai. We became great friends, especially when I had plied him well with sweets! I took a snap of him and I am hoping to send you a print if it is good. The local regimental mess invited me to dinner tonight and I have just returned to my palace again (11.15 p.m.). I shall have a hectic day tomorrow packing everything on the lorries and as usual I have all the extra mess work to do. May be I need a rest from all my strenuous jobs but I did not want a rest particularly in such times as these. You may be glad to hear that I am going to a seaside station and that will be a big compensation for losing these lovely hills. The sea has ever been my first love – excluding you, Eileen! Mine eyes grow dim and I am half asleep! Good night and God bless you.

Thursday – July 31st

If you could see me now amid all the desolation of my "home" sitting on the ground writing to my best girl you would smile and maybe sympathise with me. All my things have been packed except camp bed and that will be hurriedly put away in the small hours of tomorrow morning. The happy days I have spent in this very room – the happiest of my whole life and you made them the happiest. I read your first love letter here and that wonderful telegram in which you promised to marry me. What my next station will be like I know not, but it could not compare to this little heaven in the clouds. I have had a terrific day loading and arranging everything for tomorrow's big move. However I was not so tired that I could not go out for a 20 minutes walk to say farewell to this grand spot. The sun was setting behind a golden horizon of hills and trees; the palm trees were silhouetted against that lovely background; multi-coloured clouds were more beautiful than I have ever seen them before; the far distant mountains had a marvelous purple tinge and their outline was perfect against a dark blue sky. As I approached my home among the trees the sun suddenly disappeared and the spell was over; I found myself once more in the shadow of the trees and oh, it was so depressing. And that was my real farewell to _____. I have a large scale map of Malaya beside me now and some day you shall see it. You will have all my journeys pointed out one by one; you will see all my stations and hear what happened to me in each of them – it will be so much better hearing about it all than reading it in my poor letter. We have all been out to dinner at the rest house tonight because the Mess is all packed up and ready for the road. I am the leader in tomorrow's big convoy – I must look an awful sight perched in that little door-less Austin! If you were here I would ask you to pray that all will go well tomorrow with my convoy because there are over thirty lorries and ambulances.

Thank God I shall find time to write to you every evening when we stop for the night as our main stopping places are at quite large towns. You do understand about the delay in posting this letter. I cannot send any letters

through the Civil Post Office – all must be sent to the Army Post Office having been passed by our own censor and stamped accordingly. So my darling, you will have to wait for four more days until this is posted.

I love you, Eileen, and nothing can change my love for you. Good night and God bless you my own one.

Friday August 1st

My first day is over and all is well, thank God. I cannot concentrate to write to you under these conditions of chaos and turmoil. I only know that I love you more and more no matter where I may be or what I am doing.

I can only give you a few notes about today my darling. I had a narrow escape from death today on the journey when I discovered one of the back wheels of the Austin almost hanging off – thank heavens I discovered it in time! The bolts were all loose and almost dislodged. There were many sad farewells from the local population before we left the hills. When I arrived here I found a note waiting for me from an R.A.M.C. officer who was a very good friend of mine in India. He invited me to dine with him at the local club and now I have just returned after a very boring evening – he was bored too because he hates clubs! I have sought out a chapel and tomorrow morning I shall go to Mass and Communion – and how I shall pray for you, Eileen. Good night my darling and God bless you.

Saturday August 2nd

My second halt and still all is well and still I love you! I started my day with Mass at 7 a.m. but as we had to leave at 7.30 a.m. I had breakfast beforehand. We started off in a drizzle of rain but soon it cleared up and became a glorious day. The sun shone down upon the plains and it was hotter than I have ever known a sun to be in Malaya. You should see my face, arms, and legs – all sunburnt in a few hours sitting in my small Austin (open car).

Another friend I met on my arrival here – Humphrey Thompson son of W.W.D. Thomson. He has been very decent to me since my arrival. I have had tennis with him; he showed me around his hospital; allowed me to read his Weekly Telegraph (Belfast) and “Pro Tanto Quid”! Saw all the air raid pictures; had dinner at the mess with him and now it is bed time (11.15 p.m.). This is the “half-way house” on our long journey; I am sleeping on my camp bed in an empty room of a bungalow – and I am writing this as I sit on my suitcase! Another big day looms ahead tomorrow and another early rise in the darkness at 6 a.m. Good night Eileen and God bless you.

Sunday August 3rd

My dearest Eileen, this is the life that I love best of all – wandering! It is 10 p.m. and I am sitting by a Malayan roadside and writing to you by the light of a lantern. There is a tiny Austin car parked just beside me and behind is an equally small tent in which I hope to sleep tonight. It is my idea of life. There is a misty moon high above with a very lovely halo around it; there are stars peeping out here and there in the heavens; there are Malayan houses (campongs) close by and there is a low murmur of voices all around; a hundred yards down the road stands my convoy with everything intact. I had a very welcome bath in my canvas bath-tub and a very lovely dinner served up outside my tent – fried eggs and onions + a tin of pineapples! Oh Eileen, this is the life I have always dreamed about especially for a holiday and some day please God we shall spend many happy holidays in this way. If only there were two tents here instead of one; if only you were sitting by my side on this ground-sheet and sharing this joy with me – I could never ask for anything better – how terribly happy we should be. May be you love this kind of life as much as I do and may be you have had good times like this in Donegal during July.

I am very much alone tonight as all the other officers have gone off to sine and spend the night at the local Rest House 5 miles away! Imagine preferring a stuffy room and a mediocre dinner to my idea of bliss! The poor lads have no sense at all! If only there were not so many mosquitoes buzzing around and biting me, I could write many pages to you tonight. We had a very hot day again and my sunburn is even worse tonight – at least it feels worse now! Tomorrow is our last lap and in a way I shall be sorry because I love wondering. May be my wanderlust will cease when we meet again, Eileen. My new station will bring many changes to my poor military career, but I shall have to grin and bear it. I could face anything and bear any cross as long as I have your love and prayers. I love you as much as no man could ever have loved before. God bless you and keep you safe.

Monday August 4th

Oh, my Eileen, I am so very happy tonight. I had not arrived at my destination²² more than a few minutes when a letter from you was put into my hand. It was dated June 13th while you were in Strabane superintending and it contained three wonderful snaps of you. The oftener I read your letter and the more I look at you, the more I love you. Yes, you are still the same Eileen whom I have always loved – you have not changed even a little bit. You must be very proud of your trophies, in fact, I am surprised that you could ever love such an insignificant major in

²² The new camp is located near Kuantan in the province of Pahang, Malaya near the east coast.

the Army as I! Again I ask of you not to love me too much because things can happen to me and then you would have to suffer. One thing is certain and that is that I shall always love you and nothing that happens to me can ever make me stop loving you.

I am about to give you a lecture about your weight! So listen to me, "Miss O'Kane", while I tell you off! Imagine you being a stone underweight – you must be dieting! You know that I do not mind whether you are fat or thin, tall or small; you will never find me making a fuss about your health unless it is absolutely necessary. You will just please yourself, Eileen, about these things because I know that nothing can be so annoying as to listen all day long to lectures on one's weight or health. If God wants you to be 8 st 12 lbs, then who are we to complain! And yet, my darling, you know that I would do any mortal thing in this world for you – you will always come first. By the way I like your middle shade and all your unruly curls.

My big journey through Malaya is now ended and here I am parked once more in a wooden hut in the shadow of a plantation. Everything in this little room is exactly the same as in my last station but it is so much better now that your snaps repose on my table. I feel that you are here with me now and so my so-called "letters" will be even more in the nature of a daily talk to you than before. I am glad that you want me to just write down whatever comes into my head because it is the only way I can write. You see, Eileen, that I do not sit down each evening and write you a "duty letter" – I write only because I want to write and tell you every little thing that happens in my day and every little thought that comes into my head during the 24 hours. I was very proud today leading my big convoy into camp after 500 miles travelling without a hitch – it was worth praying for. It will help the Field Ambulance a lot with the powers that be and it will keep the morale of the men. You cannot picture the very narrow un-soiled wooden bridges we crossed today and all without an accident thank God. What a surprise awaited me here when I found that my successor to the crown is a Queensman (a class mate), who qualified with me! However, today was the first time I had spoken to him! 'Nuff said!! Actually he was one of the bright boys of our year at Queens – at least he worked ten times harder than Frank Murray (and the latter missed honours by two marks!). Your Frank played games and went to pictures twice weekly in his Final year, so he could not have worked so very hard – and now I have no regrets! My successor became a Major yesterday but strangely enough I have not been de-moted yet. I am 11 miles from the blue sea and the golden sands but I shall seek them out very soon, you may be sure. Here there is no tennis, no badminton, no football, no beauty, no walks – what a change from my hills – I have not even mentioned the heat, and it is sticky!

Eileen, my dear, I am sorry that this letter should have been delayed so long. It is very scrappy and broken up, but I shall make amends with the next one. You can never realise how happy your letters can make me, so never fail to write if it is only a few lines. I understand that you cannot find much news to write about, so please do not let that part worry you. My darling, I want you to make our engagement as public as ever you wish and I want you to go with Uncle Eddie to visit my father. My love to all your people and to the little Frances. God bless you, my darling, and may He protect you from all danger.

All my love, Eileen,

Ever yours,

Frank.

27TH Field Ambulance,
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Tuesday, August 5th [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

Will you please have a careful look at the stamp on this letter and take note of the change. I arrived yesterday amid a flourish of trumpets and much flag-waving! I have told you all about it in the letter which I sent to you this morning – another boring letter of 12 pages of very "random jottings"! I am still reading your letter which arrived yesterday and I am still gazing at you in the snaps. You now hold pride of place in my wooden hut as you stand above my table heavily laden with your golf trophies and clubs. It is good to bid you "good morning" when I hop out of bed at 7 a.m.; you are there to greet me at 1 p.m. and when I return again at dusk, hot and weary, you can still give me a smile of encouragement. May be some day you will greet me in person when day is done and then all my cares and worries will disappear like magic. Eileen darling you mean such a terrible lot to me – I could not ever live without your love now that I have found it. Being so far away from home is awful but you can never know what it means to me to know that you love me – it can bring such consolation and it can make me ready to face anything that the future may hold for me in Malaya or elsewhere. Am I telling you a very

big official secret when I mention that I hope to have a swim in the China Sea this weekend sometime! You may as well start praying that the sharks will not get me, because I have an awful habit of “showing-off” in the sea by swimming away far beyond the other lads. Do not be alarmed my darling – I shall not take any risks, in fact I must always be careful for your sake. However, you must be prepared to see me tossing up and down in the Atlantic waves at Bundoran some fine day, very far from the shore! I refuse to listen to any lectures, Miss O’Kane!



The photographs Eileen sent Frank.

I am sorry to disillusion you, Eileen, but your “Sargensis Log” is not quite fair in describing my beloved Perak. Both of my previous stations were in Perak and it was a glorious state in every way and much more fascinating than the very hot and artificial Penang which I have seen once. I have never been to Singapore as yet and so I cannot pass judgment on it but I imagine it is overcrowded – I know it is the most sticky place in the whole of the Malaya Peninsula. I have sent you snaps all taken in Perak and surely you must have noticed how lovely it was. How I wish I were back again in that state in my mountain den among the trees – and I am not alone in my wishing. The others are restless in this place and a very different spirit prevails here than what I noticed at my last station. I cannot tell you any more about this now. The new major has not assumed his high office and I have not relinquished my crown as yet, but alas it is inevitable. I know that whatever is to come that I can meet it with courage in the knowledge that I have always done my best and hope that I have always tried to do the right thing. I spent the day ‘settling in’ and so tonight I am writing to you as if I had been in this place for many moons! I am quite accustomed to moving about the world now and hundreds of miles mean very little to me. I visited the local town today and made some purchases for the mess – otherwise we would have starved tonight! There are now 13 in our mess but not all are doctors and I was charmed today at the mess meeting to hand over the job of secretary to someone else, though I have agreed to remain on for another two weeks. I just haven’t got any time for it – and it is a full time job in itself.

Will you please thank Felix very much for the welcome he intends giving me when I become one of the family. Need I tell you that I could not have a better brother than he – you must know that so well.

Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Wednesday – August 6th

I forgot to tell you that I made some discoveries in the local town yesterday (it is not really a town!). I was in a small newspaper shop ordering papers for the month when I spied a beautiful little statue of the Blessed Virgin and then I spotted a picture of the Sacred Heart. The proprietor of course was a Catholic and he gave me all the details about Mass in this part of the world. My darling, there will not be Mass here again until Christmas! It is just too terrible to think about it. Do you ever realise how lucky you are, Eileen? Please think of me and pray hard for me each time you go to Mass. How I wish that I had gone much oftener when I was at home and in India. My newspaper-man has promised to write to Singapore for a small statue for me. I have arranged with him today to get a copy of “Oriental Traveller’s Gazette” for me; I want to send it to you because it is so interesting – especially an article on Malaya describing in detail my first station and district in this peninsula. Today I bought three copies of a monthly magazine – “Asia” – and they are all for you. It is an American journal and I know you will be interested in all the articles and pictures. I hope they will all reach you safely because I want you to have them – and they will increase your store of knowledge about the East.

You can never realise how very far away I am now from civilization – about 200 miles from the nearest good-sized town (as big as Portadown!). My present abode is not so pretty as my last station but there are nice spots on the road to the local town (village I mean!). I have not seen the China Sea as yet – that is a treat in store for us. Life is not very congenial for us at the moment and more I cannot say – you must redouble your prayers for me that God may direct me in what I should do. You know that the situation in the Far East is very tense just

now, Eileen, but a war is my job at the moment and I shall try to do my bit. I only need God's grace and your love to carry me through anything. We shall meet again soon and that thought I always keep before my mind, because it keeps me alive. It will be grand to meet all your people and all your relatives – I shall love them as much as you do. It will be quite an ordeal for me and I know how particular they will be about their Eileen's choice of husband; it would be awful if they found me wanting and not quite up to standard. You will become very unpopular with the 'Clan O'Cahan'²³ if I should not be up to scratch!

I am very glad that you are having a good time at home – with golf, tennis, dances, and pictures etc.; I want you to be so very happy no matter where you may be or what you may be doing. Will you be very sad when you have to give up your beloved teaching? I know how much you love your job and how difficult it will be for you to break away from it; I shall do my best to compensate you for your loss. My poor Eileen, you have no idea of the awful time you will have being married to a lad like me – we may not even be able to afford to keep a servant!! You know how much I love you and that you shall have everything that I can possibly give to you. Have you ever tried to picture us visiting Mr. & Mrs. Roland (I don't know the surname)? May be we shall all visit old Castlewellan again together and re-live those happy days again. The McNabbs were grand people and very generous to me on many occasions. Do you remember the night I stayed at their house and upset the whole household! I wondered to myself then "Will she ever love me?". I think you shared a room with Frances that night and the noise you made was terrific – not to mention your snores during the night. I said my usual good night and God bless you then too.

Thursday – August 7th

I was terribly disappointed this evening, Eileen, when I had a phone message from the village saying that there was a telegram awaiting me there and would I please come and get it! As it was after 7 p.m. I could not go because the place is 10 miles from here and no military vehicles are allowed out after that hour. I know that that telegram must be from you and so I have to sit here and wonder what it contains. If only I could have it tonight how happy I should be but I must be patient and wait till the morn' arrives. I love you so very much to-night and I need your love as I have never needed it before. Some day you will know how happy you have made me in my exile by your letters, your love, and your prayers. I shall just have to spend my days planning ways and means of making you the happiest wife in all the world – it's the very least I can do. Is it an awful thought for you to have to change your name from 'O'Kane' to plain, ordinary 'Murray'? I think you had better start rehearsing for our big day; will you be terribly nervous? You will find in me a very calm and collected partner! How could I ever be shy or nervous with you right beside me. I have written ages ago to you asking what preference you have for an engagement ring and what your size is. Please let me know soon, my dearest, because I want you to show the world that you really are engaged. Do not think that I want you to make an exhibition of it to all and sundry – you could never do that. I shall manage to have a ring sent to you somehow unless I am mixed up in a war in the Far East. If a war should start in these parts you will have to begin praying really hard for me. There are so many things I have to tell you when I reach home again that it will take years for me to tell them all to you – they are things that must not be written down on paper while the war is still in progress. Then there will be so much to tell you about my love for someone whom I have loved since the first day I saw her in Ranafast so many years ago and whom I have loved ever since then.

Today I was out doing some work far from the camp and my road led to the China Sea. As the truck rounded a bend on the road I suddenly saw the sea and it was a welcome sight to these eyes of mine because I love the sea. May be that's why it looked more lovely than I have ever seen it before and yet the China Sea is the same as any other sea – it is wild and untamed and has a splendour all of its own. If you had seen the beach today and its thousands of graceful palms along the edge, you would have marvelled at all this beauty. I saw 'the ships that go down to the sea' and many strange craft were there from tiny Chinese sailing boats to large tramp steamers. I could not leave that spot for ages. I went down to the beach and walked on the sands. As usual it made me think of you and what you might be doing at that very moment. I hoped that all had gone with your plans to spend August at Killough with your dear ones all united together. What will they say when I arrive in Ireland to join this happy family?

I had three se-mail letters today and all three were medical (B.M.A. etc.). I had hoped for so much more from home but nothing came but all my letters come by air mail and so I should not have fostered such expectation. However it is thrilling awaiting a new post even though it brings little. May your next letter come soon – that is always my wish. And now I must bid thee good night. God bless you.

²³ Clan O'Kane

Friday – August 8th

I never knew until today how much I really love you, Eileen. Your telegram – a very long one – came this morning. I rushed off to town early this morning and collected it. I have been too happy for words today and now tonight I am sending you all the love and joy that is in my heart. I can now make arrangements at last to have your engagement ring sent; it will take time to reach you, so you need not expect it to arrive soon. You see I have to write to a big firm in Bombay called Mappin & Webb whose head office is in London. They will arrange to send you a selection of gold diamond rings of your size L ½ (this is correct?) from London. How I wish with all my heart that I could place that ring upon your finger; alas I shall not even see it until I return home again. May be we could do it all over again then, and have a celebration as well! May be we shall be too busy preparing for our wedding. If only I could make you as happy as I am; I owe all my happiness to you and so you must have everything that I can give you in return. I should be quite miserable in my present station as many others seem to be – the climate is horrible, there are swamps all around us, millions of mosquitoes, the atmosphere is depressing – but I am quite the opposite. I am no longer second-in-command of the Field Ambulance because there is another Major Sahib now and he is senior to me and as there can only be one Major in a Field Ambulance, I shall fall from my exalted position and be humbled in the dust! And still I can feel happy – that is amazing part of it. I do have my sad moments, but I have only to think of you and all my sadness has gone. I want to give you all the details of how hard I have worked, my success with the men, and our good show in the field, but you must wait, my darling, to hear it all from me. You see, Eileen, I was specially selected for this job when I was in India and I know in my heart that I have always justified my selection (said he, boastingly!), and now I have been replaced by accident by another Belfast officer! I am sorry Eileen, to have unburdened all of this on to you.

I am eagerly waiting to hear details of your visit to my sister Una in Dublin. Tell me, Eileen, did you like her? I know she will love you because she knows a lot about character and because we have always been so very dear to each other. I did tell you about the lectures she gave me long ago about love. Some people do not like her very much, but I have always loved her just a little bit more than my other sisters. She and I were considered the two “black sheep” of the religious Murray family! It is grand to meet a nun with a real vocation and see how happy she can be. When are you visiting my father and the others at home? You will find “Beechwood” a large, cold, and neglected house. I had made many plans to have it fixed up and decorated properly but the war put an end to all plans. May be some day we shall find ourselves together in “Beechwood” – who knows? It was my father’s great ambition to keep it for me and my wife and have a practice in Belfast.

I have ferreted out another wonderful magazine from the local village “Straits Times Annual 1940”; it’s a year old but it makes very interesting reading about Malaya and the surrounding lands. I shall send it off as soon as possible, with the “Asias” and I know you will delve into them thoroughly. We are still settling down in our new camp and so no serious attempt has been made to do real work. I am kept busy enough with the mess and my medical equipment to pass the time away! Do you realise that it is now midnight and I must snatch some sleep before dawn! God bless you and good night.

Saturday – August 9th

Young woman, do you remember writing me a letter on 7th May 1941 as you sat in bed and addressing it to Army Headquarters, New Delhi?? Well, my darling, it has arrived this evening and it is the most wonderful letter that I have ever read in my life. It was your first love-letter to me and I still treasure it above all else as long as I live. I have only read it three times during the past few hours! You almost put me to shame when you tell me how much you love me and how you even cried when writing about it. You must never weep again, Eileen, unless it be for my joy because you will never have any cause to be sad. We were both children in the old days and I, too, was terribly afraid of you and my heart had queer palpitations when I met you! We have always loved each other and we were always meant for each other. God had his plans for us and surely His way of bringing us together was the right way as we now love each other as He has always meant us to. The mental anguish and uncertainty you have had must have been awful and I was the cause of it all. I must have been blind when I was in England not to have seen that you loved me even though you never mentioned the word love to me. If you had seen the temptations that were put in my to get married in Birmingham – a very beautiful young lady, a Catholic, and a large practice as well – and yet I just could not love that young lady, because I loved you, Eileen. Now you have given me your love and that is all I have ever wanted in life.

I hope you have written and told me all about your travels in Donegal last month. Dr. Columban should be very proud of his magic gate – tell him that your husband will thank him and his gate personally with you some day soon! I am very willing to have you as my guide when we visit the rugged beautiful Donegal together. May be we shall both stand hand in hand on Ranafast strand and I shall show you where I traced a large “E. O’K.” in those sands when I was a boy! Please do not wear out your black frock too quickly because I want to see it and dance with you when you wear it. You shall have dancing so much as ever you wish when I return home again to

you but you will have to put up with a very awkward partner who will work havoc with your dancing shoes – and pet corns! So my little Frances intends marrying a de Meulemeester – well she shall music wherever she goes! She deserves a good husband and he must be a good man if he has been passed as such by you, my darling.

When are you going to visit my little sister Anne²⁴ at ‘Beechwood’ – she is a good child and is the Martha of our family of nuns! She will give you a royal welcome and may be she will give you some tea with my tea set which I won at Aghagallon sports so many years ago! May be she will introduce you to our two Mercy nuns at Crumlin Road – Maureen and Margaret²⁵ – both are older than I (as Una also is!). You will find them much different from Una. Maureen is the elder and is a real Rev. Mother already; Margaret can do anything – she is witty and clever; she acts the “clown” at all the convent plays; and you should hear her playing the latest fox trot on a piano. Maureen is a classical musician – ask her to play her “Irish Diamonds” selection and it will awaken all that is Irish in you.

Did you know, Eileen, that white people get six months leave every two years in Eastern countries and that they all make a bee-line for home – and that they love to get back to the heat again! They could never endure this climate continuously without a periodic change to cooler climes. Did you know that the B.B.C. has got an Eastern transmission daily as well as an African service, an Overseas service, a North American service, etc., etc. and that the services continue during the night whilst you are peacefully asleep in bed. So we in Malaya get the news daily at reasonable hours of the day!

Today was declared a half-holiday and all the officers went off in a reconnaissance to the coast. I saw the China Sea this afternoon through waving palm trees on the edge of the beach – and it was a typical South Sea Island picture. The sea was green, the sands were white and stretched for miles, the waves came roaring in throwing up a wondrous white foam; the sky was blue and the sun was hot; but a faint breeze was heaven sent. We went down to the beach armed with swim suits and towels and though the others were quick I was the first into the water and diving into those mighty breakers! I swam out far beyond the breakers where there was no noise and where I could glide up and down with the swell of the tide. It is heaven to be poised on top of a large wave just before it breaks and then to swim down into the deep abyss behind it. I love the sea and I shall never fear it – this part of the coast is not shark infested! As I was away out in my beloved sea, I thought of you, my darling, but I must not repeat the words I said to you – you have heard them too often already! I must take lots of snaps so that you can see all the beauty that I can see here. You would have gazed at the red sunset and the tiny canvas silhouetted against the sky.

I don’t deserve to be so happy. God bless you, Eileen.

Sunday August 10th

Another letter from you today my dearest! You wrote it just before going to Strabane and now it has arrived a week after your Strabane letter! How can you be so cruel to give me so much happiness – yes, my darling, it almost hurts to be so happy. When I read your letters I feel that you are talking to me and that you are really sitting by my side; you tell me all the little things that I long so much to hear – your love, your thoughts, your games, your friends, your family, and all the little things that happen to you. I love reading about your middle shade, and the curls; your new frocks – but now alas your poor clothes are rationed and you have to patch things up. You know that I shall always love you no matter whether your stockings are all darned or not! Please write to me the same letters always, they bring you so very near to me and that 7,000 miles of separation means nothing to us.

I have so much to write to you tonight that I shall have to risk sending this letter overweight – this day has been a very important landmark in my military career. The news came in by telegram just before dinner that Major Murray will proceed forthwith to a new job in another part of Malaya. I was glad of this news and again I was very sorry. My position in this Field Ambulance was almost unbearable and you can understand why and if you cannot my dearest you will have to wait till the war is over before I can tell you about it! My O.C. is mad with rage about losing me but he has only himself to blame and he is powerless to stop the move. I am going back to the same part of the country from whence I have just come, but tomorrow you shall have full details.

My dearest I have had a marvelous day on the beach – from 12 noon till 6 p.m. I know it sounds bad having such fun with the war threatening Malaya but we had to do some scouting around this morning. Five of us had a swim before lunch and oh it was grand to be alive in that sea. I swam out about a mile while the others had a dull time with both feet on the bottom in shallow water – they didn’t know what they were missing! A

²⁴ Anne Murray was the youngest child in the Murray family and the only sister who did not become a nun. She married a merchant seaman, Stanley Wood, and went to live in Gravesend, Kent. She died in 1982.

²⁵ Maureen Murray (Sister Mary Austin) and Margaret Murray (Sister Mary Theresa) were two of Frank’s five sisters. Both became Sisters of Mercy nuns and during the war they were based in the Convent of Mercy on the Crumlin Road, Belfast. She died in 1986.

glorious cold lunch under the palm trees made us contented with life in general. After coffee we rested in the shade and then came a very strenuous game of "cricket" among the palms. The bat was the branch of a palm tree and the balls were empty coconut shells (outer covering). I should mention that the ground was littered with coconuts. Your Frank was in good form and smacked the ball all over the place. At the end of 20 minutes hard work I had to retire unbeaten. Then some natives climbed up to the top of a tree and cut down some fresh coconuts and the contents make a delicious drink. My camera has been busy all day snapping the palm beach and the waves. I should have some grand snaps to send to you very soon, Eileen. We had another swim at 4.30 p.m. and it was even better than the first. If only you had been swimming with me towards that lovely beach and could have seen a red sunset behind the palms you would have said how perfect it all was. It would have been perfect for me if you had been there with me.

It is already tomorrow – 12.30 a.m.! My dearest you know that I am all yours and always shall be yours. I try very hard to love you more than I do, but alas I cannot squeeze any more love from this poor heart of mine – you have all the love that is within me. May God bless you, Eileen, and may His Holy Mother guard and protect you.

Ever and forever yours,
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Monday, August 11th [1941]

P.S. Please excuse paraffin oil on this page!
Frank.

My dearest Eileen,

I am still in Malaya with the same Field Ambulance but as you already know I had orders to move last night – I mean the orders came last night! I have been transferred to another Field Ambulance which is stationed 400 miles away from here so now I have to retrace my steps all the way back through Malaya to a place near my "heaven" in the hills (last station). If I had remained in this unit under the circumstances I should have gone mad (or may be you think I am quite crazy already?). Even though I have been ordered by the powers above to move forthwith my O.C. will not allow me to go until he has made protests about changing me. He has been busy today interceding with "brass hats" to allow me to stay put, but I know he is powerless to prevent the move. I know quite a lot about my new field ambulance because it was only 50 miles away from our last station; I don't know yet whether I shall remain a major or not but the prospects are good. Do you know that you are my only reason for wanting to remain a major? My darling, a most awful thing has just happened – my O.C. has just come to inform me that my move has been cancelled; a telegram came a few minutes ago! Oh Eileen it is such a disappointment in a way, and yet I did not want to leave my men – I do love them all and I want to stay with them and see that they get a square deal. Do you know that when the news leaked out today that I was moving, many of the men went to the O.C. and asked to be transferred to my new station – they are very loyal to me.

I have had another swim in the China Sea today and it was more wonderful than ever. You see I was allowed to wander around just as I pleased today because I was under orders to leave the unit. I always think of Bundoran when I go sea bathing. I cannot imagine why you went there for a day to see the Golf Championship and came away without having a swim! You will never find me doing such a foolish thing!! I am glad that you are taking up tennis again because when I reach home again I intend beating you at tennis, golf, hiking, cycling, and ludo!

Now, young woman, listen to me – I love you and I shall always love you. I think of you all the day long, and it makes me so very happy to think of you. You have given me more happiness during these past few months than I ever dreamed could exist on this earth. I treasure every little sentence and word of your letters because they mean all the world to me. I pray now as I have never prayed before and I ask God to bless our love and our marriage when it takes place. Do you know that our home will be the happiest home on earth because we shall have everything, please God, that can bring happiness? We were meant to love each other always and we were meant for each other. All this awful separation can only strengthen our love and make it truer than ever before. Eileen my dearest I want to write to your mother – do you think I should? I want her to be my mother now. I know that I shall love her and all of your family. How I pray for the day when we shall meet again and you will

introduce me to the family. Oh my dearest what a homecoming that will be and what joy we shall know. I have often tried to imagine how I shall feel as my ship speeds on its way homeward bound. Eileen, I could not live without your love so please love me always; I could not live unless I was loving you with all my heart and soul.

Good night, my dearest, and God bless you (I have a chill tonight).

Tuesday – August 12th

They say that 'grousing' starts today, Eileen, but do not expect any grousing from me because I have done my share of it already in this letter! How I do love you every day of my life and how I am living for the day when we shall meet again and have a home of our own. Have you told the little Frances that no matter how happy she and her Roland may be, we are much happier with our love! If she should demur, just tell her that facts are facts! No two people in this world could ever love each other as much as we do my dearest; it's not possible, is it? My darling, have you made up your mind yet as to what kind of wedding you would like and where you would like to have it? Would you like to be married in a vast cathedral, with a big crowd of people, and the mighty organ thundering out the Wedding March? Or would you prefer a simple wedding in a quiet country chapel, with just our dear ones around us, and a very squeaky harmonium bleating out the notes of Here Comes the Bride? Oh my Eileen I dream of that day and I know how happy we shall be. It will be like starting a new life all over again but it will be more wonderful than before because each of us will have someone always near to share everything with – our joys and our sorrows. Besides being so much in love we shall be "Good Companions" and very dear friends. Eileen, don't you think that God has given us everything in life and I know that we shall always be grateful to Him. He has given us true love and you know that the essence of this love is its unselfishness; you know that everything I have is yours without the asking and I am ashamed of the little that I can give you. You have all my love, all of my heart, and all of me – and there is not much more that I can lay at your feet.

The Straits Times Press informed me yesterday that they had dispatched to Miss Eileen O'Kane, Spring Villa, a copy of their 1941 Annual! So my dearest you will have some interesting reading when it arrives – the pictures are really good. I have been very disappointed at the non-arrival of the prints of 6 rolls of film from my photo dealers. They declare that they sent them at the end of last month and now 2 weeks later they have not come. There were some grand snaps among this lot – all meant for you (that's why I am furious about it!). I had a hard days work today in the field under the palms. When the work was all over there was a wild rush for the sea. About 90% of the men had never been in the sea before and they were thrilled with the waves and the sand – they were like a lot of happy children on the beach. I know they will write home to the Punjab (all are Punjabis) and tell of the wonders of the sea. May be they will tell how their Major Sahib swam away out into the ocean and came back with a very painful arm having been bitten by a monster of the deep! Yes, Eileen, a jelly-fish took a liking to my arm today when I was ½ mile from the shore and gave me something to think about! However thank God the pain has gone and I can almost write legibly (or do I ever write legibly?). I had a bad sting in Bundoran (Rogey) in 1934. By the way Eileen, did you know that I had a swim in Galway Bay one cold December's morn when there was such ice on the ground? I spend my time boasting to you of my deeds of valour(!)!

There have been no more telegrams about my transfer as yet but it must come soon. I have had a happy day, because it always begins and ends with thoughts of you. I say three Hail Marys to Our Lady of Quito each morning. I wish I could tell you of all the happy children's faces I have seen today. I was passing through a Malay village today in my truck – my driver was driving – when suddenly the wheels sank in the soft sand. You see the main street has nothing but soft sand on it because the village is built on sand. Anyhow we spent a good hour digging the truck out; we were ably assisted by all the small boys of the village encouraged by the shy mothers who sat on their door steps holding very beautiful children close to them. These children were so utterly unspoilt or modernized; they were so natural and so gay. It is such a treat away in the wilderness to see a child – a smiling face and a pair of lovely dark eyes. Need I tell you that I love children and everything about them.

Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Wednesday August 13th

Another telegram from you today, my dearest telling me of your visit to Beechwood and meeting my father. Why do you spoil me so much with all this attention – I am not used to it all yet and I do not deserve a love like yours. I want to hear about your momentous visit to my home in Belfast, whether you liked my father or not, what you think of Philip and Anne, and what you think of poor neglected Beechwood? Why could I not be at home and bring you to my home to meet all my people; instead poor Eileen had to go alone and meet them. You need not tell me that all the windows were blasted in during an air raid, that slates came off, and spouts came down – I know all about it and it was only this very night that I came to know it! Poor old Cliftonville so very far from any military objective.

You mentioned that you wish to purchase the ring yourself. It is not quite orthodox that you should buy an engagement ring, my darling, but if you wish it then this unorthodox method must be employed. However I consent only on very special conditions and with great reluctance. I want you to have the ring of your choice as soon as possible and the quickest way of course would be for you to buy it immediately. However that ring must come from me and it is understood that I shall pay for it. You must find out the cost of the ring and let me know; then I can send you the money immediately; also let me know if you wish the money to be paid to your banking account (address?) or to yourself. Eileen, I want your advice on some matters. Should I continue to send money to my father at home? You see Eileen now that you and I are engaged I should be saving up some money for you and our future. Somehow I think my father would understand. Should I open an account with a Belfast Bank or keep my few dollars in Malaya; you and I should have a joint account at home but I suppose that is against all the laws of convention! I don't like the subject of money so please let us leave it severely alone; and yet it is not fair to you if I should neglect it entirely.

I had a very pathetic letter from my father this evening. He is entirely innocent of all censors and described in detail where all the local bombs fell! The Catholic Churches seem to have escaped fairly well. Father said they were the worst three nights of his whole life and I am sure everyone in Belfast could say the same. Thank God, Eileen, you did not have to come through that awful ordeal. I am very proud of my father just as you are of your daddie; he is so very good and strong – many people have expressed the wish that I might be half as good a man as he. However he needs some understanding and I am the sole member of the family who understood him – the others thought him to be a very hard man, and he is not, really. I know how much he will love you, Eileen, and appreciate everything about you. Has he arranged for you to meet the other two nuns at Crumlin Road yet? You will like Maureen and Margaret too; Maureen is so serious and “nun-like” and Margaret quite the opposite! I was very annoyed to hear that Anne went off to Magherafelt and left father alone at Beechwood – he had to cook his own breakfast. I know so well that the poor child works very hard but it is her job to stick by father and never leave him. I can tell you all about this now you are one of the family but why should I burden you with more trouble? Did you really have a glorious day at ‘Beechwood’, Eileen? I hope you did not peep into the family album and see me dressed in petticoats! Many, many day dreams I have had during my student days in my study at Beechwood – dreams of you, Eileen, and of our future.

Your telegram just came in time because I had a long letter sealed and stamped ready to go to Mappin & Webbs of Bombay asking them to send you a catalogue and some diamond rings from their London branch so that you could make your choice. I sent you a wire agreeing to your idea of purchasing the ring. My darling, it appears that there are pythons at the bottom of our garden here! I got a grand snap of one yesterday. I have also discovered that it is dangerous to stand in one position more than a minute here, else ones legs are apt to be covered by hordes of red ants! What a country!!

Good night and God bless you my dearest.

Thursday – August 14th

I had a pleasant surprise today when a letter arrived from Frances. It came by sea-mail and was on the high seas since May 27th – she was curious to know when it would reach me. Hers were the first congratulations received on our engagement. I think she knows how lucky I am in becoming engaged to you, Eileen. You could tell the little Fanny that I shall reply in the very near future. I wrote to my father today and asked him all about your visit to Beechwood and whether he liked you or not etc.

I had a grand route march early this morning with the men. It was our first march in this our new station and it was not so pleasant – every garment soaked with perspiration. Yet throughout there was no sun in the sky; it was the humidity that did the damage. I had some consolation in noting that the natives also perspire profusely, but we poor whites have never meant to live near mangrove swamps 7° N of the Equator! Thank heaven tomorrow has been declared a general holiday in camp as it is the Hindu Christmas Day! There will be much feasting, singing, and beating of tom-toms, but what I want is some rest away from the whole show. I have worked hard in Malaya and every officer in the Field Ambulance has had leave except yours truly – I was a fool not to have some while it was possible.

My own darling, should this be my last letter to you let me put all my heart inside it and send it to you. You know that I love you, Eileen, more tonight than ever in my life before. You always come first with me – in my thoughts and dreams and prayers; I have given you my life and myself but I feel that that is not enough; I want to keep giving you more. Do I give you any real idea of how much I love you by writing to you about it? To make you really understand I feel that I must talk to you about it – and may be I shall very soon. I may go out into the wilds very soon but no matter where I may be I shall be loving you every minute of my life. I have a notion that my letters to you are now numbered, so I must write each as if it were the last one. My love for you can never die, my dearest, it cannot even die with me. But I am going to live through everything and come to you when the war

is over with my love and myself. I shall always be with you even though I am far away in actual distance. Remember that these arms are ever around you to protect you always – and they are very strong arms and will never let you down!

There is a terrific thunderstorm raging outside just now (10.20 p.m.) and the sky is lit up with the flashes of lightning. Rain and thunder all mean that there will be little sleep tonight. God bless you, my dearest.

Friday – August 15th

I did not forget to pray for you in a special way today to Our Lady; it is one of her glorious feasts and I asked her to bless our love and keep it always as perfect as it now is. This was a general holiday in camp today because of some Hindu 'Saint's' birthday. As I watched all the celebration, I thought how wonderful it would be if only they were celebrating the Feast of the Assumption instead – if only they could know about the Mother of God, surely they could forget about their mythical gods and 'saints'. How much happier they would be if they could change to our way of adoring God instead of flowing the empty creed of Hinduism. This evening all the officers attended the festivities in the lines. We were allowed to go inside their improvised temple and see what was going on. All the men were seated on the floor facing the altar on which reposed many pictures of the Gods of Hinduism; a few apples and oranges were placed before the pictures – these were gifts to the gods! It reminded me of the Harvest Thanksgiving in Belfast churches!! Well, to continue my story – the select few were seated right in front of the altar; one nice old boy was chanting aloud passages from the Hindu scriptures, another played a portable melodion(?), while a third played the Tom-Tom with great skill – later on a tambourine was introduced! All newcomers, including the Hindu officers, all went straight up to the altar, knelt down, and prostrated themselves in prayer before the pictures.

Having seen all this we were ushered outside to a small marquee near to the temple. We were given lemonade and fruit as much as we could take. Meanwhile a tall dark bearded man had burst forth into song from within the temple accompanied by music and tom-toms; men walked up and down ceaselessly waving large fans on us and everyone around. All were happy – even the Mohammedans who turned up in full force at the feasts! We all left them to it at 8 p.m. but the celebration will not end till 1 a.m. when they will eat a terrific meal (and feel bad tomorrow!). My dearest, I have wasted all these precious lines telling you of a very ordinary thing, when there are so many other things to talk about.

I wanted to ask you if you had made any plans to visit Dublin in the near future again and if so have you arranged to meet Una at Sion Hill? Have you been invited back to Beechwood again or have they decided not to invite you again! Cannot you, Eileen, shake them up a bit and make them keep Beechwood decently and not allow it to rot away into decadence. Surely it is worth while keeping it properly. It reminds me of Spring Villa in a way, but how I wish I had been oftener in your home. With great reluctance I was dragged in once by Felix. My darling, I got queer palpitations as I walked up the path and when I entered the house I felt as if I had entered a holy place. Every little thing about you, Eileen, was so very sacred to me and always will be. I shall always love you in this way and nothing can ever change my love for you. I can never give you enough love no matter how much I may give you. I have noticed by your telegrams that you have spent the early part of this month in Belfast. Does this mean that you did not succeed in getting a house at Killough this season and does it mean that for the first time in many years the O'Kane family did not all meet at Killough? I am sorry, Eileen, if all your plans for the summer have gone away. However cheer up and think of poor me with no holiday at all for over two years! Still I hope you had a grand re-union with all your dear ones. The Murray family never have re-unions; there are too many in convents!

Good night, Eileen, and God bless you. (Why do I love you so much??).

Saturday – August 16th

Let me tell you a big secret, my darling. I have felt fit today for the first time since I arrived at this new station (about two weeks ago). Thank God I now feel ready for the fray again and I got some real work done at last today. The others spent the day in the field but my company stayed at home and made themselves useful. I am still with my unit and have not been de-moted yet! I am anticipating a move to some other unit in the near future; one false alarm already. I said at the beginning of this letter that I should go mad if I remained here, but that was very wrong because now I know that I could stay and keep quite sane! My men are grand chaps and I love them all – I don't want to leave them.

This has been my very worst letter to you ever, but I was not feeling too good all throughout this week. I am sorry, Eileen, if it makes such awful reading. I have been thinking about your photograph today and wondering when it will reach Malaya – it can never come quickly enough. I want to see you every time I enter and leave this wooden hut. I am very happy seeing you now in your snap – trophies and golf clubs – and you occupy a very central position in my room. Do you know that you have always occupied a very central position in my heart – you occupied it all so very long ago. Nothing can ever displace you from your place there. The war may seem

endless and the waiting may seem almost eternal, but Eileen, we shall surely meet again and be the happiest pair in all the world. I shall do anything to make you so very happy; but you do not have to try to make me happy because I shall always be so as long as I have your love. I am many thousands of miles away from you, my dearest, but the very thought that you love me can bring me untold joy. I have so much to tell you when we meet again; so many plans to make with you; so many things to do; so much love to give you to atone for all the love I should have given you many years ago. You know that I shall love you forever, Eileen, and that I shall always be yours. To all your dear ones at home I send my love and they ever have my prayers for their safety.

Oh, my darling, I never knew that I could love you so much. I do not want to leave you now; I shall never want to leave you because I love you ever so. I pray that God will bless us and our love and may He bring us together soon again. May He and His Blessed Mother protect you and save you from all danger.

All my love,

Ever and ever yours,

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Sunday, August 17th [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

This has been a day of rest in every way for me in my forest home. In this station many days of rest per week are indicated – it is so hot and sticky with never a breath of air to cool one's brow. You see, my darling, we are surrounded by swamps and padi fields (under water), and naturally that puts the humidity up. All this should make me feel depressed; other things in the camp should make me sad, but lo and behold I am happy, so terribly happy, Eileen. It is real happiness in itself to love you as much as I do, and to know that you love me too, just makes my happiness complete. Oh why haven't we known each other like this long ago? It is my fault and you must try to forgive me for it; I shall spend my life making amends to you for all the years that we should have spent together. May be the joy of our first meeting will atone for the happiness that should have been ours during the past years; everything will be forgotten at that moment – our sufferings, our separation, all will vanish. Past, present, and future will have no meaning for us, when we find ourselves in each other's arms at Southampton some day very soon. Remember you have promised to meet me at Southampton – nothing less will do, young woman! Wouldn't it be grand if I were to arrive home without warning and rush off to Omagh to greet you by surprise. Supposing I were to walk casually into 15 John Street some fine evening next Spring – what then? Oh, my dearest, I spend my time thinking of our next meeting, trying to imagine how you will look and how you will be dressed. I shall only look at your eyes when that day comes, because I want to see something there which all the letters in the world cannot express. You will see the same in my eyes, and you will see it always there.

I read through all your letters this afternoon and the more I read them the more I want to love you. I have got six now and soon they will be tied in blue-ribbon – one written last December to India; one last April to India (received in Malaya); one last May to India (recd. in Malaya); one in May and two in June, all direct to Malaya. And now I am waiting for the next post to arrive – many people have remarked how very interested I am in the postbag nowadays! If they only knew how much I loved you, they would understand why I visit the office twice a day asking for letters! I wrote to Frances this evening and gave her the latest news of Malaya – which is nil! I had a package of grand prints arrived today from the photo man. They are a complete set of snaps of my journey through Malaya (550 miles) by road. You will like my baby Austin, my small tent, my driver, a typical river, Chinese coolies, a Malay boy, a Chinese boy etc. There was one taken of me during the journey seated at the wheel of my Austin, but it has not come out at all! When is your photograph coming, Eileen? Have you bought the ring yet? If so what is it like? Do you love it very much? May I please have a snap of it. Let me know as soon as possible what it cost, so that I can pay for it. I am glad that you decided to buy it yourself, Eileen, no matter how unorthodox it may be; you will be more satisfied and so shall I, knowing that I shall like your choice of a ring. Your second last telegram was a bit confusing to read by the time it reached me – the word 'photograph' appeared from nowhere. I shall now give it to you as I received it – "Thrilled wonderful letters photograph Gold diamond rino size L ½ wheatsheaf ceaselessly enraging safety visited Una lovingly yours dearest Eiren Okane." Now Miss O'Kane can you make out this enraging business?? I diagnosed it as praying; the 'rino' must be ring; 'wheatsheaf' puzzled me a bit; – may be it is some kind of ring? You see Eileen dearest all these messages are received by the

local village postmaster who knows precious little English and so your poor telegrams are badly mutilated by the time they reach me.

God bless you and good night my dearest.

Monday – August 18th

My darling, how much do you love me? I only need so very little of your love to make me happy. Tell me, Eileen, why were you so much afraid of me when we were at Queens together and why was I so terrified of you? May be we were both very much in love in those days but you were only a girl and had not grown up. I loved you then but it was a schoolboy's love and it did not become "grown-up" till much later. I was quite harmless – I would never have breathed the word 'love' in your presence; I would not have even held your hand! Do you remember the day I almost went to the Royal Cinema with you? We had the date all fixed up and you called it off in sheer terror! How many evenings have I spent with my eyes glued to the Geology Hut waiting for you to emerge; how many times have I waited, hidden in Shaftesbury Square, for a glimpse of you passing by – then I would suddenly leap on a tramcar, reach the Hippodrome and then shyly walk to meet you 'accidentally on purpose' on the opposite side of the road! I was then a boy and loved you according to my boyish ideas of love. You were my heroine and I worshipped you. Remember how I put you on a pedestal one day? Well my dearest, you have always been away up there as my ideal and you always shall remain there. Nothing in this wide world could ever change the opinion I have held of you. I did not get your character second-hand, I found everything out for myself.

I sent you a telegram today, my dearest, in case you should be worried about me (said he conceitedly!) – as if anyone could possibly worry about me! I shall send you a weekly telegram telling you that all is well and that I am safe. When these telegrams cease, then you will know that things are happening and that sending wires has been stopped; alas too my letters will cease when that day comes. Life is not very exciting at the moment – I miss my tennis and walks; I see no lovely sunsets here – it's too far away here from the wide open spaces. I have not had a swim for many days now, but there is one due to me tomorrow as I am going out with some men to train on the sea shore. I have loaded my camera tonight and now I am ready for my big day tomorrow. My poor little camera is fast becoming mouldy and the shutters stick a bit. Tomorrow an R.A.M.C. captain is paying us a visit here. I have never met him, but he had a practice next to mine in Birmingham – just around the corner. He was called up very early in the war as he was a Territorial Reserve Officer. When he left all his old patients came to us, but they were only on loan until the war is over. A very important Maharajah is due here tomorrow evening and I hope to be back from manoeuvres to have a look at him.

I still love you, my darling, and time can only make me love you more and more. I am all yours, and I shall always belong to you alone. Goodnight and God bless you.

Tuesday – August 19th

So many things can happen in one day – thousands of things happened today! I did not have a dull moment during the past 24 hours. It began last night just as I had settled down for the usual 8 hours sleep. The heavens opened and rain came down as it only can fall in Malaya; terrific lightning began to light up the sky and I thought that the peals of thunder would rend the skies apart. Well, my darling, this seemed to go on all night long and yet many of the officers (Indian) heard nothing – I could not sleep a wink with such a row in progress! 6.30 a.m. arrived and with it came morning tea on my tray, with the deep voice of my orderly praying his early 'salaams' – and a very half-hearted reply from under my net! It was a grand cool morning and I drove out of camp at 8 a.m. at head of my column. I spent the morning in the forest near the sea but only once did I catch a glimpse of the briny. The roads and tracks were in an awful mess and on one memorable occasion my 'baby' just failed to reach the summit of a very greasy hill and proceeded to slide backwards all the way down to the bottom again! I spent an hour getting an ambulance car back to safety from a swamp and another hour pushing a truck up a steep muddy incline! My usual lunch (sandwiches) were very welcome at 1 p.m. – then we pushed back to camp.

Everyone was all keyed up awaiting the Maharajah of Patiala's arrival at the camp. He is the head of the premier Sikh state of India and all Sikhs regard him as their 'father'. I was amazed at his stature when he finally appeared – about 6 ft 3 inches tall, black beard, very handsome, well built, and dressed in the uniform of general (Patiala's state forces). He is a famous cricketer and athlete – and he looks it. So once more I have been introduced to a famous man and shaken him by the hand! You should feel highly honoured by a handshake from me when we meet again. What I liked about this man was that he came to see the men – not the officers – and he gave all his attention to the Sikh troops. He sat in a chair and the men all crowded around him in a semicircle and sat at his feet while he talked to them as a father. Even family worries at home in India were carefully noted down for investigation by the A.D.C. to his Highness.

When I returned to the mess I found an R.A.M.C. Captain awaiting me. Before the war he was an ordinary doctor practicing just around the corner from me in Birmingham and yet I never did manage to meet

him there. Now tonight we are like old friends, we have had a long chat about our patients and general practice in general. He is a very fine man and we both speak the same language. I have just bade him goodnight and now my Eileen claims her usual two pages before I pop into bed. Have I given you any idea of how I have spent my day – my powers of description are very poor, I know? How many times in this eventful day have I thought of you? I just cannot count them – but it began first thing this morning and you kept appearing every few minutes for the rest of the day – as I was spinning along in my Austin, as I plodded in the mud, as I gave such a mighty push to get my truck up the greasy hill! Eileen you are so much a part of me that I cannot help thinking of you all the day long. I could not do my work properly without you, my dearest. I shall see you in the morning and we shall talk things over. Good night and God bless you Eileen.

Wednesday August 20th

My dearest, how can you ever doubt that you will be able to make me happy – you must never doubt it again. Your letters can bring me happiness that I have never known before in my life. That is how I feel tonight since your letter came this evening; but then I am very happy every day. Today's letter was your "Carraig Art" letter, dated 23rd June and sent from Strabane after your grand week-end in Donegal. You will be pleased to hear that all your letters have reached me safely, thank God; it would have been a tragedy if any had been lost en route. What a wonderful week-end you must have had in my Donegal, doing all the things that I long to do once more, breathing that Atlantic air that I long to breathe, and seeing all the beauty that I want so much to see again. My dearest I was with you all the way and enjoyed it as much as you did. I want to read about all the grand times you have at home; you share them all with me when you write to me about them and you make me very happy. I am so glad that you at least can enjoy life to the full in spite of the war – I should hate to think that you were having a dull time. So you, too, have experienced the peace of mind and contentedness and happiness that our love has brought to me. I wanted you to feel like that, more than anything in the world; I have wanted your love ever since I first met you, so you may guess how I feel at this moment.

I got a pleasant surprise when I saw your Carraig Art (I cannot spell Carrig without an "a"!) notepaper and envelope. Anyhow you are completely spoiling me, Eileen, because this letter arrived a week after the last. So it [is] futile trying to thank you – you understand my feelings are when a letter from you arrives. I read for the first time in your own dear writing that your answer is yes. We love each other so much that I should not have asked you formally if you would marry me and you should not have had to answer! Again I say that there never has been a love quite like ours before in this world. I was thinking of writing to your parents, Eileen, but when I come to consider it all, how can I write to them if I have never even met them once. What would I say to them? It would all be too much like a maiden speech in Parliament – all well prepared and thought out. When I meet them and know them and love them – then I shall be able to write to them without any forced labour! Do you understand my point, Eileen? It was quite a coincidence that my letter to my father should arrive at the same time as your aunties visit to him. My dearest, I could not tell him about "us" until you had given me your answer and that is what caused the delay. I do hope he received my other letter which told him all about you. I want so much to hear all about your visit to him and to Una, and what you thought of all my people. Do you think them a queer lot and do you think you will love them as much as I do? I love them very much, but Eileen, you must always come first, and you always shall, my dearest. Nothing shall ever come between us, nothing can separate us ever again. I owe you so very much, little woman, that I cannot possibly give you and more love than this poor heart can contain – you have it all.

Today has been hard and sticky – never once outside the gloomy precincts of this camp. Thank God I feel fit to cope with it all and ask for more; as usual I have had "a hap, hap, happy day"! Tomorrow I am bound for the "Ba, ba, Balmy Shore" and that means a chance of a swim no matter how busy we may be. The men like these trips and so do I. Alas the China Sea is nothing compared to our Atlantic; it is not so wild and clean and blue.

Early start tomorrow morning, Eileen. So I must bid thee good night and God bless you.

Thursday August 21st

Are you not wondering to yourself – will he ever stop writing these letters (awful letters) every day? Surely he must grow weary some time and cease writing? My own dear Eileen, I love you so much and you are so much a part of me that I shall write to you every day of my life and then I would not be satisfied. You have heard of Hitler's 'total war' idea but there is something more precious to me than that – total love. You have all of me, all my love, all my thoughts; I love you with everything that I have got to give. Just think of the happiness we shall have when we are re-united. We shall have each other always – in health or in sickness, till death Our love is true and deep and strong; it will stand all tests; it will always remain as young and fresh as it is today, it will always be carefree; we shall not spend all of our day mooning around when we get married – that's where the practical side of our love comes in. I shall have to leave you each morning to go out and earn some bread and butter, and I shall work for

you as I have never worked before in my life; you will have to stay behind and have a very dull time at home – or may be you would like to drive my car around each day?? I shall probably have to walk, anyhow!! I want to know, young woman, what you have done about our bottom drawer as yet? I bet you haven't done a thing about it!! I would have been furious if you had dared to become a nurse – you would have nursed some rich attractive young man back to health, he would have married you, and I would have been forgotten! Poor Eileen, you will be sorry that you didn't do lots of Domestic Economy, because when we get married you will have lots of cooking to do – we could never afford a cook!! My dearest, I love you so much that I could never allow you to do any work at all. Do you pray as hard as I do that God may bless our marriage? I know so well that we shall always be happy together, that it is not necessary to ask for happiness.

I hope we have a better home than my present one because the heavy rain is pouring in through numerous holes in the roof!! It is only the usual evening "shower" but how it does rain in Malaya! I have had a grand day with the men near the shore. We worked hard, we ate well out of our haversacks, we had due rest, and a good swim. What more could one ask of life? I could not ask for anything more because I have your love – that is all I have ever wanted. I looked in vain for your blue Atlantic but all I could see was a muddy green hue; the waves were tame, the sky was blue, the sun was hot, the sands burned my feet, there was not a puff of air anywhere – even the palms seemed half-dead. Oh my Eileen you have spoiled my China Sea since you reminded me of the Atlantic! Please tell me all about your holidays and all the grand things that happened to you – your happy moments can make me so very happy too. I shall always share my happiness with you, my dearest, no matter how far away I may be. I shall never ask you to share my unpleasant moments in Malaya, no matter how much you may want me to do so. I can promise you one thing my dearest and that is that I shall never ask you to live in an Eastern country. We shall live at home, even though we shall probably starve as a result!! A large drop of rain (now two!) have splashed across the top of this page, so I have kissed them away for you.

Next time you write, Eileen, and always, please put plain "Malaya" on the address. I have discovered that this Bombay stunt is a farce, though I must always put it on the back of my letters. God bless you my dearest – Good night.

Friday – August 22nd

I have just completed another small album of snaps for you, entitled "A Journey Through Malaya". There are 28 snaps in all and they are all for you to see what it is like to travel 500 miles by road in Malaya. My dear me, you might as well be living in this country, you are seeing so much of it through my camera. You could not see more of it were you sitting beside me in my Baby Austin! Oh, if only you were beside me during that eventful journey and seen all the grand things that I saw and met all the quaint people that I met. How I wish you were with me now – and yet I could never ask you to share this life with me; but if you were here I wonder would you like the snap of my girl friend (she is my lady love!). There she stands above my table holding two huge silver cups, her golf clubs slung over her left shoulder, and she is looking mighty proud! Eileen, my dearest, if you could know how much I love that young lady you would say that it is not possible to love anyone so much, that there could never be so much love in all the world. Have you made our engagement public yet, my dearest? And just how public has it become? I want everyone to know about it. My sister, Una, will be very pleased about it all – especially as she has now met you, Eileen. Have you been invited yet to visit my other sisters – Maureen and Margaret – at Crumlin Road? I am ashamed to say that Crumlin Road never held the same charm for me as Sion Hill did. You see, my dearest, I worked at the Mater for 3 long, weary, unforgettable months when I qualified and "the more I heard, the less I spoke"! I learned nothing, because I spent my student days there; I was paid 22s/6d per week and worked very hard as House Surgeon. I was very unhappy there and some day I shall tell you all about it. You will have to listen to so many tales of woe when we meet again that I fear you will not be able to withstand the strain!

My dear Miss O'Kane, very many thanks for your kind offer to knit me some socks; it is with great pleasure that I accept! You see dear lady we soldiers in Malaya do appreciate the generosity of the ladies of your little knitting circle in Belfast!! You and your good friends are surely "knitting for victory" – if you would send me a couple of pairs of woolen socks!!! Eileen, my dearest, I have many pairs of thick socks and can always get more at any time, so please do not bother your sweet head about any knitting for me. Thick socks are worn continuously by day and in the evening because of mosquitoes.

Today has been quiet and uneventful. I spent the day working in camp – and perspiring. I had a stroll just after dinner in the lines and had a chat with the men – I watched their games of cards, draughts etc; it is grand to see them all squatting on the floor playing cards by lamp-light. I approach very quietly and stand for ages just beside their circle before they realise that I am there! They are grand lads. Tomorrow we have a big day out of doors near the sea – that means that a swim may eventuate if there is time!

And now, my darling, I must leave you again. I want so much to travel home to you with this letter but you will find all of me contained inside this envelope – all my love, my devotion, my hopes, and my prayers. I

send them all to you, Eileen; they are yours to keep until I come back to you again. God bless you my dearest and may He keep you safe always.

Your loving
Frank

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Saturday, August 23rd [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

I sent off your usual six-day letter this morning and here I am on the next one. I have a miniature album of snaps all ready for dispatch to you tomorrow morning – “Journey Through Malaya” is the title. There are no wonderful snaps in this lot but you may get some idea of my 500 mile trip through this lovely country when you see these 28 pictures. I am sending them by ordinary air mail which travels by air to Durban and then by sea to Britain. I now address all your letters to Loreto Convent, Omagh; if you want me to change this please let me know. Your last letter, the seventh, dated June 23rd arrived a few days ago. You are spoiling me with so many letters, Eileen; I am not accustomed to all this attention and it may go to my head – as they say in Belfast!

My dearest, I want so much to tell you how much I really love you. I try to compare it with the height of the sky and the depth of the sea – and yet that cannot give you any conception of the height or depth of my love for you. I do know that I could never love you enough if I were to try every day for the rest of my life. I only love you more and more the longer we are separated and I do not have to try at all. I know that I am not good enough for you, Eileen, and I do not deserve to have you as my wife, but I can make you happy. My dearest, have you ever thought how happy we shall be when we meet again – we are happy with our love even though we are so far apart. What will it be like when we have each other always near by. I feel so sure of myself, Eileen, since I have found your love – so sure that our marriage will be the happiest that ever was. I often try to imagine you as my wife, you whom I have always loved, to see you every day of my life. Oh, how could God have given me a greater gift; and now I pray to Him to make me worthy of your love. With you loving me I can do anything, Eileen.

I have just returned from a party given by my men in the lines. It is 11.15 p.m. and I am sleepy, but not weary after a hectic day out-of-doors. I have been training all day until 6 p.m. with the men. It was hard work and we managed to snatch a bite to eat at 2.30 p.m. instead of mid-day – I had my usual bully beef sandwiches! Later we had a grand swim in the sea. I must have run about a mile up and down that beach today; I was so full of joy that I found running and splashing in the waves very expressive of how I felt. I owe all this happiness to you, my darling, so how can I ever love you enough. I have purposely omitted lots of “darlings” from my recent letters as I thought you might think it too, too loving. Please, Eileen, tell me about this and how you react towards ‘darling’! News came in today that a senior major is joining the Field Ambulance tomorrow and that my Belfast colleague is moving instead of me. Should I remain permanently behind here I shall become a captain soon, but that is the least of my troubles in this life. I have never hankered after power or fame; there are so many much more important things in my life to do. The “party” tonight was an open air affair with petrol lamps to light up the arena. I was the only officer invited to this show – and were the other furious? We had songs, dramatics, and dance. Several of the men dressed up as Indian women (duly veiled etc.) – their dancing was superb, and the songs have a sad haunting note. Good night and God bless you, my dearest.

Sunday – August 24th

Do you know that I am the happiest man in the world today? There is no real reason why I should have been so very happy this day. May be this was more like a Sunday at home than one in the wilds of Malaya; may be I thought even more about you than ever before – may be it is because I love you more than ever before. A new Major Sahib arrived today and I like him very much on first acquaintance. He brought some good news from the powers above concerning myself; I cannot give you details about it but it means that I shall probably remain with the unit as a major.. My Belfast colleague is due to leave in a few days time; I shall tell you all about him when we meet again. Heaps of new snaps arrived today and they are all grand. Oh why can't I show them to you now, my dearest; we could sit side by side and pore over them one by one. They are mostly of palm trees and sea, but I know you will like them – they are like pictures from the South Sea Islands. May be I am dreaming and am not in Malaya at all. You know that I am not really here – how could I be, with my heart and mind and thoughts ever with you at home. So the only thing I have left in Malaya is a ‘robot’ which walks around without a heart or mind!

I was swimming in the sea today and oh it was grand (by that I mean it was very rough!). I swam away out as usual among those waves and my O.C. was really scared in case I did not return to him in shallow water! And all the time I was thinking of you and wishing you were there to enjoy the waves. So I can only share my pleasure with you in thought. It is all so different from my blue Atlantic waves; the water is warm and when one leaves the water one starts perspiring as if he had some violent exercise on a hot day in summer.

How is your golf, my young lady? You ought to be ashamed of yourself with your handicap still at double figures. I think you had better take up the better game (tennis)! But my dear child (!) you shall never say that you beat me at tennis; why, I would not even need a bit of practice to beat you! I shall take up golf as a sideline and to show you that you are not quite so invincible as you fondly imagine! I shall need lots of dancing practice before gracing a ballroom floor with you, my dear one. Naturally my dancing is at a standstill – in fact it has never functioned properly! Should I be transferred to Singapore then I might have some chance to learn the latest steps but alas this is most unlikely.

Always tell me about your people in your letters; I want to know them all well before I actually meet them. I want to love them and I know that I shall. It will be such a happy moment in my life when I meet them all for the first time. You know that I want their love – especially your dear mother's. Should you have any news of my father or Una, please let me know, Eileen; you must have lots of information from your uncle and auntie (O'Kelly). I am so glad that my father has been kind to both of them – I could never imagine him to be otherwise – but because they are your people, my dearest, makes it so much nicer. You know well enough that you will never have to ask my father any favours; you will have his love because of our own self and because you will soon be "Mrs. Murray" (does it sound alright, Eileen?). You were the first to have entered 'Beechwood' as a future member of the family and I am sure you were made welcome because it looked as if all the Murrays would eventually become nuns or monks. You know I had thought of becoming a missionary doctor in Africa at one time. When in Birmingham I was a member of the local Catholic Medical Society and met several priests from Africa who made me interested in this work. And now I find myself in the tropics and have sampled what a Missionary's doctor's life would be like in Africa. It is so very sad to think that India is teeming with Methodist, Church of England, and Presbyterian missionary doctors, but never once have I heard of any Catholic ones. Most Protestant missionaries are financed by wealthy American and English societies; alas the Catholics seem to have no money. And may be it is better that way because our converts are genuine and not bought over!

Good night and God bless you, my dearest one.

Monday – August 25th

Life is strange in Malaya. One does not get that awful feeling on Monday mornings of starting work again after a lazy week-end. One just starts off the same as on any other morning of the week. Life could be very dull in this camp and it is dull for most folk around me, but I can honestly say that there is not a moment, night or day, when I am not happy and very interested in life. You can never realise what you have done to me, Eileen; I do not miss cinemas, dances, clubs because I now have you – and you are a full time job! My own dear one, I have loved you today in a very special way that I have never loved you before – I could not love you any more even if I tried very hard. How would you like to live here m'Lady – no golf, no games, no music, no news, no pictures, no dances, no new black frocks! You would simmer all day and be eaten alive by mosquitoes and other animals by night! You would hang your dainty frocks on nails in the wooden walls – the said walls are a horrible black colour thanks to a good tarring! You would have to sleep on a very hard bed and be rudely awakened during the night by rain dropping in through the roof! You would never have a decent bath nor a decent light nor a square meal! You would tramp on sleeping snakes in the long grass – and my poor Eileen would be no more! Would you be frightened, my dearest, were you to hear a rustling noise in the thatch just now? You wouldn't because you would know that the noise is from the poor little lizards in the roof having a spot of supper (flies!). My dear Eileen, if you feel sorry for me in my forest home, you may save your sorrow for a more deserving cause, as I love this life – it appeals to me and so I can make the best out of it. Your love has been such a tremendous help and I could not have managed without it – there is no excuse for me not being happy.

Today has been a quiet one and I sat all day painting – or rather painting signboards! So, my dearest, among my other accomplishments you will find me a very skilled house-painter! You will not appreciate what a treasure I am until we are married and you find out how useful a husband I shall prove to be around the house!! Oh, Eileen, won't it be grand fun when we have our own house and be always together – the happiness we shall know then. Surely we have found the secret of being happy in this life. I know that we shall never be sad again as long as we live, unless we are parted – and that will never happen, please God. This awful separation will end in God's own time but how I do pray to Him to make it as short as possible. We have now got so much to live for, so much to look forward to, that waiting for each other can be so easy. The war will soon be over and you will soon find yourself in my arms, a place you have never been before but to where you really belonged ever since we

first met in far-off Ranafast. By the way did you visit the scene of our first meeting place, when you were in Donegal?

Has Felix bought a practice yet or a partnership? The former is much more satisfactory – the latter are always fraught with trouble and misunderstandings. Practices in the North of Ireland are rather speculative in many ways but Felix is steady and a good worker, and that is half the battle won. Give him my best wishes for the future when you write to him again.

Good night, my Eileen, and God bless you.

Tuesday, August 26th

Many, many years ago when I was a medical student in my first year at Queens I was very keen on Anatomy. I learned then that the heart obeys the “All or None Law” and I know that my heart was obeying the All Law! (This law really refers to heart muscle!). My heart was giving all to you Eileen in those days and now today it has not changed with the years – and it never can change no matter how long I may live. My dear Eileen, do you never grow weary of reading all about my love for you; I said it to you every day because I feel that I have to tell you how much I love you. Besides you asked me once upon a time to tell you over and over again of my love for you. I have been reading your letters again this evening and counting my treasures (seven up to date) – thank God none have been lost en route. Please let me know if any of my letters have failed to reach you – it is almost impossible for any to be lost as they travel all the way by ‘plane. I have often tried to imagine what the journey must be like – I should dearly love to travel with one of my letters one of these days and deliver it to you personally. I could easily be back again on duty in a very short time in Malaya. Oh, my dearest, surely our day will come soon. That is why we must think only of that day and the happiness it will bring to us – that will keep us alive in the midst of such gloomy surroundings that accompany all wars. Think of the joy that peace will bring. I know so well that it will be a lasting peace and that we shall be allowed to live in the knowledge that our home will not be wrecked by bombs. Don’t you think it is very wonderful that we are so happy in times such as these. We would not have such happiness and contentment unless we truly loved each other in the proper way. Waiting can only make our love stronger; suffering can only make it deeper. Surely we were meant for each other, else how could we become engaged so far apart and after so many years during which we had ample opportunity to meet so many other people of the opposite sex. No young lady that I ever met ever could compare with my Eileen – and I did compare them with you, my dearest. Do you think it was a queer vow that I took when I was a lad, “I shall marry Eileen O’Kane or nobody!” Those are the actual words I used in the solitude of my Beechwood study one September day many years ago.

My dearest, I have made yet another small snapshot album and it is entitled “Whispering Palms”. There are only 16 snaps in it and they are all “much of a muchness” – all waving palms on tropical beaches! However you will see the new revised edition of “view from my back window”. I shall send them by Air Mail via South Africa and they should reach you in 6 week’s time – if the Iranian war does not upset the plane service. I made a small album for Una too and I know she will be very interested in them. I had rather a strenuous forenoon today in swampy jungle and jungly swamp! We covered many miles during our 3½ hours walking, climbing over logs and perilously narrow bridges, and perspiring! Still I love this kind of life; it is so much better than being cooped up in camp all day long in the forest. I did not forget to thank God for giving me health and strength to be able for all these feats of endurance. I was rather ashamed of the huge lunch which I ate afterwards! So many chaps just can not endure this climate, it is so exhausting, they do not eat properly and so they readily fall victims to all the diseases going in a tropical country. This evening my Golden Treasury of Irish Verse was unearthed, and it is a treasury of gold. “Shall glad your heart, shall give you hope, Shall give you health, and help, and hope”. (My Dark Rosaleen). I have not forgotten that I am an Irishman and I never shall.

Good night and God bless you, my own Eileen.

Wednesday August 27th

My own dear one, I have just come indoors from looking at a very wonderful sky. It was so cool and pleasant out there among the trees; and then to see myriads of twinkling stars among the branches and that moon which seemed to hang as a fairy lantern from the tree-tops. As I stood there and looked away towards the north west – towards Ireland and You – I wondered what you were doing on this August afternoon at 3 p.m. I wondered what were your thoughts and were you happy. Did you have that awful end-of-vacation feeling? You poor darling must leave your seaside home and go back to Omagh – and work! How can you possibly concentrate on your teaching while you are in love?? And yet being in love can make work so much easier and more interesting. This beautiful night reminded me of a similar one in 1930 when I stood in the garden at Beechwood and looked up at a starry sky and looked away to the south and Kilkeel, wondering what you were thinking about and hoping that you loved me. I was a romantic schoolboy then, and my head was full of knights in shining armour winning the hand of a fair lady;

it was full of Jane Austen and her quaint Victorian romances. I have not changed much from those days except that my love has grown up with me and matured into something firmer than a rock, and all the while my romantic boyhood ideas persist.

I wrote to my sister, Una, today and sent her those snaps. I asked her all about your visit to her and did she like my fiancé – I want her to love you, Eileen, as a sister. If it were possible for Una and all the Murray family to dislike you (and it is not possible), it would not make the least bit of difference to my love for you – I would only love you all the more; you shall always come first before relatives and friends no matter how much I may love them. I have not been outside the trees today and that does not mean that I have been over-worked. I had a chance of going to town with the C.O. this evening but I declined the invitation as I had to write to Una – besides there is nothing in the so-called town to interest me in the least! However I heard good news yesterday about cricket. It seems that matches are played quite often on the village green – the local rubber planters and miners are very keen players. So I must get in touch with them and have a game some Sunday afternoon – but it will be no joke playing cricket here on a hot sticky day. We have a wonderful match arranged for tomorrow on the village ground but as usual the other team will scratch or something! It is so difficult to even reach a football ground in this place. Our last station was grand – we had all our games a few yards away from the camp away up in the hills. Won't you please have me sent back to Perak, it is so much nicer up there! My men are very happy nowadays with their gramophones, Indian records, new games (snakes and ladders, ludo, and draughts), new football and volleyball, sweets and cordials – all came from Red Cross recently. I have started a weekly Saturday Night Revue for the men – we are going to have a royal feast this Saturday. The men love this bit of entertainment. You would kill yourself laughing if you saw our “dramatic society” (as I call them) rehearsing all during the week in a small tent! They take it all so seriously! At present I am fighting a winning battle for these lads and I hope it will be allowed to continue. They are far from home and their loved ones and my heart bleeds for them at times – they have not got much in a place like this. So many folk are apt to forget them.

[Letters received:– April 28th; May 8th; May 24th; June 5th; June 14th (+snaps); June 23rd & July 30th (Trans pacific). The other July letters are 'en route'. Frank]

And now I am off to bed, young lady. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Thursday – August 28th

My own dearest, you will never know how very, very happy you have made me tonight. Your first Trans Pacific letter arrived this evening and oh, it was the most wonderful letter I have ever read in my whole life – it was the longest and the most beautiful. The untold happiness that your letters and your love can bring to me – somehow I do not deserve it all. How you have put me to shame with my awful attempts to write to you. You are very naughty to sit up so late at night writing to me, but I cannot be cross with you; I am not worth all this trouble really. How could I ever be annoyed or angry with you whom I love so much. It will take me weeks and months answering your letter of today. It was dated July 30th and posted the following day from Killough. You had just returned from your visit to Dublin and you had so many things to tell me. I fear that you have cheated the postal authorities by putting so much into the specified ½ oz! I cannot imagine that only yesterday you were a bridesmaid at Felix's wedding – I should have sent him a telegram but alas your good news came too late. You may give him my very best wishes for every happiness in the future.

I am glad you liked Una and found her so natural. Imagine giving you 2½ hours of her precious time – that's more than I have ever been allowed! So she must have loved you. My Eileen how could I possibly be annoyed with you wanting to meet my family; surely it is natural and what I desire more than anything else. I am not annoyed that you should ask me for a ring; surely that is natural too and I love you for being your own self. You do understand that I could not send you a ring from here because it might be lost in the post; besides you would have to pay enormous custom duty on its arrival in Ireland – and I know nothing about rings. So that it would be preferable if you were to buy the ring, of course with my money. Your choice will be wise and the size correct. I shall send you a cable tomorrow saying that all letters and snaps received and ask you the price of the ring. My darling, your snap with all the writing on the back was just what I wanted. You see, its duplicate is above the centre of my table and now I can have you everywhere with me (inside my cigarette case where 'you' won't be drowned in perspiration!). Do not worry about my smoking – I only smoke two days per week because we are given cigarettes free with our food ration.

This evening we went to town to play out football match and we were beaten 5-0! Yours truly was the unfortunate goalkeeper!! Really it was not my fault, Eileen; I played better than the others (vanity) and I had many more shots than they! Somehow I have never felt fitter and stronger in my life than I was today – and I owe it all to Him. I was so happy coming back to camp in the lorry with the men and I could not fathom my happiness, quite. However when I heard that there were two letters for me I skipped to the mess full of joy and found your letter and another from the photo man containing enlargements of my snaps. These latter will be sent to you soon.

You will be pleased to know that I am older than you a wee bit – just a matter of 47 days! I was born in December 1912 and you in January 1913 – we were almost twins! You have got very wonderful parents and I only hope that we shall be like them – that we shall always adore each other and all the while loving our children with all the tenderness and love that children need. I am looking forward to your dear mother's note to me in one of your July's letters. Eileen, please, do not ask me again to discontinue sending my letters by air throughout. You are a brick to suggest waiting for two months for my letters to reach you by ordinary air mail, but my dearest it is such a pleasure for me to know that all my letters fly to you as quickly as they can go and that you do not have to wait too long for them, besides they are much less likely to be lost by enemy action. However you must not waste your money on expensive stamps as all your ordinary letters have reached me safely thank God. Can you forgive me for making you suffer so much in the past? I know that I have hurt you but God knows that I never meant it. My two romances in England must have hurt you terribly, but I did not know then that you loved me, otherwise there never would have been any romances. I just could not marry either of those young ladies. What a shock it must have been to hear that I was actually married and had taken my wife to India! Why, oh why must people invent such stories? What awful damage that rumour could have done to both of us. Some day you shall hear about it from my lips, Eileen, and you will not be the least bit jealous when you know the details. In the meantime we must continue to thank God for all that He has given us – "how wonderful are His ways". My dearest what can I give you in return for all the Masses you are offering up for me; at present you can only have all my love and all my prayers, and all my thanks. You could not send me anything or give me anything more precious than one Mass. You must love me an awful lot and yet we can never love each other enough, because we need all this love to sustain us during our married life. I with your love and devotion to support me could overcome any obstacle in life and could endure any sorrow with you by my side. You will always have me to support you, my dearest, with all the love that I can possibly give you. We shall grow old together, but growing old can only strengthen our love and the bonds between us.

It must have been grand being in Dublin again – the Abbey, the Gate, the Metropole – and how I envy you. I spent two glorious months there at the National Maternity Hospital (Merrion Square) in my student days. There was not much work done – especially when Horse Show Weekend arrived. You must have been glad to see Una Walsh again – she was your great friend at Queens. Louis J. I have always worshipped from afar as one of the greatest men in Ireland today. Thank God he believes the war will end this year – I have great faith in his predictions. Did you know that he foretold the great Russo-German Pact of 1939 six months before anyone even dreamt of such an unlikely thing? I read all his articles and books when I was at home.

My dear one, I have to finish this letter rather reluctantly. I have not attempted to answer your letter except in parts, but I shall do it in my next instalment, which begins tomorrow! Need I tell you once again that I am all yours, that I shall always be yours for ever and ever, and that nothing can ever change me. I love you as you are today. With each letter I know you better and love you more – you are so natural and honest; your heart and soul are just poured out on paper when you write to me. What could be more wonderful for me to read – I who loves you so very much.

May God bless you and keep you safe. May His Holy Mother always watch over you by day and by night; and may She keep our love ever as holy and pure as it is today.

Forever yours,
Frank.

P.S. Love to all your dear ones.
F.

P.P.S. I have so few interesting things to tell you – nothing to compare with a visit to Dublin. So please excuse this boring letter.

Your loving,
Frank.

Special P.S.! Could you send me an occasional "Irish Weekly" – no matter how ancient it may be.
All my love,
Frank.

P.S. As this is only a 4-day letter and there are 10 pages here, you have gained 2 pages more than usual!
Oh, my Eileen, I do love you so very, very much.
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o/ Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
29th August [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

Here I am again worrying you with another letter – how on earth you will read it I cannot imagine. I sent you a telegram and a 14 page letter this morning – the former to tell you that all your letters and snaps had arrived safely and the latter to tell you how much I love you. Love is a strange thing; it makes me want to give you everything I have, everything that I am, and every good thing that I do. I shall never grow weary of giving all to you – as yet I have only given you my love and myself. If writing to you ten times daily instead of once would give you any pleasure I should write ten times a day and each time you would read how much I love you. If the smallest thing that I can do will make you happy, you have only to say the word and it shall be done. I am so completely and entirely yours, that doing things for you and sending you things bring me the greatest joy. Everything that I think and do and see and hear – I must send them all to you in my daily letter. My whole day is for you; it is always you – in my work, my play, and my hobby. I do know a little about my job now and I put all my heart into it; I put my heart and soul into everything that I do – and oh, what satisfaction it can bring. You know all about my games – I only wanted to be a success at them for your sake so that you might feel proud of me. (Is this vanity?). You know that I am keen on photography; well, immediately I spot a pretty scene, I think of you, and wonder if you would like a snap of it. It is always the same. I have 30 more snaps in envelopes all ready to send to you; this makes the total from Malaya well over 100! It nearly broke my heart when many of my snaps were lost in the post about a month ago here – I wanted them so badly for you my dearest. I had a special snap taken for you – of myself – a few days ago; I am seated at the wheel of my Austin 7; I am expecting it tomorrow and you shall have it in this letter if it is good.



Frank Murray in his Austin 7

Did you know that my full names are “Francis Mary Joseph”. My father chose Francis (of Assisi) because he loved that saint; my mother chose Mary; and I chose Joseph (in confirmation). I could never understand the “Mary” part of me but it seems that it is quite common as a second name for boys in Ireland. I do pray hard to all three – to Francis for humility, to Mary for purity, and to Joseph for grace to make us always true. Eileen, my dearest, have you any idea of the happiness you have brought to me? I never dreamed that there could be so much happiness on earth, and you have given all to me. You asked me in your letter if there is anything you could send me in Malaya – I only want your love and your letters. I did mention an “Irish Weekly” once but what does a paper mean compared with your wonderful letters. I had your grand long letter yesterday by Trans-Pacific Air Mail and though I answered it last night I am still reading it and still replying to it. What did you feel like at Felix’s wedding on 27th? I hope you kept your eyes wide open and made mental pictures of everything because soon you will have to pass through the same ‘ordeal’! My darling, you must never be afraid or worry about marriage and its

responsibilities. God knows that I shall try hard enough to dispel all your fears and make you the happiest wife in the world. I cannot bear to see people unhappy and I just have to do something. Yesterday afternoon there was great excitement in camp because of the great football match we were to play at 5 p.m. with the local regimental team. Everyone was scrambling into a lorry to go to town and see my green-and-white team (beaten 5-0!). As I was passing the carpenter's work-shop I heard sobs coming from within. Our carpenter is only a lad of 17 years and there he sat huddled in a corner crying as if his heart would break. Someone had been thoughtless and said hard things to him. He would not look up. He is our most faithful football supporter and he would not come to the match. It made me doubly sad when I knew that I had to leave him there and have his good weep. He is himself today and I gave him lots of encouragement about his work and told him not to heed anyone else or what they said because I was his officer. My dearest, why have I told you this at all?

Today has been grand for us because it was a day in the field with our men. It meant a drive in the country, a sandwich lunch by the sea, and a swim – and lots of work too! And now that the bewitching hour has come I am ready for bed and a dream of you. I have shared my day with you and you have been with me the whole day through.

Good night and God bless you my dear Eileen.

Saturday – August 30th

I wrote you a short two-page note this evening and posted it (or sent it rather for censoring) with one lot of enlarged snaps. My very special snap has not arrived yet but it must come tomorrow and you shall have it with this letter. Will you be very annoyed if this letter should be shorter than usual; I have just read about the clipper leaving on Wednesday next – that means I shall have to send this on Monday. You know that I never want to annoy you or disappoint you even in the smallest of things. I live only for you and for the day when we shall be united again. A thousand times a day I say to myself – “isn't it grand to be alive”; many times I speak my thoughts aloud and the others are amazed because life in Malaya to them is not so grand! It is you and you alone who have done all of this for me, and yet I have not even thanked you for it. Oh, my dearest, if we are so terribly happy now, what will it be like when we meet again. You will always find that my love will be tender and true towards you. We shall emulate your daddie and mummy by growing old together but ever loving each other more and more as the years roll by. Your guardian angel was right when she said that everything would be all right – things will always be all right in future for us. You have a very wonderful guardian angel who made you write to me last December and I wish I could thank her enough for that. When I read your letter, my heart just leaped for joy at the very possibility of you loving me – and yet you did not say so, directly; but it was enough for me to know that there was some hope. How I prayed that my reply would reach you in time for you to make your big choice. And now that we love each other and understand each other as never before – isn't it too wonderful for words to express your feelings. Eileen, my dearest, you have been grand and so full of pluck; you give me your love and devotion without question, even though you have not seen me for so many years; you do not even stop to think that I might be changed a lot, grown older and very wicked. I shall not disappoint you my dear one. You shall ever be the most important person in my life – you shall come before self and friends and relatives; I shall ever treasure your love as a precious and rare gem. I know how fortunate I am to have a love like yours, Eileen – so holy and fine and true. I have always loved you for yourself – everything about you, your character, your nature, your temperament, and above all your holiness. I knew that you were good – I could not love you otherwise. The things that you loved in life, I loved them too – the simple things of life, love of games and the open air, love of nature, and love of God. Yes, He did make our marriage in Heaven and that's why it will be such a happy one. We shall have to spend most of our days thanking Him for everything that He has given to us. He has been over-generous with us and we shall not forget.

My dearest, you must never neglect your games because of me. My letters can wait for the rainy day but you must have your golf and fresh air when you have the chance. Besides I want you to produce many more cups when I return home again – two are not enough! Do you mind these awful lectures from me? If so just forget that you have ever read this one. I am about to make your poor mouth water very much – in Malaya there are more sweets and chocolates and other dainties than the people know what to do with! How I wish I could send you some, but alas they would be ruined 'en route'. Would you believe that in this land of chocolates and sweets, I have only tasted them once; they are not very suitable fare in tropical countries.

You think I did not know that you were an outdoor girl and that dressing up was not in your line! I shall ever be careful that we shall choose a non-fashionable seaside place for our holidays. I want to walk with you for miles each day along the coast arm-in-arm; I want you to wear an old pair of shoes, your little American print frock, no hat, and no stockings; I want to feel your hair blowing in the wind; I want to see you smile always and be happy with me. We shall just walk and walk and I shall say to myself – “Is this really my Eileen, whom I have always adored?” and my heart will answer gaily “Of course it is; that's why you feel so happy.” It will always be the same with us, my dearest, no matter where we may go we shall be happy together. Imagine you liking Mollie

O'Hare because she knew me in the olden days! Do you know that I liked her too because she knew you! Poor Mollie must have been fed up meeting me at all sorts of queer places in and around Springfield Road and being asked to convey messages to you! How many guesses may I have, please, at what the "one thing" is that you are praying so hard for? You will have to tell me in the end!

I do not remember meeting Mrs O'Kelly at Upper Fitzwilliam St. but Cormac²⁶ was there the day on which I called many years ago. He seemed a grand type of chap. My father wrote to me about a year ago and told me of his marriage and that he was living in Cork. He (my father) has always taken a keen interest in the O'Kelly family. I have only been at Broadway once and have very faint recollections of folk there. Eileen, my dearest, how many people are praying for us and our intentions?? Thank God you are doing all of this; it makes doubly sure that all will be well with us and our love. Surely I shall come back to you safely with so many prayers to guide me home.

I am watching the post daily for your three July letters which you sent by ordinary air mail. I have just read your July 30th letter all over again and I think it is even nicer now than when I first read it. Today has been very hot and sticky, so after a hard morning's work the C.O. took me along with him for a swim in the sea. I was thinking how brave one can be about jumping into the sea in Malaya – the water is always warm, so it is not very refreshing. How I wish I could be at Killough with you now, Eileen; it would be heaven for us. I do not always deserve all the love that your daddie and mammie have given to me – and all on your word alone. I know that I love them already better than if they were my own. I am longing to read your dear mother's note which you told me about. Young woman, it is midnight again and I am still here! Good night to you, my own dear one, and may God bless you.

Sunday August 31st

Do you know what my happiest thought was today and always will be on Sundays – that you heard a complete Mass for me and shared another one with me. You have no idea of the joy that you brought to me today – you are so good and thoughtful. My dearest, I do need your prayers and those all precious Masses, but you must not pray too much for me. I should hate to think that by attending two Masses on Sundays you were injuring your health or raising blisters on your poor knees! I am selfish enough to ask for all your prayers but do not spoil me Eileen. Please understand that my only reason for asking you not to overdo the praying is you and your precious 8 stones odd. It seems that I shall have to make you drink a quart of cream daily when we get married! You have been nearer and dearer to me today than you have ever been before. I fell asleep this afternoon for five minutes – and there you were before me. I dreamed of our last meeting in Belfast and how you left Fitzsimmons and me standing at Castle Junction. How I longed to speak with you alone and tell you again that I loved you still. And then I awoke and just kept very quiet lest I should break the spell. Oh, my dearest, if only I had had more courage and asked you long ago to marry me, but I thought you did not care for me – that you did not love me. I have been thinking that if this was the way God wished us to 'find' each other, it must be the right way – He is always right. It was His holy will that it should all happen when it did, so please never say again that it was your fault that we did not know each other like this long ago. You were a child before your illness, so how could you know anything of love; and when love did come how on earth could you be expected to write to any man and tell him that you loved him. It would not be quite the right thing to do and yet my dear one, if you had been cheeky enough to write such a letter, you would have found me on your doorstep within 36 hours!

I want so much to read all about your visit to Beechwood, all the details – your escort, your meeting father, Anne, and Philip²⁷. You will find father a very shrewd man; he must have read poor Eileen like a book during the first few minutes of meeting you; he is a business man and work always came first – and the work was all for us his children; he is very cautious with money but he is not mean; he has a sentimental strain very deep down in his heart and I am one of the few who has ever had a glimpse of this; he is the greatest "prayer" I have ever met – he never grows weary. Did you find Anne a very matter-of-fact person, sophisticated, but with a sense of humour – I bet she made you feel at home. What did you think of Philip who takes life so easily and has not a worry in the world; we nicknamed him "Huckleberry Finn" once upon a time! I have prayed, beseeched and bribed him to work hard if only for his father's sake as well as his own future, but somehow he just remained listless and did not study. Sometimes I was successful in dragging him out to games or out for a walk, but more often he preferred his

²⁶ Cormac O'Kelly (or O'Ceallaigh) (1912-1996) was the brother of Eamonn O'Kelly who was married to Eileen's Aunt Kathleen. Cormac was a distinguished Irish physicist with an interest in cosmic rays and particle physics. After the war he became a professor in the School of Cosmic Physics of the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies. See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-professor-cormac-o-ceallaigh-1350142.html>

²⁷ Philip Murray (1918-1979) was Frank's younger brother. He studied engineering at Queen's University and after the war he worked for Morris Cars at Cowley, near Oxford, before emigrating to Canada where he worked in the Patent Office.

easy chair by the fire! He is a strange lad and just will not be hustled! There are such grand possibilities for him because he is clever. He has been a sore disappointment to father, but the latter has promised me that Philip will have every chance to be a success. If only he were keen on games, I would not mind so much. I want to meet Hugh who loves his football and handball so much. I pray that he be successful in his 'Junior'. He is so young; you should be happy that he is so keen on his games and less keen on study – it is the most natural thing in the world for a young boy to feel this way. It always annoyed me intensely to see young lads at school with their noses always in a book with never a thought for anything else! I did not study for Junior or Senior or during my first year at Queens – after that I found the happy medium between study and sport! You distracted me far too much to allow much work to be done! I have given you a dissertation on young boys – and it has bored you I am sure! Why do you be bothered with me at all?? I shall never know.

Young lady, how can you expect me to tell you all about today when nothing happened. I did not move outside the camp today – spent the morning and afternoon on the Mess Accounts (except for 5 minutes sleep!). A mail came today but no letters for me and no snaps from my photo dealer yet. I wrote you another two page note this evening to accompany some enlargements I am sending you. But now I am going to bed (early) as it is 11.25 p.m. and I have a big day ahead of me tomorrow. That piece of raw dough, which our cook gave us as a pudding tonight is beginning to make its presence felt – it was never meant for a human stomach!

Good night and God bless you – see you in the morning.

Monday September 1st

My own dearest, do I ever have anything of interest to tell you? I cannot tell you about local people because there are none; you cannot hear about my local friends because there aren't any; you cannot hear much about me or my job as my whereabouts because it is secret – so what on earth is there left to write about except you and my love for you, my thoughts and my hopes. You must be tired reading the same thing always with never anything fresh or new to read about. Today has been the same as yesterday – a whole day in camp with plenty of work to do. It is so much better to get out of the rubber (plantation) at least once daily. At long last my snap has arrived and it was not worth waiting for or even sending to you. I may have a slight enlargement made and sent to you if you would like it. May be it is all vanity sending you snaps of myself but I know how much I love to see a snap of you my beloved one. They say that I am a funny sight in my doorless Austin with my long legs almost reaching to my chin; but I don't care how funny I look – I am happy and I love you, Eileen. I am totally oblivious to people who laugh at me and when I do notice them they receive a cheery wave of my hand in reply! I, the very self-conscious young student of former days, am now as brazen as brass!! I have warned you of the terrible person I now am and how much I have changed! Thank God I have not changed my love for you, my dearest, and I never shall. I could not live without your love, Eileen, so please love me always. Nothing must ever happen to you my dearest; you know how precious you are to me. I should not just die if you were even hurt in any way, so please take good care of yourself. Nothing shall happen to me Eileen, there are so many prayers ascending to Heaven daily for me. I shall come back to you soon my dearest and we shall never be parted again – I shall never leave you. We shall go everywhere together and do everything together; we shall always be happy together. Love makes me so very unselfish. Why you can love me at all I shall never understand; I have never done anything to deserve such a love as yours. I, too, shall do all and give all to make you the happiest lady in the world.

Are you very disappointed with a mere 10 pages? I had to catch the 'clipper' before it leaves Singapore this week – the same Clipper that brought Mr. Duff Cooper²⁸ to these parts! And now I send you all of me and all of my love to you. I am yours for ever and ever. I enclose a special message to your mammie and daddie – tell them I love them as if they were my own parents and that although I am stealing you away from them, they will never have any cause to regret losing you. Give the little Frances my love too and tell her that we shall be married before her!

May God and His Holy Mother shower their blessings upon you and protect you from all harm. May my friend, St. Francis, bless you too in a very special way.

Ever and ever yours, my darling,

All my love,

Frank.

²⁸ Alfred Duff Cooper (1890-1954) was Minister of Information in Churchill's cabinet before becoming Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; he was sent to Singapore in July 1941 to become Minister Resident.

27th Field Ambulance
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Tuesday, September 2nd [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

I am writing this at 11 p.m. in the midst of manoeuvres, so please do not expect too much. Young woman, if I were really and truly interested in my work I should not write to you tonight! But you see, my dearest, I am so hopelessly in love with you that no matter what happens I must write to you every night of my life. Recently I have found myself writing to you daily and the habit is growing. Apart from my usual 6-day letter by Pan American Clipper I shall send you other letters by ordinary air and sea mail, so that you may not have to wait too long for my trans-Pacific letters. I posted my letter to you this morning – it was only 10 pages but I wanted it to reach Singapore in time for the Clipper leaving. I sent you a snap (awful one) of myself at the wheel of my Austin and also snaps of Malaya's shore. Would you let me know occasionally, as you did in your last letter, whether all my letters and snaps reach you safely – I do want them all. I smiled when you told me how you sorted out all my letters and carefully numbered them – thank God you found that none were missing and thank God, too that all your letters have reached me to date. Your three July letters are still somewhere on their way to me and oh, it is grand looking forward to them – there is so little to interest one in these parts.

Eileen, my dearest, I am still very happy and you are still to "blame" for it all! If you are as happy as a Queen, then I am as happy as a King, but I would not change places with any King ever. You will always be my Queen and I shall always be so proud of you as such. I only live for you and I shall always live for you and you alone. Do you think there has ever been a love as great as ours before? Do you remember the letter you wrote to me from Killough after your hectic tour of Dublin with Francis, your mammie and Mairead – well, I think there was never a letter written before that could compare with that. I tell you over and over again that you write from your heart and I love every word you write to me and it makes life so very happy for me. Life is just a grand picnic for me and it should be very grim here at present. I owe so very much to you my dearest – all my happiness, all my hopes, all my dreams.

I have had a very busy day and the night is full of possibilities. I know the 'casualties' will pour in during the night and though it means a wakeful time, still I think it is grand fun. I am not in my wooden hut tonight, neither am I in my very small tent – it's all too secret to tell even you my dearest. The "enemy" are attacking with terrific zest! It does not seem right that I should have secrets that you must not hear; and yet it must be so until the war is over and censors no longer exist. You cannot imagine how much faith I have in Pius X's prophecy – I know the war will be over before the end of the year. It makes me too happy to think about it at times – may be it is not possible to be too happy on this earth. And so selfish me must go and snatch some sleep for an hour (more cases are due then). Good night and God bless you, my dearest. (This was Anne's Birthday.)

Wednesday – September 3rd

I am back again in my cosy room and oh I love it so very much because you are always here with me. I have had a terrific night and an awful day – no sleep, no rest – and yet I do not feel tired or even sleepy tonight. It is good for one to work really hard occasionally and have some idea of what one is expected to do in real warfare. Anyhow I should not like many such days and nights like these every week. My dearest, I feel that I need you more tonight than I have ever needed you before. How I wish with all my heart that this war was over and that we were together again – and yet I have seen nothing of the war anywhere. Things have happened today which should make me feel very sad, but with your love I just refuse to be sad or unhappy. If I could only see you and speak to you and tell you all about it – alas, I cannot even write about it. And now horrors of horrors my Batman has forgotten the oil for my lamp and it's going out! My dearest you know that I love you and that I always shall love. God bless you, Eileen.

Thursday – September 4th

Last night I was trying again to tell you how much I love you – and then came "the light that failed"! You mean so much to me my very own dear one; all my happiness, my contentment and peace of mind depend upon you. If I lose you, I have lost everything. My whole life is for you and you alone; I would sacrifice anything for you, my dearest, even my own worthless self – and that would be nothing compared to what I should like to give. How can we ever thank God enough for bringing us together again and giving us a glimpse of heaven-on-earth.

Young woman, let me tell you that you are not and never could be full of moods and tenses – you only imagine you are. It is not possible for either of us to have any mood except one of happiness and that will last forever and ever. The war drags on and on, but I only love you more and more. All this waiting can only make

our next meeting all the sweeter; it can only make our future all the happier. I shall do anything and everything to make you happy. Would it make you very happy if I were to arrange with the Government to have my daily letter delivered to you each day? The big days of my life now are those when your letters or telegrams arrive – I just spend my time awaiting them, I live for them. I know that if I did not have them I should go crazy. You do not realise how wonderful your letters are and what each word means to me. You tell me all that I want to hear about yourself – your thoughts, your feelings, the things that happen to you, your holidays, your sport, your people, your friends, all the details of yourself that I love. I would like to see you in your “divorcee” outfit; it must look very smart. May be I shall see a newspaper cutting of Felix’s wedding group and you in your “lavender and lace” (I don’t mean that you are a little-old-lady!). I bet you were very chic in it. My own darling, I can never love you enough and I do want to love you so very much more than I do tonight – but it seems impossible at the moment, and yet when tomorrow comes you will find that I love you a little bit more than tonight – but it seems impossible at the moment, and yet when tomorrow comes you will find that I love you a little bit more than today.

I have had a present today of a very lovely folding table – our little carpenter gave it to me. I feel so happy about things like these and they do happen to me quite often. I never ask for anything – they just are made and left secretly in my room. I know that the other officers are not given such privileged treatment by the troops, and may be they are jealous! I can honestly say that I treat the men well, without exactly spoiling them. My “show” in the manoeuvres was the best because of my men – they worked day and night without rest or complaint. They were always awake during the night when “patients” rolled in by the score. I am now sitting on the verandah writing to my beloved – I am really showing off my new table! It is quiet and cool out here; the frogs are kicking up an awful row after the rain and the usual horde of crickets make their usual awful noise! Still my heart is singing with joy because I know that in far-off Ireland there is someone who loves me. I only need your love, Eileen, to make me the happiest man in the world – you will never have to try to make me happy. And here is the proof of what I have been saying :– this very morning I heard the news that I am no longer an Acting Major but a mere Captain again – and I am as glad now as I as before this news arrived. The only thing that makes me worry is you, my Eileen, in case you might feel it badly – may be you have told your dear ones about my promotion and now you have to tell them of my de-motion. It was just bad luck and I am quite resigned to it all; thank God I was not de-moted for inefficiency – you can tell anyone that, my dearest, with truth. I am worried by this military life in case all my medical knowledge will be forgotten – it will soon be two years since I last did any doctoring, it has mostly soldiering since the war began.

Today has been a sort of holiday after the manoeuvres, with lots of “post-mortems” on the might-have-beens! I was in town this afternoon with the C.O. on business (more “post-mortems”) and called at the local bookshop. I had some great news from the owner, a Catholic, who had a letter saying that a priest would visit on 14th September and remain for three days. My dearest Eileen, I have been praying for this to happen and now it has come unexpectedly. Now I have a chance of three Masses and Communions for us and our future together – we need plenty of grace from God for our married life and how I shall pray for it during those three days. The bookshop man has let me down about the small statue and cannot get one from Singapore; however I am hoping that the priest will be able to purchase one for me and send it when he has finished his tour of these parts.

Eileen, did you know that my greatest boy friend lives quite near to Spring Villa. His name is Gerry McGuinness and he lives next door to Dan McSparran’s Surgery on the Falls Road (129). May be you know him and may be you do not like him and may be you do? We have been close friends for 15 years and never once had a row. He is first cousin to Eddie Gilliland and works in that firm; he is also (or was) engaged to a very sweet girl from Monaghan who teaches in Dublin. I only hinted to him in my last letter that soon I would become engaged to a very wonderful person who lived not far away from him; and now I must write and tell him the good news. I brought him specially to the Ard Scoil one night to let him see you! I thought there was no one in the world to compare with you (and I still do) but Gerry thought you “looked” a very ordinary individual!! Please try and meet him soon and then you will have completed the chain of links between us. I want you to meet and to love all the people who are dear to me. Some day soon I shall meet your dear ones and love them as much as you do, Eileen – I even love them already from all that you have told me about them. Did you know that Hugh Marshall (your “cousin”) was a class mate of mine when I was very young (12 years ago) and that we played hurling together on the same school team at that tender age? I wonder what has become of him – what has become of all those who were our class mates, Eileen? It would be interesting to seek them all out, find out how life has treated them, and then compare notes! Do you think we could ever hope to find two people happier than ourselves? No, my darling, two such people do not exist and they never shall.

Listen, my Eileen, it is well nigh mid-night and I must go off to my slumbers and dreams. May God bless you this night wherever you may be and may He keep you safe.

Friday – September 5th

Another day in camp and nothing happened. That's about all there is to tell of today – so, I should really say good night now because it is 11 p.m. and I have a big march tomorrow morning. But I love you my dearest and you are much more important to me than sleep or rest or marching or bed! You are the important person in my life and I could not live unless I were loving you with my all. Only one thing can stop me from loving you and that is death, but even then I think God would allow me to love you just the same if that were to happen. I know that He will allow us to meet again, to be married, and have a very happy life together; it must be so because He made our marriage in Heaven. Just think of the thousands of things we have to talk about when I reach home again, all the little things that mean so much to us, all the past and the future. Eileen, my dearest, when I think of that wonderful, and the happiness we shall know, then the present and its difficulties all fade away into nothingness. Our separation is awful but yet we have so much to be thankful for – we have found each other and love each other truly. I can be happy anywhere as long as I know that I have your love – it means everything to me, Eileen. And you, my darling, shall always be on your pedestal and you shall always have one true worshipper at your shrine – he will never leave that shrine for a moment day or night. I shall not change and I could not change – I shall love you always; I am yours for ever and ever, my dear one. Poor Eileen, I have so little to offer you in return for your love; I can only give you my love and myself. It is not enough and I want to give you so much more; I want to go on giving all to you as long as I live.

If you could see what I can see from my verandah as I sit here writing to you – a very wonderful moon shining among the trees that makes the whole scene like fairyland, in fact I am expecting to see goblins pop up around me at any moment now. There is thunder in the distance and the moonlight becomes brighter with the flashes of lightning on the horizon. It is hot and very sticky even out here, so heaven alone knows what bed will be like tonight under the mosquito net! So it's not really in your honour that I am sitting up so late tonight, it's just because it is so hot!! My darling, you know the real reason is because I love you.

I am still juggling with mess accounts and at last I have sent the bills out. We had a present to the mess today of six American national Geographic magazines and I have devoured them this evening – they are very ancient (1932–1935!), but they make good reading. There were beautiful coloured pictures of Northern Ireland scenes – I saw my old Belfast again, Dunluce castle, Giant's Causeway, Lough Erne and its 365 islands etc. I became quite homesick and had to turn the pages quickly to Malta and the Suez Canal which I know so well (now that I have seen them once)! The Italians could never capture Valetta or the island itself. I did my Mediterranean trip all over again to Port Said and then down to Suez. It is strange that you should have explored the western hemisphere so much and I the eastern one. The fascination of the east does not last very long and soon one yearns for home – I suppose I would long for home no matter where I might be. And now I want to be at home more than anything else.

Did I mention that we have a radio in the mess now testing it out for the troops? Well, I am the best customer – especially at news time, but I am not above listening to pianoforte solos and sentimental tunes (“The Badge from your Coat” appeals to me when it says – ‘one day nearer you’). However the radio will not last very long as it must be sent to the men soon. By the way my dearest, when I really put up my three pips again instead of a crown, I shall send the latter home to you as a souvenir. I did hear today that the powers above made an honest effort to allow me to remain a major when they sent me a wire saying that I was appointed as second-in-command of another Field Ambulance. They had to cancel this because they discovered that another chap in that ambulance was senior to me and if I had gone there I would not have been a major. Sorry to talk more shop, my dearest, but I have to close up for tonight! God bless you and keep you safe my own Eileen.

Saturday – September 6th

It is now 11.20 p.m. on Saturday night and I have just returned from our “Saturday Night Revue” which I have named it! It is my show and it is a huge success – but not due to my efforts. The men are simply grand; they have built a special stage with an auditorium in the camp lines; they have made some scenery and bought costumes and make-up (with money which I got from Regimental funds!). Tonight's show was the best so far – the drama was an old Punjab legend and the crowd roared its approval; the songs were good and one of our cooks produced a marvellous dance which brought the ‘house’ down – he was dressed as an Indian Princess! I allowed the play to go on until 11 p.m. as the C.O. had gone out to dinner somewhere – and oh, how grateful the men were about this. Nobody can properly realise how these lads (village boys most of them) feel in a strange land far away from their native songs and entertainments. It is a joy to me to help them and give them some fun. Tomorrow a bathing picnic has been arranged by the C.O. for the officers – I hate this because I think the men should come too and join in the fun. However I cannot do anything about this because I have no say in it at all.

This evening at 6 p.m. we had a very interesting lecture by the general who captured Keran and Massawa in the African campaign²⁹. It lasted over two hours and was very absorbing indeed. He did say that although the Italians were poor fighters and never had their hearts in the fight, he found them all a very decent lot of men when captured – always kept their word and always saluted him, and never sullen as Germans can be.

My darling, I have sent you three telegrams recently and have had no reply as yet. Still it was only the latest one which needed a reply. It worries me in case something has happened to you; it would kill me if you were ill or hurt in any way. You are the most precious person in the whole world and nothing must ever happen to you. I have been thinking that you are probably back in Omagh again starting a new term and a new year with a new set of young ladies to teach. I was delighted that they did not let you down in Geography in Senior and I shall pray that your new lot will be even more successful than before. The nuns of Loreto must be pleased about your success. How I envy those girls being taught by you. Eileen I should love to be one of your pupils and just sit in class and look at you! How many of them realise that Miss O’Kane, who stands before them daily and imparts her knowledge to them, is a very sentimental lady who is very much in love and who writes very long letters to her beloved!! A very nice major who lives next door to me here saw me writing yesterday evening and asked me what on earth I could find to write about in this place. He sees me writing every day and it puzzles him! Poor man has made several attempts to write a letter this week but had to abandon the attempt. Alas he does not know how much I am in love and that writing daily is a very easy matter when one loves so much. And yet I tell you nothing interesting or exciting, because nothing ever happens here! I can only write down my thoughts and my dreams each day and send them to you with all my love. When you become bored by these letters of mine, I hope you will tell me how to amend them and make them more readable. Young woman, you are a terrible person to keep me out of bed till after midnight “burning the midnight oil”, but I love writing to you and I love you with all my heart. Good night, my dearest, and may God bless you until tomorrow.

Sunday – September 7th

Eileen, can you ever fully appreciate what you have done for me; you and you alone have made my life in the tropics a pleasure instead of it being quite the opposite. Will you please tell me what I can do to give you the happiness that you have given to me. I have hurt you so much in the past by not writing to you but that has all passes and you shall have more letters than any other young lady in the world. Soon you may find me writing to you twice daily instead of once! It is grand to know that our letters are reaching each other safely and may they continue to do so, because it would be awful if they were to stop because of the war. You have so many interesting things to tell me and I have so little to tell you.

I am almost ashamed to tell you that I have spent my whole day by the sea with the C.O. and two other chaps. We set out at noon with a well stocked lunch basket and swimming togs. A grand swim at 1 p.m. was followed by a grander lunch – we even had tables and chairs with us, not to mention servants! It is a peculiar thing that the beauty of the tropical shore soon wears off – today I did not even look at the palms in the breeze, and yet I knew they were there and were very graceful. The sea I love at all times but it too was not wild or vast enough for me today. We had a drive along the beach for about 6 miles and then came across a beautiful little creek on which we saw many white sailed fishing boats just returning hence from sea with their catch. How I wished I had taken my camera and shown this beauty to me. We bought some fish from the fishermen for a ridiculously cheap price and set off again down the beach. Another swim at 5.30 p.m. and oh it was wonderful – I just swam and swam for sheer joy. And all the time, Eileen, you were in my thoughts. I encountered many fishing smacks out at sea – they got a shock when they encountered me so far out. They wanted to help me ashore and were very friendly; however I waved them farewell and headed for the shore again. When we reached camp at 7 p.m. I found the enclosed enlargement waiting for me on my table. I have had to cut it up a bit to make it fit into this envelope. Oh, my dearest, this is really me and how I look today. How can you love such a person as this? Do you think he even looks like an officer? My Eileen, he loves you with all his heart and soul and self; he would do anything or give anything in the world for you. And yet I know that you have met others who were willing to give you as much as I am, but my darling it’s not possible for any man to love as much as I love you. I would rather die than hurt you even in the smallest way – you have become so much a part of me that everything I do or think is for you.

I can only send you a meager 12 pages this time because of the enlarged snap. I shall send you an intact copy of this snap by ordinary air mail and that should reach you in about 6 weeks time. I have heaps of things to tell you but they must wait for the next letter, which should leave Malaya along with this one by the next Clipper out of Singapore. Tell me truly, Eileen, don’t you ever get tired reading about my love for you – I write it ten times in each letter and I have sent you many letters from Malaya. Still, I shall go on telling you about it and the bad state of my poor heart.

²⁹ This is the East African Campaign fought between June 1940 and November 1941.

May God bless you, Eileen, and may Mary our Mother always watch over us and our love.
Ever your loving
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Monday, 8th September [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

I am still here and I am still very happy. I have not had a letter or telegram from you for a very long time; by this I mean 10 days! None of your July letters have reached me yet except the Transpacific one and it was too wonderful for words to describe. The trouble is Iran has probably delayed all air mail letters. How I long for your letters to come and how happy I am when they do arrive. For the past few days (and every day) I have been watching the post in vain – it becomes really exciting when the dispatch rider comes back from town each evening with his mail bag and then my hopes are dashed once more when he shakes his head and says that there are no letters for the Major Sahib! Your letters mean so much to me, Eileen, they are the only real contact that I have with you – I read all about you, your heart, your love, your thoughts, and your dreams. And these are the things I want to know about most.

I sent off my usual 12 page letter this morning to you and another snap (enlargement) of myself. I always register my letters to you, my dearest, because I want to make doubly sure that they reach you safely – you see, Eileen, that the stamps are liable to be pinched! I read over the letter once before sending it off and oh my dear me I am so sorry it is so bad – it is not readable. Nothing seemed to happen during those six days and so I have precious little to write about; I could only tell you over and over again the same old story. Eileen, I do love you so very much that talking or writing about it seems so useless in giving you any idea of how much I love you. You are ever in my thoughts and prayers each day of my life and you always will be. I would be very unhappy if I were not thinking of you, praying for you, and loving you with all my heart. I know that I shall always love you and that nothing can ever change me. Do you remember one of Mrs. Savage's parties when that dear lady coaxed me to sit beside you on the settee – you were very annoyed and asked me to spread myself around and not concentrate on you! Eileen, if you had acted otherwise then it would not have been you. I loved you then as if you were my sister and I had my ideas of gallantry and love, which later matured into real love. How can I ever blame you for sending me away – I would have done the same thing in your position. You were a child and were afraid of me but God knows that I would rather have died than make love to you or terrify you in any way. It was mostly hero worship in those days – and now I still worship you with all of me.

I am waiting for news of our ring and your description of it. I shall love it just as much as you, Eileen, because you have chosen it. I have asked you to wire the cost of it so that I may send the money by cable to you. My own dear Eileen, when I think that we are really and truly engaged, I sometimes cannot believe it is true – it almost seems too good a thing to happen to me that you should give me your love and that you are even willing to endure looking at me or the rest of your life! I promise you, my dearest, that you will always find that my love for you is a scared thing; I pray to God and Mary our Mother that it will always be tender and loyal and good – and I know so well that it shall. I am still looking forward to September 14th when the priest is due to arrive in town and I shall storm Heaven with prayers for you, Eileen, for us and our love; and also for our dear ones. On Sundays I do not allow you to do all the praying at Mass for me – I do my extra bit and join you in hearing Mass, by using my missal. Remember that I am praying with you each Sunday at Mass. Some day soon we shall be kneeling side by side in Church and you will be Mrs. Murray and not Miss O'Kane any more!

Well, my dearest, what can I tell you about my day? Nothing much to tell except that I went to town in the forenoon with three other officers to have our photos taken for an identity certificate. Work was all in camp today and that is not very exciting at the best of times. I love to get away out into the country or near the sea – anywhere away from camp! Please, teacher, I am going to bed now. God bless you this night.

Tuesday – September 9th

The postal sepoy let me down again today and passed me by with a large bundle of letters in his hand for the other officers! It is almost heart-breaking when this happens, but thank God it soon passes away and I am as happy as ever once again. It was consoling to know that today's post was only a sea mail from India and so it could not

possibly have contained a letter from my beloved. Oh my dearest if you only knew what one of your letters means to me.

You have not advised me as yet what I should do with myself when the war is over. Eileen, to tell you the truth I would rather go back again and become a general practitioner at home. I would not and could never ask you to become the wife of an army officer. My own dearest, it would spoil everything for us – there would be no real home life for us, it would all be artificial and unlike anything we had ever dreamed of or planned. It would be unfair to you and our home to spend 5 years in India, 5 years in the Near and Middle East, 5 years in the Far East – always on the move. It would mean separation at times and I never want that to happen. Eileen, I never want you to have a moments unhappiness as long as we live. My ideas of our home and what it will be like, differ so much from the home of an army officer. Our home must be built on a rock; it must be a haven of rest and security for us; it must be a fixed thing and not to be moved about all over the globe. We shall always find happiness and holiness there; and we shall always love it and cherish it as our very own. You have said that you are willing to join me in any part of the world at any time and marry me – God bless you for saying this, but I must go to you at home in Ireland and there we shall be married and always live there. Eileen you know that there is no country in the world to compare with ours. So when the war is over you will find yourself the wife of a very modest country doctor somewhere in Ireland! No matter where we settle down, my darling, it will be home to us and we shall never leave it. By the way I must write and ask my father to look out for a good practice in the “North” somewhere. Do you fully understand, young woman, that being a doctor’s wife is an awful business? You see, he is always being dragged out by patients at night and it is then he becomes so angry with his wife – she always suffers! She has to listen to the most appalling language from her husband on these occasions! You will always find that I love going out into the cold night for any patient, especially if I can help some unfortunate person or ease some pain. Between us, Eileen, we could accomplish such wonders; we shall make others happy and bring them comfort when they need it most. Maybe we shall have something worthwhile to show Him when we die – our life will not have been in vain.

Today has been a busy one but all my day was spent in camp. “Tomorrow to fresh fields and pastures new” (Milton?)³⁰ – we are going out for the day training. I have been happy with my men; they come to me with all their woes. Tonight before dinner I went for a stroll in the camp. It was very dark but that was an advantage. The men were very happy; some singing as they wandered about in the darkness; others were creeping into bed and tucking in their mosquito nets in the dimly lit barrack rooms (wooden); and others sat around and talked of today and wondered what tomorrow would bring. Then I came across my “dramatic society” rehearsing in a small tent – they were all poring over their script and saying their piece in a loud voice! I am still vain enough to say that they all love me and I them.

Good night, my dearest, and God bless you.

Wednesday – September 10th

I have not been outside the camp today, for long; I was left behind to look after the “house” while the others were out training, but I had time to go to town for an hour and pay the local tradesmen’s bills due by the mess. I did my good turn for the day when in town by making a very sad young man a very happy one. Poor chap has been lying in hospital ever since we reached this station 6 weeks ago and he was becoming depressed about himself. May be I have told you about him – he is a young Indian doctor who belongs to our Field Ambulance. He is such a quiet, gentle, and good lad that I just had to like him from the very first; I am trying hard to get him back to India for a few months on sick leave – he will never get well in this climate. When in town I found out the priest’s programme – two Masses on 15th, 16th, and 18th of this month. Three of these Masses I shall offer up to you, my dearest, and your intention while the other three will be for us both. Isn’t it strange (may be it is not) that the more I love you, the better I can pray for you and all my dear ones at home. So it is not so strange when I think it out – our love is good and holy, and so the deeper my love the better become my prayers. My dearest, we are lucky to have a love like this and I am lucky, so very lucky, to have your love. I shall always love you in this way with all my heart and soul; nothing can ever change me.

What about this war, my dearest. Already I can see the beginning of the end – Pius X could never let us down with his prophecy! The tension has eased a bit in these parts, but it may be only temporarily. Thank God the bombing at home has ceased and the German people are now suffering as we did in Belfast. Do not worry, Eileen; your Spring Villa³¹ and our Beechwood will both be standing when this war is all over and we shall have many happy days together in our homes. And then we shall have a home of our won and we shall know happiness

³⁰ The last line of the poem *Lycidas* by John Milton is actually “Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new”.

³¹ Spring Villa is the name of the O’Kane family house at 195 Springfield Road. The original house has been demolished.

and contentment that the world cannot give; and we shall know with certainty that no bombs will ever disturb the peace of our home.

I wrote you a two-page letter this evening to accompany some snaps which I shall send to you tomorrow by sea-mail. They are enlargements of snaps which you have already received, so it is not very urgent and it is rather heavy. I am sending you another "Asia" tomorrow also. What have you done to me Eileen O'Kane? Imagine writing to anyone twice a day!! By the way, my dear one, do you mind much if I continue to write "Eileen" on the addressed envelopes which you receive or would you rather have the more correct thing "Miss E. O'Kane B.A." etc.? Please let me know about this. I now understand why your telegram is delayed so long – you must have sent it to Base Postal Depot, Bombay (and that is correct). It will take at least two weeks to come by this route. One of our Indian officers had a telegram from India today which was sent on 25th August! So please send everything to 'Malaya' in future my dearest; it will save a lot of time and worry even though it is not the correct address. I hope and pray that all my letters and telegrams reach you safely and that they may bring some happiness. My letters get worse and worse as the days go by, because I am in this wilderness and nothing happens. The monsoon has arrived and so we are having a wet time of it – rain all day and all night in spasms! However it is much cooler and that is a blessing to be thankful for.

I am off to be now, young woman, and not even you could awaken me until 7 a.m. tomorrow morning! God bless you, Eileen.

Thursday – September 11th

I do feel ashamed that I have so little news to give you of myself in these climes, but my dearest when interesting things just do not happen how can I tell you about them! This morning there was a parade and inspection by the C.O. I was in charge of the parade and I know that this is the last time – so it was tinged with sadness. All the men seemed to understand too when the new second-in-command appeared with the C.O. and inspected the lines. At next week's parade the new officer will be in charge and Capt. Murray will be a very insignificant figure in the background. I never did like the limelight anyhow and being a captain again cannot make any difference to me. I do know that I shall only love you more and more, and that no amount of changes in rank can ever alter my love for you. The only thing in the whole world that has any value for me is your love, Eileen, and I never want to lose that – I just could not bear to lose it. Oh, if only the war were over and were together again, what a difference it would make to our love and our lives. We could be married and have our own home – I cannot imagine anything more perfect. We would be starting life together full of hope and courage ready to face the future side by side. Have you ever pictured us walking down life's broad highway hand-in-hand singing with joy, meeting happiness with open arms and sorrow with a smile.

I wrote to my friend Gerry³² this evening after tea. I told him all about you and our engagement, and asked him to meet you some time. He has been a true friend to me during all these years and I think he improves with knowing – as someone once said about you, Eileen. And now as I sit out here at my small table writing to you, I can hear a chorus of British troops whistling "The Teddy Bears' Picnic" – and that reminds me of Mrs. Savage's party and her records and you my dearest. All roads seem to lead to you, Eileen, no matter which way I look or which way I think. Yes, it is still all you, all day long – in my work, and play and thoughts. You may imagine that I have nothing else to do, but listen to me young lady, I am a very busy man during the day and should not really have time to think of you at all!! I shall always think of you and love you every moment of every day for the rest of my life. You do help me to face up to things and endure lots of things that otherwise would be hard to bear – you have made life too easy for me, as hardships and trails have ceased to exist for me.

I hope you have written to tell me all about Felix's marriage and what his plans are for the future. You mentioned that he was considering buying a practice – did it come off? Will you mind very much if we settle in a small seaside town of the half-sea-half-country type – golf course etc. It has always been my idea of how I should like to live. We would be within easy reach of the city and its shops and amusements, and thither would we go when the country was palling a bit – but it will never pall with me, Eileen. If you would rather live in the big city, then it is already done – I do not want you to be hidden away in the country with me all your life. Have you ever talked all the pros and cons over with your father or mother – parents can give wonderful advice at times. If ever I wanted to meet two people, your mammie and daddie are they – we love each other already and I have not even met them yet.

There is a big march tomorrow morning lasting many hours; I love marching, but this particular one will end with a swim and a ride back to camp in the lorries. The Clipper is due at Singapore tomorrow, and may be there will be a letter from you on board. Still I would rather you did not spend your money on expensive letters to me – it is my privilege to do all the spending on you, my own dearest. Good night and God bless you.

³² This is Gerald (Gerry) McGuinness who was Frank's friend and future (joint) best man at his wedding to Eileen.

Friday – September 12th

Again I ask you the same old question – aren't you ashamed of yourself making me love you so much?? If I were not in love with you, I would not be counting the minutes each day waiting for the post to arrive and only wanting one letter – yours! I would not have to write to you every day of my life – in fact I would have no worries in the world!! Oh my dearest, you know that I want to love you more and more; I want to wait for hours each day awaiting your letters; I want to write to you twice each day. It has all made me so very happy and I think you are a very wonderful person to be able to give such happiness to any man. This is my second letter to you today as I wrote to you after tea a two page letter and sent myself with it (in a snap); it will reach you much later than this epistle as I have sent it by ordinary air mail. I still send my “diary letters” via America; all the [illegible] ones go via Durban (by air) and then sea mail to home. I am daily expecting a telegram or letter from you, my dearest – they must come soon because it is ages since your trans-Pacific letter. I want to know about the rings so that we can settle things up. Alas poor Eileen is back again in Omagh far away from the great city. I know how much you love your job and your subject, so that you must be happy to be back again at work. You will have no respite now until Christmas as it is always the best time of the whole year at home; have you made any plans for it yet? Do you remember 29th December 1940 – the day you wrote to me when I was in India? What angel or saint in heaven prompted you to write that letter – or was it your heart which did all the prompting? I would give anything to spend this Christmas with you, Eileen; but alas we shall have to wait till 1942 for that to come. I would do a lot to be out of this station when Christmas comes – it will have no meaning without Mass; not to mention the other festivities which bring good cheer at this holy season. Should I have to travel 250 miles on Christmas Day, I shall be at Mass; so if there is any chance of some leave, I shall ask for that day only. Think of me perspiring in Malaya's heat while you wrap yourself up in furs and woolies!

There is a big Highland Gathering in Singapore on October 11th and I was considering going down to have a look at them. There is a 16 lb stone putting event which might interest me! With this end in view I have been practicing every evening among the trees with a very large rock! I have found that I am much stronger than when a student at Queens. I do not want to see Singapore particularly but I want to see if there is anything there that would interest you. However I expect I shall never even see Singapore as we have so much work in hand, but I shall be at least able to say that it was grand looking forward to my trip to the South!

We had a wonderful march today, Eileen – ten miles along the coast. It was an ideal day, cloudy, but good visibility at sea. It was cool in spite of the thunder in the air – and yet no rain came in spite of all the thunder and lightning. The sea was calm and the poor fishermen could not put out to sea as there was not a puff of air to fill their sails with. We had an hour's rest from 12 till 1 p.m. for meals and as we sat and watched the sea, I spotted a shoal of porpoises playing around about 20 yards from the shore. However I could not convince others that they were not man-eating sharks. The march ended on the shore at 2 p.m. with a swim. Then a welcome sight appeared along the beach – our lorries were coming to pick us up. We all jumped in and soon we were speeding towards “home”. The evening post brought me nothing but disappointment – no letter from my beloved. I know there will be one tomorrow, Eileen, so God bless you until then!

Saturday September 13th

I prayed to God this evening – I beseeched and implored Him – to send me a letter from you and lo and behold! It has come! My own dearest Eileen, what can I say to you that will give you any idea of how happy you have made me tonight. I have never known such happiness. Your dear mother's note was enclosed and it was wonderful – she just wrote as if I were her own child and signed it “mother”. I know I do not deserve the love of you or your mother and yet you both give it to me – you who haven't seen me for 6 years and your mother who has never met me at all. Was there ever such faith or such trust in all the world before? You poor darling sending me that post-card that was supposed to reach Malaya in one week – it took 10 weeks and 1 day to reach me!! The thoughts of you and Frances were with it and so I loved it just as if it was only a week on the high seas. I shall write to my mother tomorrow – she will always be as dear to me as my real mother and I shall always love her as such.

This is Captain Murray writing to you now and he loves you much more than Major Murray did yesterday! It was published today in Divisional orders that I was de-moted on July 17th; so tonight at dinner I turned out with my three pips on my shoulder! May be that was why I was storming heaven this evening asking for the one thing that could make me supremely happy – your letter, and now that it has come crowns and pips are all forgotten in all this happiness. Now I shall hate signing “Capt.” on the back of my letters to you – it will seem as if I have let you down or disgraced myself in some way. My dearest, will you feel it very much having to tell your friends of my de-motion to Captain; I would rather die than have you hurt in this way. I do not care about myself, it is only you I am worried about, my dear one. I love you this night even more than I have ever loved you before and yet I can never give you enough love or enough devotion. You were so proud of my successes, but honestly, Eileen, I

have not been a failure at my present job. My successor has been 10 years in the Army but although he is now second-in-command and a real major he has not taken over any of the jobs that are supposed to go with his position. So, my darling, I am on the same jobs with the same men and in the same company as their commander! It is very awkward at times but the C.O. has insisted that nobody must replace me in H.Q.! Some day soon I shall have good news for you and then you will understand that the powers above really do think something of me. My dearest I do not say this in a boastful manner – I want to be a success for your sake, Eileen.

Your letter was sent on 3rd July; why did you put “kindly forward” on the envelope. The same address “Malaya” will always reach me, unless I leave this country and if that happens I shall cable you immediately. Only one letter is missing and that is the one you sent to ‘Beechwood’ last October. Your Transpacific letter came on August 22nd (dated July 30th); your other two July letters have not come yet, but they should arrive soon. There are three ways in which you can send letters to me – 1. by sea mail throughout (3 months); 2. ordinary air mail (1s/3d) – the letters are sent by sea mail to Capetown, by rail to Durban, by air to Egypt, Iraq, India, Burma, Thailand, and Malaya – takes from 6–10 weeks!; 3. Transpacific air mail throughout – takes 3–4 weeks but you must not waste your money on this often; it is too expensive. There are other ways of sending letters via America or New Zealand but I shall not worry you with these. I am quite expert on mails nowadays and even the C.O. comes to me for advice! By the way the postal people made an awful blunder when they actually put the name of the village, I was last stationed at, on the letter. It was a grand place, Kroh, two miles from the border; it would be very welcome just now. I shall answer your letter properly tomorrow when I shall have more space and more time (it is now midnight!). You always write to me of things I long to hear most – your holiday, swims and walks and golf. I have pictured your Pink Cottage in my own mind and it is a very wonderful place – how I wish I were there with you.

A very remarkable thing happened this evening. I received three “Belfast Weekly Telegraphs” from Prof. Thompson’s son and they came with your letter, which had lots in it about the Thompsons. Imagine it is 6 weeks since I saw Humphrey Thomson and yet he did not forget to send those papers as promised. Still your letter was read over many times ‘ere I glanced at the “Telegraph” – and I was thirsting to read a local paper again. Prof. Thomson would not remember me as I was not a student at the R.V.H.³³ but you could mention how decent his soon has been to me and how much I admire him.

I had a very interesting day and spent it as medical officer at the local R.A.F. station³⁴. I had to be present with an ambulance car when all planes were taking off and landing in case of accident. I met all the pilots and they were grand chaps – what a wonderful life away up in the clouds looking down on us small creatures. I now want to become a pilot – it must be a thrilling life, I know I would love it. I am already an expert on bombers, fighters etc., etc. and I saw plenty of them today – oh if only they were not used to destroy lives, what a wonderful invention the plane is. They looked like large stream-lined grasshoppers on the ground, while in the air they were even more graceful. This afternoon the C.O. and the others went off to a small local town to see the “races”, while I had to look after flying men! They were very disappointed to find only a few broken down ponies in the races and not a single horse. They all returned to camp very disappointed and very wet – they were caught in a thunderstorm which raged for hours well into the evening. Of course they said I was a very wise man! I was so happy this evening reading your letter that I would not have changed places with all the race-goers in the world!

The troops had made good preparations for their usual “Saturday Night Revue” but it was all washed away with the rains and floods! They spent about 7 dollars today on silver paper, hajas crown, “jewels”, red paper and decorations – all were destroyed. They were very forlorn when I visited the scene of the wash out after dinner tonight – they sit on the “stage” with hand under chin and just looked into space with a mournful silence. However the local village people are giving then a “cinema” show tomorrow morning at 11 a.m. and that should cheer them up a bit. The C.O. is arranging a swimming pic-nic tomorrow for all the officers; however I may be on duty and may not be able to go.

My dearest Eileen, I do love you so very, very much and I shall love you as long as I live. I can and shall make you happy – happier than any wife has ever been. I shall soon be back again with you and we shall never be parted again. With all my letters, I send you all my love – it is for you and only you. I love your father and mother, brothers and sisters as if they were mine. Please do not think me unkind, but I think Fergus is the best of all, and yet I only know him from your letters – you always tell me more about him. He must be a very good boy and how I wish I were only 1/10 as holy as he is. I am praying harder than ever in my life before and I have you to thank for this. I pray that God may bless you and that Mary Our Mother may continue to watch over you day and night.

³³ R.V.H. is the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast.

³⁴ This is RAF Kuantan. During the war it was home to 8 RAAF Squadron with 12 Hudson Bombers and 60 RAF Squadron with 8 Blenheim Mark IV fighter/bombers.

Ever your loving
Frank.

P.S. I am all yours and with each letter I send my love and myself.

Love
Frank.

P.P.S. Only 14 pages! I want to write so much more.

Much love
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Sunday, 14th September [1941]

My dearest Eileen,

I am still reading your wonderful letter (dated 3rd July) which arrived yesterday. Why oh why do you love me at all; what you could ever see in me I do not honestly know. You are many thousands of miles away from me and yet you have made me the happiest man in all the world by just telling me that you loved me. This endless waiting must end soon, my dearest, and then when we do meet again we shall know happiness that no couple has ever known before. I do love you Eileen with every bit of my being – you have all my love and you have all of me. I shall spend my life in making you happy; everything that I do is for you and it will always be for you. You know that I have always loved you and that I always shall. I belong to you and never will even the smallest of my thoughts belong to anyone but you. Poor Eileen, you have only got me and my love; and I have got you and your love – you have got the worst of the “bargain”! I shall try to love you even more than I do now and I shall try to improve myself and pray harder than ever that God may make me worthy of you. I shall pray to Him tomorrow morning at Holy Mass and Communion – I shall offer up two masses for you my own dear Eileen that God may bless you and bless our love, that He may bring us together soon again and make our married life all that He wants it to be. It is wonderful to have two Masses tomorrow, two on Tuesday and two on Thursday. The priest is doing his quarterly tour of the district. I shall pray harder this week than I have ever prayed in my life before – you will have six Masses and three Holy Communions all to yourself. My dearest, I have to give you everything good that I have even though I am not as good as you.

I shall get up at 5 a.m. tomorrow and Tuesday morning and at 4.30 a.m. on Thursday; that is nothing when Mass is available – I would do a great deal more than that to hear one Mass. The small wooden chapel is in the village 11 miles away – with a ferry in between – that’s why I have to get up so early. My poor batman had an awful shock when I told him tonight that I wanted hot water at 5 a.m. tomorrow morning! There is a war on, young woman, and you are working hard at Omagh – I, the soldier, spent my day on a tropical shore pic-nicking with the other officers and C.O.! I had a glorious swim in the warm sea and beat of all my records for distance away out in the sea – as usual every moment of that swim was with you, my dearest. I decided that when we go swimming together at home we shall swim away out together from the shore and when we have gone far enough I shall ask you “Eileen, do you love me?” – I asked you that question today away out there but no reply came. After lunch the others went asleep, but I crept softly away to a quiet spot under the palms and with my hands clasped around my knees I spent a whole hour just looking at the waves and thinking of you and our future. I was sorry when the others awoke and put an end to my dreaming. My dearest Eileen, I had such grand thoughts of you – I was completely wrapped up in you.

As we drove along the beach in the big military car I thought how very much this place resembled Robinson Crusoe’s island – even the wild goats were there too. It is all very lovely, darling Eileen, but I say again that I love you too much to think of asking you to come out here. If you were allowed to come during this war I would never ask you to risk your life in coming out to this place – and I would never ask you to come even under peace conditions. You are much safer and better off at home with all your dear ones around you. From the health point of view, women were never meant to live here (I mean Europeans) – not to mention white men. And yet you are willing to come; God bless you for offering even that much for me – you are ready to risk your life, if I asked you to do so. How can I love you enough in return for such love and devotion.

Our Saturday Night Revue was washed out last night, but tonight was dry and so the show was staged. The acting was grand and the audience became very excited when two "maharajahs" got busy with their "swords" in a fight to the death! I meant to write to my mother today (your mother), but alas I must go to bed with it still unwritten. I shall always treasure the little note I received from her in yesterday's letter. Good night and God bless you, my own dearest.

Monday September 15th

This has been my happiest day in Malaya so far and I have loved you today Eileen with my all – and even more than that because our Divine Lord made my love for you a very holy thing. I must first tell you all about this day of love before I forget even a moment of it. My batman awakened me at 5 a.m.; I washed and shaved by lamplight and all the time I was praying hard. It was the beginning of a glorious day as I stepped out into the moonlight. I rushed across to the guard room and paraded the guard – I was the orderly officer; you would have laughed if you had seen me inspecting the men and I armed with a prayer book in one hand and torch in the other. I found my little Austin and soon I was off down the road in the cool morning air before 6 a.m. I reached the little chapel in good time: 6.30 a.m. It was a lovely sight – the chapel was illuminated with coloured lights and numerous fairy lights and beautiful flowers decorated the altar. It is the native custom to have bright lights and colours – coloured banners all around the walls and in each the picture of a saint. Two priests sat at the altar rails hearing Confessions – one a little black bearded Frenchman and the other a native Malay priest. The people were mixed – half were Chinese and half Tamils (Indians), while in front of me knelt the local Irish doctor, his doctor wife, and their three beautiful flaxen-haired little girls. Yes my dearest I have never prayed so earnestly in my whole life as I did during those two Masses this morning – the harder I pray the more I love you. My Holy Communion was all for you as were the two Masses. I was in an ecstasy of joy, Eileen and it is a joy that the world cannot give – I was so happy that I could have cried. I had a talk with the little Frenchman when the Masses were over and arranged with him to have a Mass said tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. for a very special intention of mine (it concerns you, my dearest; in fact it is all for you and your intentions). I was off again back to camp in my small car and reached the mess before 9 a.m. My only regret was that I had made no sacrifices to hear Mass – getting up early was too easy; I was not sleepy, I was not hungry or thirsty or tired! So where is all the merit I should have gained by offering up these small "acts"? May be it is because I am so terribly fit that I do not feel hardships of any kind.

My whole day was one of supreme happiness and I was very close to your heart, my dearest – closer than I have ever been before. I was working away and all the time my heart was singing. But it stopped singing just for a moment today when a nursing sepoy stood before me and wept. He had been away working in the Civil hospital for over a week and just came back today – I was a Major when he went away and he found me a Captain now. He just stood there and wept, and at last I discovered what he meant. "Why, of why have they made you a Captain, Sahib?" So I said "Because I was a very bad officer." He only shook his head and then suddenly straightened up and gave me a very smart salute, saying "This salute only for you, Sahib, nobody else." Small things like this happen almost daily to me and it makes me happy to think that I have still got the men's love. My Dearest Eileen, I do not tell you these things in a proud way, I only want you to share my happiness and to let you know that a few people here do like me. I want and love to hear of people at home loving you – everyone should love you.

Eileen my dearest, if you should discover my present whereabouts from any telegrams I may send you, you must always put the usual address on the letters you send to me. May be you do not understand this queer postal system. Your letters are all sent to a Base Post Office (Army) in Malaya and then dispatched direct to me. I smiled at your description of the painless operation you had on your pet corn in Strabane! Thank heavens I haven't got any corns, else I should never be able to march at all. By the way, my dearest, I do wear khaki uniform – shorts and open necked shirt during the day; trousers and shirt with sleeves rolled down in the evenings. The khaki is light in colour – much lighter than you see at home – it is really sand coloured. I would like to see you in your Donegal tweeds with collar and tie – they would suit you very much. The enlarged photograph of the snap would be wonderful if you could send it, Eileen; I would prefer it to a studio photograph like the one I sent you. It was an awful thing and not a bit like me.

How happy I am that you did write to me and send me that letter last year. Wouldn't it have been awful if you had not sent it, Eileen. How could you possibly have hastened my poor mother's death to give you an excuse for writing to me. We were meant for each other and we would have 'found' each other in the end – you merely speeded things up by hammering at Heaven's Gates with all your prayers. Thank God you were given the courage to write to me and tell me that you loved me. I sent you back a very cautious telegram – I imagined you were still a schoolgirl and might get into trouble if I even put the word love in it.

It is now 11 p.m. and I have an early start tomorrow. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Tuesday September 16th

Today has almost been as happy as yesterday – just one small thing spoilt it for me. A letter came from my father this evening (Pan-American Clipper); it was dated August 11th. I was overjoyed to have a letter from him, but when I opened it I only found one sheet of notepaper written on both sides – the rest of the letter was missing. He must have written this letter after your visit to Beechwood and the missing part of the letter must have been all about you. My dearest Eileen, I could have cried with disappointment – I wanted so much to hear what father thought of you. Either he has forgotten to send the other part of the letter or else it has been removed by the censor. However the censor never opens your letters or father's for some reason or another.

I had my happy moments at the two Masses and Communion this morning. The little French priest was true to his word and said your Mass at 7 a.m. I had a long chat with him outside the chapel before Mass started. I have arranged to get some Holy Water on Thursday from him; and when his tour is over he has promised to send me a statue of the Blessed Virgin. The Malay priest also had a word with me – he is a grand little man and so very proud of his faith. He thinks there must be other Catholic officers in this district, but they did not show up at Mass. He was very pleased with the truck-load of lads I have produced each morning from this camp. I arranged with him for a Mass on Thursday morning for a special intention (you and also a happy married life for us both).

A lovely little Chinese baby was baptised this morning and you should have seen the proud look in that little mother's face. After the second Mass I found the little Frenchman seated outside the chapel surrounded by children – he looked the picture of happiness as he sat with his white topee, and smoking an awful looking cigar (so early in the day!). Along came the McMahon (Dr.) family and I was very solemnly introduced to the three young ladies and now my Eileen I am in love with all three of them! The eldest is aged 9 and the others 8 and 7 years. It seems there are three other flaxen-haired girls younger than these. They are grand children and very full of life – not in the least shy, in fact I was their "uncle" before we parted at the chapel gate this morning!

On my way through the village I collected my pass photograph at the small Chinese photo shop. I am enclosing one copy of me as I appear daily on parade – all hot and bothered! The headgear is a topee or pith helmet and is a light khaki colour. You may notice that I was a Major when this was taken! I fear that something went wrong with the 'light and shade' scheme of the little man who did the job! You will soon have so many photographs of me that you will not require any wall paper if you just paste me around the walls of your room! My father mentioned that the large photograph of me had reached him safely and so I conclude that you have received yours too, Eileen. Am I not an awful sight; I was dressed in my Khaki Drill, as they call the uniform. It consists of long sleeved jacket with gilt buttons, and long trousers – both light khaki colour. It is thin material and of course does not sit well, as the khaki serge can do. When I reach home I shall not have any more photographs taken of myself! I only send you my own self because I think it is only fair that you should see what I really look like 'ere you love me any more.

I wrote you a short note this evening and sent you some enlarged snaps of the beach; it was only two pages, so please do not expect long letters apart from my diary ones! I shall have to send you another telegram tomorrow as I haven't had a reply yet from the other three; I am beginning to worry about you my dearest in case you are ill or have been hurt. Is it possible that I have hurt you in some way in my letters to you? My own dear one, you know that I would rather die than do this.

I wrote to my mother (our mother) yesterday evening but alas I could not post the letter this morning as I came back too late from Mass. However my poor four pages will be sent flying all the way to her tomorrow morning. I have addressed it to St. Joseph's, Killough – is that correct, Eileen? I also wrote to Humphrey Thomson thanking him for the papers and telling him that my best girl is a very good friend and grateful patient of his pa's. Did I hurt you so very much in the old days when I showed you your snap cut out of the school team? You were annoyed because poor Mattie had been neglected. My dearest, I had at least six copies of that snap; besides I always kept Mattie separate and about a week ago I sent 'her' to you. I shall send you the snap with this letter if I can remember. I do forget things and in today's diary I almost said goodnight without even mentioning the fact that I love and adore you, my dearest. Every day of my life you will have to listen to these words. God bless you, Eileen.

Wednesday – September 17th

Do you realise, young woman, that I have to get up at 4.30 a.m. tomorrow morning on account of you?? Your Mass will be at 6.30 a.m. – hence my early rising. I really am ashamed of myself because it is no effort at all on my part – I feel as if I am not doing enough for you and for God. I do want to do so very much more, my dearest. Tomorrow's will be my last two Masses here until December 21st and how I shall miss it all. Thank God you are praying so hard for me and not forgetting me on Sundays – I love you, Eileen, because you are so good and for your own dear self.

This evening at dinner someone remarked that I should be called the happy man of the district because I am always cheerful! Yes, my dearest, it is so very true, I am the happiest man here and in the whole world. I have

told you that happiness is infectious – so let us start a campaign to make others as happy as we are. I cannot help showing people how very happy I am. I had a day dream about you this evening – we were sitting in the train bound for Liverpool from London; we were side by side and you had the audacity to cling tightly to my arm in spite of the other passengers present! My dearest Eileen, it is not conventional – it is not done by young ladies!! But I loved you for it seemed so natural that we should sit arm in arm, and you are more natural than anyone else I have ever known. Yes, I dreamed that the war was over, that you had met me at Southampton and that now we were speeding towards home – our happiness just knew no bounds. My dream ended and I found myself singing “Home, Sweet Home” and then I was sad for a moment and longed with all my heart to be home again. Then came my worrying about you – even after the post had come I was looking out for a letter or a telegram to say that all was well with you. I decided to wait another couple of days for your telegram. I know that you are in far away Omagh and cannot enquire about rings or send telegrams – you have to depend upon weekends for all of this (in Belfast). My own dearest Eileen, I should not worry about this at all but I love you so much that the very thought of anything happening to you fills me with terror – I would rather die than know that this was so.

It is now 10.15 a.m. and I am going to mine bed. If you could peep into my room just now you would see an empty bottle on the table beside me – it is for Holy Water tomorrow morning! Good night my dearest and God bless you.

Thursday – September 18th

I am sorry about last night's short note but I had to go to bed early and so poor Eileen was neglected. Well, darling, my orderly (batman) got me out of bed this morning at 4 a.m. by mistake! So I was up in good time for Mass – your Mass. I set off down the road by moonlight armed with prayer book, empty bottle, and torch; a very wonderful quarter-moon was shining above in spite of the waves of mist we met near the ground (by “me” I mean driver and myself). We reached the ferry before 6 a.m. and I had to stand and holler across the river for 15 minutes before the ferryman awoke and slowly approached. Meanwhile the mosquitoes were having a hearty breakfast at my expense – they just swarmed around me by the million. When I reached the chapel I found the little Malay priest pacing up and down outside in the grounds. We had a talk and he promised to send me some books, – one called “The Country Doctor” (Sheila K. Smith?). He also said that he would write to me when he reached his parish again in ____.

The little Frenchman was now ready to say Mass but alas the crowd was very, very small indeed – a few Indians and Chinese. No troops appeared until the second Mass at 7 a.m. when a R.A.F. lot arrived accompanied by an officer – they looked very smart indeed. As usual I prayed, and prayed as if my life depended on it – and my life does depend on prayers, because this war must end soon and I must be sent home to you quickly. Then came your Mass at 7 a.m. and oh, my dearest, if you do not become an angel after that Mass and Communion it won't be my fault! And yet I do not want you to become an angel in case you fly away from me – I could not bear to lose you, Eileen. Towards the end of Mass I noticed the French priest very busy with the small bottle in which the wine is carried. Apparently he was up to something – after Mass he rushed to greet me outside the chapel and presented me with this bottle containing Holy Water. I showed him my own bottle already filled but he insisted that I should have both! He promised to write and send me the little statue. Poor Father Gerard – I wonder what his feelings are regarding France. The French priest at my last station, Fr. Bonamaye, said that it was very awkward for them all in Malaya; but I think people understand their feelings. Well, I said goodbye to the two priests with whom I had become so friendly and off I went. I forgot to say that the local Irish doctor and his daughters were at second Mass and Communion; I met them outside and they made me a prisoner and carried me off to breakfast at their beautiful bungalow outside the village. I met the whole family – Sheelagh, Moira, Patricia, Biddy, and Michael – all blondes with dark brown eyes and black eyelashes! I spent a very happy hour with those children – I was carefully scrutinized, cross-examined, and generally tested. Then I was found to be acceptable, and admitted to their circle. Those children were all over me – one on each knee, two beside me, and the baby (Mickey) on the floor. I showed them my mouse trick with a handkerchief and they were thrilled; I made a mint disappear and they thought it was really magic! They are very proud of me, they say, because I am the only Catholic uncle they have and I am an Irishman and a doctor like their daddie. Biddy (aged 4) wisely remarked that she loved God who is so good and she hated the old Devil) and she pointed down below!) who is so wicked. They are all going back to school at Cameron Highlands on Saturday except Biddy and Mickey – and how they detest the very idea. I promised to come and see them at school if I were nearby at any time. I then tried to say goodbye to them but they clung to my hands and refused to allow me to go! Eileen, my dearest, I do love children and I always shall. You may wonder what was happening to my work during all of this time – well, there wasn't any work in camp as all the others were going out for the day on a “Scheme”.

I had more time to love you, to think about you – and to worry about you. I have been awaiting your telegram all the day long and it has not come. I know that you must have sent it and that now it is being sent by

sea mail from Bombay to here! That happens quite often nowadays and it is heart-breaking. That is why you must always send letters and telegrams addressed to me in Malaya and not in Bombay, even though it is not official or correct.

The O.C. stood for two hours at my verandah table this evening talking to me. He is a very light sleeper and hears everything and so at 4 a.m. this morning he heard my orderly passing by laden with hot water for me! So this evening he remarked "The Mohammedans used to waken me with their call to prayer and I made them call ½ mile away from the camp so that I could not hear them; the Hindus were beating drums early on Sunday mornings and I stopped that; and now the Catholics waken me at 4 a.m. going out to Mass!" I have a long route march tomorrow evening and I must away to bed. I shall make this a 14 page letter and finish it tomorrow night. I love you, my Eileen, and I shall love you forever and ever. No matter when the war may end or how it may end, you will find me waiting for you always, loving you more and more.

Good night and God bless you, my dearest.

Friday – September 19th

It is 9.30 p.m. and as I sit here in my room I can hear a British soldier playing "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" on his mouth organ; he has played "Danny Boy" and "Believe Me ...". I wonder can you realise how an exile feels when he hears the tunes of his native land played so sweetly. Well, my darling, he feels like a good weep, but alas soldiers and men are not allowed to cry! I am thinking of a pair of Irish Eyes that I love so much and that I have always loved ever since I first saw them smiling at a Céilide in Ranafast. Years later I imagined that they were smiling at someone else and so I ran away – and now I have run so far away from you my own dearest, and yet I have never been nearer to you in all my life as I am now. It may seem a bit hard that we should have found each other when I was at the other end of the world, but we can thank the Good God that it has happened. Your novena of Masses and Communions was not in vain, Eileen, and I have come to you of my own free will without any forcing. God must have arranged it all and He has ordained that it should happen as it did. Our happiness in the future will be all the greater because of the years of separation we have endured – it will more than compensate us for what we have missed. We have a love that knows no bounds; it will make us the happiest couple in the whole world because it is unselfish and because it is holy; please God it will ever remain so.

Today I spent marching under the palm trees with all the men. It was very hot, but I am accustomed to it all now and think little of the heat and humidity. We all had a swim at the end of the march and then a change of shirt when we got out of the water. I have to act as "life-guard" to all and patrol up and down the danger zone in the water – you see the men are not allowed to go out more than shoulder-high in the water and so I have to watch them carefully. They are my boys and it would break my heart if one of them should get into trouble – besides I am responsible for them all. I am going into the "village" tomorrow morning to inspect a battalion's medical equipment and when there I shall send you a cable – I really am worried about you my darling, and I must have news of you soon. You hold my life in your hands, Eileen; you, and you alone can make me happy and yet it is only you who could make me sad because I do not worry a bit when no news arrives from other friends or relatives – I just say to myself "a letter will come some-time"! But with you, my dearest, it is so different – I start thinking of all kinds of calamities that may have overtaken you, when a telegram is overdue. By the way, Eileen, some telegrams take a week to reach Malaya. I forgot to tell you that father is very worried about Philip. You may know that he did not get all his subjects this year again – and that happens every year. Alas the reason is that he does not work and no amount of talking with him will make him work. My heart bleeds for poor father because it is he who is suffering. How I wish I were at home now, Eileen; I feel so useless and helpless out here where nothing happens.

I have given up the idea of going to Singapore on leave in order to compete in the Highland Sports. I shall tell you why when we meet again because it concerns you very much and it is only because I love you that I decided to cancel my trip to the South! Did I tell you that I now take my vitamins A & D three times a day out of a small bottle of Adexolin? It is my prophylaxis against colds and infections – I do not like being ill in bed – and so I am taking no chances. I have fitted up a new recreation room for the men and soon it will have lots of games and a small shop too inside. The men are very thrilled with the idea and flock to it each evening with their cards, draughts, ludo and snakes & ladders! They all refuse to call me a 'captain' and say that they will never call me that! It is very sweet of them and very loyal but alas it is very awkward for me, but I cannot help it.

Surely you must be weary of this letter, so long and with so little actually in these 14 pages. As usual they all mean "I love you, Eileen"! I am all yours my dearest one and I shall always be yours come what may. May this letter reach you soon and may it bring you half the joy that your letters bring to me. Give my love to mother, father, Máiread, Fergus, and Eileen.

May God bless you and watch over you day and night. May His Holy Mother keep you ever so near to her heart and may she bless us both and our love.

Your loving,
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Saturday, September 20th [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

I love you with all my heart and all my being; I have given you my all, but tonight I realise that this is not enough and I want to give you much more. Your second trans-Atlantic letter arrived (dated 11th August) but it reached Malaya exactly one week ago – that may give you some idea of how isolated I am just now. Oh, my own darling, how can I ever love you enough – you who have been so unselfish to me in exile, who have given me your love and who can get so little in return from poor me. Tonight I am the happiest man in the whole world. With each letter that you send I become happier and happier, and I love you more and more. How very easy you make my life away out here – and it could be very trying. Yesterday evening I was singing a merry tune and my typical next-door-neighbour joined in and exclaimed ironically “Let’s pretend we are happy” – my reply was “I am singing because I really am happy.” It is true, my darling, and I owe it all to you.

You make me more and more ashamed of my letters when I compare them with yours. There is so much in your letters and so little in mine; the heart, which you have given into my trust – you put down on paper all its love, all its thoughts and dreams and hopes – and I can read it all. If you could know the joy I felt when I found your little miraculous medal pinned at the top of your letter and to think that you really sent it with a kiss all the way to me in Malaya – no wonder I am happy because I have the love of such a good girl as you, Eileen. Your little medal is always on my chain and it rests very near to my heart – and my heart thinks it is a very wonderful medal. I shall say the little prayer several times daily in honour of Our Lady’s Immaculate Conception. That precious medal will always remain in its place of honour no matter what happens – it is now the possession which I treasure above all others.

Oh, my own darling, I was so pleased about your visit to Beechwood and your detailed description of it. Do you realise that you painted it all so vividly that I might as well have been by your side during the whole visit. You even had me sitting beside you in the drawing room, looking at those photographs and pictures. You seem to have won my father’s heart as I knew you would – he will always love you, Eileen, for your own dear self and not on my account at all and he would do anything for you. Father always wanted to give Beechwood to me but I always asked him to leave me out of his will entirely because the others needed it more than I did. And now I have a yearning for home and Beechwood is our home Eileen. I want to know if you are happy about the idea of us having a small practice in Belfast and living at Beechwood. We might have a hard struggle at first but I know that we shall win through eventually. Poor father never wanted to sell our house and now he has shown you every inch of it as if it were your very own. I know that there are many improvements to be made, but that will follow later my dearest. It was in Beechwood that I dreamed so much about you and yet in those days if I had done anything else except dream of you, you would have been terrified! I dare not have mentioned the word “love” to you at all. And now I tell you that I shall always love you and nobody but you. Did you really like my photograph, Eileen? I wanted you to like it very much and yet I was scared in case you would not – it was taken in my first Malaya station by a little Chinaman, and I did not think it was a huge success. I am so glad that your photograph is probably on its way by this time and how I shall await its arrival. You will find out soon enough how ugly I really am and then you will see how false a photograph can be! Thank God we are just plain ordinary people and have no illusions about our beauty or brains! Are you very annoyed with me for calling you “plain”? You are the most beautiful person and character in the whole world, in my eyes – that is because I love you so much. How I wish that I were half as good as you, my darling – I do try to be, Eileen, for your sweet sake.

Your letters are all neatly tied with blue ribbon this evening. Thank God all have been received except two July letters which are on their way but are due very soon. I was worried about you for the past few days as no reply came to my 3 telegrams, so this morning I sent you off another one (prepaid) so that you could wire back quickly. We had a hockey match this evening but I could not play as I was orderly medical officer of the day. I am sorry to say that I lost my temper with an Indian officer this afternoon when I found him bullying one of my men. I am slow to anger usually and I hate rows of any kind. I was sorry afterwards that I had made such a fool of myself – in fact I was miserable until I had apologized and now I am happy again. I just cannot quarrel with people and if I do it can never last more than a few minutes because I have to make it up. My poor Eileen I am an awful man

and full of faults – you will have to take me under your care and make me better. I am sorry that I made you sad by mentioning death and I promise never to write about it again. I also promise you faithfully that I shall take every care of myself for your sake; I promise not to run any risks from injury and take every precaution against tropical disease. I have never been careless about these things because I owe it to you not to be injured or fall sick unnecessarily.

I have just returned from my night round. All my ‘children’ are safely in bed and they are happy. They all know when I am coming round and I hear them whisper “The Major Sahib is coming!” They all steadfastly refuse to call me “Captain”! My dearest, I shall write you more tomorrow – it is now midnight. Good night and God bless you.

Sunday September 21st

I was supremely happy yesterday and yet today I am even happier – I did not imagine that the sun would set today and find me so gloriously happy. I have so much to write about that I do not know what to say first – I am sure to make a mess of things. I had another wonderful letter from you today my own darling and that is enough to make me happy; it has made me love you even more than ever before. It was dated July 15th and contained a note from Felix – there is only one July letter outstanding now. It is wonderful that all your letters have got through safely because they travel all the way to the Cape by sea and then by air to Malaya. We have a terrific debt to pay to our good God who has been so generous to us and we shall have to spend the rest of our lives in thanking him for everything.

You poor darling, you were very sad in your letter – you were daily expecting a letter and the photograph, and nothing had come at the end of a fortnight. How I wish with all my heart that you could have a letter from me every day and then you would not have been anxious days awaiting my letters. My own dearest, do not worry about the safe arrival of my letter – I write each day as usual and send you my “diary-letter” once every 6 days and oftener at times. Yes, Sunday is our special day and I am never closer to your heart than on that day – I always pray harder and love you more and think of you more on Sundays. I am sorry to say that while you were attending Mass for me in the morning, it is my afternoon in Malaya and I am to be found sitting dreaming under a palm tree by the shore – dreaming and thinking of you as I look out to sea. You will always find me in the same place at the same time each Sunday – won’t you please come and sit beside me some day soon. This is my Sunday routine – I get up at 7.30 a.m. and say good morning to you and start my prayers – I have told you of my precious Holy Water (I am very careful not to waste it!). After breakfast I work in my office till 11 a.m. Then I set out for the sea on our weekly pic-nic and swim with the others. Today there were six of us; we reach the shore at noon and I spent 1½ hours swimming without a break! Now, Eileen O’Kane, can you beat that? Today I was careful and swam parallel to the shore for your sake – I am never afraid, but I have given you my promise. By the way it is very easy to remain in the sea for hours, it is so warm! When the swim was over we found a huge lunch of curry and rice, camp pie and chips, apricots, fruit, cheese, & coffee, awaiting us. At 2.30 p.m. the others went off to sleep under the palms and I went to dream of you for an hour and a half – you were praying very hard for me at that time and here was I just dreaming! I did say that little prayer to Our Lady as I sat there and I kissed you tiny medal as I kiss it every day now. Do you know that a more sacred or holy kiss has never been sent to any man than the one you sent to me with Our Blessed Lady yesterday. Our love will always be a holy and sacred thing because it will ever be under Her protection.

I returned to camp at 5.30 p.m. and was about to start tea when the post came – a letter from my love, one from Una, one from an Indian officer, and a very large parcel, addressed to “Dr. Murray, RAMC”! I must tell you about the wonderful contents of that parcel – it was from my little Malay priest. It contained the most beautiful crucifix I have ever seen; the cross itself is wooden and stands 10” high; the figure of Christ is golden and as perfect as could be. It is the “standing” type of crucifix and now it is reposing on my little table in my room and how I love it, my darling. How I want you to see it and love it too with me; some day please God it will stand on our table. A smaller metal crucifix I also found in the parcel and it too is very lovely; it is on my chain around my neck beside your little medal. Instead of the usual “INRI” above the Figure of Christ there are the full words “Jesus Nazaremus Rex Judaeorum”. On the back is the Sacred Heart with two inscriptions “Behold this Heart which has so loved me” and “Father forgive them”. My own darling, can you imagine how I feel about all this kindness from this good little priest whom I only met last week for the first time. He left here on Thursday last, reached Kuala Lumpur on Friday, and sent me this beautiful gift the same day. He sent me his card and also a very sweet letter. Why, oh why do I deserve all of this, my darling; I do not understand it at times that God should be so good to me. Did I tell you that before leaving this district on Thursday last that little Malay priest left two books specially for me at the local bookshop – “Village Doctor” (Sheila K. Smith) and “What Happened to France” (Gordon Waterfield), the former is grand stuff when I find time to read it.

Una's letter was very sweet and she sent me a lovely snap of herself. This was the letter she had sent before your visit to Sion Hill. Only one bit of it would interest you, Eileen. "Dr. McCloskey (R.I.P.) said, not long before his death, he hoped that you would marry an Irish girl" – and you my darling, are the Irish girl the poor man must have wished me to marry. I have so much to write about in this letter and so little space to write it all in!

I am worried about the ring, my dearest, and about you in case you have misunderstood my cable agreeing that you should purchase it. Of course I meant you to buy it with my money, that's why I must know the cost because I have to arrange it all with my bank in Malaya as there is a limit to the amount of money that anyone is allowed to send outside the country during the war (each month). I know that the maximum from England is £10. Now you understand why I must know soon about the ring. If you have cabled me to my Bombay address, I can understand the delay because it will probably be sent to me here by sea-mail from India! That's what happened to one of your cables to Rawalpindi. So again I say, never send any letters or cable to Bombay, address them all to Malaya, even though it is wrong.

My darling Eileen, I am going to write to Mattie, your sister, and tell her about our engagement! A circular came to my office this morning saying that officers are allowed to write to relatives or friends in occupied France or any other country in Europe. Everything will be managed by the Indian Red Cross Society, New Delhi; the letter will only have 20 words, excluding the name and address. Of course a reply will take many months but I feel that I must write to Sister Bernadette du Carmel at La Tour. It may bring her some happiness in her exile. Won't it be grand when the war is over; we shall both visit her at least once a year in France – would you like that, Eileen? My dear child, do you imagine for one moment that I shall allow you to make 9 pilgrimages to Lough Derg when I return home to you! You do not know how hard a man you are going to marry – we shall visit Lough Derg every year of our lives together, unless we just cannot manage it, but we must have a valid excuse! I know how hard it is, but my darling, it will be so easy when we do it together – everything will be easy then. The sleep part of course is the worst but I shall keep you awake with pleasant nudges! Imagine having such a grand feast at midnight when all was over. I am so glad that you never sleep a night at Spring Villa and that you always stay at Glen Road – you are so thoughtful for my sake. I know so well that you could never be afraid. Do you know that in yesterday's letter you began with "My own darling Frank"? Oh, my Eileen, how you have changed from your first timid letters when you scarcely mentioned the word love at all – thank God those days are over and that you freely write down what you think and how you feel. Not a single one of your letters has been opened or censored so far and it is very unlikely that they ever will be in the future. You are a lucky girl that I did not spend this summer at Killough – all my time would have been with Fergus, Hugh, and Joe, swimming four times a day with them and romping around as they do! You would have been neglected, my darling, but I think I might have caddied for you a little, too, in order to atone! I do like playing cards, but not too seriously – I cannot concentrate well enough for serious play; family games appeal to me and I have played them since I was 7 years of age!! My own darling, never be afraid to tell me about the past – thank God it could not hurt me any more. I laughed when I read how you had made a novena for good weather so that you would avoid going to pictures with me! I have no dislikes any more and I like Mollie O'Hare now – poor girl had some difficult jobs to do for us both; she must have felt so very much in the way at times!

I am selfish enough to say that your writing is not too small and if it were large I should not have such long letters from you! I hope Felix has taken advice and started up practice in Larne or Killough – it would be grand if he gets the latter. You would all be a happy family at Killough then. Thank Felix very much for his note and his congratulations. I should love to have a photograph of the wedding group – I want so much to see one of the bridesmaids! You see I am very much in love with her and I shall always be in love with her; some day soon I shall make her the happiest bride that has ever been known! Will you promise me, Eileen, that never again will you lie awake for a whole night on my account – I do admit that two letters and a photograph are rare events to happen at 2 a.m. in the morning but never again! My eyes will always tell you the same story – "I love you, Eileen" and you shall never be able to see anything else in them. I love you, my darling, so much that everything I do or think is for you – they are all for God because of my morning offering, but I know that He understands and knows all about our love and what we mean to each other. By loving each other more, we come nearer and dearer to his Sacred Heart. We have recommended our lives and our love to Him and they will ever be under His protection; He has blessed us so much in such a short time that He could never allow anything to happen to either of us. Our home will be a perfect one because He will be our Master. You must surely see, as I do, what a life of happiness and holiness too that stretches out ahead of us – happiness does depend on holiness.

I would have given anything to have seen you sit down in the kitchen at Beechwood with father and tuck in to a large turkey egg! Did you like the view from the windows upstairs? Many an hour I spent at those windows watching cricket matches instead of studying! I would give anything to be back again in Beechwood – how happy we would both be in such a home. Your little Mr. Jones is quite right, I shall be true to you always – in fact you shall never even hear me say those words again because it will not be necessary.

I am sorry now that I have put off my visit to Singapore, because I should dearly love to visit the Redemptorist Church there and also the Little Sisters of the Poor. However, now that things are quiet in the Far East the powers above are much more liberal with leave and my first port of call shall be Singapore. I shall tell them all about you, my darling; no matter whom I meet there. If your Fr. Cleary is the same one whom I know then he is a very wonderful man; he is a great friend of Gerry's and I once went along with the latter to visit him at the monastery in Clonard. Yours is a grand idea – to have an army of Holy Souls working for my safe return. Oh, my darling, you are so good and unselfish towards me, but you are the same to everyone and that's why they must love you. Your pupils seem to love you, too – what marvellous results you have had in the exams. I am so proud of you and your success, much more than if they were my successes. Give Hugh my congrats about passing his Junior; it proves that games do not make any difference and they do help a lot. May he be a huge success on the football field always and a moderate success in all his exams – that is my ideal boy and what he should do. It is neither human nor natural to ask for brilliant exam results from young lads; they are too full of life and youth to study hard!

Eileen, my dearest, I have been writing and writing for hours and still I have heaps to tell you. The bewitching hour has come again and it finds me ready for more writing; it also finds me loving you as a man has never loved a woman before or ever shall. God will not turn a deaf ear to our joint prayers. There will not be any trouble in Malaya and apparently I am sentenced to remain here for the duration. We were comparing life in camp with prison life – this was at breakfast – and we all agreed that they were very similar, except for Sundays when we go swimming! One gets used to anything in time – now I do not notice the heat or the humidity; I am not lonely or weary, because I have got you always with me and I have got you to live for. I shall always live for you, my darling. Good night, Eileen, and may God bless you wherever you may be.

Monday – September 22nd

My own darling, you must not spoil me with any more trans-Atlantic letters. I am very likely to get quite an opinion of myself and then poor Eileen would be ignored and neglected entirely! You know so well my dearest that this will never happen; I shall always love you, I shall always write to you daily and oftener at times – nothing in this world can stop me, not even the Japs. The war may drag on and on, but that can make no difference except that when it is over I shall love you so very much more. I am still praying that Pius X's prophecy will be fulfilled and that everything will be over soon. Oh my own Eileen you must love me an awful lot if you are willing to come to Malaya and marry me and live in this climate; how it makes my love for you seem so small and unworthy. Please God it will not be necessary to make any sacrifices for me in this way, but should I have to remain in Malaya or India for a year after the end of the war, it would be pleasant for you in either country for a short time under peacetime conditions. You know that there is nothing in the whole world that I would not do for you, my darling; I would sacrifice anything and everything for you, Eileen. I shall always be the same and never could I change in any way. Loving you is my life's condition and pleasure and job; everything depends on it – I could not pray so fervently or love God so much unless I were loving you with all my heart. I shall take good care of your heart, my darling; I shall keep it very close to mine and no harm shall ever come to it while it is in my safe-keeping. I hope you are taking good care of my poor worthless heart; I shall never understand why you can be bothered with it all.

I knew you would fall in love with Anne because everyone does no matter where she goes. She has been a little brick always – ever cheerful and gay no matter how things were going at home. You would not believe the amount of work that that poor child had to do in Beechwood – she had to manage everything all by herself. She deserves more happiness than she ever gets. My father is a little different from your daddie – he expects Anne to stay forever at Beechwood and never have a day off, because he never takes a holiday. It is Anne's cross in life to humour him as much as possible and be always with him. In one of my letters to you I complained that she should not have neglected him so much, and now I find that this was an exaggeration. You see father mentions it in all his letters to me and I don't know what to think, but I do know that Anne must not remain shut up as a prisoner in Beechwood always. Can you help to solve this domestic problem, Eileen? I am very sorry to have to bring it up again. May be I was a bit hasty too in judging Philip, as Una has told me that he was a wreck until he went to Magherafelt. As she put it "... gather thinks that no one should have nerves".

It is now 8 p.m. and I am sitting out on my verandah writing to you by lamp light – and it's raining mighty hard outside. I shall write to Mattie and my little Malay priest after dinner. My dearest one, let me know which of the numerous snaps reach you and how you like them; I have recently sent three or four of myself even though they are bad. Still they are me and I want them to bring you as much happiness as your snaps have brought me. My room looks perfect now, Eileen. You are on the centre of the wall above my table; below is a cross made of palm which I got on Palm Sunday in Hyderabad; and then the beautiful crucifix on the table. You see I always connect you and our love with holy things, they always go hand-in-hand. Will you pray, my dearest one that I

may become better and more worthy of you and your love. I have so much to live up to now that I shall never be able to pray as hard as you my darling, but I shall make a good attempt.

Here I am still writing to you long after dinner, and I want [section missing]. My own darling, I love writing to you because I write as if I were talking to you and as if you were quite near to me. I am never closer to you than when praying or writing to you. I am still a very happy man and why shouldn't I be – I have got your love and that is all I have ever wanted from life. I shall never cease to thank God for sending you to me after so many years – how can we ever thank Him enough for all that He has done for us. Now that you have seen our future home, I want you to make plans for our future in it; you must have noticed many faults in it. Some fine morning you will awake and find yourself in Beechwood; the sun will be streaming in upon you through those large bay windows; you will hear birds singing everywhere, you will hear our cuckoo clock chiming out the hour in the hall below – my dearest we shall be so happy then. To get up in the morning and thank God for another day, to look out upon the green lawn, the trim hedge, the silver gate, that lovely patch of cricket ground, and away beyond, the Black Mountain of Divis that you know so well. After breakfast I shall kiss you goodbye and go off on my morning round, and how I shall hate leaving you even for such a short time. You may have shopping to do or may be you will potter around the garden tending the roses and shrubs – do you like gardening, Eileen? You may even have time for a round of golf at Cliftonville or Fortwilliam! I shall have more time with you, my darling, in the afternoon; we may go walking or even be very lazy and just sit in deck-chairs in the garden and talk. We shall be so gloriously happy together no matter what we do or where we go. Do you think we could improve those fruit trees and rhubarb in the back ground?? Oh my dearest it will be our home and it will be our heaven; I shall always regard you as its queen and my queen too. You have seen two or three happy romances recently – Felix and Mona, Frances and Roland, etc. – but I promise you that ours will be happier than all of these put together. I shall work hard and pray hard and do everything to make you happy – I live for you, my darling. [section missing] stupid and blind and foolish in the past, but I shall make up for the past, Eileen. Why oh why could I not see that you loved me when you wrote to me in England; how I must have hurt you then – and yet I did not mean to hurt you.

It is now my 14th page and I have not told you how very much I love you and adore you. I am all yours, Eileen; I have always belonged to you from the beginning and I shall be yours till the end. We may have much waiting and many heartaches before we meet again, but we shall meet again and be happily married. I pray incessantly that the waiting may not be long and I know that God will hear our prayers. Our love will carry us through any trials ahead of us; our prayers will guide us safely together again.

I send you all the love that any human heart can send; I send all my own self to you (you should say “that is nothing”!). You know how I feel because you are in love too and you have the same feelings that words can so poorly describe. Give my love to all your dear ones at home – and to mine if you see them soon again; say love also to Frances and her Roland.

May God bless you, Eileen, and may He allow us to meet soon again. May our Blessed Lady shower down her blessings on you, Her faithful child.

All my love to you.

Your loving

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Tuesday, September 23rd [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

I am so very worried about you that I spend my whole day hovering around the office waiting for your telegram. You see, my darling, I have sent you four telegrams within the last month and have had no reply yet; I am terrified in case something has happened to you – that would kill me, Eileen. I never knew how much I really loved you until the past few weeks; it has made me realize what you mean to me and what my life would be like without you. I know in my heart that the delay is due to that awful address which I have to send you on the back of my letters – a telegram now takes a month to reach me instead of a few days. My own darling, I cannot help worrying in spite of this because I do love you such a terrible lot. You have all of me, all my love – you have always had it and you always shall – it can never belong to anyone else but you. Oh why did I ever leave you and run away to England – and then to India and Malaya, further and further away each time; and now I have never

loved you so much; I have never been so near to you. My heart is just breaking with love for you; I want to give all and sacrifice all for you to make you happy. If only I could see you again and speak to you again and tell you all about the love I have ever had for you. I have told you how happy I am since we have found each other; I have been living in a different world entirely, in a world of dreams with you alone. This dreaming will soon end please God and we shall meet again never to be parted. Surely He will not fail us now after showering down so many blessings upon us and our love. I have never prayed so hard in all my life as I do now; it is so important to our love that we must ever be praying. Much as you may want me back home again, I cannot come and would not until the war is over. What happiness of peace could we ever have until the war is ended; it is my job to remain here and much as I love you I cannot leave my post – you would not be very proud of your husband. It is so selfish of me to wish myself at home again with you; it will all come in God's own time. Surely it will all be worth while waiting for – the happiness of our re-union, our marriage, our home, and our future. At the moment I am not sad – only worried about you, my darling. How could I ever be sad with you and your love and your prayers to make me happy.

I sent you off a 14 –page letter this morning – and it was only a 3-day letter too instead of the usual six days. I cannot help loving you more and more each day; I want to put more and more love in any letters to you, I can never tell you often enough about my love. I had two letters from you at the weekend one dated July 15th and the other August 11th (trans-Atlantic) – the happiness and consolation they brought to me I have tried already to tell you about. Life can never be dull or lonely or desolate for me in this wilderness as long as your letters reach me and even should they not come, I would still be happy in the knowledge that you love me. I have a 20-word letter all ready to be sent to Mattie tomorrow morning. I have also written to thank my little Malay priest for the crucifixes which he sent me; I promised that we would pray for him. He is such a good man and does a lot of grand work in bring back the stray sheep to his flock. I have been in camp all day and yet there was not a dull moment. I tried a sepoy today for a minor breach of discipline for which he was very sorry – and I let him off with a lecture! I could not be hard or cruel – that's why I must not remain in the Army; I am too soft! I could be a real success in the Army if I were to remain on in it when the war is over, but it would not be me, Eileen – you would be marrying an Army doctor called "Capt. Murray R.A.M.C." and not the Frank Murray whom you love. I love you because you are the same Eileen O'Kane I have loved for so long, because you are very good, and generous and unselfish, because you pray hard, you love the life that I love, that you want the things in life that are dear to me, that you are sincere and true, and that you love with your all just as I do. Now have you some idea of why I love you – you asked for it in your last letter. May be I love your funny eyes when you smile; may be I love your voice, your honest face, your neat close set figure and your plain , tidy dress too– these latter are small things compared with your character and your goodness.

Good night my darling and may God watch over you this night.

Wednesday – September 24th

I sent Mattie's letter this morning by air mail to India; I told her that all at home were well and happy and that we were engaged to be married – and sent our love to her. I wonder will she ever get that letter and if so, shall I ever get a reply. That poor child is so near to you and yet she is more an exile than I am in far-off Malaya. I have been reading "What Happened To France" and it is heart-rending to see such a might nation in the dust under the heel of Germany; surely it is not possible to keep 40 million people in subjection. When I think of what Irishmen would do if they were 40 million strong and their country was occupied by Germans – the latter would grow weary of ambushes, sniping, & revolts; they would be up against real men and real fighters. Our little Sister Bernadette du Carmel will soon be rescued from her exile, please God, and so will all the other countries of Europe and all their prisoners. It was wonderful that Mattie was not interned and your prayers must have been the cause of it – you seem destined to get everything you pray for in the world. You even got me my prayer and I know so well that I am not worth praying for; it seemed as if you paid a personal visit to Heaven and arranged everything with all the Good People up there. Our good God made me send my love to you on that Christmas card – I thought that nothing would ever come of it; He made you write to me in December last and tell me that you loved me (at least I read it between the lines!). We owe him an eternal debt of gratitude for everything, Eileen. I have told you of the saintly Irish priest at Rawalpindi who said that we would meet and love each other so very much. It was his words of wisdom that sent me overseas from India full of joy and hope. You must meet my Mgr. O'Donahue some day when he comes home on leave to Ireland – he is one man in 10 million, he is a great priest. How could I praise him more than that.

My darling, I have been so very thoughtless not to realise fully how you must have been and probably still are being hurt by people saying that I am married or engaged to someone else. How can they be so unkind. My own precious Eileen, it is you I love, it is you I have always loved and there never shall be anyone but you; I have always wanted you and needed you since I first saw you. God would not allow me to pass each other by on our

journey through life. You could have been married years ago and had a lovely home; I too could have been married to someone just as you could – and yet we did not. We have always belonged to each other and we always shall. I did not mean to hurt you ever my own dearest and God knows that I would rather die a thousand times over than hurt you in the slightest degree. You must have our engagement ring soon; you shall choose it as you have desired to do so. I am a bit lost at the moment and do not know what to do about the money – would it be an awful breach of etiquette if I were to send it all to you and let you manage everything, or would you rather I sent it to your daddie, mammie or Felix to give to you. Before this letter reaches you something will be done about it – by that time your telegram should have arrived from India. I had a wild idea this morning that during your next summer vacation you might fly out to Malaya, become Mrs. Frank Murray, and then fly back home again! You are such a brick that you would do this without a moment's hesitation – you love me more than I deserve, Eileen. Of course, I could not ask you to travel such a distance and all the way by air; I love you too much to ask you to take even the slightest risk on my account. You see, my darling, it would break my heart and kill me if anything happened to you on the journey – I would be to blame for it all, and nothing would ever console me. Officers are not allowed to bring their wives to Malaya but I could get special permission for you to come here, to marry me, and then go back home again. This is just a day dream of mine, Eileen, and day dreams can be so sweet and bring such joy. Do you ever have day dreams of our next meeting and the happiness it will bring us?

I must not forget my diary! I had a hard day and oh, it was so hot under the rubber after the night's rain. Relief came at 4 p.m. when I set out for town with two lorry loads of men to play my first hockey match. I have never played before today and yet I had the audacity to put myself on the team! The result of the match was a draw 1-1, in spite of me playing right full back! I had misses, and "sticks" and "kicks" all over the place; I was handicapped by having played hurling first. Hockey is tricky and skillful but it is a poor game compared with hurling! I feel much brighter since my game – not that I am ever very bright but it is good to get into an open field and chase a ball around!

Good night my darling and God bless you.

Thursday September 25th

I was very thrilled this morning when a parcel arrived for me from Kuala Lumpur – I knew immediately that it was from my friend Fr. Girard. You can have no idea what a parcel or a letter means to me in this wilderness; it is just the biggest event of the week! I ran across to my quarters and hastily opened the parcel; I nearly cried when I found that my precious statue was broken in two pieces. There was a note inside explaining that as there were no statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary available, he was sending one of the Sacred Heart instead. It is such a beautiful one – all white and 10½ inches high. I set to work immediately with my tube of Seccotine³⁵ (Belfast made!) and in a very short time it was mended so well that the break is scarcely detectable. It looks lovely in the centre of my shelf – now at last my room looks complete; I only need your photograph now to make it perfect. I am as proud of my crucifix and my statue – they show up so well at night by lamp-light that they can be seen a long way off. By the way, Eileen, I am learning to play chess and had my first real game this evening with a major who lives next door. How do you expect me to concentrate on games which require lots of thought, while all the time I am thinking of you! It should be very exasperating but I find it very pleasant. My own darling, I shall never stop think of you and loving you as long as I am alive. You are part of me – you are all of me, just as I am you. I cannot explain myself better than this and yet it is all so simple. I love you so much that everything I am or have belongs to you and it will always be the same no matter what happens.

You are so good, Eileen, already preparing for our future home. Well, my darling, you have seen 'Beechwood' and you may have some ideas as to what you could make during the winter months. At the moment I can only think of tea-coseys and tea clothes to be embroidered! My own dearest, it does not matter what you may make – I shall like them all because they are yours. I shall have some surprises in that line when I unpack my bags on my return home; it's all very secret now and you must not be told about it! Our home will be a castle and it will be the happiest home that has ever been. I do not have to even tell you that there will never be any cross words spoken within its walls. Our happiness will lie in our love, its unselfishness – it makes life so much easier and happier when you always have someone beside you who loves you and is willing to share everything with you, joys and sorrows. Then there is our holy religion and our prayers; we could not be happy without these and I know that they shall come first always. Our love and our marriage will be blessed and holy. We shall ever be in love with our dark Rosaleen. "Do not sigh, do not weep" my Eileen because I shall soon be on the ocean green and speeding home to you.

Did I tell you of my new found friend? Every morning while I am washing by the open window I can see a little figure running from tree to tree. He is a little Chinese boy tapping the rubber trees and he always has a big

³⁵ A brand of liquid glue.

smile for me and a friendly wave of the hand, which I never fail to return. He is a comical little chap under that large felt hat and I am a close friend of his! I have nothing more to tell you of today except that I held a practice fire alarm and pretended that the store was on fire; the lads were so keen that I almost had a bucket of water thrown over me!

God bless you, my Eileen, I do love you so very, very much.

Friday – September 26th

My own darling, I am so terribly happy this evening and now I shall tell you why. Do you remember that I wrote and told you about the “half-letter” which father sent me, well the other half arrived today by trans-Atlantic air mail. Poor man; it cost him 10/- to send that letter in two instalments – I am sure he has never spent so much money on a letter in his life before! So you may guess how important the second half of that letter was to my father. It was all about you, Eileen, and your first visit to Beechwood. I shall quote part of the letter, even though it might give you a grand opinion of yourself: – “I had a visit from Miss O’Kane last Friday just for a short time, but she will be back again soon. She is a wonderful young lady. I think she is the most suitable girl I have ever seen to be your wife. She is a splendid character, modest, nice, and plain – not one of the modern type – and she belongs to a splendid family. I do admire her very much and she is a very suitable person for you. You could take her into any company and none would surpass her. All I can say is that I am very, very pleased with your selection.” Eileen, my dearest one, if you knew my father as I do and how very non-committal he can be, how slow to give praise, you would marvel at what he has written about you. A literal translation of the above means that he thinks that there is not another girl in the world to compare with you and you know that I agree with him. He does not mean that you are really beautiful to look at – he means your character is beautiful; he does not mean that you are plain-looking – he means that you are honest, straightforward, and simple and have no airs about yourself. All I can do is to hope and pray that your parents will like me as much as my father likes you, Eileen. I had written to him and asked him to inquire from Uncle Eddie about you, so he now replies “I will not bother asking Eddie O’Kelly about Miss O’Kane – the look of her and my conversation with her are sufficient for me”. He wants to see me home again and married to you, my darling. He also gave me good advice about prayer and says that “all things are got by prayer”. My dearest one, you cannot imagine how glad I was to read all of the above coming from my father; it makes our love and our marriage so much easier and happier. You poor child, you were dreading meeting him in case he should not approve of you. Is there anyone in the whole world who could not approve of you? I am so proud of you, Eileen, so proud to know you and to love you with all my heart and soul. I love you because of your own dear self, for what you are in God’s sight – that is so very important to me. Need I tell you again that I am all yours forever and that I shall always love you and nobody else but you.

I wrote a letter of thanks to Fr. Girard today to thank him for the lovely statue. I would not dream of mentioning about the statue being broken; he would be so sorry to hear of it. My C.O. arrived back today after 6 days absence on “leave & business & dentist trip”! This evening he has invited me to join him during Christmas leave and go off to Cameron Highlands or Frazer’s Hill (you may see these on map). He insists that I must get away from camp for a rest in the hills where it is so cool and fresh; where there are lovely walks, golf, tennis, and beautiful scenery. They even have two blankets at night up there and wonderful log fires! I have not seen a fireside since coming to Malaya. Do you think I should accept the C.O.’s invitation? There is a convent at Cameron Highlands and so there should be Mass up there, so If I go it must be to that spot! This was my night for putting the “children” to bed and I had to use my stick (in a friendly way) to smack all the bare arms and legs I saw on my rounds; you see it is so dangerous at night sitting around like this because of the mosquitoes. Today has been hot and sultry. Tomorrow is another day and I can look forward to a hockey match against the local Chinese team in the village!

God bless you my dearest one.

Saturday – September 27th

Do you remember what it felt like waiting for our first letters to reach each other? It took months and months before they began to come regularly. I thought those months would never end and that your first letter would never come – waiting day by day and watching every post with eager eyes. And now, my darling, your letters reach me regularly every week or fortnight but the time seems to drag endlessly on between them – a week seems like a whole month of the early days of this year and the days seem like weeks. When your letter does reach me I just live in an ecstasy of joy reading it and reading it over and over again – days later I am still reading it. Then I begin looking forward to the next one and begin expecting it long before it is due. I do become impatient as the days roll by – and yet what is the use of being impatient. Oh my darling, it shows that I long for your letters more and more and that I am loving you more and more as time marches on. I have now got 11 letters and one post card from you and I read through the whole lot each week – it can make me so very happy. You will surely like the

lovely piece of blue ribbon with which my precious bundle is tied. And now my darling I do want to see your photograph on my table; I want to speak to you just as you speak to me in your room. Your little snap still holds pride of place in my room, I do love it because it is you; I will say "Good morning" and "Good night" to you; each time I enter or leave this room I say to you "I love you Eileen; God bless you". Don't you see, my dearest one, that you are my all and you mean everything in the world to me. I just could not love you any more than I do this night because it is not humanly possible to pour out any more love than this from a human heart. I know and feel that we shall meet again soon and be married and we shall have happiness untold and undreamt of by us. I shall make you the happiest bride in all the world; you and your happiness will always come first above all things in my life. I shall work so hard for you, Eileen, that you may have every joy and comfort. We shall never be rich in this world's goods but we shall always have riches of our own which the world cannot give and which are so important to us. Do not imagine that I have no ambitions in life. My first and only ambition has been to make you love me and become my wife; hand-in-hand with that is my ambition to go to Heaven some day with you. I love my work as a doctor and I shall always do my best for every patient and ask for little reward.

I have some strange ideas about life that I have never told to a human being before except you, Eileen; nobody but you would understand. I have the gift of seeing God in everyone and everything around me. I know that He has made those poor coolies down at the Ferry who toil all day in the heat and humidity and bitten by mosquitoes. I love those men because they are lowly and insignificant in the eyes of the world. They are my friends and I never fail to give them a smile and they never fail to give me a smile and a salute – I am proud to say that I am the only officer in the whole district who gets any recognition from them (and that includes a general!). Those things all make me happy and I would rather have the smile of a coolie than the smile of the greatest man in the Army! And now, my darling, surely you will laugh at my strange outlook on life and surely you will not marry me now! What a husband to have to live with – he hob-nobs with coolies!!

My next door neighbour (a Major) has just looked in and asked me did I have a god mail from home today?? It seems that he had lots of letters and he was really sorry that more came for me! Oh, if only he had not mentioned letters at all, I would never have known that a mail came in today. Still, I am a much happier man than he at this moment and every moment of every day. We had a great hockey match this evening and beat the local Chinese by two goals to one. I played a little bit better than last time, but I am still very bad! The men are very keen and so I have promised to buy lots of new sticks and balls etc for them from the sports fund. I read good news in the local papers today that the Pan-American Clipper will soon have a weekly service leaving Singapore for U.S.A. That means that my weekly letter will not have to wait for 2 weeks here as before and should reach you at weekly intervals at home. It makes me so happy to know that you will have my letters so soon after posting – I want you to be as happy as I am. For your sake alone I am glad that the war clouds over Malaya have vanished; thank God there is now no immediate threat and our correspondence can continue as usual and always be the source of our happiness during separation. The "Clipper" leaves on Tuesday and so I must finish this letter tonight and post it tomorrow morning. I am enclosing the cards of my two good friends – one a Frenchman and the other a Malay and I shall never forget them.

Did your mammie (my mother) receive the letter I sent to her recently? I have a very clear picture of all your dear ones now – your mother so loving and so good, your father so kind and understanding; Fergus so holy and quiet and steady; Hugh so boisterous, so gay, and so manly; you know what I think of Felix and Mattie. But, my darling, you have yet to tell me about Josephine and Mairead; I know the former is a Domestic Economist and the latter a masseuse – but I want to know them better, what they look like, what age they are, and all about them. I must know them all and I do love them without even meeting them. In your letters you always write about them and this I want more and more, just as I want your love more and more each day of my life. I live only for you and your love, Eileen, and for the day when we shall meet again. It will come soon, my darling, and we must pray for patience and resignation; our love can only grow more beautiful and pure the longer we have to wait for each other. Please God you will not live to regret giving me your love and your own dear self – they will ever be the treasures of my life and I shall treat them as precious gems. Surely our waiting is worthwhile when we think of the happiness that awaits us at the end of the road.

Give my love to all your dear ones at home and also to Frances and the McNabb family. I love them all but they are friends – you have all my heart and all of me. I shall always be yours and yours alone. God bless you, Eileen.

Your loving
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Sunday, 28th September [1941]

Eileen my own darling,

"I am 6 ft 0 ½ inches tall; 12 st 10 lbs in weight; and 40" around my chest and a mere 30" around the waist! I am dark and handsome! I am a very ordinary sort of fellow and a very ordinary doctor by profession. Any young lady (preferably Irish and O'Kane by name) wishing to correspond with a view to matrimony please write to the above address. Photographs will not be returned!" My darling, I had a wonderful letter from you today and you asked what my height was! Am I too too tall for you or just right. Why do you love me so much Eileen. Why do you love me at all? I am now receiving letters weekly and last week I had two. I do need them all, because they are my only contact with you – how I love to read of all your thoughts, your hopes, and all the little things about you which mean so much to me. Can you blame me for loving you even more than ever today? I am not worthy of you or your great love, but I shall ever pray and try hard to improve in every way. I want to live up to everything that your dream husband should be. You have dreamed of him and of the happy home that would one day be yours, but please God it will soon be a reality. The happiness that we shall know in our home will not be just ordinary happiness, it will be the joy that the world cannot give. Do you remember seeing a picture of the Holy Family at Beechwood? We shall try in our own way to imitate that Holy Family and place our home under its patronage. Marriage has no meaning when two young people dress up for a day, promise to be faithful, sign their names in a register, and go off and live together. Thank God it will mean so very much more to us than this.

I have told you so often how happy I am when your letters arrive; each time they bring me more and more happiness. I do not want you to write the awful stereotyped letters which I send to you; I love your letters because they are so like yourself – I can see you in every word that you write. Never change them, my darling. Please do not ever write to me daily or even attempt it; it would not be you and it would not be natural. All I ask is a few lines from your heart weekly or fortnightly – you can never know the joy that that can bring to me in far-off Malaya. I write to you every day because I feel like doing so; I could not go to bed at night without pouring out my heart and soul to you, telling you about my love, about my trouble and my day. It does not mean that I love you more than you love me, because I write daily; love is not measured in the number of words written or even spoken – it is something deeper and grander than mere words. Never imagine that you should write oftener and never feel at a disadvantage; my letters could never make you as happy as yours make me. Today's letter was dated July 20th; you posted it in Belfast before you went off to Dublin for a week. All your letters have now arrived and include two trans-Atlantic ones posted on July 30th and early in August respectively. How we must thank God for being so generous to us – many letters are surely lost in these days of war and yet we have not lost a single one yet.

Imagine you telling me about my beloved Schubert and all his songs in "Lilac Time"! My own darling, I love every one of his songs and none better than "I want carve your name on every tree"; so you shall not have to teach me this one, we shall sing it together some day soon. I saw "Lilac Time" many years before I ever met you, my darling, and have seen it six times in all! I often compared myself to poor old awkward shy Franz Schubert; I thought I would never tell you that I was in love with you! And yet here I am telling you over and over again every day of my life that I love you. Your likes are my likes in all things, Eileen. We must have been made for each other. You know already that I vowed that I would never marry anyone but you; and now you tell me that you made a similar promise about me to mother about 2 years ago. I loved you so very much in those days, but now my love has grown beyond comparison with then. My love will always be the same as it is now – something very sacred between you and me; I promise you, too, that I could not treat it lightly. It means so much to me that I have not told a single person in Malaya or India about it – I could not bear to have it come into the cheap conversation of an Officers' Mess. I have written to my friend Gerry and told him all about us, but none others have been told outside my family circle. As a matter of fact I do not write to anyone else but Gerry. The little Malay priest (Fr. Ashness) knows that I have an Irish colleen somewhere in Ireland; my C.O. must know that we are engaged because all my letters are signed by him (he never reads them!). I shall write and tell the Wimseys about our engagement and that you are praying for them.

My own darling, I have always loved you because you were honest. It would have very wrong on your part to have encouraged me in the old days when you did not love me – at least you did not realise it then. And now when you tell me that you love me I know you mean it with all your heart and soul. This waiting will test our love, but it can only make it deeper and more sincere. You and you alone can make me happy. You shall always find a confident in me; you can tell me all and I shall listen and never find you boring. My own darling, I love you so much that the very fact of you being near to me will make everybody and everything else fade into insignificance.

That part of our love which makes us ideal friends and companions, that alone will make us want to confide everything in each other. Together we shall overcome all difficulties – our love and our joint prayers will conquer anything. Troubles can only bring us nearer to each other and make us love each other more and more. At home we were always taught to regard illness and troubles as blessings; and sure enough I could always see innumerable blessings being showered down from Heaven on that family in “Beechwood”, that would never have been given if sickness had not been in our home.

This was our day and it is always my happiest of the week. It was spent in the same way as I described so minutely in a recent letter to you. I had two swims today, the first was over 2 miles long and the second about 1 mile. The C.O. was very worried on my first trip because I swam so far away along the shore that he could not see me for 20 minutes – I was out of sight beyond some rocks! I love the sea, Eileen, but not as much as I love you. As usual my whole day was spent with you. I shall say an extra Rosary on Sundays in future, just at the time when I think you are hearing Mass. Then I shall feel nearer to you and, I hope, nearer to God. I shall never be able to love you enough, Eileen, but with God’s help I shall make you happy.

It is now 11.40 p.m. and I must go to bed, darling. Good night and God bless you – I have heaps more to say tomorrow.

Monday – September 29th

I am about to deliver a stern lecture to you, Miss O’Kane! I was very annoyed to hear that you did not go to the tennis and golf dances at Ardglass during the Summer! My own darling, I want you to be happy at home and to go off dancing when you feel like it – I feel that I am to blame when you do not go to big dances. You must not retire to the cloister and hide yourself now that we are engaged to be married! However, your happiness is all that I want and if you are happier at home than at dances, then I am satisfied. If there were dances here I should not attend them at all, but dances in the tropics do not compare with a decent dance at home. I only want to dance with you, anyhow; but you will have to be very patient with me and teach me some steps. When we are married we shall go dancing occasionally and often if you wish it. Thank God you are an open-air girl – you will have trouble keeping me indoors, except when day is done, then I shall long for our fireside. But no matter where I go or what I may do, I want you to be ever by my side – only then could I be happy. Have you ever listened to the rain beating upon the windows of our home during the long winter nights, have you listened to the wind in the trees, while we sat in our easy chairs by roaring fire safe within the four walls of HOME; and oh, the happiness and contentment we shall feel. I know how lucky I am to have you as my wife-to-be. That home will be a paradise on earth and there will not be another home on earth to compare with it. I, too, am a home bird and ever shall be; I shall never want to leave Ireland again once I reach its shores – it really means that I shall never leave you for a moment as long as I live. I promise you that our home will be a model one, just as you have dreamed about. My darling, you could never manage both cooking and cleaning at ‘Beechwood’ all by yourself – the cleaning would be too much for you. I can well imagine you as an ideal nurse helping me in my surgery; it will not be hard work, Eileen, and I shall not drag you away from your housekeeping unless it is very necessary. I know all my child patients will love you and become as good as gold when you are with me. I like attending to children and have an awful failing of playing with them while examining them, but that is not waste of time to me.

I cannot properly explain why my letters have become less interesting than when I was in the hills. All I can say is that the tactical situation is totally different here and as a result I am penned in this very awful rubber plantation all day long and every day except Sundays. There are no more adventures in the jungle, no more leeches, no more fun; it is much less healthy here but I thank God that I have not been ill as yet, though many others have. The atmosphere does make one dull and that means I am even duller than before!, but I am very happy and He has sent you to me in my exile to give me such happiness. So now you understand why I have no exciting letters to write nowadays. My only reason for ever writing any letter is to tell you that I love you with all my heart and soul and that I shall love you for ever and ever. Nothing can ever change me, Eileen. Long, long ago when I was major Murray I scarcely loved you at all compared with my love for you now as Frank Murray! Our good God has again been very generous to me; I have not once felt any regrets about losing my promotion – if only you my darling were not hurt about it, then I am doubly happy. I would rather have one little bit of your love and one small corner in your heart than all the honours and all the riches that the world could give. Your love is all that I want. Tonight I need you as never before. I do pray earnestly to God and offer so many little things up to Him – all my discomforts, all my disappointments, all my trials – I have made them prayers. Eileen, my dearest, won’t you please send me the little prayer which you called “our prayer” – you must have forgotten it in your last letter. Don’t you think we make a very big sacrifice each day in not seeing each other.

I am the most selfish man on earth – I keep talking about myself and never a word about you. My darling, I am so glad you have left your former digs. You are very naughty not to have told me more about it at the time you were so badly run down. You should have gone back to Hughes again; you need good care and fresh air out

in the country – they have been good people to you. You could have repaid them for their kindness in allowing you to remain with them. However I suppose you naturally did not want to trouble them. Will you promise me that if ever you feel yourself going down hill again, that you will go out to the Hughes family and get well and strong again quickly. I have a faint suspicion that you were working too hard last term! Write and tell me all about school; your new pupils, the news; I want to hear about your new digs, I want to know that you are happy and contented in Omagh, that you have good friends there, and that you are enjoying life. Tell me, Eileen, has love affected your gold? I bet your handicap should be +20 nowadays! I want to hear of your visits to Belfast and Killough at week-ends, whether or not you have been to Beechwood recently or not. Your last trans-Atlantic letter gave me all the happy details of your day at Cliftonville. Did you bring the photograph to Omagh with you or did you forget and leave me behind???

I hope you have not misunderstood what I wrote yesterday when I said that nobody in Malaya has been told of our engagement. I want everyone to know about it at home but there was nobody except the Wimseys whom I would tell about it here. I have only met one civilian in this station – Dr. McMahon and his wife, and these I have not seen since the priests were here. Social life does not exist in this place – I am 11 miles distant from the village with a ferry intervening. I would love to visit McMahons often, but how on earth could I reach them so late in the evenings after tea and then try getting home again in the darkness and the ferry closes at 9 p.m. Anyhow I could never hope to return the McMahon's generosity – I could not ask them to my house here with its four black wooden walls! They would just have to sit on the floor!

Today has been all camp work and tomorrow will be the same! It is not for a lady's ear to hear the rotten jobs I have had to do today. Oh, if only I could be working in a hospital and learning something useful. I am wasting such precious time in Malaya and doing no medicine. If only I had some medical books to read – alas these had to be left in India due to their weight. I had a game of chess tonight and was badly beaten! I went off with a party of men into the plantation log-hunting this morning – it was real lumber jack stuff and I heaved with the others a huge tree trunk. We brought it back to camp and have now installed it as our gymnasium "horse" in the lines. As I walked along so happy I found myself singing our song but my darling I could not possibly carve your name on every tree here – there are millions of them!

May God and His Holy Mother bless and protect you. Good night darling.

Tuesday – September 30th

Another month has 'gone with the wind' and it finds me more in love with you than any man has ever been in love before on this earth. It is 10 p.m. and I am sitting out of doors on my verandah writing by hurricane lamplight to you my darling. It is so peaceful and quiet here; I am at peace with the world and I am happy because I am so near to your heart this night. I have had a wonderful feeling all day that something good was about to happen to me and I still have that feeling even though nothing has happened. Oh, my darling, the only thing that matters to me is your love; the only person in the whole wide world who matters to me is you, Eileen. I live only for you and for the day when we shall meet again. When you come down to the docks at Southampton to meet me, please come alone my dearest one; you have said that this is what you would like to do. I, too, do not wish any of our friends to see tears of joy in my eyes. Will you think me very unmanly if a few tears do appear on that momentous day. I have so much to tell you, Eileen, and so little time (a life time) left in which to tell you all. Won't you ever grow weary listening to my tale of love?

I wrote a long letter to my father this evening and told him how overjoyed I was to know that he liked you so much. I did want him to love you and now he really does love you for what you are, not because you are engaged to marry his son – that means so much to me, Eileen, and to you also. How could he help himself; everyone must love you, my darling, and yet you have chosen poor old Frank as your life's partner. I have got nothing compared with you; I try to be as good as you but I know that I shall never succeed. I promise you now before God that never once shall I allow myself to grow careless about my prayers. Mass may only come a few times a year to Kuantan, but with God's help I shall redouble my prayers instead of easing off. My darling, I have told you so often that you have always been my guiding star – as long as I am loving you, then I have to be good – and I shall love you forever. And now that you have given me your love, how much easier prayer has become for me. I have so much to thank our Lord for and so much to ask Him for.

People cannot understand why I am so happy living in this place – I sing all day long! One should really be sad and depressed under such conditions as we live under here, but never again in my life shall I be sad as long as I have your love, Eileen. The C.O. and I have been discussing leave at Christmas time. We have decided to go to Cameron Highlands and spend 16 days there starting on 20th December. I hope to have daily Mass and Communion up there, and that will make the holiday a perfect one for me. These Highlands are 5,000 feet high, deliciously cool and dry; there is golf, tennis, and hiking. We shall stay at an Inn – with its old low hanging rafters, log fires, feather beds etc., etc. What luxuries these all will be after so many months living in the plains under the

trees. I am not so very keen to go away on leave – I am thinking it is not very fair to you and our future home if I go off and spend my money on holidays when I don't really need holidays at all. Some day soon you may see the Cameron Highlands with me; but in a way I hope that I shall come home to you instead of you coming out to me – it would be so much nicer.

There is a big inspection tomorrow and so I must be looking my best – no sleepy eyes in the morning after sitting up half the night writing to someone whom I adore! Good night and God bless you.

Wednesday, October 1st

My dearest Eileen, I tell you each day of my life how happy I am and it is true – how can I be otherwise knowing that you love me. But there is ever a longing in my heart to see you again and speak my heart to you; I become so very lonely at times and this evening found me in a bad way. I have been on duty all day and when evening came everyone had disappeared and the place seemed very deserted. I wanted someone to speak with, to tell them all my joys and hopes and fears – and that someone is you, Eileen. Nobody else will ever do instead of you; you must have all my secrets, all my confidences, all my love. I offered up this spasm of loneliness to Our Lord for your intentions and asked Him to bless us both. As usual when I feel lonely or have my own troubles I seek out your little miraculous medal from around my neck and kiss it fervently and repeat the prayer over and over again. You can never know the comfort it brings me; it is your special medal which you blessed yourself with and kissed before sending to me. My darling, can you forgive me for feeling so lonely – I should not feel so because I know that you are always with me; but the conditions under which I live here are really depressing, and this is the first time I have been very lonely. I am only human, Eileen; you see I have got no one here at all with whom I can even go out walking in the evenings. As I have told you already I would not even dream of mentioning your name to anybody in this station – it would be almost a sacrilege in my eyes. And yet I want the whole world to know about you.

The big inspection went off very well for me but others were less fortunate! I cannot help being natural and very cool on these big occasions – and so I can always give the right answers (usually!). The day went so quickly that the sudden reaction of evening set in abruptly. I am my happy self again now that I have started writing to you. Having put the “children” to bed and turned out the Guard, I had a short stroll among the trees in the moonlight. I remembered that it was not night time at home and that you would just have finished work at school – in fact I saw you winding your way back to the digs in Omagh! Were you thinking of me at that moment or were you still concentrating on Geography? I wondered how many letters were on their way to me and if you had sent a telegram or not. The last news I had of you was early in August when you sent a cable and a trans-Pacific letter. The more letters I get from you the more I long to have – this is selfish and greedy; I shall have to be more patient and reasonable in future. I know that you must have to wait ages for my letters sometimes, but I am thoughtless. I am more worried about a telegram than anything else because I have sent four without reply. Oh Eileen my darling I do love you so very very much that the thought of anything happening to you fills me with dread; what would become of me I cannot imagine – I could never face life without you. You mean everything to me, Eileen, and if I lose you I have lost everything that I live for. My life would not be worth living and yet I know that our good God would give me enough grace to bear such a heavy cross and He would make me understand that you would be awaiting me in Heaven. Do you know that when I think of Heaven I always think of you, my darling, and how hard we must strive to be happy there forever and ever. I know that our love will last forever and that God will not allow our love to die with us. Do you think Heaven will be so very much happier than our own home when we are married? I do know that we shall be as happy as it is possible for two people to be on this earth.

Today I did some calculations and decided that I could not afford a holiday at Christmas with the C.O. I was really only taking leave with the latter to please him, but I have other things to consider now and you are now more precious to me than all the C.O.s in the world. God bless you. Good night, Eileen.

Thursday – October 2nd

As this letter is now nearly ended I am quite ashamed of it because it is the poorest attempt so far at letter-writing. I have been rather depressing in parts, especially yesterday, but my darling I have never loved you so much as I have done during the past few days – I have never needed you so much. May be some day you may realise the enormous amount of influence for good that you have and always had over me. You have always guided my conduct in your own good way and how I do thank God that He sent you to be my good angel and lead me the right way. You have made life so easy for me – it is not nearly hard enough. Do you know that I would give anything to know what your troubles are – I want to share them with you as I always will; I must share everything with you else I would not be happy. Won't you please confide some of them to me, Eileen; I want to help you. I have been thinking again and now I see that the greatest compliment you have ever paid to me was to say that you confide more in me than even in Frances. How I used envy her who was your best friend, who was ever by your side and was ever in your confidences; how I longed and hoped that some day you would confide in me too. Can you

imagine how happy I feel now that that day has come and we are better than the best of friends – we have each other and we always shall love each other. I have loved your goodness, your character, and your nature, but you have one very wonderful quality which shines out so brightly and that is your down-right sincerity. You have always been sincere with me even in our school days when we were such children and knew so little about love; and now that we are in love so very much I know that your love is sincere in the smallest detail. I, too, have never been more sincerely true when I tell you that I love you with my whole heart and soul and self. My one aim in life was to make you love me; now my only aim in life is to make you happy. I love you, my own darling, with a tender and gentle love; you and your wishes shall ever come first with me above all else in life. You will find yourself being spoiled but you must pretend not to notice this because I want to spoil you always with all the good things of life. I have given up my whole life to you, Eileen, just as I have given you all of my love – all is for you my dearest one. I want to give you still more love but how can I do this when you have it all – there is none left in this heart of mine, since it all belongs to you.

And now about today. I heard today that the very important man who inspected us yesterday demanded that I should be given some leave and wanted to know from the C.O. why I was not given some! Little does he know that I am the fittest man in the Field Ambulance and that last Sunday I swam 3 miles! Anyhow he is a very good friend of mine and I spent New Year's Eve (last) at his home in Rawalpindi; I was very honoured that evening as I was the only young officer present at the party. I was a mere Lieutenant then and the others were Colonels and Majors of the R.A.M.C. and their wives! It was grand fun as the new year was rung in and we all danced round to the tune of Auld Lang Sang – "and ne'er forgot will be". My latest exploit, Eileen, is to saw huge felled tree trunks – I started it today but you should see my poor blistered hands now! Still it is good exercise and I never ask the men to do what I cannot do myself! The men work much better when I join them at the other end of the saw. I rushed off to town when day was done to buy some stamps for your letters, but alas I reached the Post Office at 5.30 p.m. to find it closed since 5 p.m. and so your poor letter will have to wait a whole day longer. But this will not make any difference because there is no Clipper due to leave for ages yet. We have a march tomorrow morning and I have to be up with the lark at 6 a.m.! By the way, there are no larks here!

I send my love to daddie, mummie, Eileen, Mairead, Josephine, Felix, Fergus, Hugh, and Joe (M) – even to May. Oh, how I love them all and want so much to really know them when I reach home again. Give my usual message to Frances and tell her she is making an awful mistake marrying her Roland – she should marry me instead!! Would you like to come and visit us, Eileen?? My darling, I love you so terribly much tonight and all the love of my poor heart is yours forever and ever. I could never love anyone but you, and I shall never change.

May the good God and His Holy Mother shower down their blessings upon you; may St. Joseph protect you and guide you during this month and always. All my love dearest.

Ever your loving
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,
Friday, October 3rd [1941]

Eileen, my own darling,

I have long since given up the idea of ever calling you anything but 'darling'. There was a time when I thought perhaps you might not like it and so I kept to 'dearest' for ages, but now I cannot help the change. If you could see a neat bundle of love letters tied with blue ribbon in my little case, you would know how precious each one of those 12 letters are to me – from the first one dated 29th December to the latest one dated 11th August, I love them all. Oh my own darling I do so love you so very very much tonight; I could not live unless I were loving you with my whole heart and soul. I belong to you, Eileen, and always shall; nothing can change me. You will find me loving you ever more when this war is over. I have faith in our prayers and in our good God who has been so generous and I know that He will send me safely back to you. I almost become too happy when I think of our reunion and the happiness it will bring to us. Are we not the two luckiest people in the whole world? Eileen, my dearest one, He has spoiled us with all the things in life that really matter; He has given us a love that will last forever and ever – and it is a wonderful love, so loyal and true and holy in every way. All that we ask and pray of Him is to complete our happiness by bringing us together again – He will not fail us if we ask and ask again and again. This is how I ask Him each day with this prayer (may be you know it?) "Though I have asked for a long time, still I ask Thee, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, once more to plead for me to Thy Eternal Father for a great favour. I place it in the centre of Thy broken, bleeding Heart. When covered with the crimson cloak of Thy Precious

Blood, Thy Eternal Father cannot refuse to hear, not my prayer, but Thine". My darling if we both make this daily petition to the Sacred Heart surely our prayers will be answered. I shall never grow weary of praying, I shall never grow weary of waiting for you. My only desire is to love you more and more, and make you as happy as it is possible for you to be at home. We were truly meant for each other and we cannot be really happy until we meet again. Oh, why did I have to be so incredibly stupid in the past and not have seen that you loved me. We might have been spared this awful separation and yet His way must be the best – our love is being tested and it will prove its worth; we shall love and cherish each other all the more when we meet again.

I am still awaiting some news of you, Eileen. You see I have no idea of what has happened to you since August 11th – it worries me. I pray each day for patience; waiting for letters is an awful business with me of late – the more I love you the more I look forward to your letters and long for them to come soon. Alas I am always expecting them long before they are due and that makes the time seem longer! Will you remember me each day between 2.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. – it is when I am writing to you (10 p.m.–11 p.m. here); at 3.30 p.m. I say good night to you and pray for you. I say good morning at 11.30 p.m. (my 7 a.m.) but I expect you are asleep by that time every night!

I have nothing of interest to tell you nowadays; I am doing all routine work and it is all in camp under the trees! I have not seen my Irish doctor since 19th of last month when I had breakfast with him and his 5 children! Though nothing happens to me, I am very, very happy and in wonderful form thank God. I wrote to Una this evening and also to the Wimseys of Ipoh. The latter was a grand spot and that hotel and all its comforts are now memories. That will be another town for you to look up on your map at school. We shall have grand fun poring over maps when I reach home again; you shall have to listen to my 'travel talk' for hours on end. I shall make it as interesting as possible. My own darling, you will always find me a good listener to you and all that you have got to tell me each day of our lives together – nothing can ever be too trifling for me to hear. I love you so much that the smallest things which happen in your day are very important to me and it will be an honour to hear all about them. You have got a kind and loving nature, Eileen, but I refuse to be outdone in generosity.

Good night my own darling and God bless you.

Saturday – October 4th

Saturday night and 11 p.m.! I have just come back from the men's lines having attended their weekly "show". Tonight I had almost forgotten them and sipping my after-dinner coffee when an urgent message came from the show manager inviting me to attend. I did notice that I was the only one to be invited – even the C.O. was left out! They would not be happy unless I were present to encourage them – when the show is over the manager and his players usually come to me for their weekly 'pat on the back'! I love them all, Eileen, and I treat them as children of my own. They watch me very closely all during the performance and there is great satisfaction on those faces when they see that I am enjoying myself.

Saturday evening usually brings a mail of some kind and this time I had three "letters" – one from my bank in Rawalpindi, one from the Malaya Command Paymaster, and the other from my friend Capt. John R. Frank R.A.M.C. He is still in India and doing lots of good surgery there. I had hinted in my last letter about getting married when the war is over to a very wonderful girl in Ireland – well, he was very pleased about this and wants to have a meeting arranged when that time comes; he says his wife is a wonderful girl too! It made me happy to read in his letter that his happiest days in India were spent with me in Barian (7,000 ft high) in the summer of 1940 and that he would never forget them. I have told you a little about my sojourn in the hills near Rawalpindi – so near the heat and yet so cool – but some day I shall give you a verbal account of it all. I am now making amends for the good times I had in those beloved hills of mine! I can promise you a very absorbing tale – you will hear how I met a member of The Macdermotts family of Sligo in those hills, but it is a sad story and never meant to be written in a letter. Do you know, my darling, that the more people I have met the more I have thanked the Good Lord for making me love you so much and making me true to you. I shall always love you Eileen – that is the one thing I can be sure of in my life. It is part of me and part of my nature to love you and so it shall go on as long as I have a nature and as long as I am alive. I have been yours from the first and I shall always be yours. If there is ever anything I can do to make you happier at any time never be afraid of asking me; we are in love with each other and so we shall be natural with each other and never hesitate about asking anything. You know that I would do anything for you my darling, that I would sacrifice anything for your sweet sake and consider it nothing. That is the beauty of true love – it makes me want to give and keep on giving without pausing to think. That is why I did not pause to think before sending you about 100 snaps that had absolutely no meaning to you – however they will have some meaning one day when I give you their history! At the time I imagined I was sending you something very precious! You were so disappointed in your early letters when no snaps or photographs of me was arriving. Please God the snaps you wanted have arrived – I know the photo reached you alright. I am now awaiting your photograph even though you have not told me yet that it has been sent. You may be sure that your snaps

have many loving looks cast at them daily. Do you remember writing a letter on the back of one? Well, my darling, that snap and those words of love and devotion on the back bring me great joy each time I see them – they make life worth living and make me realise that there is not another girl in the world like you. This evening I was reading your letters once more and oh how they make me love you and want to love you more and more. This morning I spent 5 hours checking up on the men's kit – imagine, I, a doctor wasting precious time on such things! That's a good enough reason for wanting to leave the army when the war has ended!

May God and Our Blessed Lady watch over you this night.

Sunday – October 5th

My own dearest one, this is always my happiest day of the week, but somehow today I was exceptionally happy. When I reach home again and you begin introducing me to all your dear ones, you should say "Meet the world's happiest man – Frank Murray!" If we are so happy now, Eileen, what will it be like when we meet again, and even when our first meeting is over and we have a lifetime of such happiness stretching out ahead of us. As I sit here in my home of wood in the woods I can hear a bugle sounding the 'Good Night' call and it re-echoes in my heart for you as I look at your smiling face beside me.

It was raining when we set off on our usual Sunday picnic – this week there were only four of us. The sun did not show its face today at all and so it was quite cool when we reached the beach. My first glimpse of the sea always gives me a great thrill; it looked much more like my Atlantic – huge waves were crashing down on the shore, it was drizzling rain and there was some mist to add to the beauty of it all. It was all so wild and free – that's what I loved about the sea today. Needless to say I was in the water before the others were half undressed! I discovered a real "Treasure Island" lagoon along the beach just beyond a rocky headland. I swam out of the lagoon, around the 'point' and joined the others about ½ mile along the beach; it was my best swim so far. I kept as near to the shore as possible lest you be worried about me, but you must never worry about my sea bathing because I could swim all day and never feel tired! You may guess how fresh I felt after my swim today when I tell you that I ran at full speed along the shore for ½ mile to look for one of the officers who had gone searching for me among the rocks. We did not have the usual after-lunch rest today as it was raining a little, but coming back in the car I said my Rosary as I promised you I would. I have never prayed as fervently as I did today – for you, my darling, for our own dear ones at home, and for our future happiness together. There is a lovely moon among the trees tonight – that made me think of Him Who had made all this beauty and I asked Him to keep our love always a thing of beauty and goodness. I read our Mass with you today and that brought me even nearer to you than before. Some day I shall tell you all the little things that I do each day and then you will have some idea of how much I love and adore you. You are still upon the same pedestal as I placed you upon many years ago and there you shall always remain. My darling, I do not want you to change in any way; you will not have to strive hard to make me happy, just be your own natural self – that will always make me so very happy. If only I could tell you how much I love you and how much I yearn to see you again. That big day will come soon please God and we shall know happiness that we have never dreamt of before.

Please do not work too hard at school, Eileen. I know you so well; you put all your heart and soul into whatever you are doing and you are inclined more to overwork than underwork! Be careful, my darling, because you are very, very precious to me – there I go being selfish again. I would rather a thousand times that I were ill instead of you; the very thought of you being ill hurts too much to even consider it. I hope you are keeping up your golf this winter and having plenty of fresh air; do not spend very long over writing to me, I am not worth the trouble! Do you remember last term when you sat up in bed and wrote me a long letter while you had a most awful cold? You must never do things like that again. And now my 'lecture' is ended for tonight. Tomorrow may bring you a more lengthy one! Good night my own darling and God bless you.

Monday – October 6th

Eileen dear, it is only a week ago since your last letter arrived and yet it seems like a month to me. If I did not love you quite so much as I do, this would not be so; but I am glad that I love you so much and I want to love you more and more no matter how much it may hurt. We can never love each other enough; we shall need it all during life together. Some people think it is madness to give one's all when one is in love in case something should happen which would bring awful suffering afterwards, but my darling, we were not made that way – we have to give all to each other because we know in our hearts that nothing will happen to mar our love, because we trust each other blindly and because we treat our good God and know that He will answer our prayers. Will you remember, Eileen, that no matter how long I may have to wait for you, I shall love you more each day. Do not consider my daily letter a sign that I love you a terrible lot. My letters are not real letters they are only thoughts and longings and dreams of my daily life; I just jot them down any old way and hence poor Eileen sits down to read a jumble of confusing words and phrases! I had a very wonderful dream last night about you. I dreamt that it was the eve of

our wedding and oh we were so happy and excited about our big day. Later I saw us both at our home in "Beechwood" and there we lived in a paradise of our own. I love to dream of you, Eileen, because it is always a happy dream. I spend my whole day thinking of you and write to you just before bed time – it makes a dream of you almost inevitable!

I had a beautiful present today of a perfect Malacca walking stick. An Indian Captain gave it to me this morning and I felt ashamed taking it because I had done nothing to deserve it. He is the M.O. of the local regiment and one of the nicest chaps I have ever met in my life. You do understand my dearest that there are so many things I want to tell you about India and Indians but as they are all private opinions they must not be written on paper during a war. An old Jamedar gave me a long jungle stick today (for rough country); it has a brass mounting at each end. It is the kind thoughts behind these gifts that mean so much to me. I was very, very flattered yesterday to hear another Indian officer say that I was the only Christian in the station! He meant this as a great compliment he stated! I cannot explain here what he meant by this, but you may infer a lot and wait till the war is over to hear the true explanation. I still see the good God in every man, whether he is black or white. My own darling, you will never know how lucky I am in having you and your love with me in Malaya; I am so very happy and yet others are not so happy. I sat down to dinner tonight opposite a Major; we had the table to ourselves and so he spoke his feelings. He suddenly looked up from his soup and exclaimed "I can't stand it much longer!" When I enquired "What?", he replied "This life – where the only thing to do is to go out and get drunk!" Now, my darling, do you realise what your love means to me – I haven't even got time to think of my surroundings! The major later enquired if I were writing a book! He sees me every evening after dinner in my room writing to you as he passes by!! It should have been a dull day, today in camp, but thank God I had not a dull moment since I got up this morning. We had a grand lecture this evening from the Malayan Medical Specialist. It was my first link with real medicine for years and it was like a breath of fresh air to me.

My darling, I must go to bed now! Good night and God bless you.

Tuesday – October 7th

Eileen, my dearest, I am ashamed of my letters nowadays; there is nothing of interest to tell you about my life here – no adventures in the jungle, no leeches, no camping out, no tennis duels! Do you find that when a letter arrives at Omagh from someone who loves you very much, you can sit down and write page after page – that's how I feel when your letters come to Malaya. I have noticed this about your letters, Eileen; thank God you are natural. Then as the weeks pass by and we watch the post in vain each day for a letter that never seems to come quickly enough we do not feel like writing quite so much. While I am in my present station with so little happening, poor you are getting the worst of the exchanges – because I have absolutely nothing to tell you except that I love you and that I shall love you till I die. My darling, what would we do if we had no letters from each other. I could not live without your letters, Eileen. A letter from you arrives and when I have read it I feel so very, very happy; I read it over and over again and feel even happier. Then I live from day to day again and look forward to your next epistle. Every evening you will find me from 5–7 p.m. in the Mess pretending to read the paper – in reality I am watching a little pathway down which I hope to see the postal orderly approaching with a bundle of letters. When he appears I can meet him and carefully look for a certain letter which means so much to me and my heart. When I am disappointed I say to myself that one must come the following day, and then my vigil begins anew! Today there was no post at all, but I am sure of a letter from my beloved tomorrow. You see, my dearest one, you have been back at school for a whole month (and more) and I still do not know what happened to you in Killough from August 11th onwards! It must be that awful Bombay address which I was forced to give you and yet, if I had not written that address on the back of my letters to you, you would never have received them at all. I am in the Army and so I must do as the Army orders, else my letters are burned! I can never give you an exact address while the war is in progress – "Malaya" is really very accurate! Oh, for peace again when my letters would reach you in 9 days by air mail via France – and I feel in my heart that peace is fast approaching.

Another very routine day in camp. This has been the hottest and stickiest day so far. At this time of the year it usually rains every day and that keeps the temperature down; also it only makes more steam when the sun comes out. I have thought of you even more today and loved you even more too – still I can never love you enough. I have been happy in spite of my usual disappointment this evening – no letter; and my prayers seem to increase daily for you and your safety and happiness. You know that your happiness is my one aim in life and for that I am willing to sacrifice anything and do everything. I have been thinking of Christmas again and what it will be like at Killough when your dear ones all meet again. Will you remember me when the turkey comes round; will you remember my empty place beside you? I know you will not forget the important thing – to pray very hard on Christmas morn' to the Divine Infant for me. I have an idea Christmas will be a dull affair here. Will you understand, my dearest one, if you do not receive a card this year from me – they are not obtainable in these parts

of the wilderness! A greeting card last year helped to bring us together again; when I sent my love to you then, I had not received any word from you at all.

Good night and may God bless you and keep you, Eileen.

Wednesday, October 8th

I have made this a seven-day epistle in case I had some news from you today, my dearest one, but alas nothing has come! A "Clipper" arrived in Singapore last Saturday and it was 6 days late, as it ran into a storm en route and damaged a propellor. If there was a letter on board from you, my darling, then it had a narrow escape; it would be awful to lose even a single letter. All the letters which you mentioned having written to me up to August 11th have been received. Do you remember the air mail post card you sent me which took 10 weeks to reach me – well I have discovered that that special post-card service is only applicable to the Middle East forces, but in the very near future it will include Malaya too. I shall send you a card immediately it comes into operation.

I was watching the post today as usual and my heart gave a leap when I saw the orderly coming with a load of letters; I said a quick prayer to the Sacred Heart beseeching Him to send me a letter from you. Yet when I found there was nothing for me, I thanked Him just the same and asked for one tomorrow! It is good for me to keep looking forward from day to day; disappointments never discourage me and I always offer them up to God. I have been working harder than usual today and so I was "dripping" when day was done at 5 p.m. All the surgical instruments had a thorough polish up today and all my equipment inspected – not to mention camp work, drill, and ambulance routine. I wrote to my friend Capt. Frank F.R.C.S. in India and told him about "us"; you will like him, Eileen, when you meet him after the war – he is so straight and sincere and good in every way. He is one of the few good men I have met since leaving home; I sent you a snap of him that must have reached you by this time. I shall write soon to one of my priest friends in Kuala Lumpur and find out the address of the Little Sisters of the Poor; I want to write to them and tell them about Mattie, and how I am connected with her. I also want to send them something for Christmas.

My C.O. asked me for the last time to reconsider my decision and go off to the hills at Christmas with him, but I assured him that I just could not go on leave, that I did not need any leave and that I was the fittest man in camp. Still he insists that I must have a holiday some time soon! One thing I must do on Christmas Day and that is go to Mass – it will mean a journey of 250 miles; that's all the leave that I need! Father Girard has promised to say Mass here on December 21st.

And now you have my long letter almost read and I am sorry about it, Eileen – there is so little in it and yet there is so much. There is so much love in these pages and in the heart that sends this love to you. I am sending you all my love and all my heart, they belong to you and I belong to you. I am all yours for ever and ever; I only want "to give all and do all" to make you happy, my own darling. I want you to be the happiest wife in the whole world and nothing can stop me from achieving this. I just cannot love you any more than I do this night. I pray without ceasing that God may end this war soon and send me back to you; I ask Him each day to bless us and our love that it may ever be pleasing to Him. I do not forget any of your dear ones in my prayers. Is end them all my love. If you should meet anyone from 'Beechwood' in your travels give them my love too and tell them that I am happy and well.

May our Good God pour down His choicest blessings upon you; may Mary, our Mother protect you under Her mantle of blue.

All my love, Eileen.

Ever your loving
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Base Postal Depot,
Bombay,
Thursday, 9th October [1941]

Eileen, my own darling,

I am still waiting for a letter or a telegram saying that all is well with you. You see I do not know what has happened to you since August 11th and it is very worrying – and if you are the world's worst when it comes to worrying, then I am a good second! I am still writing to you every day and sending the usual 6 or 7 day diary off by "clipper". You will be glad to hear that the Clipper Air Mail will leave Singapore at weekly intervals starting on 15th of this month. This means that my letters to you will not be delayed in Malaya – I am sure some

letters were delayed about 2 weeks here waiting for the next mail plane. All your letters have reached me, thank God, and I hope and pray that mine are reaching you too. It is the happiest part of my day when I am writing to you and yet I am always happy because I love you and have got your love. My own darling, I could not live without your love now that I have found it – I could not live without you, my Eileen. You mean everything to me and I would rather die than hurt you in the smallest thing. If I have unknowingly hurt you in any way in my letters I am very sorry, my dearest one; I have never meant to hurt you. I have only meant to make you happy – that is my life's ambition and if I succeed in that, then I shall be so very happy too. I have given you all my love and yet I am only beginning to love you.

I sent you a 14 page letter this morning and oh it was an awful letter – so depressing and uninteresting. Nothing ever happens nowadays and so you will find my letters very dull! This afternoon I went to “town” to examine troops medically and while there I was caught in a terrific thunderstorm. There has been real tropical rain for the past 5 hours; I had the full ‘benefit’ of it all as I sat in my open, windowless truck – I was wet through and through. However when I reached home I had a change immediately and felt grand after dinner. I have prayed harder today than ever before for you my darling. I have asked Him over and over again to send me one of your letters and if not soon, to give me patience to wait until it comes. As the days roll by and I love you more and more, I find the waiting much harder – it is a very hard “act” each day which I offer up for our intentions. Thank heavens I am going out tomorrow on a scheme which will last all day long – It will be interesting and a change from the very boring camp routine. I am sitting here half-asleep and trying to keep my eyes open while writing to my best girl – my only girl! It is only 10 p.m. but I am finished for the night! May God bless you, my darling and keep you safe.

Friday October 10th

It is midnight and I have just returned from my first whole day out of camp! I am not too weary to tell you that I love you with all my heart and soul. You have all my love and you will always have it – I want to give you so much more, Eileen; I shall never be satisfied that I have given you enough or that I have done enough for you. I have loved and adored you ever since I first met you – my love “grew up” with me, but never did I dream that I could ever love you as much as I do today. It is the only thing in my life which matters – you are the only person in my life who matters. I do love my dear ones at home and I like to have letters from them, but my darling, it is your letters and your love that I am ever looking out for – awaiting them day by day as if my life depended on the next letter! Is it very wrong to place you before all others, to think only of you, and love you above all others. My life does depend upon you, because without you I would not be living in the true sense of the word – I would have no reason for living. I have as many things to tell you when we meet again; my dreams and hopes and my love – things that letters can never really express. When I think of the happiness that lies ahead of us, Eileen, I can never grow tired of life in Malaya. I haven't had a letter from you for 2 weeks, but surely one must come today. I have sent you four telegrams in the past 2 months and no reply has come yet, my darling. I know that all this delay is not due to you, but to the stupid address which we are compelled to use. It is no secret that every officer in Malaya is moving heaven and earth to have our address changed back again to the simple “Malaya” one. It is awful to think that any letter sent by you via “Clipper” must first go to Bombay and then be sent to me by sea-mail; the same thing happens to telegrams. It just makes me furious to think about it! Did I tell you that each officer now censors his own letters nowadays – so that the only person who ever reads my letters to you is myself.

And now I must tell you about what has happened today and why I have been so late. I have been out on the beach from early morning until 7 p.m. (darkness) – it is not work for me but grand fun. It was hot and sticky and there was not a ripple on the sea – and though the sun did not come out once I found my arms very burnt (red!). I did manage to snatch 5 minutes rest away from the cares of state and have a quick dip in the sea, but even that was not very refreshing and I continued to ‘dip’. Later I did not have time to sit down and have lunch under a palm tree, but hastily ate my sandwiches while dashing along the shore in my lorry load of “casualties”! And all this time I visualized you sleeping peacefully in bed at home in Ireland, where everything is so green, and fresh and cool. My darling, “... none can compare with my Dark Rosaleen”; may be you found that out in your travels, as I have. I would not live outside Ireland for all the money in the world. The longer I live the more I love you, Eileen, and my religion and my country. Many people at home will find it hard to understand why I am in this war at all – I may even have made enemies over this matter, but I only did what I thought the right thing. However it is not good to write about this – we shall talk of it instead.

Before setting out this morning, Major Dave (my successor) invited the C.O. and myself to dinner at his house in town this evening when our “scheme” would have finished. We accepted and brought a change of clothing in the car. There are two families at his town house – his own children (he got a divorce recently) and another lady and her children (he hopes to marry this lady). Anyhow it is all too complicated for me and should not be written about. Remind me to tell you something about it when I reach home – it's not worth the trouble! My darling, all

I can say about my evening is that I thank God that I love you; Eileen, I never want a home like the one I saw this evening and I know we will not have such a one. I do not want to be critical or unfair or uncharitable; perhaps everyone has different ideas about home and happiness. I did my best however to keep a very uninteresting conversation going; we had Martin McCall as our subject for a long time as the lady came out to Malaya on the same boat as he! I have told you that he is now District Prosecutor in Kuala Lumpur and is a very important man. Our evening broke up at 11 p.m. and soon we were under way in Major Dave's car. We had the usual "mass air attacks" by mosquitoes at the Ferry! Good night my own darling and God bless you.

Saturday – October 11th

Another late night! It is 11.30 p.m. and the Saturday night show is over at last and I can write to you, my darling, and pour out my heart and my troubles(?) to you. I have been on duty all day, otherwise I would have been playing in the hockey match in "town" against the local Chinese – we lost by 2-0 (not because I was not playing!). It is now a sort of duty with me to attend the men's "show" on Saturday nights – they would be very hurt if I did not put in an appearance. The first half of the show was washed out by a typical Malay thunderstorm but immediately the stars appeared in the heavens again at 9 p.m. the cry went up "on with the show!" So I allowed them to perform from 9 till 11 p.m. You would laugh at the open air theatre – a few planks for a stage, a few lamps for lighting, and a few sheets and blankets as screens! They had the usual maharajah and his maharani in the drama – tonight the former lost his wife to a very skilled archer who shot a fish out of the sky! They were all armed with bows and arrows and had a paper fish perched on top of a long pole!

I made a wonderful discovery today as orderly medical officer. I found out that I can stitch a wound better than ever, even though I have not done any surgery or medicine since joining this Field Ambulance 10 months ago! One of the men had a deep wound over his eyebrow and I did the job with my eyes shut (almost) – said he callously! The men had not seen me "perform" as yet and were quite surprised when I elected to do the job instead of giving it to an assistant doctor. I had feared that I might have lost my touch but thank God I haven't. My darling, you will have to assist me one day when I have small surgery jobs to do – will you be terribly afraid, or will you be a very capable assistant. Of Eileen I know you so well and know that you will be a grand help to me, but you know that I shall never ask you to work at all – I love you so very much. You will be a very wonderful wife to me and I know in my heart that you will not live to regret marrying me or loving me. Our love is natural – it is sincere and good and true, and God and His Blessed Mother will always keep it so if we pray hard to them. Our home will be a scared place and the Sacred Heart will watch over it always and He shall reign therein always. We shall lead a simple life together; we shall ever try to imitate our parents who are good, honest people – there was nothing artificial in their lives. My own darling, no matter what trial we may have to face in our future married life, you will always find me by your side doing everything in my power to help. You know so well, Eileen, that we could face anything that God may send us – we have got prayer, a true love, and we have got each other.

I was expecting a letter from my best girl today, but alas I was disappointed. It is much better to go on hoping and being disappointed than to lose hope and never have disappointments. Malayan papers are grand – they can tell me the exact date of departure and arrival in London of my "Clipper" letters to you. Today I read that the mail plane leaving Singapore on September 9th delivered letters in London on October 2nd; then I calculate that you received my letters a few days later. You should have two letters by the next plane which leaves on Thursday next.

I have heaps of work tomorrow morning examining troops near the beach. I shall set out at 8.30 a.m. in my small Austin, with a stethoscope and bathing things behind! I am to join the usual pic-nic party on the beach later in the morning – at least I shall have earned my dip. It is past midnight, young woman, and I have to get some sleep! You are a terrible girl to keep me out of bed. Good night & God bless you, Eileen.

Sunday – October 12th

My very own darling, I am going off to bed tonight happier and more contented than I have been for weeks – and as usual only you could bring me such happiness. Your express telegram arrived today; it must have taken at least 3 weeks to reach me! I have no idea of when you actually sent it but it was headed "Bombay, 27/9/41"! My darling, I think that it is an awful scandal that express telegrams should take so very long to reach their destination; my C.O. is going to lodge a complaint if that will help. However that is poor compensation for the weeks of suspense and worry I have had over that telegram. Now that I know you are well and still love me I am not angry about the delay – in fact – in fact I think the postal people (army) are simply grand!! You told me that rings were expensive and the selection poor, that you wanted me to buy a nice ring in the East and that you would wear a signet ring until I came home. I am so sorry, Eileen, that you have not yet got our ring but I promise you that before very long you will be wearing it; I could never allow you to wait until the war is over. My plans about it all must remain a secret until I actually know that a ring is being sent to you from 'somewhere'. The ring will be your choice and

mine, Eileen, and we shall always treasure it. Tell me all about the signet ring, how you wear it, and whence it came. It is a ring which is a symbol of our love and I love it too. However, I shall not rest until a gold diamond ring is upon your finger and please God you will not have long to wait. You can never know how happy it will make me when I hear from you that the engagement ring has arrived and that you are wearing it.

I read in the papers today that the new "airgraph" postal service will be operating in Malaya within two months time. A 200 word letter is written on a special card, this is photographed, the negative is made very minute; the latter is sent by plane all the way to England, the negative is developed and printed, put in an envelope and sent to Spring Villa. The service is one-way only and you will not be able to send any airgraphs to me. It does not appeal to me very much; it is all so mechanized and by the time it reaches you, Eileen, will have lost its personal touch which the original letter had. What I mean is that a photograph of a letter is not quite the same as the letter itself. I shall send you an occasional airgraph, Eileen, but my daily Clipper letters will continue as usual. To remind you that you must never send a telegram or letter to my Bombay address! If you send them to Malaya the postal people cannot refuse to deliver them to me, even though they know that the address is wrong (technically!).

I was up with the lark this morning and soon I was heading for the beach in my small Austin. I reached the camp at 10 a.m., examined about 50 men and my day's work was over at 11 a.m.! It was my usual happy Sunday and as I sped along the sands I was thinking how good God had been to me. Arrived at our usual bathing spot about 2 hours before the others were due, I could not wait so long and watch that lovely sea. I swam out of my Treasure Island lagoon and away around by the rocks parallel to the shore for about 3 miles; the sea gulls could not quite make out who I was and they circled around and shrieked with excitement. The native Malays collected on the shore to watch the strange sight of a man swimming in the water. The swim was grand but alas in the tropics when one gets out of the water one immediately starts to drip, and we sat down to lunch. After lunch I prayed with you too on my way home when a very old Malay man held a very lovely baby up in his arms and helped it to give me a very smart salute as I passed by; I smiled and returned the honour with a salutation. The small boys always recognize me and hail me from their campongs; their shouts of joy are real music to me. Tonight the others have gone out to the village to see a film at the local show house – it is a native Filipino film and when I read the advertising circular, I decided not to go, in spite of the C.O.'s entreaties. I would rather sit here and write to you than see all the films in the world – and tonight's show is not good. The C.O. still thinks that I must go on leave soon; his contention is that no matter how fit I am, I need to get away from work and all thoughts of it. Little does he know that I am very happy at my work and that my thoughts are usually in far off Ireland with you, my dearest one. Good night and God bless you Eileen.

Monday – October 13th

My darling, as this letter much reach Singapore on Thursday I have to send it off tomorrow morning at the latest – so you will not have the usual 14-pages! But some kind of letter is better than none at all, therefore you shall not be kept waiting. The new weekly 'Clipper' service from Singapore is a Godsend to us and I shall never miss it as long as I am in Malaya, and as long as I love you – and that means forever and ever. My only regret now is that I can never love you enough even though I have given you my all.

I must tell you all about a very wonderful letter I had from my little Malay priest this evening. I had written to him thanking him for the crucifix and told him that my Irish colleen would pray for him. His first thought is a Christmas present for you, Eileen, and he has arranged it all for me already! He had bought some silver Malayan souvenirs or keep-sakes for his own people, but he wants to send some of them to you from me with my notes inside. Poor man thinks it will reach home in time, but I know otherwise – it will be in 1942 at least! The parcel will contain – "1 Kelantan silver paper knife; 1 dress fob for ladies; 1 beautiful Rosary". I should not have told you the contents but I cannot help it now; so you can start looking forward to January 1942 and this parcel from Malaya. I only hope that you will not have to pay any duty on the articles and that it will arrive safely.

I sat down and wrote a letter of thanks to this grand little priest (Fr. Ashness); promised him lots of prayers from us both. He wants to pay for your present but of course I won't hear of it at all and told him so. I shall meet him in Kuala Lumpur on Christmas Day as I shall be at Mass in his Church of St. Anthony there. I know that you will write to him, Eileen, and thank him when that precious parcel arrives; his address is "Rev. L. D. Ashness, Church of St. Anthony, Kuala Lumpur, Federated Malay States". My darling, have you ever know anyone so thoughtful and good as this little man; he knew that it would bring us both happiness. I have always wanted to send you something from Malaya itself; but I could never find anything decent in the small towns and villages to which I have gone. And now Fr. Ashness will put me in the 'know' and I shall buy lots of curios for you – native Malay wood carvings are marvelous & I have seen them in some houses. It would be awful if I were to leave Malaya without bringing you something from this country of beauty.

I have written to Singapore for Maurice Welsh's latest book "Thomasheen James" and when I have read it, shall send it on to you. I have also written for a copy of "Life" (dated 21st July) which is entirely devoted to articles

on Singapore – there are some very good pictures in it. I must not leave Malaya without visiting Singapore – remind me to visit it sometime! We may even see it together one of these days! I was a bit homesick this evening when a record of “My Dark Rosaleen” was played by special request from London in response to an Irish lady’s request (India). It is my favourite song and I know that you love it too, Eileen. By the way a radio in Malaya can be very fascinating as there are so many countries all around – I know the difference already between Chinese, Malay, Hindustani, Thai etc. Have you ever sat in your verandah having tea and watched the “flying lizards” gliding from tree to tree?? Well, I did this evening! Have you ever sat writing to your best boy at 11.40 p.m. in the tropics, while it rained a tropical rain outside and thousands of mosquitoes kept up a continuous barrage?? Well, that’s how I am writing to you now, my darling! It has been a quiet day and I was glad when 4 o’clock came and work was done. It is so much better to be out of camp but alas that cannot be done every day. It is you and your love and prayers that keep me alive, Eileen, and without them I would be lost. I am expecting a letter from you in the near future but I know that it will take time before your “Bombay letters” begin to arrive. I am sorry about this short letter, but you will have a long one next time to compensate.

My own darling, I must tell you again that I love you with my whole heart and soul. I belong to you Eileen; I always have been yours and I always shall. Nothing can ever change me – the longer I have to wait for you, the more I shall love you. Sometimes I think it is unfair and selfish of me to ask you to wait for me, and yet I know that you love me and that you have promised to wait. My own darling, how can I ever hope to love you enough or give you enough in return for such loyalty and devotion.

May God bless you, Eileen, and may Our Blessed Lady protect you now and always. All my love, darling.

Ever your loving

Frank.

P.S. Do not be disappointed with the blank page, Eileen, it is only a 5 day letter and already you have a page extra!

Give my love to all at home – Spring Villa, Killough, & Beechwood. Tell me about them all when you write again.

Ever and ever yours,

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Tuesday, 14th October [1941]

Eileen my own darling,

Do you think it possible for me to love you more than I do tonight? I have given you all the love that is within me, I have prayed and asked the good God to make me love you even more, I have thought of so many ways of showing you how very much I love you – and still I want to give you more love and more affection than I have ever given you before. You are more precious to me now than you have ever been. Is it selfish of me to want your love always – never to lose you or your love; my darling they mean everything to me. Oh, my Eileen, please love me always – I need you so very much; you are my life and I live only for you. I know that I am not good enough for you, but try to overlook my faults and forgive me for hurting you in the past such a lot. If Our Lord should ask us to wait for each other for years, then I shall wait patiently and endure anything He may want me to endure – all I need is your love and your prayers. Waiting can be so tedious at times, but thanks to you my waiting has been made easy. If I were to describe a typical day of mine in Malaya at present you would exclaim, “How very monotonous and boring it must be”. But, my darling, if I were to tell you of all the wonderful thoughts I have of you and how my heart sings all day long, you would realise that my day is full of happiness and not a bit dull.

My address is still the same as I have mentioned to you before. It is now over 2 weeks since your last letter reached me, but I think the delay is due to the Bombay address which I had to give you – and still must give you (officially!). I have come to the conclusion that telegrams are a waste of money! Your last one took 3 weeks to reach me, but even so it was worth a million pounds to me because I was so worried about you. So in future when I feel like sending you a telegram I shall sit down and write you a special “Clipper” letter which will reach you just as soon as a cable would! I travelled 22 miles specially for you today, Eileen, and sent you a cable about our ring and bought stamps for your letters! You see, my darling, it is always you all day long and nothing but you. I posted a short Clipper letter to you this morning; it was only 11 pages but it had to be sent today to catch the ‘plane at

Singapore on Thursday next. This letter should be a longer one but I cannot promise anything yet as another Clipper may leave soon again – it is a weekly service now.

I had a glorious walk this morning in the woods. I went out in search of my stretcher bearers and somehow lost them – for which I was thankful, in a way! It was so cool and fresh after the usual rains, that I imagined I was at home again in Ireland and was walking with you. My thoughts always turn to you when I see trees – and I see them all the day – and I begin to sing our song “I want to carve your name on every tree”. I reached the main road eventually and many lorry drivers were feeling sorry for me walking, but I was too happy with you to want a lift. I went to the village at 4 p.m. and just reached the Post Office before it closed at 5 p.m. – in time to send your cable. My good friends the Ferry coolies squeezed my small car on the ferry even though it was already overloaded. My driver said that he dreamed last night that I was a Colonel; but my darling, an Indian sepoy can make dreams when it suits him! I am never deceived by flattery – I would rather hear my faults. A simple thing can make me happy; today a little Malay boy smiled for me and waved his hand – that means much to me and it always will. I am going off now to dream of you and our future happiness together. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Wednesday – October 15th

It has been a hot, dull day in camp and nothing happened! Still no letter from my best girl – and I have been watching for one all the evening. I know it will be ages before your “Bombay” letters begin to arrive and so I have to be resigned to wait. As time goes by I need your letters more and more, and never a day passes without me spending a couple of hours on the look out for one. Do you think me very greedy wanting to have letters every day from you – how I wish there was a daily letter service, then you would have my daily epistle. You see, my darling, I now love you such a terrible lot that my whole life is you. No matter what I am doing, no matter where I may be, it is always you and you alone I think of. As I listened to the London news at 8.30 p.m. this evening, I wished with all my heart that I could change places with that announcer so that I could be near to you. It was 2 p.m. at Omagh and I saw you standing before your geography class – then I wished that I could be there and speak to you just for a moment. How I envy the good nuns, your pupils, your friends at Omagh who can see you every moment of every day and speak to you when they wish. Do they appreciate you, Eileen, and do they realise that there is someone in far off Malaya who would do anything and give anything to see their geography teacher just for one moment? Do they realise that there is someone in the Far East who has known and loved you since you were a schoolgirl and who loves you now as no woman has ever been loved before? My own darling, there never was a love like ours; there never has been such happiness to compare with ours – and it has not begun yet. Think of the joy we shall know very soon when we meet again. All this suspense and everlasting waiting will come to an end and be quickly forgotten – we shall not have time to think of it. I hope you have told everybody about us by this time and that the whole world knows about our engagement. I am longing to hear what has happened at home to you since August 11th when you wrote to me from Killough telling me of your visit to ‘Beechwood’, and meeting father and Anne there. I want to hear all about school, about your life in Omagh, your golf and your dances and your black evening frock and your divorcee outfit! I want to know how often you can manage week-ends in Belfast and Killough. My darling, please continue to take good care of yourself – especially about sleeping in Belfast – I would rather you did not spend a single night there, unless you cannot avoid it. You are very dear to me, Eileen, much dearer than all my family at home and anyone else in the world; I would rather give my life a million times over than have you here. I do not even drive a lorry unless I have to because it is dangerous in these parts. The good God has given me wonderful health since I came to Malaya and good health is a rarity in these climes!

Have you sent me the photograph yet, Eileen? I am longing to see it and put it in its place of honour on the small table at my bedside where I can see you morning, noon, and night, and speak to you. Do you remember promising to send me your bridesmaid photograph which was to be taken at Felix’s wedding? Alas I cannot write to you about weddings and dances; I can only tell you of my life in camp which is not exciting and I can tell you about my love – you must be weary reading all the love I send in my letters. You must have wonderful patience to read my letters at all, but love is blind and lovers do not see! I have been very happy this day and have prayed so hard for you, Eileen. Good night and God bless you.

Thursday – October 16th (Malaya)

I have been thinking today that if I were ever shipwrecked on a desert island and left there for many years, that I would love you even more when it would all be ended. I would be happy all the day long and never find life boring for a moment. Well, my darling, I have been “shipwrecked” in Malaya and very far away from you, but I love you more tonight than I ever dreamed I would be capable of loving any one. And yet that is so little to give you in comparison with all that you have given me. If you had only made me half as happy as I now am, all that I can give you would never be enough. You know that everything I have is yours – myself, my love, and my prayers all

belong to you and always shall. How I hope and pray that these very dull letters may bring you some happiness however small. The greatest sacrifice I would glad make if only it could give you some pleasure – I would gladly do without your letters in order that my letter could reach you safely and make you happy. You could not ask a greater sacrifice of me at this moment because I live for your letters and the many hours and days of happiness that they bring to me.

Eileen, you will not recognize me when I return home to you, I am so very browned with the sun! I discovered that the only patch of white skin which I now possess is under my watch! Yet I am sure that by the time you meet me at Southampton I shall have lost all my bronzed colour and really be a white man again. Oh, my own darling, if you only knew how often I think of that wonderful day and how I long for it to come. I am like you in that I cannot see very far ahead of that day – I can only see us meeting at Southampton and being married at home soon afterwards. We shall be so very, very happy together, Eileen, because we were meant for each other. I am storming the heavens with my daily prayers that He may send peace soon and bring us safely together again. I never forget to thank God for all that He has given to us already, and then I begin asking for more favours. Surely He could never allow anything to happen which would prevent us meeting again – that would be an awful cross to ask us to bear. I know that we shall meet again because I trust in God and have great faith in prayer. Have you ever noticed that the important thing about our love is that it makes us pray harder the more we love each other. It will always be the same throughout our lives, Eileen; prayer will ever be the mainstay of our love and our married life together. We know that this will always bring us happiness.

The war drags on and the Germans are approaching Moscow, but still I have got faith and believe that it will end this year – Pius X will never let us down. Things are looking black in the Far East again, but Japan has missed the boat this time. The amazing strength of Singapore and Malaya are very discouraging to the Japs. I have had my usual day in camp with the men but it has been a happy one (as usual). I have been out in very heavy rain just now having a look around the camp as I am on duty today; I wear a macintosh and use a parasol in the rain and even that is not enough to keep out the tropical downpour. My C.O. is happy now as he has found someone to accompany him on leave at Christmas to the hills – so now I can rest in peace! The “Maurice Walsh” book has not arrived yet but it should come tomorrow at the latest. I am reading a book on flying at present; I do not intend to ever fly, but the knowledge may be useful some time if I have to fly! I am actually studying medicine from an old book which I found in the camp hospital – believe me it is a pleasure to read it. I have a big show on tomorrow in camp and must have a few hours sleep, young woman. Why must you keep me out of bed so much – I lose an enormous amount of beauty sleep due to you! God bless you, Eileen, and good night. May the angels watch over you.

Friday – October 17th

My own darling, do not expect much from me this night of rain and storm – I have been wearing a steel helmet all the day long and that gives one a “head”! I had my men doing their stuff today and as usual they put up a good show, thank heavens. I never want to shine at any of these manoeuvres – I only want to excel myself in loving you, Eileen; nothing else matters. I do my best always no matter what it may be but when it comes to loving you my best is not good enough, and I want to love you better.

My “friend” Thomasheen James” arrived today and I received him with open arms! Already I have delved well into this grand book and I know this man-of-no-work very well indeed. It has made me a bit homesick but oh it is wonderful to be in Ireland again – if only in a book and hear the rich brogue and laugh at the ready wit of the Irish. I shall read it quickly and send it off to you immediately. Did you know that my third reason for loving you is because you are Irish – the first is because of yourself and everything that you are and the second is because you are a good Catholic? Are these very strange reasons, my darling? Anyhow, they have made me love you as a man has never loved before and I am so very proud to love you. You can never know the honour you have paid me in giving me your love – there are others who would give anything to have your love. Why did you pick such a hopeless chap as I am? I shall never quite understand it and yet I have been wanting you to love me for so many years. My darling, no matter how long I may live I shall love you always and never anyone but you – always remember this even though things may not be going well. God will give us the grace to be patient and will not allow us to suffer this awful separation much longer. Should the waiting be long, we can find comfort in the fact that our love is daily growing stronger and deeper and more true than ever before.

I told you yesterday that I would never fly and now today I have been informed that it will be compulsory for each officer to have a trip in a large bomber for several hours while on reconnaissance in the near future. It will be a thrilling experience, Eileen, but I promise to go up only once, even though I can go up as often as I like. Haven't you ever wanted to have a trip in a bomber? Another semi-compulsory item is leave, but I continue to hold out against this for many reasons which I cannot well explain here; besides it would not serve any useful purpose to tell you about it. How would you like to be forced to have a holiday at Killough just now in mid-term

– it would be awful!! I have been thinking that Killough must be a cold spot in the winter, but I love the sea just as much in winter as in summer. That reminds me to tell you that two sharks were seen quite near to the shore today – at least that is the officer's story. The China Sea must be full of these monsters of the deep – that will make me even more careful when swimming in future. Though it rains every day here, it appears that the rains have not come yet!! November and December are the worst months of the year for rain – I hear it is awful. But I shall be happy through it all because I love you and I have heaps to occupy my mind – you are the sole occupant of mind. I wish I could have more games in this place but it is hopeless trying to manage anything – we are so much cut off even from the village. Chess is a very poor substitute for tennis or football or cricket! I am fast becoming a chess fiend and already I have beaten my tutor twice. Do you remember the Highland Games in Singapore I told you about in a recent letter – well if I had gone I would have won the stone throwing competition easily (judging by the winner's distance). This is a shame because I wanted to gain fresh laurels for you, Eileen. My darling, please excuse today's diary – it is so very disjointed and muddled up. I wanted to tell you that I love you above all else in the world and that I always shall.

Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Saturday – October 18th

I never thought that I could survive three whole months without a letter from you, my darling, and now it has happened – and I am still alive and happy! As long as I am in love with you I could not be unhappy whether letters are coming or not – that means that I shall never be unhappy. I do miss your letters, Eileen, but thank God He has given me patience to wait and pray and hope. My dearest one I know you are writing constantly and that you will never fail me; I trust you blindly and implicitly as you must trust me. And yet I do not have to tell you these things – our love makes it unnecessary. I know that I am the world's luckiest man to have the love of such a grand girl as you, Eileen; I have always placed you above all others in the world and I know that I am not mistaken. I pray hard each day to our good God and ask him to make me better and more worthy of a love such as yours is and of such a girl as you are. When two people care as much in love as we, compliments are sincere and flattery does not exist – you know what is in my heart and I know what is in yours. What is in our hearts is all that really matters to us – my old philosophy always turns up “we are what we are and not what others think we are – they can never change us.” The only change that I want is in myself and not in you, Eileen; I want to improve each day for your sweet sake. Some day soon we shall come face to face and then we shall really know each other and yet I realise that I have always known you. What a stupid ass I have been not to have married you years ago but He must have ordained otherwise and we do thank Him for everything – for our love and happiness it has brought to us. It has been a strange re-union and a strange engagement but my darling I know in my heart that you will be the happiest wife in all the world, because I shall spend my time in making you happy.

Saturday is a strange day without any games – so I have many strange days in this place! As it a half holiday and as “mad dogs and Irishmen” do it, I went for a walk in the ‘woods’ in the sun! The natives have got some sense in all these hot countries and have their afternoon siesta! However I loved my walk and was not a bit lonely on my own. I spent the rest of my day reading “Thomasheen James” and though the latter is a ‘character’ he uses some strong language which young ladies should not hear! So now I am debating whether or not to send you this book full of choice phrases. A much more suitable book would be “The Hell is Mine” by Maurice Walsh – this is a romance of the heathery hills. I have not seen heather since I left Ireland and it was my delight to walk for miles and miles over the moors at the back of the Cave Hill. Your little snap was always with me on all my walks and it was looked at very, very often. I would sit for an hour in the heather and look down on Belfast; I would first find Ardoyne Church, then trace the North Circular Road around to Springfield Dam; then I would pick out Clonard and its monastery – and a few yards away was the only girl in the world whom I loved and adored. I would wonder what you were doing at that moment in Spring Villa – were you sitting in the sun outside or were you sewing indoors. I would lol back in my heather and watch my beloved larks fluttering above in the heavens and giving forth their wonderful song. I was so near to you then and I was so very happy at such moments as those. Off I would go again across country to that silver lake away in the distance; I would swim its length and soon I would be heading homewards to Beechwood – 8 miles away. And oh what a tea my dear mother would have ready for me – home made bread and hot scones, heaps of jam etc.! That was my idea of living and it still is. What wouldn't I give to be in those hills again – what wouldn't I give to see you again my own darling. May God soon send peace to that land of ours – I know that you have always known the peace that He alone can give and that you always shall.

Good night, Eileen, and God bless you.

Sunday – October 19th

Another of our days has come and gone – and it has been such a happy day for me because I have been with you all the time. Do you really know how very much I love you, my darling? When I simply write down on paper that I love you I can never convey to you what is deep down in my heart. It means that I love you with all my strength and all my being; it means that I shall be true to you until death; it means that I would suffer any tortures, endure any hardships, and make any sacrifice under the sun rather than betray your trust in me. My own darling, will you always remember these things and remember that I shall love you forever and ever – nothing can shake my love for you, nothing can change me. I feel sometimes that my heart will burst with love for you, Eileen. I can never love you enough no matter how long I may live; you deserved a better man than Frank Murray to be your life's companion, but with God's grace we shall go through life as the happiest couple that ever lived. You shall make it a place of holiness and happiness, and it will ever be under His guidance. I promise you that you will never have an unhappy moment in our home at 'Beechwood' – how could we ever be unhappy, loving each other as we do. Have you ever thought how wonderful our life will be together, Eileen; you always by my side, our love and our prayers to guide us – surely it could not be more perfect. You know that God has given us this love and that He has blessed it, and we shall forever be grateful to Him for it. We are very far apart and yet we have never been nearer or dearer to each other and we have never been happier – and He has made this possible. We know how fortunate we are to be Catholics and to have a Catholic love – and some day we shall know the bliss of living in our Catholic home. I could never have loved you so much, Eileen, if you had not been so holy and good – I love your soul too, my darling, and everything about you.

It is nearly midnight and I am very much awake in spite of my day by the sea. I have just heard "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" on the radio and now I am looking at your two Irish eyes and they are smiling too – and it makes me very happy. There was a special programme for Tobruk and many wives came to the microphone and spoke to their dear ones out there in their desert fortress. What wouldn't I give to hear you speak and listen to the words of love which I long to hear from you, my dearest one. I heard with dismay that a mail ship from England to Malaya has been sunk and that letters posted on July 20-25th were all lost. All your July letters reached me safely, thank God my address has been changed again! It is now "27th Field Ambulance, c/o Army Base Post Office, Singapore, Malaya". However, plain "Malaya" will always reach me safely. I am still in the same place.

This has been a wonderful day on the beach. I did my longest swim yet and when it was over I sat on the sand with two other officers Capt. Buckley and Lt. Bawa (Indian) and dug holes with them! We were children again but we were happy playing in the sand. The C.O. could not understand it at all. I saw no sharks on my travels, but I was on the look out for them and I hugged the coast line in case they did appear. My back is well burned with the hot sun on the beach – it will hurt tomorrow. I said my usual extra prayers with you this evening while you were at Mass praying for your "pagan lover" in Malaya! By the way, darling, your time is now 7½ hours behind Malaya time so good night (really good morning!) and God bless you.

Monday – October 20th

It is now into the 4th week without a letter from you, my darling, but please God something will come soon. I have known what life would be like without your letters during these past weeks, but how can I complain when He has given me your love, Eileen, and made me so happy. God will ask sacrifices from us and we shall willingly make them, but surely He would not ask us to go through life without each other. Now that we have "found" each other, nothing must ever come between us. I know in my heart that nothing shall stop me from coming to you as soon as ever I can. I love you so much that life without you would be unbearable.

I want to hear all about your plans for Christmas, darling. Will you have a gathering of the clans at Killough? No matter where you may be on that great day I shall be with you in spirit. My plans at present are – to go to Kuala Lumpur on Christmas Eve, spend the night there at an hotel, hear a few Masses on Christmas Day, and come back here either the same day or on Boxing Day. It will be a round trip of 540 miles – just to attend Mass! Will you think of me as you mend your way to Mass on Christmas morning in the cold and try to imagine me sweltering in the heat of Malaya. Last year I was at midnight Mass in Rawalpindi and oh, it was bitterly cold – as all northern India is in winter. It did not compare with home, but at least it was peaceful and I heard a lovely sermon by my Irish priest (Mgr. O'Donohue) – and my friends Paul and Mary greeted me outside when all was over. This year it will all be so strange, in a strange place, in the heat, and not a friend to greet me. But my darling I shall spend a happier Christmas this year because now I have got you and your love and I shall spend it with you. My own darling, it will be the best Christmas of our lives we shall not celebrate together. Next year we shall have our own home and we shall be so very happy together. All this waiting and suffering will not have been in vain – the joy we shall know will more than compensate for this awful separation. It must surely end soon, my dearest one, and I pray hard each day for this intention.

I am so very ashamed of my letters nowadays; I have nothing interesting to tell you and so you must 'endure' these letters full of love and day dreams. And in a way, my sole reason for writing is to tell you that I love you and that I will always be yours, Eileen. God will end this war soon and He will bring us together again – never to be parted. Then we shall know real happiness and live our lives according to His holy wishes.

Give my love to all your dear ones at home and tell your mother that I am very sorry about stealing you away from her. You did not have any trouble stealing me away from my father – he was only too pleased to hear that you had stolen me away! When is the little Frances to be married? Tell her that I wish her all the very best that life can give and may all her fondest dreams come true. Do you think we shall be married before her? My darling, it is almost midnight and I must be gone to my slumbers and dreams.

May God bless you, Eileen, and may He keep you safe from all danger; may His Blessed Mother watch over you always.

Forever

Your loving

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army base Post Office,
Singapore,
Tuesday 21st October [1941]

Eileen, my own darling,

Do you like my wonderful new address? Alas I am still in the same place and very many miles from Singapore. And I am still waiting for a letter from you, my darling; it will soon be 4 weeks since the last one came. I can only blame this constant changing of my address for the delay in your letters. You know how much I love and adore you, so you may guess how I have felt all these weeks without a letter – and yet these things seem to bring me nearer to you and make me realise how very, very much I love you and how hopeless it would be trying to live without you, Eileen. I have loved you such a long time now that it has become more than a second nature with me; and I still go on loving you more and more as time passes. I pray harder and harder for you, my darling, and ask God to keep you safe; I ask Him to bring us together soon again and never allow us to be parted. May be I ask Him for too many things concerning you, us and our love. Ever since I first met you I have prayed for you my darling, because you symbolized everything that was good and holy in my eyes; and you know that you have ever been my model and I have tried to be good for your sake. Is this a worthy motive for wanting to be good, Eileen? I know it must be right and pleasing to Him, because He appointed you as my guardian angel. Unknown to yourself you have been the means of 'saving' me from disaster many, many times in the past. Why did you wield such influence over my life always? Somehow I could never do anything without your 'consent' – I would ask myself "would Eileen approve?" Some day soon we shall be united together and you will always be at my side advising me what to do and how to do it. My darling, I shall always be guided by your wisdom and your goodness. We shall automatically turn to God in everything and precede all our undertakings by earnest prayer. It will bring a blessing on our home and it will bring us untold happiness.

I have been the orderly medical officer today and oh it was just the same old day in camp – except that I sent you a 14-page letter! As the Clipper leaves Singapore weekly now I send your letters on every 7th day – instead of every 6th day as before – but you are having extra pages! This evening I went to our small hospital to examine a patient there and on my way back through the lines I heard the strains of a very familiar tune coming through the night air – it was lovely! I could scarcely believe my ears – it was "Daily, daily sing to Mary". If you were here and walked through these lines of barracks full of Indian troops, you would surely say that a Catholic hymn is the last thing you would expect to hear in the said barracks. I investigated and found an old Indian Havildar (=Sergeant) blowing out this beautiful hymn for all he was worth on a small mouth organ! He is a South Indian Catholic, very black skin, thin and wizened; he was very proud of his new mouth organ which he purchased in the bazaar today. He played the hymn over again specially for me and oh it was good to hear it played so sweetly. I thought to myself that surely our good God was very pleased with that old man's offering to Himself and Mary Our Mother.

I am sad this evening as I am about to lose my good friend Thomasheen James – I have almost finished the book! How I did not ever want to finish it at all and leave the man-of-no-work; but the best of friends must part! The great Mohammedan Fast ended tonight – the new moon appeared somewhere in Malaya but not here as it has rained hard all evening (the new moon ends the Fast). There is a holiday tomorrow and the men have

invited all the officers to lunch in the lines – I love these parties because they give me a chance of making the others very informal when they are trying hard to be formal at these functions!

Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Wednesday – October 22nd

My own darling, I am still here, still writing to you and still loving you with all my heart and soul. Loving you so much is a whole-time affair because I place it above all else in my life – except God – and He knows that without you I could not pray so hard to Him. That is why He wants me to love you always and I would rather die than have it otherwise. Oh, my Eileen, if I could only explore my feelings and paint you a picture of all the love that is in my heart for you – my letters are but a poor attempt at this. I feel so dissatisfied when I have finished a letter to you; it gives you no idea of how much I love you – I want to tell you so much more but never seem to find words for it.

Tonight I am sitting out on this small verandah and everything is cool after the rain. It rains every evening for hours accompanied by thunder and lightning – I do not even notice the latter any more except to admire the wild beauty of a sky lit up with a radiant purple flash. It was a sort of holiday and the morning was uneventful. Then came a terrific “bean-feast” which the Mohammedans gave us for lunch! It was mostly Indian food but it was delicious. We were seated with the men but of course at a separate table. I spoiled the whole dignity and pomposity of the occasion by winking at the men and pulling faces at them – the others did not even look at the men at all! Irishmen and Australians in the British Army are apt to forget that aloofness which seems to be essential to an English officer who never has a sense of humour anyhow. Well, as this lunch we ate too much, and came away in a very sleepy mood. However, I was detailed by the C.O. for a job in the sea! I was ordered to have a swim at two places along the shore and to report their suitability or otherwise for the troops to use. It seems there is a holiday-camp scheme afoot at the moment and we are testing out the likely spots for a site. Anyhow I had a couple of grand swims while doing my duty! I only wish I had more duties like this! I set out for the beach in my small Austin and soon discovered that all Malays are Mohammedans – they were observing the “Id”. It was a pleasant sight to meet little groups of men, women, and children all gaily attired in their multi-coloured native dress. I got many a cheer from them – they were all so happy on their great feast day after the long fast. I passed by two cyclists and each had a bride on the cross-bar – they were pretty smiling brides and each had a garland of flowers around her head. I discovered why Indians go to bed for the afternoon! It is sheer madness to go swimming on a hot afternoon immediately after partaking of a heavy Indian lunch! I was glad to get back again to my wooden hat at 6 p.m. – ready for tea. My darling, I do not really spend my time eating and sleeping! I forgot to tell you that during our feast today a grandmother played selections – the first record played was “Does your mother come from Ireland?”

We have a lovely set of hockey sticks now, thanks to the Red Cross people. I must fix up a match for the weekend for the men; I wish we had more games here, but we are so far away from everything, buried in this plantation as we are now. I discovered our boot maker today making a lovely pair of brown “chaplis” (Indian sandals) – it appears they are for me, though I have not ordered them!! The cute fellow knows that I could not resist them and shall buy them off him at an exorbitant price. I discovered today that one of my sepoys had drawn no pay since coming to Malaya. On enquiry I found out that he is saving up all his money to get married when the war is over and that during the past 7 months he has spent 50 cents (= 1s/2d)! Can you imagine such a thing, my darling?

I have bored you tonight Eileen, and I am sorry about it, but I love you and I must tell you all the events of the day. Good night and God bless you.

Thursday – October 23rd

My own dearest one, another day has come and gone and still I can say that it is good to be alive! This, in spite of no letters from you for 4 whole weeks. My darling, I hope there are no awful delays in my letters reaching you; there should not be, as your address is straightforward while mine is a bit complex at times! Your letters to me have to pass through so many hands before they ever reach me; it is very annoying; but I am in the army and there is a war on! I love you tonight with a very special love, more than I have ever loved you before – it is more tender and deep and true than ever before. Still I want to love you so very much more than I do tonight; I have given you all but that will never be enough. Do you know that I can see you each day of my life standing on the docks at Southampton waiting for me; I can see your upturned face – you are the only person that I can see in that dense crowd. I know that I shall run down the gangway into your arms and that nothing in the whole world will ever separate us again.

I had a letter this evening from Ipoh. The Wimseys wrote to me a very lovely letter thanking us for remembering them in our prayers, Eileen. They promise to give me a ‘Cead Mile Failte’ next time I visit them at

Ipoh (about 400 miles from here!). Holiday (leave) fever has broken out in camp and everyone is dashing off for 10 days at the various resorts. Holidays cannot be much fun in Malaya without a boy friend; besides my life is a holiday here and so I do not need to seek health elsewhere! This afternoon I had another swim in the sea with two other officers (not belonging to our unit). I swam about 2 miles in and out of little lagoons – finding all kinds of little openings among the rocks. I am not brave and I am not “showing off” when I go off on these long swims – it is my delight to have a long swim and explore new channels along the coast. The sea was rough and wild, and that is how I like it. Will you think Capt. Buckley and myself very big babies when I tell you that we played about in shallow pools of water among the rocks when our swim was finished?? We had crab races – and were severely nipped in return; we explored numerous shells on the shore and found new kinds of shell fish. We did all the things that young lads love to do at the seaside! Need I tell you that I spent a very pleasant afternoon and that I wished with all my heart that you had been there to enjoy it with me. Crossing the ferry both ways my very good friends the ferry-coolies had a very special greeting for me, and ignored the others! Needless to say the latter could not quite understand why so much attention was being paid to me. It has been a sort of holiday today – that’s why I was not working. I have a big day out tomorrow starting at 6 a.m. and here you are keeping me out of bed! My darling, you know that I would willingly sit up all night and write to you rather than let you down for a single day by not writing. It is not a duty; it is a pleasure and I love it, and would not be happy unless I wrote my diary to you each day. By the way the Wimseys thought I was too soft about losing my promotion – they say that I should have demanded a transfer to another unit or station, or demanded that my successor be transferred in all fairness to myself! I had thought of doing all these things, but I decided to “stand and wait” because I love my men and they are loyal to me. They think as much of me now as Captain than ever before as a Major – it did not change me and nothing ever will change me whether I am going up or down the ladder! My only reason for ever going up that ladder of flame is for your sweet sake, so that you might feel proud of me.

Good night and God bless you, my darling.

Friday, October 24th

I have had a very busy day, but thank God the so-called “work” was such that I thought of you the whole day through. I wanted you to be with me today more than any other day of my life – and I don’t quite know why. I thought of how cruel I have been to you in the past and have been planning all kinds of ways to atone for my cruelty. I would have given anything in the past to know that you loved me, but this has been God’s way of bringing us together and it must be the only way – the right way. We have always loved each other and we were meant for each other; we have a strong, true love and it will bring us great happiness – and it has brought us great happiness already (and we haven’t even met yet). My own darling, we are many thousands of miles apart and still we are very happy because we love each other and we have faith in each other and in our prayers. There are so many reasons why I love you so much and you know them already; and yet, Eileen, there has always been a certain indefinable “something” in your very soul that I have always loved and could never see in any other woman. If you will excuse my rudeness, neither of us has been given great physical beauty, so it cannot be beauty on which we founded our love my dearest one; you have a beautiful heart and I love it with my whole being – that is the only beauty that really matters, any other kind is very false. I am yours, Eileen, for ever and ever and nothing can change my love for you. I have seen reading your letters this evening and oh what happiness and consolation they bring to me. How I am looking forward to the next one. I watch the post every day – even on days when I am sure that no mails are due – I never lose hope, and that is what makes life worth living to anyone. We hope and pray that this waiting will come to an end soon, and we shall never grow weary of hoping and praying.

I have spent the day in my small Austin as I was an “umpire” in the Field Ambulance manoeuvres – it was almost like superintending an exam but much more exciting. The whole show was almost entirely by the sea and yet I did not have a swim the whole day long! It was hot and sticky and much glare from the sun, but I enjoyed it all. On the way to the shore I passed through a large rubber estate and there encountered a crowd of about 20 small Tamil children. They looked lovely – black faces, white gleaming teeth, and big eyes. Later I met four small Malay boys trundling their empty tins; they hailed me and I offered them a ride. They dropped the “toys” immediately and soon I was speeding down the sandy path to the sea with two happy children riding on each footboard of my Austin! They were very thrilled, especially when I brought them back to where I had picked them up! You see my darling, I remembered my boyhood days and the joy which a ride in any vehicle brought to me. I was pleased because I had made friends with them and made them happy without speaking a word of their native tongue to them. Lunch-time found me in a tiny Malay village by the sea. I sat with my men and ate huge sandwiches much to the amazement of the inhabitants! Soon all the village boys and girls and men had gathered around us; goats sprang up from everywhere and wanted to share our lunch! The shy maidens and proud mothers peeped at us from a distance, but they were interested too – and roared with laughter when they saw our “casualties” being evacuated through the village! We sat on a covered wooden platform with the men of the village and watched

them play cards. The small boys wrestled and frolicked in the sand for our benefit; the small girls just sat and looked at us with their big eyes. I fell in love with a curly-headed damsel of about 3 years of age; here eyes sparkled with wonder and her earrings danced in the sun. All Malay girls wear earrings and they are very beautiful (the girls are!). Can you blame me for falling in love with “my curly-headed baby”? My own darling, you know well that I shall never love anyone but you no matter how long I may live. I was so happy sitting among these friendly people that I made up my mind that if ever you should be in Malaya I shall bring you to this remote village and show you my friends there. Have I bored you, Eileen? I never mean to bore you. Good night and may God bless you.

Saturday – October 25th

My own darling, can you guess why I am so terribly happy this night? I had a letter from you this evening – the one you sent from Killough on 26th August before Felix’s wedding. I always read through your letters very slowly many times so that I may not come to the end of them ever – it nearly breaks my heart when I reach page 8 and know that soon I shall have finished. My dearest one I could never live without your letters – they are like milestones in my love for you and as each milestone comes it marks a new gush of love and affection from my heart towards you. And now tonight my heart is so full of love for you that I don’t know what to say or where to begin. I cannot attempt to ‘answer’ your letter tonight as it is now 11 p.m. and it would take hours to do this! Eileen darling, do not worry about my safety; we have left everything entirely in His hands and He knows what is best for us. We must never have doubts; we must be sure that our prayers will be answered and then I shall be with you soon again. Does anything else in life really matter as long as we are in God’s grace and as long as we love each other – we shall always love each other and we shall always love Him, because these two loves are inseparable. We would never have been so much in love if we had not His friendship and blessing. I promise you that I shall not lose his friendship once, knowingly, for the rest of my life; I shall never forget my daily prayers; I shall go to Mass and Communion every day when at all possible. Your miniature miraculous medal is always around my neck, night and day, and its prayer is never forgotten during the day. It is an awful loss not having even Sunday Mass here, but that does not make me careless; I only want to gain by prayer what I lose in Masses. My own dearest one, tomorrow I shall join you as usual at our Mass and my prayers will be more earnest than ever before. Why are you so good and unselfish to me – how can I ever hope to repay such devotion and love.

I had a letter today from Fr. Ashness in which he said that he had sent you the parcel as promised and also a letter telling you about the said parcel and its contents. I was a little disappointed to learn that he asked you to arrange the purchase of “certain tickets” for him. His parcel and letter will not reach you until after Christmas but you will soon have a strange surprise from me before Christmas – in fact it should reach you in November! My darling, please do not be disappointed with my surprise when it arrives; it is meant to be my Christmas present to you, Eileen, and withal it (they) will look nice in our future home! So very soon in addition to your screen we shall have another item (Jean Valjean got into trouble about them in “Les Miserables”!)³⁶. So be patient with all my mysterious allusions to this strange present because you will soon see it (them!). I also promise you that you will soon be wearing something small, round, made of gold and it will sparkle on your finger! Please do not ask me to wait until the end of the war; you must have it soon, my darling.

I wrote to Fr. Ashness this morning and gave him the sad news that the Irish Sweep had ceased to function. I also sent him a cheque for the parcel he sent you to cover all his expenses. My new Indian shoes were delivered by the little boot-maker today and they do look posh and are a perfect fit. They are said to be the most comfortable shoes in the world – and I quite believe it. Our usual picnic and swim have been fixed up for tomorrow. The C.O. asked me to go accompany him to the village “cinema” after dinner, but I declined having given very lame excuses. Your letter is more important; besides it is my act not to visit a cinema as long as I am here. My darling, do not think that I am showing off when I tell you about my daily “acts”; I only do small things and you are always in my thoughts at the time. I sleep on a hard bed, while I could easily have a soft one; I do not read or look at certain magazines in our mess etc. You are the only one who knows these little things and I feel that I must share them with you. I shall always want to share everything with you. We had a small inspection this morning and my successor (Major Dave) and I were together. As I walked around the barracks with him I marvelled at God’s ways and how good He has been to me. There I was, very friendly with this man; I had no bitter feelings towards him or anyone else – and yet, my darling, I have been shamefully treated and have every reason for being resentful. I worked very hard for my promotion; and I worked harder when I got it. I feel the same as you do, Eileen; nobody can hurt me unless they hurt you. Oh what wonderful courage and forbearance we shall always have no matter what happens to us because we shall ever have each other and we shall never have to fight a lone battle.

³⁶ These were two silver Mappin & Webb silver candlesticks and they are still in the family’s possession. They were made in Sheffield with a 1941 silvermark.

My very own darling, I understand how you feel about the young man who is pursuing you in Omagh. I do want to hear all these things from you, Eileen; it is much better that you should share your fears with me. You must not be afraid again of him; he can do you no harm. Surely he will stop annoying you if you tell him of our engagement. Do not be afraid of his cleverness; you are strong and good. We love each other Eileen and surely nothing can change that – not even all the clever people in the world. This young man may continue to force his attention on you, he may even succeed in making people believe that a romance has sprung up between you, but my darling no matter what happens I am with you always, loving you all the time and wanting to give you courage.

I am so glad that you have met all of my people at home – you were to meet Margaret in Dungannon. She is a grand person and such a very happy soul. I conclude that Philip is still rustivating otherwise you would have met him too; I wonder what you will think of him. I could never quite make up my mind about him – and I am his brother! You seem to be a very privileged person with my father; do you realise that I have never been shown the room in which I was born – and yet you have! He must love you a lot, Eileen. I am sorry about poor Anne's holiday; father does not understand young people at times – he thinks they should feel as he does (at his age) towards holidays. He is much happier working and so am I at the moment. Yes he must be a lonely man otherwise he would not ask so much of Anne.

I hope that your photograph is on its way, my darling; but I love your snap where you are holding your golf clubs. One is pinned up over the centre of my table; the other lies before me every night on my writing pad as I write to you. Of course it is the best photograph of you, but I also like the group one where you are sitting on the grass beside Rosa. Remember, Eileen, that I am all yours, that I am loving you every moment of every day and always shall love only you.

May God bless you and may His Holy Mother guide you always.

Your loving
Frank.

P.S. My love to all at home and also to Frances.

Love
Frank.

P.P.S. I have just discovered that it is only good night until tomorrow! I have got my pages mixed up! I am sorry about this Eileen, but you must have 14 pages!

October 26th – Sunday

My dearest one, I have been so very near to your heart today; I have never loved you more; I have never prayed so earnestly as today. There is no limit to our love, Eileen, and still it keep on growing. I can never give you enough love or affection; I can never pray hard enough for you; I can never do enough to make you happy. There is something I wish to ask you and you must answer me in your next letter. Do you find my letters too sentimental? If you do, my darling, I shall try to make them more readable in future.

We had a pleasant surprise awaiting us when we reached the beach this morning for there before us lay a lovely two-masted sailing ship anchored about ½ mile from the shore. Within about 10 minutes Capt. Buckley and I were swimming all around it and admiring its beauty. It was quite safe out there as there were many men aboard working so I swam a little way beyond it. When I turned and faced the shore, I saw a grand sight – it was like a picture in a Robert L. Stevenson story book! There was this graceful schooner heaving to and fro with each wave against a lovely background of a tropical shore. After lunch I went off alone down among the big rocks just overlooking the sea and sat in a shady spot and said the most fervent Rosary that I have ever said in my life. It was so peaceful and quiet down there all alone with you praying for our big intention with all my might. Then I sat and dreamed of a colleen whom I adore – Eileen Alannah”; I wondered when we would next meet again and I thought of all the happiness that lies ahead of us. The sea does make me dream a lot but it is not a dream to say that I shall come back again to you soon. God will hear our prayers my dearest one, if we persevere – and we shall never relax our prayers for a moment. I want you to thank all your dear ones for all the prayers they are offering up for my return – I never forget them in my prayers. I only hope that they will not be disappointed when they meet the object of all these prayers! And you, my own darling, who prays so hard for me and goes to daily Mass and Communion for our intentions – what can I say to you that will give you any idea of the gratitude that is in my heart for all that you have done for me. God has given us everything we have asked of Him and now He will not let us down in our great request.

I shall try to send you a cable tomorrow if I can manage to get into the village. If an occasional cable will make you happy and cause to worry less about me, then you shall have one often. I had intended sending them weekly, but I found out that they take almost as long to reach you as my letters. (It is a pity you cannot see the

beautiful firefly which has alighted on this page – he keeps flashing his little green lantern all over the place!). I have read your letter this morning and again this evening – I never grow tired and I love every word. How I wish I could see our new firescreen – the first item for our new home and we shall always have a special place for it, especially as mammie made it. I wonder if my letter has reached her yet; I want her to know that I love her as my own mother. I am looking forward to your next letter and all the news of Felix's wedding. My own darling, I shall refuse to marry you – unless we have a quiet wedding, without any fuss. We shall prepare for it as God wishes us to – with earnest prayer – that is the only preparation that really matters. I am glad that you feel the same way about it as I do; we always agree on things that count in life – that's why our love is so true.

I shall love you forever and ever, Eileen; nothing can change me. God bless you; Mary protect you; and may your Guardian Angel watch over you and keep you safe.

Your loving,
Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Monday, 27th October [1941]

Eileen, my own darling,

I am still reading your wonderful letter which reached me on Saturday and oh how happy it makes me. You wrote it just before leaving Killough and you were a little sad at your family gathering breaking up. My dearest one, you have been very good to me all during the holidays in writing so often and sending such long letters. Believe me, Eileen, I understand how very difficult it can be to write letters during vacation by the sea – surrounded by all your dear ones and friends, you have to join them in all the fun. And yet, my darling, you have sacrificed many happy hours and wrote to me. You see, it is so different with me here; I have no dear ones around me, I am in a strange land and in a spot completely cut off from civilisation. In the evenings there are no amusements; I have no excuse for not writing to you daily because I have so much spare time to myself. My thoughts are always with you, no matter what I am doing; and so each night after dinner I tell you all my thoughts of the day and tell you how much I love you. It makes me very happy to write to you and I only hope and pray that my dreamings do not annoy you or bore you. I love you so very, very much Eileen; I am yours and I shall always belong to you, completely and entirely. All the affection and love that is in my heart is yours and never could belong to anyone else but you. There is no need to tell you that I shall be true to you even unto death, that the longer I live the more I love you and the harder I pray to our good God for us both. Our love would be useless without prayer – it depends on prayer and on holiness. I shall never forget this because I have known it since the first time I met you. God will send me safely back to you my darling and we shall never be parted again.

I have just come back from the Mess and heard the "Blue Hills of Antrim" over the radio from London. There was actually a Belfast programme on and oh how grand it was to hear that accent again; to hear the linen mills working, and to listen to its music. At the mention of Sandy Row my heart gave a jump and it brought back memories of Queen's days when I used do your footsteps down that same Row. My darling, I am sorry if I caused you any annoyance then, it was selfish of me not to consider your feelings no matter how much I loved you. Do you remember the day we cycled around the T.T. course through Ards and Comber with Molly O'Hare and a girl called McGlade? I was actually happy when we lost the others and also when you had a slow puncture – the latter gave me a chance of doing something for you! My dear mother (R.I.P.) knew all about my romancing with you but she never mentioned it to me and now you have told me that she hoped and prayed that some day I would marry you. How I wish that Josie and mother were both alive now – they would love you because they both had a loving and generous nature and would have done any mortal thing to welcome you to "Beechwood". You don't know how happy it makes me to hear that you love all my dear ones at home – it is so very important to me. My dearest one, you have shown great courage in going forth alone to meet all my people but I was always with you in spirit to introduce you to them. You have shown me how much you love me and made me ashamed of my poor love for you. I wish I had met all your dear ones too – that would have made things perfect for us both, but I love them just as much as you love my family at Beechwood and the three nuns. Do not fall in love with handsome Philip when you meet him!

My darling, please send me the universal prayer of Benedict for peace; I am ashamed to admit that I don't know it yet even though I heard it a few times in India. I hope that all my letters are reaching you now at regular intervals and that you no longer have to wait 3 or 4 weeks for them. Should my queer Christmas present ever

reach you Eileen, please do not think that you should send me something. I only want you to send me your love – that is the greatest treasure in the world to me and I deem it more precious than anything else. Then there is that miraculous medal which you sent to me – it brings me great joy each time I kiss it and say its prayer to Our Blessed Lady. I am sorry you were disappointed with your photograph; you are a terrible girl to waste so much money in trying to please me! If only I were worth half the trouble that you take with me.

I meant to go to the village today and send you a telegram, but I had a job to do at the aerodrome. We were practicing loading “patients” on to the planes and unloading them. And so my darling your telegram could not be sent but please God these people can manage without me for a couple of hours tomorrow while I send my best girl a cable. It is nearly midnight and I must go off to my bed. Good night Eileen and may God bless you and keep you safe.

Tuesday – October 28th

Another day nearer to you my own dear Eileen – that’s what I say to myself every evening. Yes, it is another day nearer to our reunion, to our wedding day and to our happy married life together. I love you even more tonight and yet last night I did not think that this was possible. I ask God each day to make me a better man, to make me love Him more because then I know that I shall be able to love you. I often think and wonder what might I have to the happiness that you have given to me; I have treated you so badly in the past and yet I have loved you all the time. I do not deserve your love, Eileen, but I shall try hard to be worthy of it and shall give all to make you the happiest wife in the world. I shall never grow weary of giving my all to you because that always makes me very happy.

My darling, I want to suggest something to you and please do not be annoyed with me. When your photograph is ready and you have sent it to me could you also send one to “Beechwood”. It would make me very happy to know that your photograph stood beside mine in our drawing room. If you do not like the idea, Eileen, well just keep your photograph and mine in your own room at home. My darling I hope you have got better digs this term than last year; you must take every care of yourself. I know how you put your heart and soul into everything that you do especially your work; but please do not overwork, for my sake. I want you to be strong and very fit for my homecoming because I shall march you over hill and dale, I shall swim with you for miles, I shall golf you to a standstill, and dance with you until your head spins! Aren’t these awful threats coming from someone who adores you! How I love fresh air, Eileen; I could never be happy caged up in an office or even teaching. I do not know how I shall ever return to civilization – to “respectability”, to wearing long trousers and a collar and tie – I shall hate giving up on my open-necked short and shorts!

The C.O. took me along with him today on a long reconnaissance. We found ourselves 20 miles from camp on the most beautiful stretch of beach I have ever seen. Soft golden sands stretched for miles; tall palms fringed the shore; the sea was green and the sky was blue; behind us lay a lovely stretch of open grassland (a rarity in Malaya); the beach tapered into a huge headland with steep wooden slopes. We decided that it would be ideal for a holiday camp for the men. On the way back we sat down outside a native village under the palms and ate our lunch – and oh it was grand to be alive. Coming through town I made the C.O. wait at the Post Office while I send a cheap telegram to my best girl and told her that all was well and that I sent her all my love. You see Eileen, I do not want my best girl to worry about me and so if a cable will help she shall have hundreds of them. I have a big day on the beach tomorrow and have to get out of my lazy bed at 6 a.m. (normally I rise at 7 a.m.). Good night my dearest one and God bless you.

Wednesday – October 29th

Well, my big day is over and I am tired after running about in the sun. Do you realise that the heat is very intense when combined with humidity and that one cannot touch one’s steel helmet it becomes so hot! I do pity the men who have spent the Summer in the Western Desert wearing steel helmets. It was a perfect day by the sea and oh the water looked so inviting, but alas I could not have a dip. The big two-masted vessel rode peacefully at anchor in the bay, the sea was a Mediterranean blue and a gentle breeze ruffled its surface, visibility was marvelous and all along the whole horizon were studded the tiny white sails of the local fishing fleet. I had only a moment to spend admiring this grand scene and I did not want to take my eyes away from it. Evening found me speeding towards the setting sun in my little open Austin; it was such a lovely sunset too and every cloud had a silver lining. I knew that away behind those darkly wooded hills in the west you were hard at work in school and I wondered if you were thinking of me just then.

I stopped at the book shop on my way through the village and bought you another copy of “Asia” which I hope to send off tomorrow to you. It will almost be a year old by the time it reaches you, as it is a June edition! My darling, I shall be able to send you a Christmas card – a Malay one too; it has made me so happy. I discovered the cards tucked away in an old book-case in the book shop and immediately pounced on them! You have no idea

how rare Christmas cards are in this place and I had given up all hope of ever getting one at all. My darling don't you know that I would do anything on earth for you, anything to make you happy. I love you so much Eileen that I live only for you; nothing else matters to me except my love for you. My whole heart and soul and mind are all concentrated on loving you and yet it all comes natural to me to love you so much – there is nothing forced in it. We shall be the two happiest people in all the world when we are married. If loving each other across 9,000 miles of ocean can make us so very happy, what will our future happiness be when we come together again. What do you see in me to love me so much? I know you have had several good men who wanted to marry you and yet you have chosen Frank Murray. Young woman, you have no sense at all!!! My darling you must never change in any way. You are not just being an 'old teacher' when you try to do things as thoroughly as possible and as methodically as possible – I love you for it, because I hate to see a job half-done. Eileen, my dearest one, I know you so very well and that's why I love you so much; everyone who knows you must love you. Do you know that each time I think of you during the day, and that is often, I always say a prayer. So you see, Eileen, that even my prayers depend upon you; it is you and you alone can keep me near to God. These long months of waiting are really months of preparation for our marriage and we cannot pray hard enough preparing for great sacrament. My idea of heaven on earth is a Catholic marriage where two people are really and truly in love; the happiness and consolation it can bring. Can we ever thank the good God enough for giving us so great a love – a Catholic love, which is so vital to our happiness.

I have been thinking today that the only thing which I like about the army is its open-air life. It seems such a shame that an army doctor should have to do almost everything except doctoring! If only I were learning something about my profession that would be useful to me in general practice. I hope I am right in saying that I was meant to be a doctor and not a soldier, though God has given me the gift of knowing no fear, except that fear of losing his friendship. Yes, my darling, should the war start here I would become a doctor once again and do things worth while. Does it bring you any consolation to know that my particular job will always be done 15 miles at least behind the front line and that this distance can increase up to 50 miles?

May God bless you, Eileen. Good night.

Thursday – October 30th

My own dearest, if I did not know you and love you so much I would be a very awful man and you would not love me at all! I do not mean that I am good, but Eileen dearest you are my good angel every hour of every day. Today, for instance, I have been sorely tried by others and my wild Irish temper would have come out with a vengeance were it not for you. May be I would not pray so hard if I did not love you, and not praying so hard would mean that I would lose my temper many times daily. My darling will you always be at my side and make me do the right thing always; my life would be perfect if you would do this for me. Some day soon please God we shall be together again and walking down life's broad road together, I shall always be at your side and you at mine. We shall share everything, Eileen, no matter how trivial. Our joys will be multiplied ten fold when they are shared; our sorrows will dwindle away into nothingness when they are shared. Surely this is one of the greatest roads to happiness in married life. I shall not burden you with all my sorrows, Eileen, that would be unfair; but you must tell me all of yours so that I can help in some way. And yet I know we shall have nothing but joys to tell each other.

This evening we had a football match on the village green with another unit. It was good to see open spaces again, and they green ones. One would not need to have claustrophobia living in a rubber plantation; and still I know that it will always be one of my phobias throughout life. I have always hated large crowds especially on streets in Belfast and it was my delight to wander aimlessly through the quaint narrow quiet streets adjoining the heart of the city – Smithfield, Dockland, and the Market area. Well, about the football match – we managed a draw (0–0). The reason I allowed no goals to be scored against me was that the ball seldom came my way! We really did put up a good show against a strong team but alas others (spectators) did not think so and said some uncalled-for things – and were it not for you Eileen I should have "gone off the deep end"!! I enjoyed my evening in spite of everything. I have been kept busy all day long and did not have time this morning to send your magazine. However it is now well packed and labelled and ready for the road tomorrow morning. I have a march tomorrow morning early and that means the usual sandwich lunch and getting back late in the afternoon. Thank heavens I like marching and can march for 20 miles and never feel weary. Our week ends up with a hickey match on Saturday and a whole day by the sea on Sunday! So you probably think that your Malayan exile is very well off indeed!! Well he is very well off in that he loves you so very much and in that you love him too – that is all that your exile wants in life.

And here I must leave you for tonight my dearest one. I have loved you more today than ever before. I have read your last letter again tonight and it brings me great happiness. Good night and God bless you Eileen.

Friday – October 31st (Hallow Een!)

When I think of the many happy Hallow Eens I have spent at home and compare them with tonight, well, I wish I was at home again! I promised myself and now I promise you that when we have our own home that the Eve of All Hallows will be a happy evening for us, that we shall remember our childhood days again and become children again. Have you ever thought of how very happy you were when a child; it was a carefree happiness – no troubles, no worries about tomorrow. It makes one almost sorry that one has to grow up at all, and yet, my dearest one, I am glad that we have grown up together knowing each other and loving each other as we do. We have a different happiness now than that we knew as children – it is more mature and deep and lasting. I know that our love has brought us all this and that we are as happy as it is possible for two people to be on earth. Eileen, my darling, we are so very lucky – we have got everything and He has given all to us. We do thank Him but we can never thank Him enough. And now only one small thing remains and when He brings us together again He will have made our happiness complete. I know that He will not fail us, Eileen, because He is so good and is ever granting our requests but with all my heart I say “May Thy Holy Will be done O Lord”.

Well, today we went a marching along the shore. As usual the lorries carried us to the beach and back again to camp. It took 3 hours to reach our starting point, thanks to delays at the Ferry. We were all set to move on to the Ferry when up dashed two large cars (private), claimed priority and got on ahead of our convoy of lorries. That meant that our tail end was left behind and so we had to wait for them on the other side for an hour. When I questioned the drivers of the private cars I discovered that the cars belonged to the brother of the Sultan of Pahang and of course they have authority to nip in ahead of the queue. I did notice that this man had many wives in the back seat of the cars – the Sultan himself has 3 wives! Well, “as I was going to St. Ives, I met a man ...” (but that’s another story!). It was cloudy today and that is always a blessing in this country when on the march. We marched for 3 miles along the water’s edge, rested, and then there was a rush to the sea. Soon there were 120 dusky bodies bobbing about in the water. The sea was rough and the waves well above my head. It makes me happy to see the men enjoying themselves and I shouted and played with the happiest of them. Later the rains came, we had lunch inside the waiting lorries, and soon we were homeward bound again. It is grand to get out in the wilds for a while. It has been a whole week out of camp each day and I have loved it all.

It is midnight and the boys have just come back from the village cinema (I mean the other officers when I say “boys”). I wonder: are they as happy as I am just now? I know that one of them will not sleep tonight – he has not slept for months poor chap and I fear life in this camp and in this climate is too much for him. The others made him drink too much last night, thinking that he might sleep but alas he got up this morning with insomnia + a sore head! I am a very lucky man to have no craving for drink – I am a tee-totaller because I don’t like drink! That is a very unworthy reason and nothing to be proud of. However I shall drink something on our wedding day and occasionally during our married life at the right time and in the right place. If you would rather have me remain tee total, well darling it’s just too easy for me, but I can promise you that never once will you find your husband taking to drink and giving you a black eye on Saturday nights! Our psychologist – the chap with insomnia! – declared yesterday that he had made a close study of his fellow officers, but alas he could not understand his own case. I asked him why I should sleep well at night, why I should be so happy and contented while living under the same conditions as himself. “Ah, Captain Murray, you are different from the rest of us – you would be happy and contented no matter where you lived, because you have trained yourself to make the best of things; besides you have got religion.” He is an Indian and says he has no religion. They all know that I am a Catholic and yet I have never discussed religion with them; I never preach to them or make demonstration of my faith to them. They just know all about it. Well, my darling, I have trained myself in a hard school – and it began when I went to Lough Derg as a boy with my father and Una! I can now endure any discomfort or hardship and live under any condition, and still it would not cost me a thought. I can go without many luxuries and as usual I never miss them – my “acts” have not got much merit attached to them!

Young woman, I have loved you enough for one evening! I love you my darling, and I shall never love any one but you till I die. God bless you and may the angels guard thee this night.

Saturday – November 1st

I have prayed to all the saints in heaven today as this is their feast; how I wish I could have been to mass this day. My darling it is such an awful loss to me missing so many masses daily; and tomorrow I shall feel it most when so many are available wherever there is a priest. The Holy Souls have so many claims on me and my prayers. Eileen, my dearest one, if you had only me my mother and Josie (R.I.P.) you would have loved them above all the Murrays; my mother so loving and good and unselfish – I know that she gave her life for her children, especially for her poor Josie. May be you will understand what it means to me to find another mother like your mammie and to love her in the same way as my own mother. Josie was always a child and thank God she was a child when she died and knew nothing of the world. She was very lovable and good and kind. I have often tried to picture to myself what

my brother Charlie would have been like today if he had lived. He would have been 25 years of age, fair complexion, brown eyes, tall and upright, fearless and dashing, and handsome too. You would have fallen in love with him Eileen and never had a thought for this stick-in-the-mud, Frank Murray! I can well imagine him being a pilot in the R.A.F. and winning medals every day for gallantry. I loved him, my dearest one, especially when he was ill – he was a miracle of patience, the like of which I have never seen since then and I have seen many sick people since that time. These three members of our family, I shall remember very specially tomorrow. Much as I wish them to be alive today, I do thank God that they have not lived to see the horrors of this awful war. God knew what was best for them and took them unto Himself. I know that all three are fighting hard for us, Eileen, and I am sure that their pleading will not be in vain.

This was my duty day and so I had to stay in camp. I have been happier today than ever before and why should I be anything else but happy. I am not callous enough to sit back and wait happily for our reunion no matter when it may come; I feel every moment of our separation and pray hard that it all may end soon. But I cannot be miserable ever in my life again, because I love you so much and you love me – and I have got His friendship too, which means so much to us both. One of my men told me his sad story today – his lady love had proved unfaithful and married his younger brother. Now listen to me Miss O’Kane, don’t you go off and marry my younger brother!! In India all marriages are arranged by parents and the ladies have no say in the matter at all – so I am glad we do not live in India, my dearest one!! A mail was due today but alas it did not turn up and instead will come tomorrow morning; however I am not expecting a letter from you so soon after the last one. I heard the awful news today that sometimes the “Clipper” is held up for a week in mid-Pacific due to bad weather. I wish I could do something to avoid these delays in the transport of your letters – I do not want you to have anxious moments about letters reaching you. I shall write every day until we meet again – I am so sure of this, Eileen; just as sure as I know that I shall love you always. Good night and God bless you.

Sunday – November 2nd (Feast of All Souls)

Eileen, my darling, am I still dreaming or is it really true that you love me – you whom I have loved and adored ever since I first set eyes upon you. The only thing in the world that I wanted, the only thing I have prayed incessantly for has been given to me – your love. You have brought a new happiness into my life and have given me joy that I thought could not exist. It does not seem quite fair that I should be so happy while the world is in such an unhappy state. I am praying hard that God may spare us both for each other, so that when this horrible war is over we may come together again and live in peace and happiness for the rest of our lives. I need not tell you what I thought of you when I first met you in far off Ranafast, but I would love to know what were your first impressions of the odd looking big schoolboy who paid so much attention to you in those days! My darling, I must have been so stupid and boring; how could you be expected to ever fall in love with such a man. I shall never know why you ever fell in love with me. You know that I shall do everything within my power to make you happy. Our marriage will be a happy one, Eileen, because we love each other so much, because our love is holy and God will bless our marriage and our home. I have thousands of things to tell you when we meet again, thousands of plans to make, and thousands of questions to ask. Isn’t this a terrifying ordeal to contemplate in view of our reunion???

We set out for our usual picnic today in a downpour of rain! It takes more than rain to daunt our stout hearts. I find that rain does not depress me but I experience great exhilaration in the rain. It is always welcome in this country and much preferable to the sunshine! Well, when we reached the shore today the rain had stopped but the sun did not appear; instead there was an awful heat (humid) coming from the heavens and not a whiff of air to give relief! It was grand to get into the water (this was cool actually!). I grow daily stronger as a swimmer and always feel ready for more when my long swim is ended! Most people in Malaya find themselves growing weaker and weaker as the days roll by – thank God I am growing stronger. Health is vitally important in this country and I never take any chances with it. Of course one is bitten about ten times per day by mosquitoes, but luckily only a small percentage of mosquitoes are malarial carriers. After lunch the C.O. and I went for a 20 mile run along the coast and back again; I love racing along the sands at full speed in a car. Most interesting to me was the new scenery and strange villages along the shore. I saw two pretty little islands about ½ mile or ¾ mile from the beach and I vowed that I would visit them some day and feel what it is like being on such a South Sea island! A single palm on the shore, a grassy hillock in the centre, surrounded by trees, and all around a tiny golden beach!

You must not worry about me at all, Eileen, ever. God will send me safely back to you if it is His Holy Will; we place all our trust in His Sacred Heart and He will not fail us. Oh, my darling, how I wish I could see you again and tell you that I love you with my whole heart and soul; all I can do is write to you about it. I shall always love, Eileen, and nobody else but you; I am all yours and ever shall be yours. This letter has been dull and not exciting, but please forgive me, my dearest one; may be the climate is to blame! The only thing I have wanted to say to you daily in my diary is that I love you.

May God bless you my own darling, and may His Blessed Mother protect you from all harm.

Ever your loving

Frank.

P.S. Love to all at home and Frances.

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Monday, November 3rd [1941]

Eileen my own darling,

Another day, another month, nearer to the end of the war and nearer to seeing you again. I have never been closer to your heart than I am now; you have never been dearer to me than now. If I could only tell you how very much I love you Eileen, and how I long to see you again, I would feel much happier. I am still in the same place and I am still happy in my own way here. It is you who has made me so happy – your love, your prayers, and your letters. God alone knows what would have happened to me during all these weary trying months in Malaya without you by my side. Yes my dearest one, I have ever kept you by my side and oh what a help you have been to me – in fact my good Guardian Angel must consider you as quite a rival as my protector and guide! I owe my happiness to you, Eileen; I owe everything to you. That is why my only fear now is that I shall never be able to love you enough in return – you have all of me and all of my love; you shall always have these my darling. Yet these seem so small in comparison with what you have given to me. How I hope and pray that my love can bring you half the happiness that yours has brought to me. Above all else you have made me a better man in God's sight and that is the most important thing to our love. Since we found each other I have prayed harder and more earnestly than ever in my life before.

It is now over a week since your last letter reached me and already I am clamouring for the next one – in fact I began clamouring the day after it arrived! It is because I love you so much and your letters bring me such great joy – I know it is a joy that no other man in Malaya could experience. I do write you very strange disjointed letters in my weekly diary. Maybe I am thoughtless and do not take enough care with them. I sit down every evening and write about anything and everything that comes into my head; I tell you what my heart longs to tell you for itself. I tell you of my dreams and hopes and fears. It all must make very boring reading material because I never have anything interesting to tell you – never any news; and so I am ashamed of my letters. Nothing ever happens in this place and the only excitement I know is the arrival of your letters! I could tell you about yesterday and the strange wild man from the Ulu I met on the beach; he had a huge monkey on a chain and this brute was taller than himself! I could tell you of my coolie friends at the Ferry and my very special coolie whom I call "Charlie" and for whom I bought some bananas yesterday!

Today has been dull because it was a day in camp but life is never dull for a moment with me. This sounds paradoxical but it is true, Eileen. I have strange jobs to do and none of them ever approach medicine at all! Please tell me how you manage your young ladies of Loreto Convent when they are naughty; do you have to punish them in some way? I find it very difficult dealing with offenders; I never want to punish a single man – oh what an officer!! However I do notice that when I have to punish the men they always take it well because they know that they have deserved it and never do they bear any malice. I can make them smile five minutes later!! Today I received a copy of the Times Annual 1941 and sent it to Anne. Your copy was sent direct about a month ago and you should have it right before Christmas. This was the first time I had seen it (today) and I thought it grand stuff; much of it has local interest for me, but I know that you would appreciate it all when you see it. Do you still love me Eileen?? Are you still the same shy schoolgirl whom I loved so very much in the past and still love or are you very much "grewed-up"!! My darling it is past midnight, it is raining out in this verandah, and the mosquitoes are biting! Bed is calling and I cannot resist! What a weak man you are going to marry! Good night my darling and God bless you.

Tuesday – November 4th

Eileen, my dearest, are you taking good care of my heart? It has always belonged to you and it always will, but you will have to handle it very carefully because there is so much love in it for you that it is ready to break at any moment. I treasure your love and your heart above all else in the world, and never once in the smallest thought

could I betray your trust in me. You know that no matter how long we may be parted, no matter how long we may have to wait for each other, it can make no difference to my love for you – I can only love you more and more the longer I have to wait for you. If two people were ever meant for each other surely we are those two people. We were only children when we first met but we must have loved each other since that day even though we did not fully realize it. It was earnest prayer and nothing else which has brought us together again in spite of the thousands of miles which separated us at the time and in the midst of a horrible war. The awful part for me is that you are in the front line and I am very far removed from the battle-front; you are in danger, while I am safe; your very food and clothing are rationed while I am living in a land of plenty. My heart is ever with you, my dearest one, sharing your danger, your troubles and discomforts. I am so very far away from you and feel so useless no matter how much I may want to help you; so all that I can do is to be with you in spirit and to pray constantly for your safety. My dearest, nothing must ever happen to you; that's why you must take every care of your health and your safety. I could never face life without you, Eileen; I could not live without you love.

The war seems to go on and on, spreading every day, but still I put my trust in Pope Pius' prophecy and know that it will all soon be ended. I think the war would have been ended long ago if there had been 50 million Irishmen in France instead of Frenchmen. They would have fought to the last man and would still be fighting all over Europe against the invaders of their native land. Fighting is in our blood – and so is praying.

I have been in camp all day but I managed to make it quite interesting for myself. The honourable British Resident in Pahang came to have a look at our camp today and it seems this was a great honour! All I could see as I shook hands with him was a tall portly man dressed in a white suit and "crowned" with a wide-brimmed cowboy hat which carefully shaded a large oval puffy face and its fair baby complexion! Am I very critical Eileen? Anyhow this is a very accurate description of the honourable gentleman. He is divorced from his wife as most Europeans are in Malaya but that does not prevent her father from living with the Resident! This grand old chap is 90 years of age and invariably has the same story of what he told Baldwin in '35 and what he told Prince Konoye³⁷ in '38!! Yet people think this old "buffer" the greatest bore in all Malaya! I medically inspected 150 men this afternoon but alas this did not mean medical work for me – it is all a routine and not very interesting. This evening I organized a party of men and together we made a new basket-ball ground among the rubber trees. Later I hope to have a small hockey and football pitch too. The men love games and do appreciate what is being done for them in camp in the sports line. They have now got volley ball, basket ball, football, hockey, badminton, tenny-coit etc, so they are not badly off at all – in fact they have many more games than any other unit in this district. Of course this is because I am the sports officer!!! I am still very modest! After midnight m'lady and I must away to my dreams. Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

Wednesday – November 5th

Eileen, my own darling, I must tell you some wonderful news quickly because I am very thrilled about it and I only hope it will thrill you half as much. A few short weeks after receiving this letter you will, please God, be wearing a very lovely plain gold ring which has three beautiful diamonds in it! It is our ring darling – our engagement ring and though I have only seen a picture of it I know that it will be a nice one. You must promise me to send it back if you do not like it and have it changed for another one; if you would like to have it altered in any way please do so, Eileen. If you wish to have a miniature inscription put on the inside you may have it. I know that God will not allow 1941 to end without your ring safely on your finger. Of course you will have it blessed, my dearest one, and when you are putting it on your finger please shut your eyes and dream for that moment that I am beside you – you have agreed to this already. My darling, I do want you to love this ring; it means so much to us – it symbolizes our betrothal, our great love, and a promise that will never be broken. Wear it always, Eileen, and then I shall know that there is one more tie between us, though we could not have been closer together than in these past months. I am so very excited about the news and I almost feel as if I were awaiting the arrival of a ring and not you! I have arranged all the details about delivering the ring to you and the conditions on which it will be sent (changed if required). Let me know immediately it arrives; I shall not rest until it is safely on your finger. I shall put it on for you again when I reach home again – and that will be very soon now. My own dearest one I do love you so very, very much tonight because this is surely a mile-stone in our lives; tonight we have been united more closely than ever before. I could never love anyone but you, Eileen; you have always come first and you always shall. Nobody else seems to exist in this world except you; I live for you my dear Eileen, and you alone.

All your letters have reached me safely, thank God; and the latest one was written from Killough on 24th August. You have been so thoughtful and good to me during these long months of waiting; you have written too

³⁷ Prince Fumimaro Konoe was Prime Minister of Japan between June 1937 and January 1939 and then again between July 1940 and October 1941.

often to me – you should have been enjoying your holiday instead of writing to a useless young fellow like me. You have made my exile so very sweet and happy; I often wonder what right have I to be so happy in this sad world and living under such conditions. I love you so much, Eileen, and yet all I can give you in return is my love and my devotion for all of my life. I shall never grow tired of giving where you are concerned. I am all yours and I shall always love you no matter what happens.

Yet another day in camp but thank God it was a busy one. I had grand fun with the men at a basket ball match this evening – they love this game above the others. Then I had a long walk in the woods all alone but not quite alone because you were there too in those leafy glades by my side as I swung along. I sang all our Donegal songs – at least I attempted to sing them – “Crucia Glas na h-Eireann”, “Is grad mo croide tu, Tir Connail Astoir”. They brought me back again to Ranafast and to you, my darling. How I loved those Ceilidhs, the dancing, the music, and the songs. Somehow ever since my Ranafast days I have always preferred Irish dancing to English – for sentimental reasons and other reasons too. I thought that they brought me nearer to you, Eileen, and to our first meeting at a Ceilidh. Are you annoyed that I should still prefer Irish dancing; I know you like ballroom dancing. However you shall not be deprived of this pleasure because we shall attend various dances during the year.

There is a big day outside camp tomorrow and though it starts at 6 a.m. it will be a day of fresh air, sunshine, sea breezes, and a swim – not to mention a grand trip in an open truck along the sands. Did you know that this is poor old Guy Fawkes Day? I read in the papers today of a very brave Catholic Bishop in Germany who denounced the Nazis and their crimes against innocent Catholic clergy and nuns. He knew it would mean the concentration camp for him but did his duty as a Catholic and oh it made me so proud to belong to the same religion as such a man. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Thursday – November 6th

This morning I was up with the dawn at 6 a.m.; tomorrow it will be at 5.30 a.m.! My day was spent on a picturesque tropical shore and so you may guess how pleasant my work was. We were out doing an anti-malarial survey of the proposed site for the new holiday camp and selecting likely places for water supply. As usual we made a picnic of it though we only had sandwiches and fruit. We had a dip before lunch and oh my darling it was heavenly. There I was on the most perfect beach in all the world and everything around me was beautiful and unspoilt. There was an amazing swell on the water and waves of 10 ft high were pounding on the shore – when I looked up at them I realised how mighty the sea is, especially when I was tossed about like a cork (me and my 12 st 10 lbs!). Then I swam a bit beyond the waves and found myself, one moment on the peak of a swell and the next moment in an abyss looking up at the mountain of water ahead of sea. I have never had such fun in the water; will you mark the 6th November down in your diary and remind me to tell you all about it when we meet again because there is no space in a letter and because I love you. I loved you in a very special way today – much more than yesterday. What would I do without you to guide me always Eileen? How have I existed without your love during all these years? I have an awful confession to make to you my dearest one and I hope you will understand it – I have always loved you, Eileen, but never once in the past did I have any wish to tell you about my love, never once did I have any wish to kiss you. I had put you on that very high pedestal; I thought that no one must ever kiss you – you were so good; I felt that it would spoil everything. I lived in a romantic world of my own and I put you on high as my ideal; you are still away up above me and you are still my ideal. I shall never change my opinion of you, Eileen; you will always be adored by me and I shall always consider that you are too good to be kissed. This may sound strange my darling but it only shows the respect and regard I have ever held you in apart from my love entirely. I think that the word “respect” describes what I want to express to you; it is vital to my love and opinion of you and it is vital to our future happiness when we are married. I shall not kiss you indiscriminately and yet you shall not have cold duty kisses – each kiss will be holy and sacred to us and will always be an expression of our great love. Oh why am I worrying you about kissing and making you blush! When two people love each other as we do Eileen, kissing is so very unimportant; the things we give and the things we do for each other are more important to us and can bring untold happiness. I shall spend my life doing things for your sake; I shall never tire of giving all for you because it is a source of constant joy to me.

Tomorrow I have to spend on the new holiday camp site “water-draining”. The engineers are going to bore for water in the ground and I have to examine the water. I am looking forward to my day by the sea; it always passes too quickly and I am happier out of camp than within. Never worry about me, Eileen, because I am happy, I am very healthy, and I am safe; I love you with all my heart and soul and I take good care of myself (and my soul). Now do you honestly think that any man could ask for more, having received all the above blessings? And now you will be glad to hear that I am about to have my first “holiday” in Malaya! The C.O. has planned a weekend visit to a small town about 50 miles along the coast. He has invited four of us to accompany him. The journey will almost entirely be made along the shore; we start out at midday on Saturday and are due to return on Sunday evening. We are to stay at the local Rest House for our weekend. It will be a welcome change for us; and changes

are very necessary very often in Malaya! You shall hear all about it in my next letter; so good night and God bless you till tomorrow!

Friday – November 7th

What a glorious day I have had out in the wilds by the sea-shore with half-dozen sepoys. The day began in darkness and in rain, but by 7 a.m. it had cleared up. Boring in the ground for water can be very exciting and it reminds me of “diggin’ for gold”, but it is hard work for the men. Our operation for the day finished at 2 p.m. and then we seven had a wonderful bathe in the sea. The men had never seen a sea like that before, with its huge waves breaking on the shore. We all held hands and went forth to meet the giants coming in from the sea. Each wave scattered us like nine pins, and after each submersion I had to carefully count the six black heads around me and make sure that none were missing! We were the happiest men in all the world as we played around in the waves. I did not have a swim today as I could not leave the men for a moment – I was responsible for their safety. The men are always thinking of home (all exiles do) and when they saw land in the distance across the sea they immediately asked if that were India. It was really part of the Malay coast but as it pointed north east I told them that Japan was away out there and that India was away behind us to the north west. I drove the large 30 cwt. lorry all the way back to camp, over sand, and creeks, and tiny bridges, and a two-planked ferry, and bumpy roads to home without a mishap. We were tired and hungry, but we were happy and glad to be home again. My dearest one, you were in my thoughts the whole day long. As usual I wanted to share all my joys with you. I was happy with those simple Indian men today – happier than I could ever be with kings and princes. It is good to hear the merry laugh of men like these and see them smile as they emerge from under each thunderous wave! They laughed at me and with me; and I did the same to them. If I had been a pukha British officer I would dutifully watched the men from afar and not mingled with them at all, but also I am human and cannot be distant to these good men. They really are grand soldiers too. There is a certain Indian regiment stationed here at present and I am quite sure that if they should ever go into battle they would not yield an inch of ground but would willingly fight to the last man.

Everything is now “laid on” for our big weekend and now it depends upon the weather! I have arranged the rations, the cook, the coolies, and the servants. Tomorrow night should find me writing to you many miles away from here, but I shall be loving you even more than I love you tonight. My own darling, won’t you please come and see me for Christmas! You would have heaps of time during your vacation! I am not worth it, Eileen, nor am I worthy of the great love which you have for me. My eyes are beginning to close – good night and God bless you, my own dear Eileen.

Saturday – November 8th

It is 10.30 p.m. and I am sitting on the window-sill of my bedroom in the Rest House at Kemaman. A few yards in front of me I can see a small pier; beyond is a broad tropical river and the moon is shining on its still surface; the sea is about 2 miles away and I can see the intermittent flashes of the local light house from its perch on the headland beyond. It is a strange place in a strange land and is just like a small town away up in Mississippi! I love seeing places that I have never seen before. It is such a spot that I have always wanted to wander – narrow streets, grass houses raised up from the ground on stilts, a strange people. There is only one European living here and they say he has “gone native” (whatever that means). My darling, I wish you could have been with me this evening as I strolled through this little town, you would have felt like an explorer discovering a new land – you would have seen what you have only read about in books. I don’t know why we have come here at all; the others don’t like it but I think it’s all grand. Most polite visitors to this place would not dream of sitting on the steps of the Rest House in the evening before dinner but that’s what your Frank did at 8 p.m. when he discovered that this was the coolest spot in the building! The natives thought it quite unusual and could not quite understand it! So here I sit in the moonlight 50 miles from camp and I am thinking of you and loving you with my whole heart and soul. I would quote Lorenzo (Shakespeare) and say to you “On such a night ... I am so very happy that I could even live here in this spot and wait for you and never grow weary or bored. This place must be the most isolated on earth – it can only be reached by river and is almost completely cut off from civilization. It took us eight hours to reach it – 50 miles in 8 hours! The first 30 miles were glorious, mostly sandy beaches, sea breezes, and huge waves on the shore, tiny creeks to cross, several one-car ferries. Then came 20 miles of cart track through open fields and ditches, with never a semblance of a road! But I enjoyed every moment of that trip, the journey itself, the swim, the lunch, the puncture!; and then we came to the banks of this big river and came to a halt. We had to leave our trucks on the other side and allow ourselves to be paddled in a canoe up stream to this town. I felt that somehow it wasn’t all real and that I would awake and find it all a dream, but all these dreams were really fact and I drank it all in with eagerness. It was like making history for me and all the time I was planning to tell you all about it; I wanted you to share it with me. And now I am dividing the spoils of my adventures along the Malay coast, but the division is

very unequal because I have seen and heard it all. It is a shame you cannot be here my darling; why cannot you hear the roar of the distant sea as I can now hear it from my window. Still, I am glad you are not being eaten alive by mosquitoes and that you cannot feel the heat of this night on the river (Kemaman). Your little snap is by my side and you are by my side too; I can always feel you near me, Eileen. I always feel your influence for good on me and in my life. You have made such a difference to me, darling; you have made me less selfish and more loving than I have ever been before.

We plan to leave here at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning and get back to camp early. Maybe there will be a letter from my best girl awaiting me and so that car will never be able to travel fast enough for my taste (we were doing 50 m.p.h. on the sands today). I will now say good night from my new abode. I am longing to get into a real bed, in a real bedroom! God bless you, my darling.

Sunday – November 11th

My weekend is over and I am within these four black walls again! What an awful disappointment awaited me when I returned this evening – no letter from you, my darling. A whole fortnight without a letter from my beloved, and I am alive to tell the tale! I know that you have much longer than that to wait for my letters and yet you never complain. My darling, I love you so very much and I love your letters so much that it breaks my heart having to wait for them. What I need is lots of more patience and I do pray hard enough for that nowadays.

Well, my dearest one my glorious trip into Terengganu is ended and I enjoyed every moment of it. When I left you last night I crept on to that lovely soft bed and soon I was asleep – and did not waken till 8 a.m. This is a disgraceful hour for me to get up at; 7 a.m. is my latest rising hour. From my window I watched the small canoes flying up and down the great river; then came a paddle steamer and oh how I wanted to jump aboard. There and then I decided to spend some leave at this place and explore the river by steam boat and motor boat – I cannot imagine anything more exciting. After breakfast we decided to push off for “home”, but ‘ere we departed I bought 3 rattan belts interlacing with each other; they are very cheap and you probably will not wear them but they are made by the local natives under the guidance of the Terengganu Arts and Crafts people. Soon our little canoe was shooting down the river towards the far bank where lay our trucks. I made friends with the local lads of the village there and played a strange game with them. We stood in a circle and a hollow basket-like ball was kicked from one man to another without it ever touching the ground! I was quite good at it even though a beginner! We had a grand send-off from the village by all the inhabitants.

The journey back was grand and interest was added to the trip by one lorry being bogged down in the muddy track. However, we towed it out successfully and we were off again. Need I tell you that I waved to all the children on the way and they were terribly pleased – and so was I. We had a swim in the sea at 1.30 p.m. and those waves were higher than ever before; a small lunch at 2 p.m. and back to camp at 5 p.m. I still think I was the only one of the four to enjoy the whole trip. The others worried about the roads, about our trucks and the food – I worried about nothing. I scared them a bit coming down the river in the canoe by rocking the boat from side to side a little. Before leaving the rest house at Kemaman I read an article by Dean Inge in the Spectator; it was a very bitter attack on the Catholic Church but I found that it made me love my religion even more than before and be so very proud of it. The poor Dean does not realise the good he is doing and it’s a pity all Catholics cannot read his article.

My own darling, my diary for the week has ended and how I hope and pray that it will make you half as happy as I have been in writing it to you. You know that I am all yours; that I love you above all else in the world and that I shall love you forever and ever. Eileen, my dearest one, nothing can change me because I am yours for life. I am longing for your next letter and the news of Felix’s wedding – it is now mid-November and I have not yet heard what happened to you after August 24th. Did mammie ever receive my letter? I sent it to St. Josephs in Killough and I hope it reaches her safely. I had a telegram from New Delhi today from a major Fegan wishing me a happy birthday. I knew “Tim” Fegan very well in Rawalpindi when I was M.O. to his unit. He is of Irish descent of course!

I shall see you soon my darling and I mean this. He will send me back to you quickly now that the war is nearly over. May God bless you, Eileen, and may He keep you safe from all harm. May Mary Our Mother keep you ever under her protection.

Your loving

Frank.

P.S. Love to all and Frances

F.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Monday, Nov. 10th [1941]

Eileen my own darling,

A whole fortnight without a letter and how I do long for your next one to arrive. I love you so terribly much now that I cannot sit placidly and wait for your letters to come. I enquire daily if any mail is expected; I go out daily to meet our dispatch rider and ask him if any letters have come for me; I sit and wait for mail time in the evenings with my eyes fixed on a certain path through the trees expecting the postal orderly each moment. I worry sometimes in case some of your precious letter have been lost on the way; thank God all have arrived safely and the last one was dated August 24th. I want so much to hear what has happened to you during the past three months; I want so much to read of your thoughts, your plans, your work, and your love. God knows that I have never needed your love more than during these days in Malaya; I want you to tell me over and over again that you love me – when I read this, then nothing else matters much to me. With your love I can endure anything; I can conquer anything, but my darling child I need you always by my side to guide me and sustain me. Do you mind very much if I call you a child; it is a great compliment and besides this I am very much older than you! My own Eileen I do love you so very much with my whole heart and soul and mind; everything that I am or have is yours and it will always be yours. You know that I would give up everything including my life for you, Eileen, and yet that would never seem enough. No matter how long I may live I shall never be able to give you enough; I only want you to be happy and if I can succeed in that object then my life will have been a success. I am all yours my dearest one and always shall be yours. I am living for the day when I shall set sail for home – and you my darling; surely that day cannot be far off now. How I long to see you once more and really tell you how much I love you; and how I long to hear from your own dear lips the words that mean so much to me. I shall keep you to your promise of meeting me at Southampton and you all dressed up in your divorce outfit!

Do you ever receive any parcels from me, Eileen, such as magazines, snaps, candlesticks, and engagement rings? You will say that this is surely a strange collection but please God they will all reach you safely 'ere this year is out. Maybe you will burn two blessed candles in our candlesticks on Christmas Eve – one for you and one for me – and maybe you will put them at a window (as is customary in Ireland) to show the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph that we are ready to give them shelter at all times. Maybe you will like our engagement ring and wear it always – you are a very wonderful woman to say that you would always wear it in spite of conventions and superstitions. I cannot help loving you, my dearest one, and there must be many men at home who love you too – it's so natural loving you. I am having masses said for mother, Josie, and Charlie this month by the Redemptorists at Singapore and I shall have a Mass said for your intentions very soon.

Life goes on as usual in camp though I had that Monday morning feeling after a grand weekend away up the coast. I posted your weekly letter this morning and on Wednesday it will take wings and fly away across the Pacific to you my darling in the Emerald Isle. There was a row last night when the men invited only me to their "show" but thank God things have settled down today (a bit). It is now 11.20 p.m. and I have to get up at 6 a.m. Good night my own darling and may God bless you.

Tuesday – November 11th

My own darling, I am not really impatient or complaining when the mails are slow in reaching me, but I do long for your letters so very much. I am the happiest man in the whole world but my happiness can never be complete until I see you again. Some day we shall walk hand in hand up the garden path to Spring Villa and you will show me to your dear ones. I want so much to meet them all, Eileen, and know them and love them even more than I do now. You have a big advantage over me now, my darling, because you have met all the Murray family and I have not met your dear ones as yet. Did your dear mother ever receive my letter? I wrote to her about 2 months ago, and told her that she is my mother too and that I loved her as such. Even in war time it is nice to have a home, and a good father and mother. Exile can be so heartbreaking at times, in fact it can be unbearable for many people, but thank God, He has not allowed me to suffer much in this respect. I can thank you, too, for this, Eileen, because you have made my exile actually a pleasant thing and bearable. You have given me so much happiness under almost impossible conditions. My darling, please never cease praying for me, because your prayers are so vital to me; please love me always; and please do write to me as you have done in the past months. You have been a brick all along to write so constantly, especially during your vacation at Killough.

My dearest one, how is your Domestic Economy getting on? Are you a very good cook? Can you darn and mend things? Can you cook edible meals or would you still like to 'try out' your dishes on poor me? I hope Josephine has given you much useful information about Domestic Economy. By the by is this little sister still in Barnsley sticking to her post in spite of the war? It is good to stay at one's post, no matter how safe home may be; Josephine would not have been satisfied or happy at home, Eileen, and she deserves great credit for being so plucky. Mairead is lucky to be in Dublin's fair city; is she spending another year there or is she due back home? Would she like to visit Una at Sion Hill? I know she would be very welcome there. Tell me all about Fergus and Hugh when you write again; I would love to know these two young men. And how is my darling – Eileen? Does she still love me and does she take good care of her health? Tell her that I love her with all the love of my heart and soul and that I shall always love her. I am sorry that the little Frances will have to wait for at least a year before getting married; but I expect it cannot be helped. She is a grand wee girl and I always love her. It was she and she alone that gave me hope when things seemed hopeless; we owe much of our happiness to your best friend and we shall never forget her. All the McNabbs were so very good and kind to me – and oh how I imposed on them. I was always so happy at Castlewella – even though my Eileen was not always there during my visits. I shall ever remember those happy days in Co. Down – please God they will come again for all of us. Together we shall mend our way to Castlewella and renew our friendship with all the good people there.

Another dull day in camp but not for me – I was so very happy the whole day long. I had heaps of work thank God and did not finish till 5 p.m. – but I started my day at 6 a.m.! And now I am going off to get some sleep before the dawn! Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

Wednesday – November 12th

My darling, I felt so terribly happy when I awoke this morning because I had been dreaming of you the whole night through. I have thought of you and this dream all the day long, and oh how very happy it has made me. I dreamed that I had come back to you and that our reunion was all that we imagined it would be. I was a bit annoyed with myself because all my bags had not reached home from India and I longed to show you the contents and give you all the things I had collected for you in the East. Then I dreamt of our life at Beechwood after our marriage. You actually kissed me several times – aren't you ashamed of yourself! Then, in my dream, I saw you again. We were surrounded by our friends one evening at Beechwood and you were a perfect hostess, my darling. They all seemed to love you, Eileen, and that alone brought me great joy. Somehow I did not mind much whether they loved me or not – I only wanted them to love you. One of our guests was a priest – it must have been Father Murphy (though I have never met him). It is God who allows us to dream and He was very good to me last night when I needed it most. I wish I could dream of you every night, Eileen, then I would be thinking of you for 24 hours of every day. Here I am loving you more and more every day of my life, thinking of you more and more, coming nearer to you in every way – and these thousands of miles between us become a mere nothing. I am very optimistic about the war just now and think that it will be all over within the next two months. This is not just wishful thinking; I am convinced of it. Won't it be wonderful when it does come, my darling; I think the end of the war will mean more to us than to any other two people in the whole world.

I had a letter today from the Indian Red Cross Society at New Delhi which informed me that my message to Mattie in Brittany was already on its way. How I hope and pray with all my heart that the message will bring her some joy in her exile. My heart goes out to that poor child who is so completely cut off from you all at home, though Celtic Brittany is not so far away from Celtic Ireland. My darling, if there are any special messages you want me to send to Mattie please let me know and I shall send them off immediately. All these letters through the Red Cross Society to people living in occupied Europe are first sent to Geneva and are there re-directed to their destination. You know my dearest one, that if there is anything in the world that you want, anything you want me to do for you – only say the word and I shall do it for you. There is nothing on earth that I would not do for you, Eileen. This is very natural when two people love each other as much we do. My life is yours, Eileen, and I am yours now and for ever. Nothing can change me; nothing can ever come between us and our love. I shall wait for you as long as long as you wish me to wait; I shall come to you as soon as ever I can then we shall never know what separation is like again in our lives. We shall always love each other, we shall always pray hard – these two will bring us great happiness during our married life. I am preparing very hard for our marriage, Eileen, and I know that you are doing the same; our prayers now should always be to ask God and His Blessed Mother to bless our love and to make us enter into that Holy Sacrament with simple hearts and the purest of minds.

Today has been hot and sticky in camp – I mean worse than usual! Of course it rains every day as usual, but we don't mind that at all! I cannot imagine what a winter is like since I came to Malaya; I still have my cold shower every evening – the thought of hot water chills me! It was very pathetic at dinner tonight when an Ordnance Officer told me that his girl in England had not written since February last! Still the poor lad sends telegrams (prepaid) and Clipper letters – and still no reply. Strange how people differ in nature – I would not dream of

mentioning the word girl friend at all, because you, Eileen, and your love are so dear to me. Another officer (Dublin man!) came back from leave in Singapore this evening and he spent hours recounting his experiences there. A typical day spent there consisted of getting up at midday, having lunch, going to the cinema, having tea, going to bed, having dinner, going to a cabaret, and home to be at 2.30 a.m.! No wonder the poor lad feels tired after his "holiday" at Singapore. My darling, I would go crazy if I had to spend a holiday like that. I would go to Cameron Highlands and live at a guest cottage up there. I would get up early, walk for miles to mass, come back to breakfast ravenously hungry; I would play golf and tennis, and ride; I would tramp over hill and dale. I would visit the convent there and take those wild McMahon children out for the day – I would play with them and eat hot scones and tea with them! I would go to bed tired but happy at 10 p.m. and how I would thank God for such a glorious day. Then I might go to the seaside in quaint Catholic Malacca; there I would swim, and fish and sail and walk the whole day long! These are my ideas of a happy holiday in Malaya; how I would hate the cinema daily, a hot sticky city, the cheap cabaret with its fighting, struggling crowd, with its hot smoky atmosphere. My darling, I know that you love the life that I love so much — the life in the open; it is good in every way and I know it is the life that God likes too because he created nature and all its beauty – the hills, the trees, the flowers; the wind, the rain, the sun and the stars. He meant us to enjoy them and we shall, my darling. Good night and may God bless you now and always.

Thursday – November 13th

I have just read what I wrote last night on this page – my dreamings and musings – and I wonder what you think of it all. My darling, I cannot write you a decent letter nowadays because nothing ever happens in this place! And I have to write down my dreamings and my thoughts. I am writing these lines in bed (my camp bed) and its mighty awkward sitting bolt upright with nothing to lean against! It is my first letter in bed I have written to you; I am not ill but I had to take refuge in bed under my net to get away from the mosquitoes! It's raining hard outside and so the mosquitoes all came indoors to bite. You would laugh if you could see me now in this small room, writing pad on knee, and oil lamp propped up on a pillow at my feet! My bed is in great danger of going up in flames but it would take more than fire to stop me from writing to you my darling and telling you how much I love you. I have been analysing my feelings today and have realised that my greatest trial now waiting for your letters to come. Isn't it very natural that I should look forward to your letters so much my dearest one, even when I know they are not due. Your letters are all that I have Eileen – I have got nothing else. Sometimes I think that your next letter will never come; the time seems so long – but I always offer my "act" up to God.

My C.O. told me today that he has asked the powers above for sanction to send me to Ipoh on business for 10 days. It will thus be a free trip but will also be a holiday for me in a way. I shall be able to see my friends the Wimseys and also Frank Reid the solicitor. My trip to Ipoh would not come off until January next! I have something strange to tell you about my life in the camp. There are two Captains here, both doctors, who always salute me as if I were still a Major (and they know I am not) and they invariably call me "sir"! It is very sweet of them but I don't care for it much. The men still call me the "Major Sahib" but that is just force of habit. They remind me of children very much – and not unlike rabbits when I make my rounds in the evenings and they scurry away under their mosquito nets! I smack all bare arms and bare legs with my stick – these must be covered up in the evenings to keep the mosquitoes from biting! I find that my method is much better than punishing the men on the following day. Tomorrow will be a field day out for me and oh it is good to get out of camp or a day. I love you my darling; I shall always love you and nobody but you. I have an early start tomorrow and I shall "see" you when I return to camp in the evening. God bless you, Eileen.

Friday – November 14th

My own darling, a letter from you today! You know what that means to me – I am so very very happy and I am away in the clouds again. As with all your letters I have read and re-read it over and over again. The wedding group was lovely, Eileen, and you were like a queen in it – I like this photograph of you very much. Do you remember the three snaps you sent me many months ago? Well, you wanted my honest opinion about these and here it is – the golfing one is you and I love it best of all, the group one where you are sitting on the grass, I like it too, and the deck chair one was not you and so I did not like it! Are you hurt my darling when I tell you this? Do not be, Eileen, because photographs do not matter a lot when two people love each other as we do. I was heartbroken to hear that you had to wait for a whole month and then a solitary letter arrived from me. A letter must have been lost, and you can easily find this out by checking the other letters and their dates. My darling, I have done everything humanly possible to ensure that you will receive my letters often; I have written daily without fail, the letters are all registered and sent by "Clipper" for safety – everything to make doubly sure that you will not have to wait for my letters. It must have hurt you terribly, Eileen, but it has hurt me even more than you. I love you so much that the thought of you being disappointed in any way worries me in case I have neglected you. But

Eileen I haven't let you down for a single day since we came together again. I am so very selfish to complain that your letters were coming at intervals of 3 weeks – and you poor child had to wait for a month. Can you forgive me for being so selfish? Let us just blame it on the climate! Let me know if any of my letters are lost, then I shall write you an extra special one to compensate you. Remember that I shall write to you every day so long as we are apart. I am very sorry to have upset you with all the changes in my address, but my darling, I am in the Army and must obey orders, otherwise my letters would never reach you at all. It is not my doing – it is the Army's! But you can depend upon it, that if you use the address which I send to you, then all your letters will reach me safely. That Bombay address annoyed you, and me, and every officer in Malaya but we had to use it or else have our letters destroyed. Thank God we have at last got an accurate address. "Singapore" does not mean that I am stationed there; "Bombay" does not mean that I am in India or am likely to go there!

I had a cruel disappointment today when the C.O. told me that I would have to spend Christmas in this camp. This means no Mass for me on Christmas Day. My darling, can you imagine how I feel about this – I who would give anything to hear a simple mass at any time, I who haven't seen a priest for two whole months, and now to be denied Mass and Communion on Christmas Day. The C.O. is going on leave, the second-in-command is going on leave, and I have been ordered to stay in camp. I shall find a way out of it somehow, Eileen, because I must have Mass on that day. When I arrived in this place on August 5th I sent you a letter and told you that there was no priest here; I described my whole journey through Malaya by road from day to day 'en route' – you could not have received this letter, Eileen. I am very sorry to have worried you by telling you about my troubles in the Field Ambulance, but thank God they are all over now and I am happy with my men, my fellows, and my work. When I tell you in my letters that we shall soon meet again I am only indulging in wishful thinking and trusting in Pope Pius X's prophecy. How I pray and pray with all my might for that great day to come.

I had expected a glorious day by the sea today but alas I only had a glimpse of the sea from afar. However I had a happy time with the men in the open, even though we were "retreating" all the time during our manoeuvres! Then to come back to camp pleasantly tired to find a letter from you – it is my idea of perfect bliss. Good night my darling and God bless you.

Saturday – November 15th

I have had a grand time today – a swim and a game of football! The sea was terribly rough, but that made it all the more thrilling; I swam and swam in that seething ocean until I thought my heart would burst with joy. Then came football on the way back and I was young again running wildly around that green field with those simple brown skinned men from India. Today I realised that I was never meant to be closed up in this camp among the trees all the day long; I feel much less depressed when I get away from this plantation, and am better in every way. Tomorrow we are having a Sunday picnic on a beautiful shore about 20 miles away from here. Don't you envy me with all this swimming in mid-November – or does it make you shiver?

I am still in the same station and have been here since early in August. In a way it is safer than the last one in the mountains. We have that awful task on our hands of sitting and waiting for things to happen; I am not allowed to give you my opinion as to whether things will happen or not! I have not had my trip in a bomber yet but it is due very soon now – you must not worry about this as it will only be one trip. I am wondering what it will be like; have you ever been up in a plane, Eileen?

And now young lady you are about to have another lecture from me! I love you with all my heart and soul, and you love me, my dearest one, and have promised to become my wife one day. I trust you, Eileen, as I have never trusted even my dear ones at home – it is natural that this should be so. I want you to have a good time, to get as much enjoyment out of life as ever you can in these dark days of war. It will make me very happy to know that you are going to dances and pictures. I have not the least objection how often you go and with whom you go; you are not a child and you have sense and judgment of character. You were quite right to go with Mr. Murphy to the pictures in Omagh; it would have been very rude to have refused his kind offer. My darling child, never hesitate on my account about such things – you are not going to elope with Mr. Murphy!! And now, Eileen dearest, do we understand each other perfectly in these matters and have I made it all clear to you? We love each other so much and trust each other so much that going to a cinema with Mr. Murphy is a very very minute thing indeed to me. I shall look up Mrs. Valda Roberts in Malaya some fine day at Kampar (300 miles away), and I shall talk for ages with her about home, Omagh and you; but all the time I know that you trust me not to run away with the good lady – and all the time I shall be loving you and you alone!

I am so glad you have found really good digs in Omagh, darling; it is so important to your health. The Rays have been very good to you, Eileen; I can well imagine you and the good Major discussing the international situation over a cup of tea. You are quite right about the financial side of the question – retired majors have a very small pension indeed. I feel that you will be happy with these people, my darling, and that you will not have to change your digs again until your teaching days are over. Some day soon I shall command you to stop teaching

and marry me, and you will meekly obey my royal command! My own darling, there will never be any “commands” in our lives. Our home will be the happiest that has ever been on earth – with one exception, and our home will be modeled on that home at Nazareth. You will never hear a single unkind word from me, please God, and I shall make you the happiest wife in the world. Have no fears about not pleasing me – you will always be a good wife. Do not worry about your cooking; no matter what you may cook I shall eat it, not because it will please you but because I am very easy to please with food. If you had seen the chunks of beef I ate tonight at dinner and the lumps of dough I ate in lieu of pudding, you would say that I would eat anything!!! My own darling, I do not think we should buy anything big in the way of furniture for our home, just yet. We could buy very many of the smaller things, such as pictures, a nice clock, tea tables, card tables; chairs, a dog!, carpets etc. and anything at all that you may fancy. Remember that I leave it to you and your choice will always be mine and I shall love it. Just buy whatever is going, my dearest. Your mother is an angel to have given us that eiderdown, the spread and sheets for our home. Please thank her for me because we are both her children now and we shall always love her as our mother. She is so very good, Eileen, to think of our home already and she has not even met me yet. I would dearly love to see our screen with its Donegal scene on it – the word ‘Donegal’ means so much to both of us. No, my darling, there is nothing you can make for me or send to me in Malaya; knitting of course is out of the question – I am warm enough, thank you, in this heat!!

And now comes the awful question of finance! I have formulated a plan and I hope you will agree with me about it Eileen. In the near future I shall send you about £20 and I would like you to open a joint banking account at the Munster & Leinster Bank, High St., Belfast. I want you to keep your own bank account at Omagh and not put any of your money into our joint account at Belfast. I shall send about £25 each month to our joint account direct from here. I am afraid you will have to “manage” this account, draw a cheque book and bank book. Now, my darling, all the purchases for our home will be made from our joint account and you can sign the cheques accordingly. Of course you can use the money for anything else you wish. You are doing all the work for our home and I am doing nothing. Is your new supper cloth very beautiful, Eileen? I do not deserve such a person as you for my wife – I shall never be worthy of you or your great love. Do you consider that silver candlesticks are a very foolish contribution to our home? It is your Christmas present this year and I hope they reach you safely. The gold (plain) ring, with three diamonds set in platinum has also been sent and you might even have it for Christmas too. Let me know when all the precious parcels reach you, Eileen. The little Malay priests gift of silver souvenirs from Kelantan state (Malaya) will not arrive at Spring Villa until after Christmas. I am looking forward to seeing this little man again and also my little French priest. The latter is due here on December 21st to say mass. Am I being selfish in asking whether you still go to two Masses on Sundays and offer one for me – I need it so badly, Eileen. But, do not worry about my prayers and my religion; I never miss my prayers and they are earnest ones. I am a better Catholic in Malaya than I have ever been in Ireland. Yes, our preparation for marriage is perfect; our love is being tested and chastened; our prayers much more sincerely said than in we were seeing each other daily. It is a very hard preparation but it will be all the better in the sight of God. We have been so very lucky in having such good parents. When I was young and foolish I thought my parents were hard and cruel, but thank God it was not too late when I found out how really good and loving they were to me and all of us. Imagine you sleeping in my room at Beechwood; my father is spoiling you with such luxury! I spent 10 rheumatic weeks in that room once upon a time and it was then I asked Una one day to buy me a St Louis (Kilkeel) scarf of blue and silver! How many cricket matches have I not seen from these pleasant windows; and how often have my thoughts strayed to the foot of Divis over beyond in the distance. It was always you, Eileen, and it has been you ever since then and always it will be you. You have all of me and all of my love. I am yours forever and ever.

May God bless you, my darling, and may Mary our mother watch over you and keep you safe from all harm.

Ever your loving
Frank.

P.S. Love to all at home

P.P.S. I have another “Asia” ready for dispatch to you.

Love

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Sunday, November 16th [1941]

Eileen my darling,

I sent your usual weekly letter off today and also another magazine ("Asia"). I often wonder whether my letters reach you at all or not; you are so very far away and each letter has a long perilous journey to make 'ere it reaches you. Your last letter dated September 4th reached me on Friday last and you know how happy it has made me. My darling, you look lovely in the wedding group; the other two ladies may be very nice but you are the most stately and the most handsome of them all (or may be I am blind and lovers do not see ... !). Your three snaps are here on table and also the wedding group, and I love them all. Need I tell you that I love you more than ever before and that I shall always love you. All this waiting can only strengthen our love; it gives us time for a real preparation for marriage and our preparation could not be better. This separation will only make us realise how much we mean to each other and when we are united again we shall appreciate one another and our love. We cannot pray hard enough to God during these trying days, while the future is so uncertain; we need all His help and all the graces He can give us. I know He will bless our love and our marriage, because we have placed ourselves in the care of the Blessed Mother. If only I could pray half as earnestly as my father does, then I would be happier. I felt that I am not doing enough toward our cause and that you and your dear ones seem to be doing all the praying. I would give anything to be stationed at a place where I could have daily mass – I amiss mass so terribly and it does worry me. However it has made me realise how much I love Mass and it has made me determined never to miss a single one again when it is possible for me to go. I wrote to Father Girard today and arranged with him to say a mass each for mother, Josephine, and Charlie (R.I.P.). I told him how welcome he would be here in December when he comes. I asked him to send me the address of the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Redemptorists in Singapore.

You are very good to be working so hard for our home. As I cannot actually make things, I fear that all the making will be left to you, Eileen. I want you to buy things with money from our account, but the money must be mine – you must not spend any of your own money. In this way I shall be doing my bit. However I leave everything entirely to you, your choice of things will always please me, because you have much better judgment in these matters. I hope and pray that the stuff I bought in India for our home will not all be eaten away by moths and ants! Wait until you see the lovely hand made Kashmir silk tea table set, and the wood carvings, and the jewelry box and the carved cigarette box and the pictures and my white elephants!! As usual my purchases are all useless, while yours are practical and sensible. You poor child, what a stupid fellow you have chosen as a husband. However, if you ever want my advice about what you should buy or not buy for our home, I shall try to help you out as best I can.

I had a glorious day in the sea today. It was raining hard when we entered the water and the sea very rough – the waves were terrific. I was the first man in and the last man out of the water! I love bathing or swimming in the sea because I have a great sense of freedom and well being immediately I slip on a bathing costume and start swimming down to the water's edge. The day cleared up well, and we had lunch under the palms. Then we all walked towards the rocks and the big headland about ½ mile down the beach. I made the first discovery – a cave hidden away among the rocks. I thought of the bad old days when pirates were rampant along these shores, I pictured smugglers using this old cave as their secret rendezvous! Nobody seemed keen to explore the darkness of the cavern so off I went alone; I crept up and up along the narrow passage – it was very exciting walking into the unknown. An octopus would not have been a welcome creature to meet! Eventually I saw the light of day above me and lo and behold! I found myself out near the top of the headland. I was thrilled and awed by the view below me as I looked down through the foliage – a seething mass of foam, terrific waves dashing against the rocks below and sending spray 20 feet in the air. Straight ahead was that lovely stretch of sand that runs for 7 miles along the shore. I was monarch of all I surveyed! I did not want to leave this beauty but it was growing late and I could not keep the other waiting – I could hear their shouts and whistles away below. I picked a bunch of wild flowers at the entrance to the cave and brought them back to camp to beautify our dining table! And now it is 12 midnight and I have to get up at 6.30 a.m. It would have been a perfect day if you had been there with me to share it. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Monday – November 17th

I am disgusted with the letters I am sending you nowadays and I wonder how you can read them at all. The station is much less invigorating than my station in the mountains; it is hotter and stickier, and were it not for the sea I would have nothing here in the way of entertainment. There is no adventure, nothing to tell you about, but thank God I never allow myself to become depressed in this home under the trees. It is prayer and your love that make me so very happy – without these I would be utterly lost in this place. My next-door neighbour (Major Hill) came to me last evening as I sat writing outside my door and told me how terribly depressed he felt – “this life and this place and this climate are getting me down.” Early in the day he had asked me why did I seem so happy – I was singing this morning! Some chaps cannot sleep, some cannot eat, others have different complaints and others depressed – and yet your Frank has been spared all of this. I do not forget to thank Him for all He has given to me and all the blessings I have received during the past year. I know, my darling, that your prayers have been the cause of all this and how can I thank you enough for everything. This has been the happiest and holiest year of my whole life – and you know the reason for it all. When we meet again, Eileen, and are married, think of the happiness we shall have together, think of the good that we can do together, think of the prayers and masses and Lough Dergs we shall offer up. And all the time you will never have an unhappy moment – I just could not hurt you intentionally, my dearest one; there will be no quarrels. Did you know that the only thing I really detest in life is quarrelling and worst of all I cannot endure not being on speaking terms with people. I have very rare quarrels with folk who are not my friends, but I have to “make it up” again about 10 minutes later! So, my darling, how could I ever quarrel with you when I love so much – how could I ever stop speaking to you?

As you know there is another crisis looming up in the Far East again, but you must not worry about this, Eileen, because there has been a crisis every week here for years. Does it bring you any comfort to learn that I am prepared in the way that you would want me to be prepared to meet whatever lies ahead of me. And all this I owe to you and your prayers, my dearest. I am lucky to have inherited my father’s complete lack of nerves – it is not bravery or bravado, I just feel that if the house fell down now I would sit here and finish my letter to you as if nothing had happened! Poor Philip has been less fortunate and I do sympathise with him. Have you met him yet, Eileen, and how do you like him? Yes, you are like an absent-minded professor – you did not tell me a thing about Felix’s wedding, but the newspaper cutting really told me everything! Do not take this seriously; I think you have done wonders to have sent me so much news, and more important, so much love. I shudder to think what would happen to me if your letters did not come and I pray to God that they will never cease. And if the war should interfere with our correspondence, He would give me strength to carry on and not allow me to despair. I shall love you until I die, Eileen; this is the only thing I can be sure of in this life.

It has been a glorious day in camp today. Somehow I feel happier as the days slip by and this may be due to the fact that each day brings me nearer to you. I seem to love the men more every day and they are very lovable; they need lots of understanding and sympathy being away from home for the first time in their lives. I make life as pleasant as possible for them and they appreciate this by working very hard. It is ages since I have had a man charged with even a minor breach of discipline. The Red Cross sent cigarettes and sweets today for them, the latter for non-smokers. Need I tell you that many grubby-looking and sticky sweet was offered to me today in a dusky hand. They are just like children wanting to share their few sweets with their pals – and I am very proud to be one of their friends. In many ways I am thankful to be with an Indian unit in preference to a British unit. These men from the villages of India are honest, generous, and good – and they are clean. They are deeply religious and pray hard every morning and evening – and they live up to what their religion teaches them.

And now there is only one more thing to tell you and that is, you will be wearing a very nice engagement ring ‘ere Christmas comes! Will you be very annoyed if the note I sent with it does not arrive (at) the same time as the ring. I wanted you to have our ring so desperately that I could not wait. Good night and God bless you my darling.

Tuesday – November 18th

I have just bought something very nice for our home and yet I am not allowed to tell you what it is, nor can I send it to you! Yet another secret! but it may bring you some joy to know that yet another item is waiting to adorn our home. We are fortunate to have so much time on our hands to get things ready for the future, but how I wish with all my heart that we are not given too much time. Oh, my darling, this waiting will come to an end some time, this war must end soon, and we shall be together again never to be parted.

And now I want to make things clear about our future. You have listened patiently to my father’s dreams and plans for us to settle in Beechwood and you did not know how I would react to all those plans of his. You were sensible enough to realise what I have realised so very long ago, that a practice does not exist on the Cliftonville Road for me. However I can promise you that we shall settle down in Beechwood if it is at all possible and it is possible if I can have a practice in North Belfast such as Ardoyne, Old Park, or Newington district – or even further afield. I could have a surgery in the middle of the practice and we could live at Beechwood. It is practicable my

dear Eileen, but I would like your opinion in the matter. You see, my darling, when this war is over, a state controlled medical service is sure to come into force and though this has many disadvantages it should suit us very much. It may abolish the old idea of a family doctor but the patients will get better attention than ever before. I shall be able to visit poor patients more frequently because it will not cost anything for them for extra visits and special attention. That's what I loved about the panel system when I was working in Birmingham; I did work hard for those poor people in the slums and it brought me great joy. It is part of the glory of a doctor's life – one feels that one is doing something useful in life without gaining anything from it by way of recompense except great consolation and happiness – and what better reward could one ask. You will find me an idealist, Eileen, and not very practical in my ways. You will have to teach me how to be more practical – I wish I could be half as methodical as you, Eileen – and yet I think that if I had been different and less idealistic I might not have loved you so constantly during all these years. You were my ideal and so I clung to your image ever since I first met you. I was a queer lad when you knew me in the past and I must have frightened you horribly in those school days and afterwards at Queens. Did I seem very rough and uncouth to you, Eileen? I shall never understand why you ever loved me at all. It was my dear mother who was instrumental in bringing us together again – she hoped and prayed that some day we would get married, and yet I thought that she must have forgotten all about you because it was years since I had told her about you. Imagine, she loved you so much and died without ever having met you. So many people love you, Eileen, and I am so glad that they love you. And you have accepted my poor love and given me yours in return. I treasure your love above all else in this world; I shall always respect it and keep it locked away in my heart where it will be safe for ever. I only wish I could love you even more than I do today; it would make me even happier than I am – I want to keep on giving and never grow weary of it.

I have worked very hard today and that makes me happy. My whole day was spent in camp with the men and as I am on duty I shall tuck them all into bed very soon. I now write to you in the evenings before dinner so that I can go earlier to bed – my after dinner letters used finish at midnight and I had then to get up at 6 a.m. or 6.30 a.m.! Growing boys need their sleep and though I have stopped growing I am still a boy – I love sport, simple things, I love innocence and children. I am still a queer lad! Good night my darling and may God bless you and protect you from all harm.

Wednesday – November 19th

How do you expect me to compete with your letters, Eileen?? A wonderful 10 page letter came today and yet it was only last Friday when your latest one arrived – you are spoiling and ruining me. It was sent on September 14th and oh how very happy it has made me this day. I do not tell “white lies” – your letters are grand and mine could never bring you the happiness that yours have brought to me. You write about all the little things that happen to you in your daily life – and all these are very dear to me. Margaret's little snap of mother arrived safely thank God – you are a darling to send it and it is typical of Margaret to think of me in this way. That little snap and the verse will console me immensely while I am so far away from home. I knew you would like Margaret – one could not have a dull moment in her company, she is so gay and so very happy; nothing ever worries her. She has marvelous pluck and yet withal a perfect nun. She was very keen on dancing, like you, Eileen, and many a scrape we got into at Beechwood for being out late at a dance – and above all missing the family Rosary! The latter was the greatest crime that anyone at Beechwood could commit – and my father was right to insist on a full attendance. And I shall insist, aided and abetted and urged by you, my dearest, on having our family Rosary every single day of our lives – we shall never miss it. Earlier in this letter I told you how much I loathed quarrels and that I would never stop speaking to you – and how I read in your letter that you feel exactly the same as I do about this. Any kind of strife or unpleasantness just kills me too. God has been too good to us in all these things – we always feel the same about things that really matter in life. It will make our married life so much easier; it will be a life of great happiness for us. We shall pray even harder than to God and His Blessed Mother and ask them to bless us both. We cannot be happy without prayer; it is the secret of our present happiness and contentedness. A most awful war is raging, we are thousands of miles apart, and yet we are not unhappy. Our great love would be lost without prayer.

I am a terrible coward, Eileen, and only now have I had enough courage to tell you about your beautiful Rosary beads – the Lourdes pair you sent to me in England. Believe me, my only reason for not mentioning this before was my dread of ever hurting you – and now I hope you will not be hurt. Yes, my darling, those lovely beads did reach me in Birmingham and a nice note with them and I who love you did not acknowledge them. I thought you did not love me then and that you were just a very religious Irish girl sending me a token of regard to an old friend. I treasured that Rosary and brought it to India with me but I also brought another pair of beads (a London pair) to India – the latter were sent to me from that good little nurse I told you about. She might have been to Lourdes at the same time as you! Mary (her name) sent her gift as a token of regard too and wanted me to pray hard with those beads. These two Rosaries remained with me in India until January 1941 and then I gave them away under the following circumstances. It was in Rawalpindi as I was coming out of Church after a visit, I

saw two small Indian children kneeling in prayer at the Grotto of Our lady of Lourdes in the grounds. I came up to them and stood behind them and oh they were so devout and did not take their eyes from the Statue of Our Lady, but I noticed that they had no beads. Next evening I came again to the Grotto and found the same children there, but this time your Rosary and Mary's were in my pocket. Their eyes opened big when they saw the beautiful beads – my darling I had to give them much as I treasured them. I am very sorry now that I gave those beads (yours) away, but it may console you to know that an innocent Indian child is kneeling at Our Lady's feet every evening and is praying for me with your Rosary in his tiny hand. I would never have parted with your Rosary if I had any idea that you loved me; I was convinced that I would probably never see you again. Has this hurt you, my darling? It has taken me a long time to make up my mind to tell you about it all. Please forgive me, Eileen, if I have hurt you in any way.

I was so very glad to hear that all my letters have reached you safely – imagine 5 coming at one time. I was terribly worried in case any were lost; you did not have a letter for a whole month at one period. I never want you to have a moment's uneasiness as long as I can avert it for your sake. Oh, how could I ever be jealous of your male friends; I want you to have such friends and I shall like them when I meet them. May be they are jealous of me instead! I loved my first day at Omagh convent with you and I loved all those nice girls who saw me there!! It is so typical of you, my darling, to tuck me under your arm and carry me off for all your friends to see and listen to all their flattery!! And the greatest compliment of all and the most galling (for me) was when someone said that you resembled me!!! Oh, my own darling, I do love you for being so very very human and natural. I did know that we resembled each other in appearance but how I wish I resembled you much more in every way. Yes, I do feel annoyed at times because I am thin on top – my father's heritage to me! I suppose my hair was too nice and wavy at one time and I was too proud of it – and pride must have a fall! Do you mind terribly, Eileen, about this scarcity of hair in our beloved? I only worry about it now for your sake.

Your friend Mrs. Bell is a sister of my former boss Dr. Macsherry. The latter is very fond of his only sister, even though her son, Louis, almost broke his heart (my boss's heart) in Birmingham. I have met the bank manager brother when he visited the doctor in Birmingham a couple of years back. Give him my regards when you see him again. The poor old doctor is very upset about the loss of his elder son who was killed in action with the R.A.F.; he was a sergeant-pilot in a fighter. I write often to the old man, but I haven't had a letter from him since I came to Malaya. However I did have a letter from his former dispenser, Miss Finney, who is now in the Land Army. The Finney family were very good to me in Birmingham, especially their silver haired mother who was like a queen in spite of her broken leg (which did not mend). Miss Finney very flatteringly wrote that the patients were broken hearted when I left the practice!! Of course it isn't true! You need not be jealous of my girlfriends – they are only friends. I shall tell you more about them anon.

Another busy, happy day in camp and now it has vanished like magic. Good night and God bless you my own darling.

Thursday November 20th

You would be amused at all the queer jobs that I have to do in the Army – everything except doctoring! This morning I spent five solid hours bug-hunting among the men's kit and beds!! Everything was disinfected and also disinfested, boiled and steamed. It is rather good fun, though, because all work stops for the day, the men are happy and as busy as bees laying out their boxes and beds in the sun. For hours I say on a soap box and pronounced "sentence" on each man as he filed past with all his belongings – no one escaped my vigilant eye. In the afternoon the sports officers of all the units here assembled to discuss hockey and football matches and arrangements about grounds. I was very happy at this meeting because I was in my element and discussing my favourite subject – sport. For some reason or another the others regarded me as a sort of authority on these matters – they were amazed at our Field Ambulance having so many games to play and considered us very versatile! The officers were all young chaps and really very nice indeed; I was so happy among them – it was like Queens' days again. You would love these boys, Eileen.

I have a very astounding thing to tell you about my Queens' career. If you had been very nice to me in those days, if you had accepted my love and told me that you loved me – it would have ruined everything for us and our future. I would never have passed my exams at Queens, I would never have qualified; you see, my darling, my love in those days was so romantically inclined as to be impracticable! I was living in a dream and spent my whole day in a dream during my first years at medicine, and did not bother to study and try to make my dreams about you come true. It was only when you began to shun me that I was stung into action and proceeded to study for the first time in my life! I wanted so much to show you what I could do; later on my reason for working hard was to please my father and mother – how I dreaded exam results in case I should have failed and let them down. And yet all the time I was quietly confident in all my exams because I loved the subjects – it was my "trade" and I could never have been anything but a doctor. At the beginning it was o please father that I started medicine at all,

but later I realised his wisdom in choosing this career for me. God had surely strange but wonderful ways in bringing us together again after so many years drifting apart. He allowed you to meet other boys and to like them. He allowed me to meet other girls, to like them, and compare them with you Eileen. And all the time I knew that there was no girl like you in the world, that I would always love and never marry anyone but you my darling. It has been a good thing for us both to have met others, because now we can love each other as never before in our lives. It makes me happy when you tell me about your past romances; you confide so many things in me and I love you for your faith in me. Your illness was a strange one but it was God-sent and what a blessing it turned out to be for us both. In England I could not understand why you suddenly wanted to write to me and oh how stupid I was not to have realised what it all about.

You wanted to know more about my beautiful young lady with whom I was “romancing” in England at the outbreak of war. Like your young man from Omagh, she had blue eyes and golden hair; she was a Catholic (convert), was very young, and innocent. Her mother was a life-long friend of my boss Dr Macsherry (he too is fond of ladies!) and it was through him that I met these people. I took pity on this child who had a very lonely existence in a strange household – I cannot write about the latter but shall have to tell you verbally sometime. I brought her to pantomimes and pictures while her mother was working. And then one day she grew up and told me that she loved me; I had an awful shock when I heard this – I did not and could not have loved this child. Still I was enamoured a bit by her beauty and she was a good companion for me. We corresponded while I was in India, but that did not last because another young man (rich) with a big car captured this fair lady’s heart! I was happy because I knew that “paddy” and I never loved each other – we were direct opposites in every way. And then came my mother’s death – it was she who brought me back to you, Eileen; she always prayed that I would one day marry you. She disliked “Paddy” immensely even though she never met her; however Anne did meet this young lady and she disliked her too though Philip was a bit spell-bound when he saw her! If you would like to ask Anne all about her, I do not mind. The sad ending to my story is that poor “Paddy” grew tired of her other young man and decided that she wanted me back again! I had telegrams and letters from her and her mother, but my answers must have made her realise how hopeless it all was. And now they know that I am engaged to you my darling, whom I have always loved; they know that I shall never change my mind. All this they have heard from me. I doubt very much if we two shall ever meet “Paddy” – she does not belong to our world. And now my dearest one you have heard it all and it needed some courage to tell you about this romance; I am sorry if it has bored you, but I had to get it off my chest! “Paddy” has helped to make me love you more and more, to appreciate your worth and your goodness. Please do not be annoyed about this romance of mine, I have always loved you, Eileen, and I never could love anyone but you.

I sent you a telegram this morning (by messenger in town) telling you that the ring had been sent to you. I shall not rest until that precious ring is safely on your finger. How I hope and pray that you will like it and love it Eileen; I am sorry that I could not possibly have sent it from Malaya from me – I had to have it sent from a London firm to you. How I should hate myself if you are disappointed in this ring. For ages neither of us quite knew what to do about buying an engagement ring, but thank God all the misunderstanding has been cleared up and you will be wearing our ring soon.

My darling, you must not be hurt about anything I have written in this awful letter. I love you with all my heart and soul; and I am yours for ever and ever. You know that I would rather die than let you down in any way; if I could give you more love, I would, but already you have all my love and all of me. Give my love to all your dear ones and to Frances; thank them for all their prayers and tell them that I do not forget them.

Ever your loving,
Frank.

P.S. I am starting a saving campaign for us, so do not expect too many telegrams; I shall write daily as usual! All my love, darling
– Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Friday, 21st November [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

I feel so happy and contented and at peace with the world in general that it does not seem fair while such an awful war is raging all around you. I do want to be near you my darling while you are in danger and

when you need me most but here I am in the same place so far away and so helpless to do anything for you. But you do know, Eileen, that I am always with you in spirit, in all your joys and sorrows and dangers, sharing them all with you. The days pass quickly but all the time I find myself loving you more dearly. I have always loved you, but if anyone had told me that I was capable of loving you as much as I do today, I would have laughed at them incredulously. These long hours of waiting for each other will not be in vain; we are using them as preparation days for our married life and to strengthen our love by unceasing prayer. We should really thank God for these days of separation no matter how hard they may seem; it is His way of letting us know how much we love one another and how very sure we are of each other and our great decision. Never once have you written to me and said "Frank, if you should change your mind ..."; never once have I written such words to you – we are so certain that we have chosen rightly, that we shall never change. God has been too good to us, Eileen, in giving us everything in life that really matters – our Holy Faith and our love, not to mention so many other things. Our parents have blazed the trail for us as a shining example, and please God we, too, shall follow in their footsteps; we shall be even happier than even they have been and we shall love each other even more that even they have loved. I know we can do it, Eileen, and we shall pray constantly and earnestly that God may give us graces in abundance during our married life together. It was you and your love taught me to pray really hard and to realise that we could never be happy without prayer. I only wish I could pray as you do, Eileen, but I am doing my best under difficult conditions. Will you ask Him daily for a special favour for me – I want to be sent to a station where I can have mass more frequently, and daily if possible. Think of all the graces that I am missing through not having Mass here; can you imagine it, my darling, only four times in the year the priest visits this isolated spot. I told you in a recent letter that the C.O. and the second-in-command would both be away from camp on leave during Christmas and that I was detailed to "hold the fort" – this meant that I could not go to Kuala Lumpur to mass on Christmas Day. However things are brighter now and the C.O. is coming back to camp on the 20th December from leave, and this means that I should be able to get away. I have been much happier since I heard this because now I have a chance of having a happy Christmas as you and I know it. I do not mind the distance; I do not mind missing the grand Christmas Dinner that has been arranged in the Mess – all I want is to be at Mass on that day and receive that Infant Child into my heart. It will make my Christmas as perfect as possible in far off Malaya, but on that day I shall be nearer to you, Eileen, than ever in my life before.

My trip to Ipoh on business & leave has been cancelled by the powers above. I was a bit disappointed because I did want to see my friends the Wimseys there and also the Reids, not to mention Fr. François and his lovely church. I had planned daily Mass at Ipoh, but alas that hope has vanished. I would have met your Mrs. Valda Roberts en route at Kampar and made another link with you in Omagh. We had a great hockey match today with another unit in the local village at 5 p.m. I was in grand form and produced some first class hurling strokes with my stick – I can only hit the ball when it is in mid-air! The pitch was ideal, and Irish green and so level; it was cool because the clouds were low. A thunderstorm put an end to our game and back home we came. I am always happy playing outdoor games of any kind and I shall always love an outdoor life. Thank God you love all those things too, Eileen, and will be a good companion on all my open-air expeditions! I am now off to bath and change for dinner – I shall be back soon again!

I sent your usual 14 page letter off this morning; another was sent on Sunday last; and a cable yesterday! Oh my Eileen, I feel that I can never do enough for you; I want so much to make you happy. How I hope and pray that my letters bring you the happiness that yours bring to me – I have been terribly happy since Wednesday when your latest letter (dated Sept. 14th) reached me. I read one of your letters each night in bed before going asleep; then I say my "baby" prayers as I call them – the ones my mother taught me to say in bed ("As I lie down to sleep, I give my soul to God to keep ..." and "Infant Jesus meek and Mild ..."). All my grown-up prayers I say on my knees, of course. My darling, do you still say your baby prayers too? You are in very good company in my room now – on one side is my mother, on the other is Una, below you is pinned the little palm cross which I got in Hyderabad; above you is a little shelf on which stands the Sacred heart statue, at His feet is a small Holy Water fount, Josie and Una are on either side of the statue, and away below you on my table is my beautiful crucifix. And there you stand looking down at me now, and you are a very proud young woman with your cups and clubs! My darling, you look perfect in that snap and much as I would like a photograph of you, it will never be quite the same as that little snap.

My last letter might have annoyed you, Eileen, but God knows I did not want to worry you with my past romances; still it was better that I should tell you about it as you told me about your Omagh romances. All these things belong to the past and they have helped to bring us more closely together and to make us realise that there is only one love for us. Thank God we have weathered the storm and reached the shore, as you so nicely put it in your last letter. And here I must say good night to you my own darling; may God bless you.

Saturday – November 22nd

My own darling, here I am again with your usual daily dose from me! It is Saturday evening, 5.30 p.m., and alas it's the same as any other evening to folk who live in camp the whole week through. If I were not writing to you daily I would soon not know the days, apart from Sunday! What a contrast to a Saturday evening at home in peace time – especially when I was a lad. I would be pleasantly tired after a hard game of football or hurling at Cherryvale; it was my greatest delight to chase a ball of some sort around a field. For many years my father could not understand why I should be so fond of sport and for a long time poor mother and I fought a losing "battle" against him. We pointed out that it was good for my health and my soul. Mother always encouraged me and many times she thanked God that I loved games so much; games were my first love and you were my second love, Eileen! And now these two loves are combined in perfect harmony – you will never be jealous of my first love, will you my dearest one? You will never have cause to be jealous of anyone or anything as long as ever you live, Eileen; whether we are together or apart will make no difference – I shall always belong to you and you alone. Let us keep our love as it is today; let us grow old together but our love will never grow old with us. I become too happy sometimes when I think of the happiness that lies ahead of us. Two people have never been more suited to become man and wife as we are, Eileen; we were meant for each other – we could never have come together again unless God had planned it all for us. Do you know that I can feel that you have been praying hard for me during all these months? My awful temper seldom shows its head nowadays; I refuse to quarrel with people I do not care about. When a row is imminent I bite my tongue and walk away – it avoids unpleasantness and hard words, not to mention the misery afterwards. One of the things I abhorred most in people all my life has been insincerity – I just cannot stand honeyed words from folk who do not like me even a little bit! I could never say nice things to people about themselves unless I was convinced that they really were true. I have been blunt to the point of rudeness to many people, but nowadays I am more tactful!

I am sitting here in the twilight in the verandah of the house; my chair is facing towards the west and I can see a golden red sunset. That same sun out there is shining on you at home (11 a.m.) and how I wish I could see what he can see as he looks down upon Omagh – and you. My darling, aren't you tired reading my reverie of this evening? You never bore me with your letters; they are so natural and fresh. You began your last letter by frankly confessing that you were not in a letter-writing mood that day – you are so honest and true, and oh I love you so much for your honesty and truth.

I was rather touched this morning when one of my sepoy's stood before me and wept. He had come to say good bye to me as he was transferred to another station; I shook hands with him and wished him luck. He was so overcome that he could say nothing and then tears welled up in his eyes – I patted his shoulders and then he suddenly ran off to the waiting lorry that was to take him away forever from this Field Ambulance. One of the Indian officers went off on two months leave to India this morning and it made me think of home too – and you, my darling. I shall soon have spent two years in the East without a holiday and thank God I have never felt the need of holidays. However I was interested to read in yesterday's paper that it was recommended in the House of Commons that men should be changed to Home Stations from the Far East after they had been out here about 2 years. I expect it will not apply to officers, but I shall make enquiries no matter how hopeless things may seem.

I had a letter yesterday from the F.M.S. Museums' Director saying that some journals were being sent to me – Zoological, Ethnographical, and Archaeological! I have no idea what all these big words mean, but they are all for you, Eileen, and your pupils to elucidate. I hope these journals will be of some interest to you, my dearest one; anyhow, you will surely know your Malaya 'ere' I leave this pleasant land. And now I have nothing more for you today my good lady except to tell you that you have all the love that my poor heart can give you. Good night and may God bless you and keep you safe.

Sunday – November 23rd

My own darling, do you that the happiest man in the whole world is writing to you tonight, and it is you have made him so happy. If anyone had asked me what I would like for a birthday present, I would have said "a letter from Eileen". It is no use trying to thank you, my darling, for your greetings, your long "Clipper" letter, that precious little curl, and that lovely snap of you (polyphoto); and besides all this you have given me a very special present of a whole Mass – the most precious gift you could give me. How you have spoiled me with all these gifts and how unworthy I am of them all.

I have so many things to tell you and so little time to do it that much of it will have to wait until tomorrow. It is 11.15 p.m. and the end of my happiest day in Malaya. It began with your letter being handed to me at breakfast this morning; I must have just stuffed my scrambled egg down my throat, had a hasty cup of tea, and fled to my room with my treasure. I must always be alone when I read your letter – I cannot bear anyone else to be in the room; and then how slowly it is read so that I can enjoy every word. If I could only express my feelings properly and tell you of the new torrent of love that poured out of my heart this day to you, my dearest one, but alas I am

hopeless to describe it all. How I have gazed at your picture and loved it dearly and how I have kissed your tiny curl of brown hair and placed it safely away under lock and key. Your snap now rests on my table at the front of my crucifix.

We went off on our usual picnic at 11 a.m. – five of us. Sunday is my big day of the week and it is our day, Eileen. The sea was very calm and scarcely a ripple upon it, and so I decided to explore new inlets on the coast which are normally dangerous because of the rocks. Away I swam in and out of little lagoons, through narrow channels, and round by the ‘point’ – and all the time I could touch the rocks a few yards away. Several times I had to turn back and seek other routes owing to huge rocks just below the surface of the water. I swam for miles but it was safe, because I was near those rocks at my side. When I joined the others later the C.O. asked me if I had been to Sumatra!! After a grand lunch one man went asleep, two others played draughts (and later went asleep), and the C.O. wrote letters home – your Frank went down to the shore to pray. I sat on the rocks and just gazed down at the beauty of the sea and no prayers were said! Four men appeared in bathing costumes on the sand below me – they were weary and thirsty and asked for water. They were four Australian airmen who had walked for miles along the beach in search of adventure in this quiet land. I led them off to our lorry and fixed them up with 2 large bottles of beer! They were very grateful and drank to my good health in style! Off they went down the beach as happy as four kings – my good deed for the day had been done; I had quenched the thirst of four thirsty men! My colleagues could not understand why I should give beer to four strangers – especially ordinary Air Force chaps! I went down to the shore again to pray and this time I succeeded. I explored among those huge rocks that jut into the sea and found hundreds of large crabs – a speckled green colour with dark yellow legs and white pincers. I reached a nice ledge of rock between two large boulders and down I knelt and said my Rosary in thanksgiving for everything that God had done for us and the happiness He has sent us. It reminded me of Lough Derg at the end of a station, kneeling by the waterside and looking out across that lovely stretch of water. I was terribly happy as I knelt there, Eileen, and that Rosary came from a heart full of joy and gratitude. I found some lovely shells on the shore and I have kept them for you. Then came 4 p.m. and time to go back reluctantly to camp and another six days under the rubber! But I was so happy that I cared not where I was. We met a Major Feinall on our way; he is an old friend of the C.O.’s and mine from India days. As he is staying at the local Rest House for a few days we decided to have dinner there tonight with him and get all the India news from him. I did not forget your words in today’s letter about not accepting invitations to town with the C.O. [I did not explain to you, my dearest one, that all other invitations in the past have been to the pictures, but I have decided to cut out pictures while I am in Malaya as an “act” (I like pictures too much!). I don’t like drinking and so my teetotalism is not an act.] We had a good dinner with the Major and had a long talk about mutual friends in India. There is a nice chap coming to this station soon with whom I was friendly at Barian; we had lots of tennis last summer together. His wife and he were ideally happy in that little hill station (the most picturesque in all India); they had an adorable little child and they used to consult me on the baby’s feeding, teething etc. It seems that poor Dick (his Christian name) became a major in India or a few months and a few days before leaving for Malaya, another officer arrived on the scene who proved to be senior to him and so Dick was demoted to Captain like myself. He had worked so hard and then demotion came as a reward! It is much more severe on him than on me, because he is a regular soldier with years of service, and the difference in pay means a lot to him and his family. Would you liked to have seen me tonight at the Rest House drinking my orange squash between two men armed with whiskies! I am not ashamed, thank God, and it makes no difference socially to me or my company. It may interest you to know that there are five others in our mess who do not drink – so I am not alone!

I shall write heaps more tomorrow, my darling, but now I must be off to get 6 hours sleep! Good night and God bless you.

Monday – November 24th

Well I only managed 5 ½ hours sleep after all – I get up at 6.30 a.m. nowadays! Thank God I have never felt better in my life and this early rising is good for me. Since coming to this station I have avoided all strenuous exercises in the heat of the day and believe me this is very wise because I have seen some cases of heat exhaustion among the locals.

In all the excitement of yesterday I forgot to tell you that I had a letter from Father Girard in the evening. He could not say the three masses on 23rd, 24th & 25th November for mother, Josie and Charlie; instead he will remember them in the Memento of his Masses on those days and will say Masses for them on December 4th, 7th, & 8th. My birthday gift to mother will be a Mass – I shall surely have a happy birthday this year. And then Charlie’s Mass will be on the 8th and that is so very appropriate because that child’s soul was so pure and white. I have always known that he was praying for us two in heaven. Many a quiet moment I spent in the garden at Beechwood under a starry sky and I often wondered was he looking down on you and on me and interceding for us at the Throne of God. Those were my student days and it was very routine to stroll in the garden to try and freshen up a very dull

brain – and to dream of you and what the future might hold for us both. And now all those dreams have come true – and I thought then that my dreaming would be in vain. Father Girard is coming here on Sunday 21st December to say Mass at 7.30 p.m. – this is marvellous news for me; it will be my first Sunday mass since Ipoh days last April & May. I have been given the pleasant task of informing all Catholic troops in the station and already the good news has been spread everywhere. My saintly friend also sent me the addresses of the Redemptorists and the Little Sisters in Singapore. The Rector of the Monastery is Very Rev. F. H. Cosgrove; may be some of the Clonard men would know him. Anyhow I shall write to both places and threaten them with a visit from me when I visit Singapore. I shall tell the Little Sisters all about Mattie and you my dearest one; I shall offer to communicate with any of their friends who may be in German-occupied territory – this I can do through the Red Cross. However the message would have to be signed by me as this scheme is for officers only. I shall not forget these good nuns at Christmas and shall send them a present from us both. That reminds me of your present to Frances and her Roland for their wedding – and you included me in the gift too. You are so thoughtful, my darling, you never forget others. Give them both my very best wishes for the future and I hope they will be as happy as we shall be together – and that is wishing them all happiness. Her Roland has been a faithful lover and he is a lucky man to have a girl like Frances – and I suppose it is mutual (the luck). It is surely the grandest thing in life to see a young Catholic boy and girl so much in love and so happy.

Your last ordinary air mail letter was dated September 15th – the others are not due yet, but it is pleasant to know that so many are already on their way to the Far East. I am so sorry, Eileen, that my letters only reach you in spasms, but perhaps things may improve with the weekly clipper service which now operates from Singapore. It is dreadful to think that you have to wait 5 whole weeks for my letters; you must have the patience of Job, my darling; even I do not have to wait longer than 3 weeks for your letters and sometimes. I am so glad that my letters make you so happy; that is why I write so often – and oh how happy I am when writing to you; every word is from my heart no matter how dull it may be. They are not duty letters, it is my pleasure and my privilege to write to you; they never interfere with my games. That is why I insisted that you should always have your golf and games as much as ever you can; if you have free time in the afternoons or evenings never hesitate between golf and writing to me – always have your golf because it will make me happy. You must not sit indoors for hours – these are orders, young woman!! You are grand to have sent me the Irish Weekly so regularly each week and I am looking forward to their arrival in January – I hope Louis J still contributes articles, because I love them. I hope that by this time you have received some of the many magazines I have sent to you – however the letters are more important to us both and we must thank Him for speeding them safely on their perilous journey.

Eileen, I cannot keep loving you more and more every day and I can see your love growing too with each letter you send me. I am so glad that my de-motion has not hurt you – that was the only thing that worried me a lot; and now you are writing to plain Capt. Murray more loving letters than you wrote to Major Murray. Thank God our sense of values is good and that the things in life we treasure most are the things that really matter. You can never know the joy it gave me to know that you liked my new lot of Malayan snaps – the palm beach ones etc. They were all taken especially for you, Eileen, so that you could see the beauty of this country without visiting it. I was thrilled to hear about the Malaya album which you want to start during Christmas vacation; it will be grand fun in later life to pour over it and recall happy days here. I laughed at your description of your visit to Prof. Thompson and how you both spent hours over a large map of Malaya! It must have been exciting for you to have traced my long journey through this land – even more so than it was for me who actually did the trip. Prof. Thompson is a grand person and everyone adores him; I could scarcely believe that he remembered me at all. I have not heard from Humphrey recently but he has gone away northwards to a spot 50 miles from my recent home in the mountains of Upper Perak. He is now attached to a C.C.S. (Casualty Clearing Station); the spot is very dull and not nearly so pleasant as Tanjong Malim. However it has the advantage of being near Penang and it's easy to get weekends there.

It is wonderful to hear of Felix and Mona settling down in Ballynahinch. I have often heard at home that it is an excellent practice; and I consider that Felix could not have picked a better one – it is a very sound investment. Do not be sad, my Eileen, our day will surely come soon and we shall be doing just as Felix and Mona have done. Please send them my very best wishes for every success at Ballynahinch and every happiness in their new home. By the way Frank Martin and I were schoolmates many years ago; and he is a great friend of Gerry's. They always have an unusual bet among themselves at the all-Ireland Final – it is grand fun listening to their repartee as they are both expert talkers! It has made me happy to know that you have already tried to meet my friend Gerry – I do want to hear your opinion about him. He improves a lot with knowing. My darling, I want to hear heaps of detail, so when you write do not think that you are boring me with details – it's all the little things in your letter that mean so much to me.

You did have a glorious weekend at your mid-term holiday and how happy you make me when you visit Beechwood. I would give anything to see you walking up the path to the house I love so much – you are an awful

girl not to have come to Beechwood years ago when I was there waiting for you so patiently. But it was all my fault for being so blind. And now you have kissed my own father, with never a kiss for me as yet!! My own darling, how I do love you because you like my father so much; he is a good man and he loves you, Eileen, for your own dear self. You would very soon know if he did not approve of you! Everything you do is so natural and so loving; and I know that you will not change ever. Poor little Anne has a lot to contend with at Beechwood and it is marvellous how she has managed things single handed. She must miss mother so very much – they were very devoted to each other.

My dearest one, you are simply wonderful in doing so much for our future home – you make me ashamed of myself; I seem to be doing nothing at all. You must not go on buying so many things; please let me have a share in them – I must do my bit. When we get our joint account started in Belfast things will be more simple to manage. It is grand of you to have started cookery classes, but you know that I would not have minded what sort of things you dished up! I am longing to hear details about the classes and how they all began – you have written about them in other letters. Tell Miss Boland that she will always have a special corner in our hearts; I should like to meet her, my dearest one. I want to meet all your friends and to love them as much as you do. You are becoming a very proud young lady – especially over that supper cloth you have embroidered. You love me too much Eileen, much more than I really deserve.

How dare you ask if I know what a “station” is!! I have known this since I was a very small boy and to me they were fascinating in those days. It is the custom in all the country districts of Ireland and yet you only heard of it recently! I can see plainly that we shall have to spend our lives seeing that little patch of green in the ocean called Ireland and learning more about its people and their customs. My darling, there is no land in the whole world to compare with ours, Eileen.

I have been on duty today and how happy I have been. I discovered that I am still a doctor when I attended a case this evening – it was an injured eye that was bleeding inside. I did everything correctly and dished out the treatment like a song. How I wish I could have brought my medical books with me from India, but alas it was not allowed; I could have studied a lot in Malaya. I parted with a very good friend of mine this evening – a haveldar (sergeant) who has been sent to another unit. He has 20 years’ service but is very tough; we marched many miles together in upper Perak and in the jungle. I could not tire him. Tonight he was weeping as he held my hand and bowing over it pressed it to his forehead – this is a very great honour. I loved this man and he loved me; we had many laughs together. He is the taller of the two men I snapped under the parasol; he is also in the group of three men snapped beside a lorry. I have told him that he will always be my friend.

And now this rumble-tumble letter has ended and I have given you no news. Oh my Eileen I shall always love you no matter what happens; I am yours forever and ever; I want to give you more love, but there is no more to give because you have it all. If there is anything in the wide world that I can do to make you happier, then I shall do it for you. I cannot be happy unless you too are happy. The love you have given to me is in safe hands and you shall never know a moment’s unhappiness; I shall treasure your love above all else. Myself and my life are nothing without you. May God bless you, my darling, and may His Holy Mother protect you from all harm.

Ever your loving

Frank.

P.S. Love to all your dear ones.

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Tuesday 25th November [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

It is a very hot November afternoon and though I am “dripping” I must write to you now while there is time today. Later in the evening I have to play in a football match and that always means a late dinner and late to bed. Can you possibly imagine such heat in mid-winter? Only another month to Christmas and there is so much to look forward to – even though nothing will happen! Today is my brother’s tenth anniversary of his death (R.I.P.). Do you remember your first time at Queens in 1931 and what a change it all was from school? Do you remember me, the very shy schoolboy who pursued you so relentlessly and frightened you so much by my attentions to you? How I wish you had met Charlie in those days; he was a saint and everyone loved him. He was

my favourite and we had grand fun together; I missed him terribly when he died. He knew all about you, Eileen, and I knew he was so pleased about it all even though he could not speak.

I have not recovered from your surprise birthday letter which reached me on Sunday morning. Really my dearest one I cannot describe the happiness that it has brought to me – the curl and the polyfoto snap are treasures which I shall keep near me until my dying day. You are too good to me Eileen and I wish deserved it at all, but I don't. My poor love seems so small in comparison with all that you have given to me; you know that you have all of it and that I am yours forever and ever. It is so easy for me to love you so much because I have always loved you and you are the most lovable person I have ever known – or ever shall know. I have given my all to you and I know my heart is in good hands. All I ask in life is to be able to make you a very happy wife and that is all I shall live for. Surely it augurs well for our future when we find ourselves so happy today with so many thousands of miles between us. There never was and there never shall be any room in my heart for anyone but you. I have often wondered what kind of life I would have led if I never met you, Eileen; I know that I would have been utterly lost without your good influence. I would have been without my ideal to live up to; you have guided my every action since the first day I met you and I know it will be the same for the rest of my life. My darling, don't you see how completely I am dependent upon you for everything – you are the source of all my happiness and my holiness too, because these two must go together always. Am I boasting when I tell you that no man has loved a woman as much as I love you, Eileen; I could not live unless I were loving you – it has become so much a part of me. What more could we ask of God who has given us this great love and has made it so holy and pure; it is true love and in every way it is as perfect as He would like it to be. The longer we are apart the stronger it grows in depth and holiness. How lucky we are in every way; we were spared a very painful separation and parting at the outbreak of war – it would have broken our hearts, my dearest one; and today we would be miserable instead of being happy and hopeful. There is so much happiness ahead of us, that the present is bearable – in fact you have made it pleasant for me. In both our hearts is that yearning to see each other again and then we shall know happiness beyond our expectations and fondest dreams.

I started out with the good intention of telling you in simple language that I loved you with all my heart, but alas I wandered off into the future again and it must have wearied you to read it all! I am as happy as the day is long and today had only a twinge of sadness when I said goodbye this morning to an old friend – Haveldar Assar Singh; he really was my friend and how I did not want him to leave – I wanted to go with him to the north. However, I still love this Field Ambulance and everyone in it and I could not bear to leave it ever. I have told my C.O. long ago that I would rather remain here as a captain than go elsewhere on promotion. I came back from football not long ago and oh it was grand even though we were beaten! I became tired of goalkeeping and wanted action, and I got plenty at right-back against a team of black-bearded Sikhs! I re-lived my school and Queen's days over again; in fact I can run faster nowadays. I must go off to dinner lest I bore you any more tonight. My leave is indefinitely postponed, but sometime next year I have hopes of a few days somewhere; I may even do a locum here sometime because we need the money for our bottom drawer. A month's locum in Malaya would earn me £200! I do not want it for myself and never shall; it will always be for you, my darling, and only you. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Wednesday – 26th November

We had a big inspection today by the head of the army medical services in Malaya. He is a grand little man, grey haired, wiry, and a dynamic personality; no shaking of hands at introduction! And now I shall give you the conversations piece, when I had been introduced by my C.O. "Murray, you have been with this Field Ambulance since it began?" "Yes, sir!" "You were second-in-command at one time; bad luck, you lost that but your turn will come again." These are the words of great hope coming from the man who makes all the appointments in the medical branch of the Army in Malaya. It was he who said it was grossly unfair that I should lose my promotion, but the damage had been done (inadvertently) and could not be undone at that time. I have never sought after promotion; I have never canvassed directly or indirectly; I have kept out of the limelight – I just worked quietly and happily no matter what my rank was. Need I tell you that I would welcome promotion again for your sweet sake alone; I want you to feel proud of me; I want to save more money for you and for our home. Alas I do not know the value of money, and in this respect I am like my dear mother and very unlike my father! You have so many things to teach me, Eileen; you will find me a very willing pupil. I shall listen to you all day long and never grow weary – even though you imagine yourself to be a real chatterbox! We shall have so much to talk about when we meet again, that we shall be busy chatting for many moons after my return home to you. I am frightened when I think of the round of visits we shall have to make then – Beechwood, Spring Villa, Killough, Ballynahinch, Omagh, Castlewellan, Dungannon, Dublin, a special tour of Belfast – falls Road and Andersonstown, University Square, Crumlin Road! I think you had better arrange with Thomas Cook to fix us up with a special circular tour of Ireland. I will not be a bit shy so long as you are at my side – everything in life will be so easy for me while you

are there. My darling, when we do meet again would you be willing to waive all convention once more and always walk beside me on my left hand side – I want you to be always near to my heart. If you think this is just stupid or childish, just tell me so, Eileen, and we shall forget about it – it won't hurt me in the least. How I do thank God that we have a perfect understanding between us my dearest one; we agree on all things that really matter; about other subjects we shall always come to a solution which will please us both. Above all we shall be honest with each other; we can always be candid. And now I want you to promise me something when you reply to this letter. The only thing I dread is hurting you in any way; my love will never allow me to hurt your feelings, but if it should ever happen (and God grant it never shall) through inadvertence, then you must not conceal it from me – you must promise me now that you will always tell me that I have hurt you and how it has happened. I would rather die than cause you to suffer in the smallest thing – and even that would not be enough to atone for my thoughtlessness. I was standing on parade today with all my men and I was thinking of you and how much I loved you. As I looked at simple Indian lads I realised for the first time that I would gladly die for any one of them; and then another gush of love came from my heart for you, Eileen, and I knew that if I would give my life for these men, there was no sacrifice on earth that I would not make for you. That is how I love you today and yet 'ere the sun shall set tomorrow I shall be loving you even more than now.

I wrote to Anne last night after dinner and told her once more how happy I was. I told her not to worry about things at Beechwood, that everything would turn out well in the end. I am glad that you have made Anne your favourite; she is a grand child, so unselfish, and so holy. I heard Margaret admit one day that Anne had more character and wisdom at 15 years of age than any of her sisters ever had at 20! I also wrote a letter of thanks last night to Father Girard. I was looking at some old snaps this evening and discovered a lovely one of myself taken in John Frank's room in Rawalpindi. I had a large boil on my cheek at the time and so you see I was swathed in bandages and looking very miserable! All my snaps and negatives are being slowly destroyed by the awful climate; so thank heavens I have sent all the good ones to you. How I hope and pray that they have reached you safely by this time. I had a letter this morning from the jewellers in Bombay who say they have cabled London about your ring; they gave me no definite news as to whether it was sent yet. My own darling, you must have the ring before Christmas as I promised you and it will break my heart if you do not receive it in time.

Good night and God bless you my Eileen. (Later) It is still Wednesday night; I cannot leave you, my darling. I wanted to tell you that during this war I am a non-combatant and have special privileges under Article 21 of the Geneva Convention and am under the protection of the International Red Cross. I am not allowed to fight, nor is the enemy allowed to fight me; I can be taken prisoner but the enemy must treat me and pay me as an officer! They can only use me as a doctor in whatever way they wish but they cannot compel me to do any other work. However it remains to be seen whether the enemy will carry out all these things to the letter; the said enemy will never come to Malaya.

My darling, would you be very surprised to hear that there is one tune which can bring tears to my eyes – it is an Irish hornpipe tune that I heard in Ranafast; I don't know its title but I have always associated it with you. They were not tears of sadness but rather of love. When I was a fourth-year medical student at the Mater and hadn't much work to do, I spent many pleasant evenings in the visitors' room listening to that tune being played on the piano by your namesake – Jackie O'Kane. It was badly played but it was heavenly for me to hear it; I think the said player knew why I insisted on the same tune over and over again. I loved you during all those years of my student life; you were always before me as my ideal. I have been humming our tune this evening and now it brings tears of love mingled with joy. Some day I shall sing it for you, my darling, and you will recognize it immediately. God bless you, Eileen.

Thursday November 27th

I had a grand surprise today when your birthday greetings telegram arrived. You have done everything possible to make my birthday a happy one, and I know that you will have made it the happiest of my whole life. Do you know that last year I scarcely realised that I had a birthday at all – it passed by almost unnoticed; it was anything but a happy one. And now you have changed everything in my life; I feel like a different person altogether – I am so terribly happy and contented. That is why I say that I can never hope to love you enough. Your telegram read "59, 120, 32 Eileen O'Kane"! I rushed away to the office and rang up the village P.O. and they de-coded the message; I was amazed that these three numbers could mean so much (I had used "32" often and so I knew what it meant). Each time you send your love to me, my darling, I feel so very happy and proud, too, that I should be so lucky to have your love which I prized above all else in the world. You have done everything and sent me everything to make me the happiest man alive; I wish you could put a stamp on yourself and post yourself by clipper to me! However I love you too much to allow you to risk anything for me – besides you would not be allowed to leave Ireland. We are not really separated and never shall be – we are always together; you are ever in my heart and in my thought so that you spend the whole day with me! I still say "good morning" and "good night"

to you, Eileen – do you always hear me? I have been counting up all my ‘treasures’ this evening – seventeen letters, your precious lock of hair, and your four snaps – the wedding group. We should be so thankful to God who has guided our letters safely on their long journey over land and sea. This evening I read an essay on “delight” and really, Eileen, we both have known to the full what delight is. My next-door-neighbour has lent me his “Oxford Book of English Prose” and I am revelling in it; needless to say I did not ask him for this grand book; he just offered it to me. Did you know that I have a very awful failing – I never borrow anything from anyone nor do I ever ask any favours from my superiors. You will find me too independent and in this respect I am like my father; it is not a good thing to be too independent. Many a time I walked from Queens to Beechwood rather than borrow ‘tuppence’ from any of the lads! Is it very selfish of me not to want ever to lend things to others; I like having my own items of personal wear and things for my room. I do not mind lending anything to my friends but when others came along casually and ask for things on loan, I do not refuse but I am furious and cannot understand such people. I know from sad experiences they are careless with things I lend them and it just kills me; I am always doubly careful of other people’s things when handling them. Now this evening along came a certain officer to my room to borrow my chaplis (Indian sandals); he wants them while on leave for 3 weeks! I meekly handed them over, even though I have scarcely worn them as yet; but I would rather do this than cause unpleasantness. I was seething within but I managed to say – “You are welcome to them, sir”! My darling, it is selfishness on my part; but I shall miss these sandals from my room and shall not rest until they are back again with me. This officer has borrowed constantly from me, and it maddens me because he has thousands of pounds in his bank while I haven’t got a cent (scarcely!)! And now my Eileen, I want you to give me a stern lecture about my faults; do you still love me in spite of my meanness? Can you solve my problems for me – there is something wrong in me and I want your help.

The C.O. told me this evening (after he had borrowed my sandals!) that I must spend several days in Kuala Lumpur at Christmas and said it would be useless only having one day there. He is very anxious to know why I am going at all; he thinks I want a gay time at dances, cabarets, and pictures but all I want is Mass on Christmas Day and nothing must stop me. When I have had my wish I want to get back again quickly to my job because Kuala Lumpur is not a health resort but is much hotter than this station. It is not so far away (270 miles) and I can easily be back on the evening of 26th. I forgot to mention that your telegram was sent on 14th November and took 12 days en route; and I read in the papers that I shall have to send my Christmas telegram to you before 5th December – only 20 days in advance! And off I must go to bath and change for dinner. All my heart and all my love are with you this night. God bless you and keep you safe.

Friday – November 28th

Eileen, my darling, I am so very sorry now that I wrote you such a frightful diary yesterday, but I had to get it all off my chest. Why you should have to listen to my tale of woe I do not know; it is unkind of me to unburden such thoughts on poor you – and I did express myself so very badly. Do you remember in one of your letters telling me to always get things off my chest and that you would listen and understand. How would you like someone to come along to your room and “pinch” your nicest pair of shoes!! I am a terrible person and you should not love me at all – if you had any sense. My own darling, if only you knew how very, very much I love you; you are ever in my thoughts – they are all for you, everything I do is for you. My day is just one round of happiness; dull things are now interesting and exciting – and you have made all of this possible. This morning at breakfast I was so very happy – I was at Southampton and you were in my arms; I whispered in your ear “Eileen, my darling, never, never leave me.” That is the day that I live for and dream about always; and oh what joy it can bring to my heart. Please do not think that I dream too much; I must dream about you otherwise the present reality of life in Malaya would finish me off completely! You know that no matter where I may go, no matter what may happen to me or to the world in this awful war, I shall never change – I shall always love you, Eileen. Our love and our happiness and peace of mind are such priceless gifts; we would not exchange them for all the glory and wealth of the world. We have a glory that the world knows so little about. I know that we shall be the happiest couple on earth; we shall live in a little kingdom of our very own but our love and our happiness will reach far beyond the confines of our kingdom to others. We shall spend our lives making others happy – this is one of the secrets of life.

Malaya is many thousands of miles away from home and yet today I shook hands with a very famous surgeon in this camp – a man who examined me in Surgery for my Final in 1937 in Belfast! I remember it all so well – Julian Taylor (his name) standing facing me across a bed in the Mater Hospital; I saw his kindly face, his smallish stature; so very neat and slim and with such delicate tapering fingers. I was not afraid, I was not nervous – in fact I was cheeky enough to wink at my friends who crowded around the glass door of the ward entrance! Today he looked older, thinner, and greyer but he is still a kindly man and so very charming. He did not recognize me of course as he only saw me for 5 minutes in 1937, but he asked if I had ever been examined by him and was

very interested in my career. He is now Col. Taylor but he is a colonel in name only!! He will never be a soldier but he will always be a surgeon – one of the greatest ever produced by England.

I am longing for your photograph to come – I mean the one you were to have enlarged from the polyfoto. It will be lovely having it on my table; the miniature has made me so very happy. My darling, you must not have any more photographs taken; I only need one, Eileen; I know you are thinking of me when you suggest this; but you must not undergo any more torture by posing for the cameras. I always think it is unnatural sitting before a camera trying to appear natural – and failing miserably! And now for a lecture on telegrams! I am much happier when you send “EFM” telegrams; I do not want you to waste your money on expensive ones – it worries me. It is the same with letters; I am much more contented with your ordinary air mail letters than Clipper ones. I love all the thoughtfulness and goodness in you that prompts you to spend money on me and to make me happy, but I do understand you and know how you feel. Alas I have made a muddle of this and have explained my meaning so badly. By the way darling, your EFM telegrams come much quicker than NLT (express) telegrams even though they are 1/5 the price!

Your ring is worrying me, Eileen; how I have prayed that it will reach you safely before Christmas comes. The jewelers have not cabled me yet as they promised to do when everything was finally settled. It will break my heart if anything should happen to it and if you should not like it. Please, please have it changed if you do not like it, Eileen. If only I were at home now we could select it ourselves and our choice would please us both. But I know that God will not let me down and that you will be wearing that precious ring before this letter arrives.

Good night and God bless you, Eileen. May He keep you safe.

Saturday November 29th

It is peaceful evening here among the rubber trees in far off Malaya; everything is so still and calm – not a leaf stirring anywhere. Yet it is a very momentous evening for me and for you too, my darling. Alas I cannot tell you a single thing about it all, but it is another big day and you must ask me (when we meet again) about 29th November 1941. I want you to write this down on your diary of that date and make the following entry :- “Frank has loved me today more than he has ever loved me in his life before; he will love me unto death itself and not even death can ever separate us.” Yes, my darling, it is true and you must know it all so well already. Eileen dearest my love for you has grown so much in the past year that you would not recognize it; thank God it has grown in holiness too. How futile and hopeless our love would be unless it were as holy. Our joint prayers will always keep it good in the sight of God; we could never hope to be as happy unless our love were founded on prayer. Ever since I first met you and loved you, Eileen, I have wanted to pray harder while loving you more and I have kept that love the most sacred thing of my whole life. It has saved me over and over again from disaster and all the time you were with me and kept my head above water. Two years in England and one in India were not without temptation and dangers to a young man, but somehow I could not let you down, Eileen; you made it easy for me to keep good. How often have I thanked God for allowing me to meet you and fall in love with you at such an early age; you have been my guiding star. How can I ever love you enough; what can I do to make you happier, what can I do to love you even more. I pray and pray to the Sacred Heart each day and ask Him to send peace to this unhappy world and above all, to bring us together again. I only want to see again and speak to you and tell you how much I love you. Then our happiness would be complete. Wouldn't it be wonderful if a miracle really did happen and we were to meet again in the near future; we would not worry about a very uncertain future because we would be together always, ready to meet anything that may come. If it God's holy will that the war should continue then we are resigned to wait but I always think that this waiting is so hard on you, Eileen. Still in God's own time we shall meet again never to be parted from each other again and then we shall know love and each other as never before. Thank God that waiting can only strengthen and purify our love still more; we should be so very proud of it because there has never been a love like it before in the world.

As usual I have no news to give you about today's events in camp. The C.O. went off this morning on leave but alas I had the unpleasant duty of sending him a telegram to return to camp immediately. I have had my old job of second in command for a whole day and I was not terribly thrilled with it. I need some exercise badly and so I was compelled to do some physical jerks this evening and some weight throwing. We had a hockey match arranged for yesterday but it was washed out! Our usual picnic for Sunday has been cancelled too as the C.O. is away and our waiter is ill in hospital. However Capt. Buckley and I have arranged a swim for tomorrow afternoon – I mean to get out of camp at least once a week for some fresh air! I have been on duty today and so I have had heaps to do even though it is Saturday. Unlike you I do not darn and wash and mend on Saturdays; my orderly does all my darning and mending – I gave it up as a bad job!

I love you Eileen and nothing can change, Eileen. Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

Sunday – November 30th

My very own darling, what can I say to you tonight? – you whom I love and adore so much; it may be a plain “goodbye” for many a long day. The situation in this part of the globe could not be more serious and soon I may be enveloped in a war. Should it really come, you must not worry about me, Eileen; worrying unduly can only do harm to us both. All we can do is pray and leave everything to God. I shall take good care of myself and I shall pray as never before; I shall ask Him to give you courage to face whatever the future may hold. My darling child, we love each other as two people have never loved before and we love our good God who has been so generous to us. We know a happiness and a joy that two people have never known before. Oh Eileen, can anything else matter very much? We were meant for each other and our marriage was made in Heaven above; God will bring us together again but we shall always be resigned to do His Holy Will.

How I hope and pray that this will not be my last letter to you. You know that should the war start here, sending air mail letters will be impossible and all air mail will cease. Sea mail too will almost certainly cease or be greatly curtailed and very uncertain. However, I shall write to you every day as usual and then when the chance comes you will have dozens of letters all at once! But maybe war will not come and you shall have your “Clipper” letters as usual. All leave has been cancelled and that is an awful disappointment for me – it means that I shall not have Mass on Christmas Day in Kuala Lumpur as I had planned. Maybe Fr. Girard will not come here on December 21st as arranged. I am praying hard that I shall have at least one Mass in the near future; it will be awful without it. Need I tell you that I am in the state of grace, thank God, and that has given me new strength and courage. My own darling, I shall always love you, you will always be in my thoughts and prayers. We have known great happiness during these past months but it is nothing to what lies ahead of us. Never worry about the present; think only of the past and the future and then you will not falter in your courage. You can thank the Good God that He moved me from my station in the mountains – today it is infinitely more dangerous than my present station. Never fear, Eileen, I shall do my job well; I shall pray well and how I shall love you in the fateful days that are coming.

Please tell mother that I love her as if I really were her son. You cannot imagine what it means to me to have her as my mother in times like these. Your daddie too I love because he is yours, Eileen, and because he is so like my own father in his ways. Tell Josephine and Mairead that I am really in love with them and not Eileen! I would marry the former for her good cooking; the latter for her assistance to me in my practice!! And here I am engaged to marry their sister Eileen who cannot cook or nurse!!! My darling, you know that love never thinks about cooking or nursing; I love you for your own dear self – I love everything about you. Ask Fergus to pray for us and tell him to hurry up and become a Redemptorist – we want him to marry us. Tell Hugh that I shall beat him at handball when I come home; do not let him study too hard – “he is only a young fella”! (I used have this said to me at home very often). And last but not least is Frances; you are lucky to have such a friend in life. I always loved her and I first confided my love in her. Tell her that I still love her and am praying for her happiness. Give my regards to Felix and Mona at Ballynahinch and wish them every success and joy from me. You will see my father and Anne quite a lot; they will always be happy to see you. My father loves you and all my sisters love you too; but their brother Frank loves you best of all. Goodbye my own darling Eileen, and may God bless you and keep you safe from all harm.

All my love;

Ever your loving

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore, S.S.,
Monday, December 1st [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

I sent off a very frantic 14 page letter this morning to my best girl and now I am sorry about all the things I put in it! It was frantic and I wrote frantic things in it because it was a sort of ‘farewell’ letter – I thought it would be the last one for many months to come; but I hope and pray that this will not be so. The Far Eastern situation became very bad recently and so all Malaya has been standing by; all officers were recalled from leave. Well, my darling, we are still standing by but the excitement of the sudden “get ready” order has died away and here I am as usual writing to you under very quiet and peaceful conditions in this little verandah. It is raining hard but rain never worries or depresses me because I love it. I was so excited that I sent off the letter containing

my small snap and forgot to write something on the latter explaining my bandaged face of Rawalpindi days! I did not forget to say goodbye to you and all your dear ones. My darling, it was thoughtless of me to write such a gloomy letter to you, but as usual I just wrote as I felt. We did promise to be honest with each other and write down our feelings, our fears, our hopes and dreams; but that is no reason why I should suddenly unload all my woes upon your delicate(?) shoulders.

If I were to tell you of the one exciting event of today you would laugh – well, darling, I had sugar of my bread at tea time! However I did go to the village on business this morning to see the medical officer of a unit there. I was entertained regally with orange squash. I sent my Christmas telegrams off from the local P.O. – one to you my beloved, one to Frances, and one to my father. It seems so cold writing down a few numbers on a telegram form and sending them off to people one loves; but you know that my whole heart and soul is in every word that those numbers mean. I went to town in an Ambulance car and it was like any other visit to town except that I wore a Red Cross Brassard on my arm! On my way I passed a native kampong and saw Mrs. (Dr) McMahon doling out advice and medicine to women and children gathered all around her. I would love to have her job among all these kindly natives. I later saw the doctor himself doing his rounds at the hospital and we hailed each other.

My dearest Eileen, I am still very happy and it is your love that makes me so happy. Thank God you are safe in far off Ireland and that there have been no air raids on our native land – it brings me great consolation in times like these. How thankful I am that you are not in Malaya now and married to me; it would kill me to think that I had brought you all the way out here and put you right in the middle of another war where you would be so utterly alone without kith or kin to turn to. How infinitely better off you are in Omagh; you are on the last lap of your first term and Christmas is fast approaching. It is a grand feeling looking forward to and preparing for Christmas – especially in Ireland. My darling, will you promise me that on Christmas Eve of every year in our home, that you will light those two blessed candles in our candlesticks and place them by the windows for the Blessed Virgin to see. It is an awful thought to me that for the first time in my life I shall have to spend Christmas without Mass. I cannot now have leave for a single day. Still I am praying that Father Girard will be able to come here on Sunday December 21st promised. I sent a letter (official) to H.Q. about Mass and Confessions for all Catholics within the area and they kindly circulated it to every unit, including the R.A.F., so that every Catholic soldier in the district now knows all about Mass on 21st and he also knows that the good news was sent to them by a very obscure Captain in the R.A.M.C.! My dearest, I always feel so proud being a Catholic and all that it stands for. You, in Ireland, have no idea how carefully others watch Catholics in Eastern countries; somehow they always expect a lot from us in the way of example. Others may “go to the dogs” in these countries, but never a Catholic!

I must away and have my bath and bore you no more this night. God bless you, Eileen.

Tuesday December 2nd

My darling, you must be prepared for very boring letters in the near future because I may be confined to camp for many months to come. At present I feel like a “bird in a gilded cage” surrounded by all these trees and no prospect of seeing daylight soon; worst of all not a chance in the world of having a swim in my China Sea! However “stone walls do not a prison make ...” and so my spirit and my heart are many thousands of miles away with you and that is why I shall always be happy even though we are separated. How can I ever be sad again in my life while I have your love to sustain me and our prayers to guide me aright. I want to share my happiness with others here and I do succeed in making many people in the camp happy. They just cannot understand why I should always be so gay; no matter what things may be like, no matter how boring life may seem in camp – I am always the same and in great form the whole day long. My own darling, you know that you are the cause of all this. (Interruption! Two hours debate with my neighbours on Russia, Germany, Spain, India, Malay, Communism etc. etc.!). It is now 8.40 p.m. and I have not changed for dinner yet, but I must tell you that I love you with all my heart and soul and that I am yours forever and ever. Nothing can ever change me. I know that I shall come back to you and that our happiness will only have begun. Marriage is not a light undertaking, but with our love and our prayers we shall make it a success. My darling, you must never have any doubts about our great decision – we are sure that we chosen rightly because we have chosen after much prayer and trials. Our future happiness is assured because we have placed it in the hands of our good God. Our love and our marriage will be under Mary’s protection and she will make our home like that home she had in Nazareth. The aftermath of this awful war has no terrors for us because we shall, with God’s help, pull through somehow; we have so much to live for in those days – there will be work to do but it will be in a good cause and we shall love it. We shall always be happy together no matter where we may be or what we may do. We are not building our future just as dreams, Eileen; we are preparing for it in real earnest. We are not depending on selfishness or superficiality in love to bring us happiness – our love is deep and true and sincere; it has been tested during all these years and today, it has never been so strong. There are so

very many things about our love and our future which I cannot write about in letters, but I feel that you understand all these things and that we agree about everything. We have so much to talk about when we meet again.

When you find that my letters are becoming dull you must be honest about it and tell me. Thank God we can always be open with each other. All your letters have been received and the latest was your grand birthday letter which came by Clipper. Your last ordinary letter was sent on September 15th. Did the box of snaps ever reach you, Eileen? And what about all the magazines I so generously sent you? My darling, it is my delight to be sending things to you; it will be my constant joy to give you my all during my life. My birthday will soon be here, but you will have made it a very happy one by your letter, and snap and lock of hair, and mass etc. I read my horoscope today (which I don't believe in) in the papers and it seems that next year I shall have a removal, shall travel far, shall be married, shall be a great success in my profession etc.; Venus is shining very bright for me!! Have you ever known such a marvelous year for me?? It seems that Venus is doing good work for you too on January 20th!! I must go now, Eileen; God bless you and keep you.

Wednesday – December 3rd

Today has been so busy and I finished work at 4 p.m. – yesterday it was 6 p.m.! With the crisis comes a lot of bustling around, mostly in small circles. I have had a delightful job during the past two days of sketching the aeroplanes of all the local countries – friend and foe – and colouring in their distinctive markings. I love working with coloured pencils and chalks; you know how I loved geography for its maps and contours! We are still “standing by” in Malaya waiting for anything that may come. I have always much more to do than the others – in fact I am still doing all the jobs I was doing when a major (Company Commander, Q. Master etc). I am like a father to the men so I have to feed and clothe them and that is no easy job when fighting begins as I shall then be a doctor and in charge of the Main Dressing Station. In this we have operating theatres, all surgical instruments, dressings, sterilizers, anaesthetics etc. as in a modern hospital. I have to organise the whole show, keep an eye on everyone, operate, dress wounds, and give anaesthetics; in short, I have about a million jobs but please God I shall be able to manage them all. I love work and oh how I hate idleness; my work so far in the army has been anything but medical but it was grand to be doing something. I have suddenly remembered something! – yesterday was my second anniversary of joining the army! Imagine two precious years of my life have gone – whither I know not; the first year was the saddest of my life and the second one has been the happiest. I shall never be unhappy again in my life – that can only come when you are hurt by anyone. How I wish that for the rest of our lives that I could bear all your hurts and troubles; you have promised to share them with me and I shall feel very annoyed if you do not keep that promise. You must never give the excuse that it will worry me when you confide your troubles in me – we are partners, and partners always share things.

As I sit in the Mess writing to you I have been keeping one eye on a certain path because a post was due today. And now I have seen a familiar figure coming down that path and he is carrying a bundle of letters for the officers! Yes!, there is a letter for me, but alack! it is from my bank!! Still, it was grand fun sitting there in expectation of a letter from you, my darling. Our Mess is a low wooden building, thatched roof, very long, twenty large windows and 6 doors – these latter are always open! One never dreams of shutting a window or door no matter what the weather may be like; it would become very hot inside. I cannot imagine myself back in civilization again where doors are bolted and windows barred; the latter custom is city-bred!

This afternoon I was introduced to the Maharajah of Garhwal (a state in the hills of the Punjab). He seemed a very ordinary sort of chap, fat, short of breath, and very pleasant looking. I tried to visualise him robed in his regal outfit and holding court at his luxurious palace in India surrounded by his counsellors and lovely ladies; but I failed hopelessly. The surroundings of this camp did not encourage my flight of imagination – a poor background for this Prince who is entitled to a salute of 17 guns! Tomorrow morning I have been detailed to go to the village and inspect the medical equipment of a regiment there. I am looking forward to this as it will mean a few hours out of camp; in fact it will be exciting as I shall have my automatic in my pocket. Now my darling, don't you think that I am safe now carrying such a weapon; it is really only a toy in comparison with a service pistol. It is essential (and ordered) that one should be armed in these days of unrest.

I am very worried about Josephine, your sister since I heard the news at lunch time on the radio. My darling, surely that child will not be conscripted under this new order; it would be awful and I hope and pray that she will be exempted. I think that teaching is a reserved occupation. Thank God you have been spared all of this in Ireland; it would break my heart to think of you doing a man's work – it is all so unwomanly and unnatural. The Mess has been “invaded” by three officers and the Radio is in full blast – and the news is not so good about Libya. The Germans are being driven back from Rostov, but the war seems to drag on and on. I am still optimistic about a speedy end to it all and still have confidence in Pope Pius's prophecy. How I love to think of what the end of the war will mean to us and the happiness it will bring to us.

Tomorrow is my big day and I shall spend it entirely with you – in thought and in prayer. Alas I am the Orderly Officer tomorrow – a special present! I wonder what my dear mother will think of her son tomorrow? She must be happy now that she has brought us together again; Eileen we shall never forget her in our prayers for a single day of our lives; we owe so much to her. I know she will be pleased with the Mass that I have given her and which will be offered up tomorrow morning in Kuala Lumpur by my little Frenchman – Father Girard. I have been thinking about our family Rosary, Eileen, and how faithful we shall be to it; we shall have a tremendous number of “trimmings” to say after it each night and friends to be remembered daily. (My mother called all these things the “trimmin’s” of the Rosary!). She used chide father a lot (in fun) for the huge number of extras he said after the family Rosary! I had a grand view of them all from the “back row” – father so devout, mother so holy, Josie so innocent, Anne fast asleep, Philip half-asleep and never a word, Maureen so serious, Margaret so genuine, and Una so prim, and your Frank so stolid! And now you have the whole family except Charlie – he was so quiet and so patient and good as he lay on his couch; he would smile when he heard Anne’s heavy breathing and laugh outright when Philip would say 12 “Hail Marys” instead of 10, thereby incurring a storm of rebuke from father!

Good night my darling and may God bless you.

Thursday – December 4th :- 7.30 a.m.

Good morning my own dearest one! It is my birthday and there you are fast asleep (12.30 a.m. in Omagh) in bed. I feel so happy and gay and want to tell you all about it. I have begun my birthday with you and that’s why I am happy; I have never been nearer to your heart than this morning. I am growing old in years – 29! – but thank God my love is growing with me and I feel younger in heart than ever before in my life. Shall write to you at lunch time when I return from the village. [2 p.m.] Had a glorious drive to town and back through the rain; everything so fresh and cool. And all the time I knew it was my birthday and my heart was singing; I was thinking of you always. Now you sleepy-head you are only crawling out of bed at this unearthly hour of the day; may be you are on your way to my Mass – your special present to me on my birthday. Oh my Eileen I do love you so very much. [4.30 p.m.] I have just realised properly that in one way my birthday is the same as any other day in that I am always thinking of you. This is my third note to you today and there is more to come, but I should be doing this every day of my life. However my letters are quite disjointed enough without sending you four installments daily instead of one! I have actually examined two cases (patients) this afternoon and I feel quite a doctor again! However I must be off now to mount the Guard!

[6 p.m.] It is now evening and your wish has come true – it has been a very, very happy birthday, Eileen. I did not think there could be such happiness in this world as I have known today, especially this evening. I have felt that you were close to me and with me in spirit; I have even felt your prayers. You and I depend so much on prayer for everything and we shall never change; our love and our happiness all depend upon prayer. Please God we shall never have a single unhappy moment in our married life together; and it is in these days of separation that we are making sure of this by praying with all our might. We are loving each other more and more as the days pass by – and we need this store of love to carry us through a lifetime together. I have always loved you, my dearest one, but my past love seems so small compared with the level that I have poured out of my heart to you this day. And I know that my love will grow greater each day of my life. I shall be the proudest man on earth the day of our wedding because I shall be marrying you whom everyone loves so much and because there is no girl in all the world like my Eileen. I have been around one half of the world and you have been around the other half, and we have never met another Eileen O’Kane! Yes, you are a terrible girl, but I adore you! My darling, I worry about you at times in case you should feel “all out of it” at home; I mean everyone seems to be married except ourselves. Even Frances and Roland may be married before us. In a way I feel a little pang at my heart when I hear of a new wedding, but my darling child our day will come too and we shall have our own home. Then all these weary months of waiting and praying and loving will only be happy memories – all our letters, snaps, telegrams, and greetings will be souvenirs of our great love. You must promise not to allow me to read the letters I have written to you; it would break my heart to read the boring things I sent to you from Malaya. However it will be fun telling you about my (our) Malayan snaps. Have you bought our album yet, Eileen? I want you to tell me all about it as you fill it up. Alas my snap-craze has died down and now snaps are out of the question these days, but my chance will come again and you shall have heaps of Malays, Kampongs, and the fishing fleet, when an opportunity arises. The main difficulty here is lack of good films. I must have a snap taken of myself in my new Australian felt hat; when you see it you will think that your Frank has joined the North West Mounted Police! My darling, I am the only officer lucky enough to get one of these hats and they are really very smart – much nicer than topee or cap. You should see me in my new raincoat (cape); it has a cowl which I wear over my hat. I am an awful looking sight, but then everyone is!

And so another year has gone and I am 29 years of age! It has been a grand birthday, spent with you my darling. Today I have remembered every single member of your family and mine too; Frances was not forgotten –

I said a special prayer for her intentions. I shall write to her again and to your mammie too. Good night and God bless you my own dearest Eileen and thank you for my happy, happy birthday.

Friday, December 5th

My dearest one, some journals have arrived for you today from Kuala Lumpur Museum. They are all very interesting to me because I am living in this country, and I only hope you too will find them interesting. They are the Journals of the Federated Malay States Museums and their titles deal with expeditions to British North Borneo, Sumatra, and most interesting of all is one written by an Irishman called Moore and describes in detail the various aborigines of Malaya. They are all well illustrated by photographs – mountain peaks, jungle, lakes, streams, queer remote villages and their inhabitants – I just cannot describe them to you. They contain very valuable maps which alas I cannot send to you. Your girls will surely love these books especially for the pictures. It makes me so happy when I have things to send to you, because they are all tokens of my love for you no matter how small they may be. And yet I am still worrying about the greatest token of all – the engagement ring which I ordered to be cabled to you many weeks ago. I have not heard definitely as yet from the jewellers whether it has been dispatched to you from London. I shall feel so relieved and so happy when I know that it has reached you safely; I shall be contented only when it is on your finger. My darling, I wanted to ask you often whether you wear the little signet ring always on your ring finger, even in School? We shall always treasure that ring because it was really our first engagement ring. Your Auntie is a dear to lend you her dress ring for special occasions.

I am expecting a letter from you at the weekend, Eileen, as it is now about a fortnight since the last one arrived. I just live for your letters and very word you have to tell me about yourself, home, our friends, your dreams and prayers. I think sometimes that you are too generous to me with all the prayers you offer up for me and the hosts of people you have asked to pray for me. I should be a saint with all those good folk's prayers, but I am no saint. I try to be good and pray very hard but oh how I miss all the things that you have in abundance at home – the Masses, confession, Holy Communion, and Devotion. Thank God you have all these blessings and graces; you are a very lucky young woman to be surrounded by such aids to holiness. I have awful heartache when I think of what I shall miss at Christmastide.

Today has been quiet in camp as most of the men were out. However I had some fun with a few troops when we went "down in the forest" to dig some turf in an open glade. We are making a nice plot of green grass in camp to deceive the enemy – if possible; among other things I appear to be the camouflage officer too! Anything and everything except doctoring! My birthday is very far off today but my 29th was a very pleasant one; please God we shall both spend our 30th birthdays together. We shall be so old then, Eileen!! My own darling, our ages do not matter one iota; what matters is that we love each other so much and that we love God too with all our hearts. He and His Blessed Mother will surely bless us, our love, and our marriage because we shall pray to them without ceasing.

Good night my dearest and God bless you.

Saturday, December 6th

My own darling, it is nearly 11 p.m. and this is the first chance I have had to write you a line. Today has been another land-mark of my stay in Malaya and it has been a nightmare of work for me. Even now I should not be coolly sitting here writing to my best girl, but I had to tell you that I love you with all my heart and soul and self; you have all of me and all of my love, and I shall always love you no matter what may happen. This letter will surely be my last to you for a long time though I hope and pray that this will not be so. As usual I can tell you nothing of what is going on around me and why I am so busy. Thank God I can always keep cool and think in a crisis; so I did get things done today without any undue fuss. I shall pray harder in these days than I have ever done before; I shall keep near to you, Eileen, always and nothing shall ever separate us. If this should be my farewell letter to you, my darling, then I must tell you that these past months we have spent together have been the most glorious and the happiest and holiest of my whole life. Can you forgive me for being as blind in the past and so stupid; I have even hurt you whom I have always adored so much. My own darling, I did not dream then that you were in love with me or things would have been so different. I was hoping and waiting and praying for your love – and now that it has come I am happy.

I am sorry this note must be so short but I shall have more time tomorrow. At present I am "holding the fort" here. Good night and God bless you my darling.

Sunday, December 7th

I am not in my cosy little wooden hut but in the office. I am sleeping here tonight beside the phone because the whole country is in a state of emergency – still I am very, very happy. I had a wonderful letter from you this morning, dated September 28th; your letters now come regularly every fortnight nowadays and nearly always on

Sundays. If I ever needed your letter it was today; you never let me down, Eileen, and your letters always come just when I need them most. You may know about the crisis here and how large Japanese convoys were seen by R.A.F. patrols approaching the Gulf of Siam; this is not secret but was announced on the radio today. Naturally everyone in Malaya is standing by; and this means a total upset to my usual routine, all work and no leisure. However today has been quieter but still I have been working the whole day long; I am always in uniform and tonight I shall sleep in it! My little automatic is with me day and night, but I know I shall never use it. The important thing to me is that your little medal is ever around my neck and always close to a heart that will always love you. My love will never change, Eileen; it will always be the same except that it will daily grow stronger and better. I would not be Frank Murray at all unless I was loving you every moment of my life. I would rather you would call me "Frank" than "Francis" because you have known me by that name from the first. I always preferred St. Francis of Assisi to your Xavier, but since coming out East I have realised how great a saint St. Francis Xavier really was. The influence he had over the natives of Southern India was amazing – they worshipped him and his statue is all over India. The Tamils brought their Catholicity with them to the rubber estates of Malaya and all this was due to the Xavier.

My darling, I was so sorry to learn about your defeat in the Patrick Cup. You played very well; you did your best, what more could you do? I love you more now than before you lost your cup. I know you were disappointed, Eileen, and so I share your defeat with you; but I was not disappointed in you and never shall be. I have always loved you my dearest one for your own sweet self and everything that you were; and now I find that you have grown lovelier than ever before in yourself, in your ways, and in grace. You have nothing to live up to in my estimation; you will always be the same Eileen please God. So never, never say that I shall be disappointed when we meet again. That waiting can only make our happiness complete. I am a very proud man and a very lucky one too to have the love of such a good girl as you; I shall be ever so proud of your goodness. I love you for your holiness. We would not be happy unless we had true love; it would not be real love without holiness and there would be no holiness without prayer.

In your letter you have mentioned our ring again and how you wished me to purchase it in Malaya, and bring it home with me for you. Alas my darling you know nothing about the East! In India and in Malaya all good (so called) jewellery is English made – probably comes from Birmingham! The local stuff is cheap and badly finished; you could not wear it, my dear child. Hyderabad jewels do exist apart from story books, but all the good stuff is tucked away in the Nizam's coffers! My darling, I had to take a chance and have your ring sent from London. I wanted so desperately to have it sent before war should have come to the Far East, so that you could wear it always. If the ring should not suit you, Eileen, then please just wear the signet ring until the war is over and then we shall have another one instead. Actually they have not sent the bill yet and so it is not too late to change our arrangements. They have been so very slow about it all that I am disgusted with them. You simply must have that ring for Christmas Day. The photograph of my mother was lovely, Eileen; do thank Margaret for being so thoughtful. Today Father Girard offered up a Mass at Kuala Lumpur for Josie and tomorrow one will be said [for Charlie]. I have a special love for The Immaculate Conception and every day of my life I have never missed my 3 Hail Marys and after each – "Oh, Mary, by thy pure and Immaculate Conception, make my body pure and my soul holy".

And now it is au revoir once again, my own darling. You know that the longer we are apart the more I shall love you. I am all yours and I am yours forever. Your happiness is all that I live for; I hope and pray that my love can make you half as happy as yours has made me. I do have dreadful spasms when I long to see you again with all my heart, but thank God I am spared a lot of pain by prayer – this brings great peace and comfort to me at such times. Give my love to all at home and to Frances. When you see Gerry again give him my regards and ask him to write to me.

May God bless you, Eileen, and keep you safe from all harm. May He send me home soon again to you.

Ever your loving

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
Malaya,
Monday, December 8th [1941]
Feast of the Immaculate Conception

My own darling Eileen,

This morning I had a message from our advanced dressing station and it said "War declared; naval bombardment; coastal landing by enemy." I could scarcely believe my eyes. It seemed a sacrilege that war should begin on this great Feast of Mary Our Mother.

This has been an awful day for me at the Main Dressing Station here. Already I have given my blood to an R.A.F. sergeant³⁸ and oh I was so proud to do this for such a man. He shot down a Japanese fighter into the sea before leaving his targets below and brought his plane safely back. The other casualties were minor ones, and were [deleted]. I have been happy today because at last I am doing something worthwhile. I thought of you all day and my only concern was that you might be worried about me and my safety; I wanted to tell you "Do not worry, my darling; all will be well." I have never loved you as much as I do today and I have never prayed so hard. I shall always love you, Eileen.

This morning I put your little polyfoto snap inside an empty cigarette case with your lock of hair; your medal around my neck – and thus armed I went off to the war. I have opened that little case so often today and I have prayed each time for you and loved you more. This is the first page of the war diary which I am keeping for you, Eileen; we shall read it together when the war is over and we meet again. Good night and God bless you my darling child.

Tuesday, December 9th

My darling, today the second of the war in the Far East. We were bombed and machine-gunned by Japanese bombers this morning for hours. This was my first air raid and strangely enough I was not afraid in the least; I carried my sergeant pilot on a stretcher into a trench with the other patients. There we were for ages looking up at those huge planes, first in formation at 10,000 feet and then just above the tree tops when they machine gunned our hospital. I did not forget you for a moment during that raid; neither did I forget to pray to Our Lady of Quito. Your medal, your snap, and your lock of hair were all close to my heart – so I must have been safe. It annoyed me very much when I was ordered to leave my sergeant behind during the third raid alarm; he did not want to come with us so I remained with him and kept him talking the whole time. After all the bombing and machine gunning there was only one slight casualty in the whole place.

My friend the Irish doctor joined us here and is doing great work in the operation theatre. He is a very cheery soul and oh so very good to the patients. The Japanese have not landed here as yet but have confined their activity mostly to Kota Barhu – as announced on the radio today. We still hold the aerodrome up there and the Indian troops are fighting very well. I must have some sleep now while there is time!

God bless you Eileen.

Wednesday December 10th

My own darling, I have been out of camp for a few hours today in a lorry and managed to get drenched to the skin! It was grand to get out in the open again and to feel the rain beating in my face and have fresh air around me. I did not even trouble to look up into the sky and look for enemy planes – I was happy. It was rather pathetic to see the refugees streaming along the road – to nowhere – Chinese, Tamils, Malays. Women clasping small babies to their breast, with a bundle in the other arm and a sad look on their pale frightened faces (especially the Chinese). These peaceful people are now in the thick of the war; now they realise what China has endured at the hands of the Japs.

The men are used to air raids now and think nothing of them at all. More bombs were dropped today but no damage was done and we had no casualties. My little sergeant was evacuated today and though I was sorry to lose him, he will be much better off at a base hospital. I am on duty by the phone in the office tonight and I am wondering what your thoughts are just now. My darling, do not worry about me; I shall be alright. Remember that the only real harm that can come to me is that I should lose God's friendship; nothing can harm me while I have that to guide me. I want to send you a telegram but have not a moment to spare, and it's very doubtful if telegrams are being dispatched nowadays. You know that I love you with everything I have got and that I shall always love you. Good night my dearest one, and may God bless and console you this night.

Thursday December 11th

My darling, can you forgive me for the awful letter I am writing to you now. I only have a few moments to spare at night and when these moments come I am too tired to do anything; you may even think my writing quite good when I tell you that it has been written in almost complete darkness due to the blackout. I could never have carried on without your love, Eileen, and your prayers and now I know that no matter how long the war in Malaya may

³⁸ This is believed to be Albert Beagley who was a gunner on a Blenheim Mark IV. See Postscript for more information.

last I shall carry on through it all and in the end come back safely to you. During the past three days I have loved you more than I thought it was possible to love anyone on this earth. No matter what may happen to me I know that I shall always love you; nothing can ever change me or my love. My darling, I do not want you to suffer and that is why nothing will happen to me. I am no coward, Eileen, and for myself I care nothing but it is you I am always thinking of and wondering how things will affect you whom I love so much. I would rather die a thousand times than have you suffer in any way. I know you will find comfort and consolation in prayer; He has said "Come to me, all you ..." and I know that you will go to Him for solace and He will not fail you.

I sent you a Pan-American letter on the 8th December but it will not travel by "Clipper" as this service has ceased to function. The ordinary air mail has also ceased and nothing remains except sea mail and this will be slow and uncertain nowadays. I hope and pray that my "farewell" letter to you on the 1st December did not upset you, my dearest one. I think it must have got through to America in good time. I wanted you to have that letter more than anything else. Alas I have gone to war without knowing whether or not you received the ring or not. Oh why did they not send it before all this started; I would have felt so much happier; they will probably cancel the whole thing now. Thank God your Christmas card and presents were sent in good time and should have reached you by this time. Let us pretend that one candlestick is you and one is me; then we shall be together always on your mantelpiece! The flame of our love will never be extinguished – we shall always love each other no matter where we may be. I shall spend Christmas with you in spirit and I know that it will be a happy one for us both. Eileen, my darling, we have got everything that two people could ask for; we have got true love and a holy love and we have had a wonderful year of happiness even though parted by many thousands of miles. Think of the years that lie ahead of us and the joy that will surely be ours. We place all our trust in Him who knows all things and who created all things. His way is the best way and we shall always do His Holy will.

I have been a doctor today at last! I have practiced my art and I have eased pain and given some joy to others. I have a kind of running "buffet" in my dispensary and hot tea is served to every patient – and their escorts! If you could have seen the dusky face that appeared out of the darkness just now and asked me for some Holy Water you would have smiled. It was my old Havildar (who is a Catholic) and I gave him half of my store – he was so pleased to have it. Nothing much happened today except that I loved you more than ever.

Good night my darling and God bless you.

Friday December 12th

Today I had to abandon my role of doctor and become a lorry driver for a few hours this afternoon! I had a glorious time driving through blinding rain to draw supplies at the depot; I think I must have missed my vocation – I should have been a lorry driver. It is rather precarious driving along these narrow roads especially when another lorry looms large ahead of me. My only worry was that the drenching rain would penetrate my cigarette case and destroy its priceless contents; but all was well and you escaped the showers! I must have looked a sorry sight on my return to camp with all my clothes sodden and rain dripping from my nose!

There was not much work today and it was good to relax for a whole day – not even an air raid to break the peace of our home in the rubber. There is not much news of the Far Eastern war today and though Japan has started off in real "blitz" fashion, she will have to slow up a bit now. Then one of these days she will be struck by the might of America and the war will be over in this part of the world. Japan will have small temporary success but she cannot hope to survive when Britain, America, China, and the East Indies get together.

My own darling, you must not be sad or think that I am pessimistic about the future. I have placed myself in God's hands and I know that He will bring me back safely to you but it may be His Holy Will that I should never return to you and we cannot ignore this possibility. Should anything happen to me, Eileen, always remember that our love can never die and that we shall meet again in heaven please God – He will allow us to love each other then too. I shall always need your love no matter where I may be and you will always have mine; I have always wanted you, Eileen, and your love ever since I first saw you. Do not be sad for me if anything happens – I want you to be happy. God forbid that anything should happen to you, my own darling, but if it should then I would not become despondent and utterly miserable – I would go on loving you in the same way and pray for you; and yet all the time I would know that you were loving me and praying for me even though were in heaven. I would never marry anyone if I could not marry you, Eileen. But you must not think the reverse to be true – should I die then you must not be bound to me; if any other good man can make you happy then I would be pleased indeed. It would break my heart to think that you were ever miserable. My own, darling, I am sorry to write in this strain to you; I have put it very badly, but you may be able to understand how I feel on this subject.

I want you to be cheerful and be your normal self at home and at school, among your dear ones and among your friends. It is natural that you should worry but please do not let them see that you are worried. God is sending you a greater cross than ever – the war in Malaya is my job but it cannot hurt me; my only worry is that this war might hurt you. It is my life's ambition never to have you hurt even in the smallest thing and yet here I

am causing you more worry than I am worth. I cannot understand why you ever loved me at all. It was so natural that I should have loved you because you were everything that was good and you were a very lovable person. Do you remember how simple and innocent our love was at first? How could anyone ever think that it was wicked. Thank God it has remained fine and holy, as it always shall be. My darling, how perfect our marriage will be with such a love to keep us together; our home will be heaven on earth because we shall have everything to make it so.

I know you will visit Beechwood often and see my dear ones there. They all love you, Eileen; father loves you more than his own children and Anne has made you her sister; Margaret, Una, and Maureen will treat you in the same way. Don't you think that Margaret has great character; she is a wonderful and resembles my father in many ways. Do not let them worry about me; do not let your mammie and daddie worry either, because all will be well please God. I am getting in as much as I can in tonight's "diary" because tomorrow night I shall be on duty and sleeping in the office and I may not have time to write much. I promise to write every day even though only a few lines.

God bless you, my own dearest one, and may He keep you safe.

Saturday – December 13th

How very unlike a Saturday it has been today. I have been in camp all day and it was not exciting – even when some planes came and dropped their load; no damage was done. The poor Japs are incredibly bad shots but of course this country gives little chance of accuracy in bombing. As I sat in the trench today and looked up at the planes overhead, I felt so very unafraid and so very cool; somehow I had new courage and I was happy too. Is it unnatural to be happier during air raids? I knew that you were the cause of my unhappiness – your love and your prayers and thoughts give me such wonderful strength and confidence.

War conditions here for me are exactly the same as peace time conditions. All my "acts" are very useful to me now, because I have no desire to go to pictures and so I do not miss them. Cigarettes will soon be scarce, but I shall not miss them at all. There is one thing I cannot live without and that is your love, Eileen; I must always have that. You see how good God has been to me in every way; He has given me happiness and peace of mind even under my present conditions here. Everyone is cheerful and optimistic in camp here; naturally the men were frightened during the first air raid but since then they have been marvelous. There are so many things I should like to tell you about in my diary but they must wait till we meet again – they cannot be written in a letter. However the censor does not object to me telling you that I love you with my whole heart and soul, that I have never loved anyone but you, Eileen, and never shall.

God bless you this night and may angels guard thee.

Sunday – December 14th

My own darling, I am in the office tonight and all is well. Did you know that I loved you so much? After loving you for so many years I now find that my love has grown beyond all knowledge. You are a terrible girl for waiting so long to tell me that you loved me! but how I thank God that you have told me all about it. During the past year I have felt so happy that I could have cried with sheer joy at times when I thought of you and the love you have given me. Your love has always been the most precious thing on earth and now that it has come, I realise that it means everything to me; somehow a war seems a very small thing indeed, when I think of all that you have given to me. My heart is broken just now in case you are in the least worried about me. We, two Eileen, have so much to live for; we have so many grand things to do in life that our lives could never be long enough. You must never be sad, my dearest one, no matter what happens to me – I shall always be loving you in the same way. I know that I shall never be able to love you enough no matter how long I may live, but I do know that I shall love you more and more every day of my life. Even death cannot separate us – we shall love each other forever and ever. If I should be the cause of much suffering to you, then you will know that I could not have avoided it. We have loved much and had much happiness; but alas great love can bring great pain at times; I shall never, never regret having loved you so much, Eileen. I have always wanted you to have all of me and all my love; I would never have been happy unless you had all. These are eventful days in our lives, Eileen, but our prayers and our love will pull us through all right; and when this war is over our love will emerge stronger and purer than ever before. I have got peace and contentment that so few around me seem to have; life can never be grim to me again. I feel so happy when I get up each morning and greet the dawn at 6.30 a.m.; I say good morning to you and then come my prayers with a very fervent morning offering to our dear Lord and a prayer for you and my dear ones and yours too. And when night comes after a joyous day I bid thee "good night" and put you safely under my pillow. Eileen you do look lovely in that little snap – it will never leave me, please God, night or day, nor will your medal and your little lock of hair.

Today has been a strange Sunday because it is the first Sunday in my whole life that did not seem like a Sunday! I worked hard all day and did some little bit of doctoring. Last night I doled out some more Holy Water

and oh how happy that little Yorkshire lad was when he went off from my room with his small bottle. He is a nursing orderly (British) in the R.A.M.C and he is a grand chap. The war is much as usual in Malay and we are holding our own very well indeed. I must be off to my "cot" and sleep and dream; have to rise at 6 a.m. tomorrow morning. I love you Eileen. Good night and God bless you.

Monday December 15th

My darling, what is it like at home nowadays? Are you very busy doing Christmas shopping in Omagh! May be you are on holidays already and enjoying a rest after a hectic term at school; I know you will have Christmas at Killough. It will be so peaceful and quiet down by the sea in Co. Down – an ideal setting for that Holy Season. It is a time of great joy and I know that you will have a happy time because I want you always to be happy. I never want to cause you a moment's unhappiness ever – I would rather die than do that, even indirectly. Can you forgive me for ever coming into your life, for allowing you and wanting you to fall in love with me, and no when your love has reached its height I am causing you to suffer. Oh my own dearest, if I could only do something to prevent your suffering – what wouldn't I do, what wouldn't I give. I am not in danger, Eileen, and you must know this too well. I am a doctor attending the wounded during a war and am not in the fighting line, much as I would like to be. I can do so much good in my present job and you must think only of this; everything that I shall do I shall imagine that you are always present to help me – then my job will be well done. And if you were really present in person you would never be ashamed of me because I put my best into everything.

Do you remember I told you in a recent letter that rather than have a row with anyone I always walked away – but today was an exception and I had a battle royal. I did not lose my temper though my adversary completely lost his! I stood up and fought and won because all my principles were at stake; it did not matter to me whether my opponent was a senior officer to me. I am glad that I had this row because it would have shown awful weakness on my part and besides, it had a happy ending because the other man and I were on speaking terms a few moments later! My darling, you see I must have a row sometimes especially when it concerns something which a Catholic holds dearest in life. You would have hated me if I had not fought today. It was a great moral victory for me and I am very elated about it. I was asked to do something by a senior officer which would have been against all that you and I have been taught to love and I refused! Then the battle began and soon ended! My own darling, I do love you so very, very much tonight and I shall always love you. God bless and keep you this night.

Tuesday – December 16th

Eileen my dearest, at last I have had a chance of sending you a telegram; it is all ready to be sent to the post office in the morning. Alas I cannot send it to you myself and much as I hate others sending it for me it cannot be helped. However I have put it in an envelope, sealed it and addressed it to the local postmaster. I am also sending one to my father lest he be worried about me. Maybe I have got a swelled head in thinking that anyone in this world would be worried about my safety; I know so well that I am not worth worrying about! In case my telegram goes astray, here it is for you now – "Do not worry; all is well; I shall always love you my darling; ever your; Frank Murray." How I hope and pray this message has reached you safely already and that it will bring you some joy.

Another air mail has arrived from India today but not a word has come yet about the ring. I had a letter from my bank in Rawalpindi and they inform me that I now have 115 rupees credit (about £9!). However I have got over £100 in the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank at Ipoh and about £200 in Birmingham. I am sorry to mention money, darling, but it is best that you should know where my things are. I have five cases of stuff with Cox & Kings Ltd (Storage) at Rawalpindi; one trunk, one suit case, and one attaché case here with me. If anything should happen to me, though please God it won't, then you can give these details to my father. All my plans for our joint banking account have now gone astray as I cannot send any money now that war has come to Malaya. My own darling, I feel as if I had let you down about our ring and about the banking account but honestly, Eileen, I could not help it. Your plan will be the best in the end when the war is over – we shall select our ring together and I shall put it on the third finger of your left hand. That day will come as sure as sure! And then you will see how much I love you. It is of no use trying to explain all about my love for you, Eileen; we shall have to meet first and then you will hear it all from my own lips. Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

Wednesday December 17th

My own darling, I am becoming more and more ashamed of this letter – it becomes worse as the end approaches. It is not easy writing under these conditions and so you must forgive a lot of things in my letters. Thank God you have some idea of my whereabouts and that you realise that the war has not actually reached me as yet. Your visit to Prof. Thomson was not in vain and the time you spent on that map has been profitable to you. I told you that Humphrey had gone north some months ago and at the moment he is probably in the thick of the fighting but his

unit is situated about 50 miles behind the front lines. It is sad to think that my little home in the mountains is now in enemy hands – it almost seems criminal and unholy that they should occupy such beauty. I have heard some details of the fighting up there and all concerned put up a grand show against terrific odds. The little man (officer) of Magherafelt origin was magnificent throughout and still is. I am sorry we were sent away from that pleasant place; I would love to have been in that battle, but I suppose my turn will come soon enough here.

When you write again, Eileen, please tell me all about Belfast – Falls Road, Cliftonville; does Divis still look down upon Spring Villa and does my Cave Hill still look very lovely and green? And is my cricket ground³⁹ a lovely bowl of green; and are the leaves coming back to those stately trees around Beechwood and the Convent⁴⁰ beyond? I suppose the little Chapel bell is silent nowadays and does not chime out the Angelis. Maybe I am a bit homesick, but then who wouldn't be, occasionally? I would dearly love to see our native city again, to ride in the trams and buses, to walk along its streets, to approach a villa on Springfield Road and peep through the garden gate (very rudely) to see if my beloved were in the garden in her blue dress. Would she welcome me back again and would she really throw her arms around my neck and tell me something that I have wanted to hear for many, many years? Do you think she would notice the tears of joy in my eyes or would her own eyes be too misty to see even that? Do you think she will know immediately how very much I love her; do you think she will find much change in me whom she used to know as a very self-conscious schoolboy? Would she mind terribly if I flew off to "Beechwood" with her to meet my father and my dear ones; would she mind terribly if I went off with her to the highest peak of Cave Hill, and sat down in the heather beside her and just talked and talked to her alone as we looked down on Belfast below. I have so many things to tell her that she will be bewildered by it all; I wonder will she listen to my boring tale? Maybe she will have much more exciting things to tell me, but I too must have my say. You are a terrible girl to make me love you so much; oh my darling I always wanted to love you as much as I do now; I have always loved you and only you. How I hope and pray that my dream will come true and that we shall meet again. I want to see you just once more, Eileen, and tell you something which should have been told before, but which you have always known. I want to meet your mammie and daddie and all those who are dear to you. Please God I shall meet them all sooner than we expect at the moment. Think of the joy that will be ours; think of the days and months of happiness that are ahead of us. Think of the home that we have planned; think of all the little things that can make our home perfect. Oh my Eileen we have got everything that a human heart could desire; our home will be a perfect one and you and I shall be the happiest couple the world has ever seen. I am so proud to be engaged to you, so what will my pride be like when we are married. No matter how long I may have to wait until our next meeting you know that I shall be loving you more and more each day of my life.

I shall pray that God may guide this letter on its perilous journey to you in safety. I shall write to you daily if it is only a single line. I shall send you a cable when possible. I shall love you forever and ever, Eileen, and nothing will ever change my love for you. I have always belonged to you and always shall be yours. May God bless you, my dearest one and may He keep you safe from all harm; may Mary our Mother watch over you always and protect you from danger.

Ever your loving

Frank.

P.S. Love to Frances and all at home

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Thursday, December 18th [1941]

My own dearest Eileen,

The war is still on in Malaya and still I am not in it – as yet. Apart from a couple of very poor attempts at air raids we have had nothing here at all. I am very, very happy still because I find myself loving you more and more each day; because I am praying better than ever before. I am especially happy tonight because I

³⁹ The cricket ground in question belonged to the Cliftonville Cricket Club and was located opposite the Murray family home, Beechwood, on the Cliftonville Road. In 1972 the club was forced to leave the ground after the premises were looted and burned by a mob.

⁴⁰ The convent belonged to the nuns of the Poor Clare Sisters and was located on the Cliftonville Road. It closed in 2012.

shall, please God, be at Mass and Communion tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. Isn't this wonderful, darling! The little French priest did not let us down in spite of the war; he has kept his word. How I prayed and prayed that I would have the grace and privilege of one mass and Communion before going into battle – and God has answered my prayer. I know that you will feel much happier about me now that you know I have received these graces. My Mass and Communion will be for our combined intentions and we both know what these are; tomorrow morning you will be in my thoughts every moment – and yet you are always in my thoughts. You are in everything that I do or say or think. My love for you is reflected in all my actions and thoughts of the day. How I wish that I could love you more than I do; I would be even happier than I am tonight; I want to do so much more for you, to give you so much more. All during my life you will find me trying to do this and I shall never be satisfied that I have succeeded.

Oh my own darling, if you could only see my heart this night and all the love that is there for you. Loving you is my life and what a sweet life it is. I would have no life unless I were loving you. I know that nothing will happen to me Eileen and that I shall be spared to you; I place all my trust in God. He will send me back to you. It may be His Holy Will that I should not return to you; if that should happen then you must not be sad for my sake because you will not have really lost me – I shall be yours more than ever before and always I shall be close to your heart. I know that you will always pray for me as I shall for you – nothing will ever separate us; we belong to each other now and forever. God has made us for each other and He will not let us down because He is all good and all holy. Put all your trust in the Sacred Heart and then you will not worry about me at all. Just you keep a stiff upper lip and keep your chin up; I shall feel so proud of you when I know that you are carrying on as usual and smiling all the time. I am doing my bit here, Eileen, and I manage to cheer them all up here a bit when life should be so grim and dour.

Good night my darling and God bless you.

Friday December 19th

Oh my dearest one, what a happy day this has been for me and I must tell you all about it quickly. I was on duty last night and so I slept in the office beside the phone. I had two calls at 2 a.m. & 3 a.m. but that did not prevent me getting up at 5 a.m.! Away I went to the Mess to wash and shave – and as I went I was “walking on air”. I collected my little band of Catholics – six in all – packed them in my truck and drove off to our rendezvous with the priest, which was a tiny village about 8 miles away. Father Girard greeted us on the steps of the local Chinese School; he was really glad to see us, but not half as glad as we were to see him. He escorted the seven of us into a tiny whitewashed schoolroom (the infants) and there we knelt at those small desks and faced that little altar (on a low table). On the blackboard was written “Good morning Sir!” and numerous Chinese words and figures. It must have been the strangest setting that Mass has ever been celebrated in. There were three others besides ourselves in the congregation – my Irish doctor, a Chinese dentist, and another Chinese. Our party consisted of three Anglo-Indians, three Europeans, and one Indian. I am happy to say that we all went to confession and communion (I know that it had been a year at least since this happened to some of the lads!). I managed to persuade them a bit!

I had a private talk with Father Girard before Mass and he agreed to offer Holy Mass up for my intentions (which are our intentions). I asked God to bless us both and to bless our love; I asked Him not to allow you to suffer on my account but to send me back safely to you, my darling. He knows how much we love each other and He knows that when we are married we shall spend our lives in loving Him and doing His Will on earth. Need I tell you that it was the most wonderful Mass I have ever heard and what a glow of happiness and peace came to my soul this morning when I received Him into my heart. You would not worry in the least about me if you could have seen me this morning and shared my happiness with me. I prayed to Him that He would comfort and console you at this moment and until we meet again. My own Eileen, you have never been so precious and dear to me as you have been today; you mean everything to me my dearest one. I could not be happy today without you; I owe so much to you and your love. I would not be so near to God this night without your help.

Seven happy men bade goodbye to that gallant little French priest after Mass and went back to camp through the morning mists. The countryside looked more lovely and green than ever before; it seemed so peaceful and quiet. The simple peasants passed us by on their way to the village market to sell their vegetables and buy tea and sugar in return. There was no sign of panic, no sign of war. As I said goodbye to Father Girard, I realised how truly wonderful is the vocation of the priest – he is privileged to be God's medium in bringing grace and joy to man. That little priest is just carrying on with his holy work – he is travelling dangerous roads alone in his little car, he is stopped and questioned by police and military. He shows no fear and will not run away at any cost; he will stay with his flock in time of need. Somehow I think that Catholics can be braver than most people, because they realise that death should have no terrors for them if they are at peace with God. I shall always have a special affection for Fergus both for himself and the great vocation he has received. I remember well at school when I was a small boy of 13 we had a maths master called “Tom” Ivory (brother of Fr. Ivory). He could not teach me maths

because I could not be taught that subject, but he did succeed in teaching me to have extra special respect for all priests; he always said that we should not say a single thing or think anything bad of a priest because he is God's anointed. I knew all this so well already, but it was particularly impressed upon me by Mr. Ivory. Priests are only human beings but I always manage to find things to say and think of them. A priest cannot stand in the pulpit and say "I have the most awful neuralgia and that is why my temper is short at times!" People can be so thoughtless and so ready to condemn others so quickly, instead of taking a charitable view of things.

How I thanked God for sending me mass and Communion today when I needed them most. He has always been so generous to me and to us both, Eileen, and we shall never be ungrateful to Him. Nothing much happened today or maybe I was too happy to notice things happening! Planes came – but that is nothing! How I wish I could speak to you and tell you everything that is in my heart. We heard on the radio tonight that my little town of Grik has been captured – do you remember I described my visit to it one Sunday, it is a miniature of London. It was built up by a Catholic District Officer in 1909 – Capt. Berkeley; Berkeley Square was the first London name to be given to a street there. I am wondering what has happened to the present D.O. and his beautiful bungalow at Grik – he is a Catholic too. My good friends at Ipoh, the Wimseys must be worried too at the moment. It would have killed me if you had been in Malaya at such a time as this; thank God you are at home in peaceful Ireland.

Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

Saturday December 20th

My own darling, I am still here and still very much alive. I was out today at another spot doing a job when a large formation of Jap bombers arrived; bombs dropped all around me and my little party. I was not afraid in the least bit. Honestly, Eileen, I just cannot make it out why I should find all this courage; I know that you must have something to do with it as well as He. How I do thank God that I can remain cool and unafraid in times like these. I find that I have a knack of putting everyone at ease around me and making them forget the grim reality of what is happening up above. In the first raid today I had everyone in the trench laughing and then in the second when the bombs were dropping fast all were at ease. When the latter was over I made a tour of the area in my lorry with the men, but we did not find a single casualty. The men were very interested in the bomb craters and were amazed to see that no damage had been done but that the mother Earth was studded with holes! Really darling there is no danger from bombs in country like this, it is only in cities where bombs can wreak such destruction. The bombs here simply sink deep into the earth and expend themselves there! Those little yellow men away up in the skies – how harmless they are! – and yet they imagine that they are doing great things and are scaring everyone! I always invoke your friend (and mine now) Our Lady of Quito; she will never fail me in an air raid. You must be praying very hard for me but you must not spoil me because I am not worth all your prayers. I shall try hard each day of my life to become more worthy of you and your love, Eileen. I know that I can never do enough to attain this end.

My darling, you will have to change your dentist when I come back home!! I don't mean anything personal by this and I don't doubt that your dentist is a very good one. Well, today after the big raid I came back to camp, and found a dental case awaiting me. Nobody else would tackle the job so I scrubbed my hands and extracted a huge back molar in grand style. The poor lad was in awful agony with toothache and I could not bear to see him suffering. I am quite an expert at dentistry and have extracted hundreds of teeth even as a student at the Mater!⁴¹ Today a motor cycle caught fire and while everyone was shouting their heads off and dashing off for fire extinguishers, I coolly put the fire out with my handkerchief! Here I am boasting again – I have told you over and over again that you must cure me of this awful habit but you don't seem to pay much attention to poor me! My darling, you will have an awful time when we are married having to listen to my story of the day as we sit by our fireside in the evenings. You will have to listen to the failures as well as the successes.

If you could only see Malaya's sky tonight you would say how beautiful and peaceful it is. You would see millions of stars that are never visible in an Irish sky at night – it is the same all over the East at night. I love the evening star away out in the west (Venus) and tonight it looks like a large silver sphere; I know that it shines out there near you my beloved one. Today I had a talk with an officer who was in Belfast four months ago; he is living in our Mess now and oh the questions I fired at him about our native city. He was billeted at the new Queen's Chambers and dined at the Carlton each day. He told me about the "blitzed" buildings and all the very latest that you were not allowed to write in a letter to me. Now if you had only known that this man was coming out to Malaya a few months back you might have sent me a ship load of love with him! You might have sent me some Christmas cake! Is it really Dec. 20th and is it really near Christmas; I should be doing my shopping with you now! However we shall do it together next year, please God, and oh how happy we shall be then.

⁴¹ The Mater Hospital on the Crumlin Road, Belfast. Frank worked there for three months in 1937 following his graduation.

Good night my own darling and may God protect you and bless you.

Sunday December 21st

Today is our day and though the work has been hard (and I am still on duty) I have not forgotten that it is ours. When I got up this morning I asked God to bless you in a special way as you lay asleep, to always give you peaceful sleep and never be troubled. In the afternoon (7 a.m. your time) as you were getting up to go to mass I asked Him never to allow a single tear to come from your eyes on my account. We should both be happy because we have so much to be happy about. Eileen, my dearest, we have a very beautiful love and we should be so proud of it. No matter what may happen to either of us our love will never change – it will always be holy and good. Who would have thought that the friendship which began between that shy schoolgirl and that self-conscious schoolboy so many years ago would ever grow into such a great love. These were wonderful days in both our lives when we were growing up into woman and man, but we did not realise it. These are wonderful days too because our love has reached its height; somehow it could not be more perfect than it is tonight. I love you as much as it is possible for any man to love woman. You and you alone could have brought me the happiness I have known during the past months. I always wanted you to love me; I never wanted any other love but yours, Eileen.

We heard today that Penang has fallen to the Japs – that lovely island with its golden sands and its graceful hill. I thought of the rich tin mine owner whom I met in Upper Perak – the “King” who had that lovely castle. He had built another castle on top of Penang Hill and now both his castles have toppled to the ground. It makes me realise that money does not really matter in life; it cannot bring happiness because happiness cannot be bought for gold. Things are going better in Upper Perak now and today’s radio says that we have successfully counter-attacked south of Grik. Today I attended a wounded Jap prisoner of war and he received the same treatment as any other casualty – the usual cup of tea etc! He seemed very pleased with himself in spite of his grave wound. Maybe doctors in a war should not have time for sentiment, but I wondered if this young man had any dear ones at home whom he would never see again.

My darling, I am worried about the precious bundle of your letters. Should I burn them or should I keep them; I don’t want to part with them but it would be so much better to destroy them than to let them fall into other hands. They were meant for me alone to read and that is why no one else must touch them. I have read them all over and over again, and each word is dearer to me than life itself. At present I cannot destroy them – it would hurt too much. I shall wait until they are in actual danger, and then I might destroy them. My dearest Eileen I love you so much that I could not part with your letters. You know that your Miraculous Medal, your lock of hair, and your little snap are all close to my heart night and day – they will remain there always. Night and day you are in my heart and it all belongs to you – there is no room for anyone else but you. May God bless you this night and may he keep you safe from all harm. An atheist officer tonight said to me “By the grace of God, I shall have a quiet night on duty”. I was amazed at this very Irish expression and enquired where he had heard this expression; he replied “From you!” Early this morning he had declared that even if bombs were dropping near him he would not believe in God. How I wish I had more of God’s grace to guide me through life. May he bless you again and again.

Monday December 22nd

Eileen my dearest one, here I am sitting on the steps of the office in the gloaming and oh it is such a heavenly evening. There is a red glow away out in the west among the trees and everything is peaceful. An old gramophone is bleating out “The Blue Danube” and how very inappropriate it is just now! At this moment as I sit here writing to you I am wondering will any of my letters ever reach you. All air mail ceased and sea mail must be at an absolute minimum – and all the routes must be perilous ones just now. But I place all my trust in Him who created everything – the sea and the Japanese – and I know he will guide this letter safely to you. And now the cracked gramophone is playing “Tipperary” – yes it’s a long, long way to the sweetest girl I know. I have met many girls but never, never could a single one compare with you, my darling, my first love and my only love. Besides loving your character and everything about you, I have always seen in you “something” which appealed to me very much; that “something” I could never quite understand but I have never found it in any other. Maybe it is something in your personality – I cannot explain it. Maybe all lovers are like us, they cannot fathom that “something” which makes them fall in love. I only know that I love you with my whole heart and soul, and that I shall never cease to love you.

According to the radio the Japs are now nearing Kuala Lumpur. Once upon a time I traveled by car from Ipoh to this place, which is the residence of the Sultan of Perak. What a journey that was (70 mph); what beauty I saw at the Sultan’s palace – the splendour of it all. But I have told you all about it in my early letters. And now

these little yellow men from the land of the rising sun are coming nearer to my beloved Ipoh – my “first love” of Malaya; and that burly Irishman from Co. Mayo will go out to meet them with his rifle and he will fight as he fought in the troubled times in Ireland. These little yellow men are coming nearer to your Frank, but that does not worry him a bit because he has nothing to be afraid of.

It is now nearly 11 p.m. and I must get some sleep – have to get up at 6 a.m. as I am on duty tonight. Life is not dull for a moment nowadays and I am doing the work I was meant to do. Good night and God bless you my darling child. Pray hard for me.

Tuesday December 23rd

My dearest one, I had a wonderful dream last night about you and when I awoke this morning I was as happy as if I had just seen you and spoken to you. Will you be very annoyed and embarrassed when I tell you all about my dream? I dreamt that we were married and together again at home and that we were expecting a baby; we were so very, very happy about it all. My darling if you think that I should not tell you about such dreams, then please tell me and I shall not mention them again. Eileen, my dearest one, surely there is nothing wrong in such a dream; surely we understand each other well enough and we are grown up enough to talk of such things. How often have I wanted and longed to speak to you about my thoughts and dreams of the future. How often have I pictured us in Beechwood, the happiest couple in the whole world; and yet we both know that our joy will not be complete until we are blessed by God with children of our own. Can you imagine greater happiness, Eileen – our own home, our own practice, our love, our prayers, our happiness, and then to have children of our very own. My darling, what a happy home that will be because we shall model it on that Home in Nazareth; we shall love those children as children have never been loved before and yet withal we shall love each other just the same. I know that I shall only adore you more than ever when we have children around us. Can you imagine greater happiness than to see them grow up from tiny things to grown boys and girls; I can see you teaching them their first prayers and oh how happy it makes me. I know that they will always worship their mammie – and I shall not blame them or be jealous of all the attention you will receive. I know that we shall sacrifice anything for them because God will have given them into our care and we must give them back to Him as good and as pure as when they came to us. Do you ever think or dream of all these things and do they make you happy too? Have you ever thought of those two Catholic families at Spring Villa and at Beechwood; the happiness and the holiness that has been in those homes. The love of both our parents; the blessings which God showered down upon them. I have always wanted our married life to be even happier than theirs and I know that God will hear our prayers. Eileen, my darling, please forgive me for mentioning all these things to you; I know how sensitive you are and how good, but believe me everything I have written is sacred and holy to me. Our marriage and our love would be mockery unless we wanted to have children; I cannot imagine our home without children – it would be such a vain selfish life for both of us and against all the teachings of our faith. Oh why do I give you lectures on religion when you know more about it than I? How will you ever be able to endure all these lectures from me when we are married; why did you ever fall in love with such a man as I am!

I forgot to tell you about a lovely present I received last evening from a sepoy. He came up to me with a most beautiful shell in his hand – you know the type I mean, beautifully speckled by dark brown spots and looking very delft-like. We have two of them at Beechwood and when I was a child I used to put them to my ear and listen to the sea waves! However this one was particularly lovely and I was ashamed to accept it. The sepoy shyly explained that we were really “brothers” as I prayed on my beads twice a day just the same as he! He is a Brahim by caste and this is the holy caste among Hindus. How did he know that I had beads? Well, one night on board the ship which brought us from India to Malaya, I saw this man sitting on deck praying upon his beads. I was surprised because I thought that Catholics only used beads to count their prayers besides having them as holy things; so I showed this Brahmin my Rosary. He was very pleased and since then has been a good friend of mine. This shell will look very nice in our home, Eileen, and it is one more addition to our “bottom drawer”. You have been making too many contributions to our future home and I have done so little.

My darling, will you think me very silly if I ask you again to marry me? “And do you, Eileen Patricia O’Kane, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband; for better or worse; for rich or for poor; in health or in sickness, till death do you part?” Please say “I do!” when you read these words! You know what my answer is – so now we are married in thought over thousands of miles of land and sea! Some day our dreamings will cease and reality will come and of what joy that reality will bring to us. Do not rub your eyes in amazement and ask yourself “Is there a war on in Malaya? And what is my Frank doing about it?” Yes my darling the war is still on and the Japs tracing my steps from the far north. They haven’t got very far yet and they’ll never manage to emulate my feat of 500 miles without a mishap! They have had severe casualties; yesterday they lost 9 planes and that is a lot for

these parts. Your Frank will soon be working really hard at his job and will do his job, please God, to the best of his ability. Good night my darling and God bless you.

Wednesday – Christmas Eve

Eileen, my dearest, this is a wonderful night at home in holy Ireland – and it is a wonderful night in Malaya too. I am sitting in my little room and on the table before me is a beautiful coloured picture of the Nativity painted in the 15th Century by Botticelli. It is my Christmas Crib and oh what a treasure it is in times like these; there is peace and joy and goodwill in this room tonight. My lamp is shaded on account of the blackout but a beam is shining on that Nativity scene, and beyond is the gilt figure on the Cross – I shall carry that crucifix with me no matter where I may go. And there stands my little treasure box (cigarette case) and I can see you smiling in that little snap. You are now in good company in this little box – mother on one side and Una on the other; Josie is in the opposite compartment with your “golf snap”, your lock of hair, your little medal, my small crucifix, my identity discs, my Red Cross protection certificate, and last of all a tiny slip of paper which concerns you very much. All these treasures are pressed close to my heart day and night, and oh how happy they do make me. I can see you at any moment of the day or night because you are always with me. My thoughts are all with you this night because it is a Holy Night; you will be at midnight Mass and you will receive that Divine Infant into your heart. That Child who was born so many years ago, will bring you peace and happiness and consolation. God will not allow you to suffer, Eileen, because He loves you with a special love. Promise me, darling, that you will not worry or grieve for me; I love you and I shall always love you no matter where I may be. We can never be separated, with a love like ours to keep us close together and with prayers like ours which span the oceans. We have never been nearer to each other than we are tonight. Do you remember this time last year when you were debating with yourself whether to write to me or not? I was thinking of you then as always and I wondered if you would ever write to me again. Eileen my dearest, I had hurt you so terribly in the past that I thought you would never forgive me or write ever. When you receive this letter please tell me again that you forgive me for all the wrong that I have done to you and all the heartache and unhappiness I have caused you.

This may be my last letter to you for a long, long time but you know that I shall be loving you every moment until we meet again and we shall meet again soon please God. You shall not leave my thoughts no matter what conditions I may be living under. I shall love you always; I am all yours Eileen and I shall always be yours no matter what happens. My people will always have a warm welcome for you, because they love you for yourself and not so much because we are engaged to be married. I want them to love you for your own dear self as I love you. In case I do not have a chance of sending any more letters I wish you a very happy Christmas; I wish you all the joy and happiness in life which you deserve; may you always have a contented and holy life – I know you will. Do not allow memories of me interfere with your happiness; I only want you to have happy and holy memories of me, as I have of you. You must never be sad because you were not made to be sad. God will send you consolation when you need it most.

Goodbye, my own darling, and ay God bless you now and always. May Mary our Mother protect you and keep you safe for

Your loving

Frank.

P.S. Love to all at home.

Frank.

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 on 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 children's 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 have 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; our love too is and always shall be under her protection. Won't 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 prayers 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 a.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" on 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 14 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 Havildar! This was sweet music to me under present conditions. And oh what a Christmas lunch we had – rissoles, 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.

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 Clipper and then upon telegrams and now both do not operate. Will you understand, Eileen, when no birthday greetings and no birthday present arrive 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 on 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 marvelous men; they never grow weary; they never give in.

I had a very busy time today, but I am not a bit tired thank God. It is good to have plenty of work these days; all my works are prayers 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 darling, 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 tomorrow. God bless you, Eileen Aroon.

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 guided 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 today in the middle 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 goodbye outside the hotel. I can still see your face.

Good night and God bless you. Forgive the note.

Sunday December 28th

My dearest Eileen, I have been thinking today how very happy I am in spite of everything around me – I am the happiest man in the 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. Eileen 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 reunion 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 some of these things and yet we have been so very happy – so you 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 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 'ere 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 Good 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 enemy 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 men 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 today 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 grown 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 Eileen, 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 one 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 1940! 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 you 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, Eileen, 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. How 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 came, 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 on phone duty, but today I did not manage very much reading. I heard on the radio tonight that Ipoh ahs fallen into Jap hands, but they never seem 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 Eileen.

Tuesday December 30th

I love you my darling!

Wednesday December 31st

No sleep last night; working at terrific 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 as much as I do this evening, Eileen. 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. My Eileen, 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 you a happy new year, my darling one. It is a strange one for me kneeling here in the mud 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 an 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 starry 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 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 got 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 ambulance and nursing sepoy; 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 chin up, darling. God bless you and keep you.

Saturday – January 3rd

Still in the same place – somewhere in a Malayan jungle – 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 thank 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 an adorable 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, Eileen, if I could only explain the things that are in my mind and heart; my love for you and my love of God are indispensable 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 undergrowth, the strange animal and insects, then you would realise how infinite God is. I saw a hornbill in the evening perched on 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 wonder shall I ever get used to comforts again? My darling, when I return home to you again you will have to marry 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, dry biscuits and water (to drink) – at least you will have no cooking problems trying to satisfy him! You may never find him sleeping in the garden at night on a blanket – and then your lovely smocked 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 mammie’s eiderdown if it was cold at night?? My darling, we have so 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 Killough 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. I 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 mammy and daddy? Do you have many weekends at home to see them. Give them both my love when you go home again. I trust that Felix and Mona are happy as 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 Eileen.

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 this day and yesterday too. I had real adventure yesterday in getting 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 traveled all day without a meal; I managed to scrounge some biscuits for them too. I had a crude meal in a Malay Kampong 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 – we three. 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 at first. I have loved you today my Eileen 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 stamina – 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 slight bayonet wound – he shot six Japs before going down. War in this type of country is a test of endurance. I am writing 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 stretcher and blanket in the lovely garden here – even the rain will not deter me. Last night I waited up till 1.30 a.m. 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. Pearson. Do you remember I told you about him, his wife, and baby whom I liked so well in Barian. 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 Mary our Mother watch over you for

Your loving

Frank.

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

Frank.

27th Field Ambulance,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
Tuesday, 6th January [1942]

My own darling Eileen,

The war in Malaya is about a month old and still I am here writing to you as if nothing had happened! I have written every day – some days it was a line, other days it was a page, but it was always the same story I wanted to tell you, that I love you with all my heart and soul. War can only make me love you more; I am more yours now than I have ever been.

There is a roof over my head tonight again but I have grown to love the open sky as my roof – it gives me such freedom. We are having a short breathing space at present but it won't be for long you may be sure. My friend Capt. Pearson called to see me and we had a long chat together; he had great adventures in the front line with his gallant gunners. We talked of happy days in the hills of India in "peace". His wife is now in Simla and they are expecting their second baby soon and Dick is very worried about it. He has not heard from his wife since he recently came to Malaya. We had planned here to have a few days at this spot and I tried hard to be allowed to stay but the powers above said that I must move. Pearson is staying on here for a while.

My darling, I am happy, very happy and you must not worry about my safety. God bless you and keep you, Eileen Aroon.

Wednesday – January 7th

My darling, this has been my happiest day for many a day and yet all my days are happy because they are spent with you my beloved one. Last night I slept on a stretcher in a lovely garden and as I lay looking up at those misty stars I prayed hard for you and asked Him to send all my love to you. I got up at 5 a.m. and my day has been long and weary. Tonight there is another more beautiful garden to sleep in, although the house is marvellous too. It is full of specimens from all over Malaya because the owner is the Government official for your pet subject at Queens! Is this very mysterious to you – well darling I must not even mention the subject in case it would be of use to the enemy. Anyhow this chap has a marvellous collection and I may be able to ask him for a few for you, Eileen. That subject of yours which kept me waiting for hours and hours outside Queens, watching and watching that wooden hut for my beloved to emerge from Prof. Charlesworth's lecture! That waiting of hours became the waiting of years but it was not in vain because I was your love in the end. That was all I wanted of life and God has been so very good to me. You know that I have always loved you and that I always shall love you. Oh my darling I feel that writing to you about my love can give you so little idea of how deep and true it is. Some day you will know how much love is in this heart of mine for you – it is all yours and always shall be yours.

I am on duty tonight and expect to be busy. Your last letter has not been posted yet because there is no place to post it from! Good night my own darling and God bless you.

Thursday January 8th

Oh, what a night I have had under Malaya's sky – it rained last night! I was covered by a groundsheet; so I was not soaked through entirely. My darling, it was grand and this morning I feel so refreshed after my bath of rain! I had many interruptions from casualties arriving, but that did not worry me at all. You know of course that casualties do not mean that these men are wounded – they can also be medical cases and accident cases too. Tonight I intend putting up my bivouac instead of being entirely without shelter. I have got used to this life; I can get used to anything quickly and adapt myself to the surroundings.

My darling, I actually love you a little but more today than yesterday; did you think it was possible? Well, it has happened and here I am today loving you with all my heart and soul – with a little bit extra thrown in! I can

never love you enough, Eileen, no matter how hard I may try. You should not love me so much as you do because I am a worthless fellow. Your memories of me must be those of a very awkward and shy schoolboy, who used pester you morning, noon and night with his love and his attentions. What would you have said if you had seen me in that tramcar passing and re-passing "Spring Villa" to catch a glimpse of you, my dearest one. The more you avoided me the more I persisted in following you and loving you. We have both grown up now and childhood has been left behind, but what memories we have of those days. You have become quite a lady now and you have lost your plump round cheeks of childhood, but this has made you more beautiful than ever in my eyes. I peep at you often each day and I know that I love you more each time. Your medal and your lock of hair are kept ever close to my heart no matter where I go or what I do. My only worry is you my dearest one in case you are worried about me. Oh, if I could only send you a telegram I would feel so much happier and contented, but I cannot as telegrams are not allowed to be sent. How I do hope and pray that some of my letters will reach you safely, as there are many dangers attached to their safe arrival. My darling, if I could only send you a message each day, you know that I would. I would send you a special plane with my letters, but alas that's not possible! Oh my Eileen our reunion cannot now be far off and I am praying that it may come soon. Surely He will understand and bring us together again soon.

Good night my darling and God bless you.

Friday January 9th

Today is the fourth anniversary of Josie's⁴² death (R.I.P.). How I wish that you had known and loved that child; she was an angel and died as innocent as the day she was born. Maybe you have heard all about her from my dear ones at home because they all loved her too. I remember kissing her goodbye after my short Christmas holiday in 1937; she was a picture as she lay back on her pillow – her goodness, her innocence, and her patience were all reflected in her face. I knew then that she would not live very long. It was such a tragedy to see such a child passing slowly away from us and we could do nothing to stop it all – and yet the Murray family could see that it was God's holy will that Josie should die. Father always taught us never to fear death, because it was God who sent it in His own good time. Josie is in Heaven now; thank God she has not lived to see this most awful war – she was never meant to see war.

Good night my dearest one and God bless you.

Saturday January 10th

My darling, I love you.

Sunday January 11th

My own darling, I still love you. Just have time to say that I shall always be yours no matter how long this war may last.

Monday January 12th

At last a rest and time to write you a whole page. Do you think I am an awful person not to have written much during these past few days? I just haven't had a moment's rest for ages – it has been hard work day and night without ceasing. My own darling, you know that you have not been out of my thoughts for a moment. You have been with me as I sat one night tending a wounded man – he was very ill and I thought he would not live till morning. I prayed hard that he would live and pressed my crucifix to his lips; and I nursed him myself. Thank God he lived and I heard he reached safety in good condition. At last I am a doctor and can do something worthwhile in the army. I wish that I could tell you everything about myself in this war, my movements, and my adventures, but you will hear them all some day soon as we sit by our fireside together. I shall not have much time for telling you about the war, I shall be too busy telling you of my love.

I am sitting in a basket chair (oh what luxury!) outside a nice bungalow which is situated on a little hillock which overlooks a large plantation. There is peace here; there is quiet; it is cool; the evening sky is clouded but is very lovely as it cloaks those dark hills in the distance. We arrived here in the early hours of the morning and I slept on the verandah on my camp bed – and oh I was tired and sleepy after a long (not distant) drive. I was heading a large convoy and everything went well, thank God. Eileen, my dearest one, I wish you could see me always and know what happens to me in Malaya without actually being here, then would realise how happy I am in my work here. It is hard; it means days and nights without rest or sleep; it means discomfort and no cooked meals; but I do not even notice these things. God has given me a very philosophic mind – I can take everything

⁴² Josie is Josephine Murray (1914-1938), Frank's sister. She became a Sister of Mercy novice nun at the order's convent in Lurgan but was invalided out suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. She died at Beechwood in her early 20s.

that comes along in my stride; I have reached the stage where nothing is a hardship for me. Honestly, Eileen I sing the whole day long and try to make others happy – and I do succeed. I know that I can make you happy too my darling; and nothing will ever be spared by me until I have succeeded in this. That is my one concern.

Good night my darling and may the good God bless you and keep you safe always.

Tuesday – January 13th

My darling, it rains and rains in Malaya – 24 hours without ceasing – but I love you all the more! You are my happiness and you are my life. We are completely cut off from each other by land and sea but we have never been closer together than this evening. Nothing can ever separate us, nothing can ever destroy our love – it will last forever and ever. Oh Eileen, even in this hour of trial our love is deeper and truer than ever; it will save us from despondency. It will make us pray harder and bring us nearer to God – and that is the most important thing in our lives. The only reason we were created was that we might love Him; He has given us a very wonderful love and has blessed it in a very special way. I am looking at your photograph (wedding group) at my side and oh how I am pouring out all the love of my heart to you at this moment – and you know that it is pouring out always for you. I can see you in your classroom now (nearly midday) and you look so very serious and earnest. You were always a very earnest young woman no matter what you were doing – working or playing. I love and always have loved everything about you.

I can hear a gramophone playing “The Mountains of Mourne” in this far off Malaya! It has never sounded so sweet and it has never made me more homesick for you and my dear ones. Some day soon, please God we shall be united again and have great happiness. Think of long summer days spent at Beechwood in those pleasant surroundings; think of long winter evenings at our fireside; think of the security we shall know and the contentment and peace of mind within those solid walls. It will be a real Home and it will be blessed by the Sacred Heart. Do not worry, Eileen, it will come soon. Good night and God bless my dearest one.

Wednesday – January 14th :- Eileen alannah, I just cannot love you any more than I do today. I write to you and write to you and tell you all about it, but you never respond! Oh my darling, your letters cannot reach me, but your love and your prayers reach me very day – nothing else matters to me in the world. I am hoping and praying that some of my letters will reach you and that they will bring you some consolation. If you were to see me now you would not worry for a single moment about me. I am happy; I am strangely elated in a way that defies explanation. Should I not be happy even in the midst of war? I have got you, my darling, always before me and that is why I can never be unhappy again in my life; I have got my prayers and I never neglect them; I have got my work and I am contented. Oh if only I could do something to ease your mind and not allow you to worry.

I am sitting in a beautiful garden and away on the horizon I can see the sun setting behind the hills. There is a lime tree beside me and hundreds of limes hanging up there untouched – what wouldn't you give to have these lemons; there are hundreds of kinds of flowers here and trees of every variety. If you were to imagine an ideal setting for a plantation medley, then you would find it up here in this terraced garden overlooking a vast stretch of plantation. About a mile away are the coolies' quarters – so neat and trim; out in the open air – their own playgrounds, their own cows and goats, their own little kingdom of peace and contentment. Soon they may lose all this and I am wondering what they will be given in return; somehow war always hurts the innocent most of all. There are Malayan raindrops on this page so never say that I have not sent you anything from Malaya. Did you ever receive any of the magazines I sent you? I wanted you to have the silver candlesticks very specially because they are symbols of our love – yours and mine. Did you receive the souvenirs of Malaya sent by Father Ashness? I did not see these at all but they must have been interesting for you. Maybe you showed them to the girls at school? There were so many things I had planned on sending to you but my plans all fell through when the war came. How terribly sorry and disappointed I am about the ring, you can never know, but my darling, some day soon we shall buy it; we shall go arm-in-arm to town and buy the most beautiful ring in all the world. It was your wish that we should wait until I came home to you before we select a ring. I shall always see that precious signet ring on your ring – it is a strange engagement ring but it is very dear to us both. My darling, I shall be back very soon and you must never think otherwise. I shall love you till I die; my love will not die with me because I shall love you after death. I may not have a chance again of telling you all this; but you know and feel how true it all is. My love just could not change.

And now the sun has gone and it's very dark out here. There is light enough for me to tell you again that I am yours forever and ever. Good night my dearest one and may God bless you.

Thursday January 15th

I am still in the same garden and still loving you more than ever. Have you ever thought it strange that all our happiness should come to us as it did – while we were thousands of miles apart. Eileen, my darling, if we were so happy during all these months without even seeing each other, what joy shall we not have when we meet again. I am overjoyed when I think of what the future holds for us – the present does not matter very much. We love each other, we love God and we trust in Him – what more could we ask of life? We know that He will bring us together again. I am watching His glorious sunset away down in the west and oh the beauty of this creation of His. I am far away from that lovely shore where I used have those grand swims, but the Japs are now enjoying the swims! But that does not worry me very much – in fact not at all. My only concern at present is you, my darling child; I want to know if you are well, if you are happy; I want to hear of your dreams and hopes. I do not want you to worry or be sad, because there is nothing to worry about. Eileen, my dearest one, our love can never be sad; it has always been a happy one and it must always remain like that. I hope all is well with you, that your work goes as smoothly as mine does and that you are still happy with your colleagues at school. Please go home as often as you can to see your mammie and daddie, and all your dear ones – it will help you a lot if you do. Go to Beechwood if you can and see them all there – father's quiet confidence in prayer will give you fresh hope. I know that you will seek real comfort in prayer; how I thank God that you can pray earnestly.

We are still resting, but it may not be for much longer. The bombers still come but they do not cause us a thought – one gets used to bombs! I have done a little medical work today and that helps a lot. I am at peace with God and with my fellows; I keep out of squabbles and rows – I mind my own business! Many people here marvel at my placidity – I just keep on laughing and singing no matter what comes along. I can hear “She is Far From the Land” on the radio, but I am far from that land just now and not a little homesick. My friend Venus is shining away up in the western sky; the bats are flying around me and I must go off to my bath. Good night my darling and God bless you.

Friday January 16th

My own darling, it is late but I must write and tell you news about myself. Today I have been appointed Commanding Officer of a Motor Ambulance Convoy and transferred from the Field Ambulance. I am leaving here tomorrow or on Sunday to take up my new job. My darling, you can never know how sorry I shall be to leave this unit and all the men I have learned to love so much. My new job is a responsible one and very important. It means promotion to major again – so meet Major Murray again. How often must I change my title? Rank does not make any difference to me, Eileen; I shall never change in any way except to love you more and more the longer I live. Now that I have been promoted again, I lay my new honours at your feet, just as I give everything I have to you. My new unit is a British Unit with British Officers; I have about fifty ambulances under my command and I am responsible for evacuation of casualties in the backward areas (behind the field ambulances). Can you imagine me being a C.O.? Well let me tell you young woman that I was a C.O. in a hospital in India when I had only 6 month's service! My only worry now is how to part with these men.

The Australians are giving the Japs a rough time not far from here and there is every likelihood that the tide has turned in Malaya. Our bombers and fighters were busy today pounding the enemy good and hard; they have lost 20 tanks in the past 24 hours. All the casualties are on the Jap side. My darling, you know that I love you and that I shall always love you. This war will soon be over and you will have me with you again please God. So please keep your chin up till then. Good night my own darling and God bless you.

Saturday – January 17th

My darling, I am still with the Field Ambulance but I am leaving tomorrow. Do you realise, young woman that I shall be a very important person from now onwards! Do you think I shall be too important to bother about a little Irish school marm?? Oh, my darling, you know that worldly honours mean nothing to your Frank; the only honour that he prizes above all else on this earth is your love, Eileen. That is all I shall ever want in this life. You have all my love and all of me – I shall always belong to you and only you. You have seen great happiness in Spring Villa and you have seen great love there too, but my dearest one our happiness and our love will be even greater than that when we are married. Our love and our prayers will overcome anything during our married life. May be you feel as I do now, a strange quiet joy even with a terrible war raging around us – it cannot be explained by ordinary means. It is a happiness that will always sustain me. My own darling, I have wonderful news for you – I shall probably be able to have daily Mass and Communion at my new station! I shall be able to visit the Little Sisters and the Redemptorists and that will bring me fresh joy. I shall tell them about you and Mattie and our romance; I shall give them that Christmas present that has been so long delayed by the war. So now you know where my new station is or at least you can guess it. I have always wanted to see it but now it will be seen under war conditions. I did not try even a little bit to be sent there, I did not try to become a major again, I did not try to

be transferred. When I lost my promotion I only smiled and did not complain; and now that it has come again I am still smiling but I am not exultant or overjoyed about it. The only reason it makes me happy is that my promotion might bring you some joy; I want you to be proud of me. My father too will feel so pleased about it. Oh how very sorry I felt for him when my demotion came; I felt as if I had let him down – and yet I hadn't really. All the time I have been in the unit I have tried to be good and just to everyone, no matter what their rank. I have been in charge of all the stores (medical and ordnance) but no one will check my stores before I leave because they know me – it is the first time that I have ever seen any stores handed over in the army to another officer without a careful check. I have been as strictly honest as my father and that is praising myself a lot. Never once have I asked any favours of my superiors; never have I tried to shine in the eyes of the powers above – would you believe it that I actually avoided all the big men for that very reason. And now nobody can accuse me of canvassing the powers above for my new appointment. How they know of my existence at all I do not know! Eileen, do you think that I am too independent? I was the same when in practice; I would not go out of my way to meet the big men of Birmingham who could help a lot to get me a big job in the city. You know as I do the contentment and satisfaction one can have in doing one's work well and to the best of one's ability – material reward means little to you or to me. We shall go through life together like this. Oh Eileen we have so much to be thankful for. Please God we shall not have lived in vain because all our work, our love, and prayers will be offered up to Him. I wanted us to have something worthwhile to show Him when our times are ended; we shall pray each day for grace to always do the right thing and do all for Him.

I have so much to tell you on this my last evening in this lovely garden. The sun is going down again but I must be off soon to my farewell party. Yes, the men are giving me a farewell party and I feel so honoured because it has never been given to any officer before. I found a holy picture in this garden yesterday and it is a lovely one, but written on the back is "1927 To wish dear Eileen every joy – Winnie". I have kept it as a souvenir of the happiness I have known here. The picture shows our Blessed Lady plucking lilies for the Child Jesus. My dearest one I must go now, as they are all waiting for me. God bless you now and always.

Sunday January 18th

My darling, I have arrived! Wonder of wonders I shall be able to send you a cable tomorrow if I have time. I am very busy sorting things out in my new unit. I shall make an exploratory tour tomorrow to find out the nearest church, the Redemptorists and the Little Sisters. I had a wonderful send-off from the field ambulance; I saw many a tearful eye today as I shook hands with all my men. They put a garland of flowers around my neck and off I went in my car.

God bless you, Eileen and may He keep you safe.

Monday January 19th

My darling, I have not sent your cable yet, but it really will be sent tomorrow. I was very busy all morning interviewing all the "big" men here and getting instructions about my new unit. I reached the bank at 1.30 p.m. to find it closed and so I had no money to send the cable with! I saw all the sights of this grand place on my rounds this morning and met its very mixed population. Yes, it is an attractive place and is everything one reads about. I spent my morning looking up a phone directory trying to find a church somewhere. I rang up a man called O'Sullivan at random (thinking he would be a Catholic); he was very decent and gave me all the information I wanted – when he had finished he remarked that he was a Church of England minister! However he said that did not matter but he only wished that some of his flock would ring up about churches – "They never do, you know!" he remarked. Then I discovered a name "father Lee, St. Teresa's Church" in the book and he gave me exact details about St. Joseph's Church which is 4 miles from here. So, my darling, I am off to Mass tomorrow morning and oh how I shall pray. Did you know that I love and adore you with all my heart and soul and that I shall always do so? I can't help loving you as much as I do.

I had a phone call today from Lt. Col. T.K. Murphy RAMC; he was one time president of the Irish Students Union – he is a Cork graduate and claims to know poor me! I met a Ballymena man (RAMC) yesterday! It seems there are heaps of Queensmen here and I am sure to meet them soon. Did I tell you that I arrived in the middle of an air raid yesterday, but nothing happened today. I must buy a pen tomorrow; I lost my other one on my way from the South China Sea! Good night and God bless you, my darling.

Tuesday January 20th

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! I have prayed so hard that it would be a happy one for you. I went to Church at 7 a.m. but alas there was no Mass – St. Joseph's is a small place, a chapel attached to a boys' school, but I knelt before the tabernacle and asked Him to bless you. May you have all the graces and blessings that your heart desires and may you have happiness undreamed of before. My dearest one I have been with you more today than any other day of

your life and I have loved you more too. You must have had many happy returns of the day because I wished it to you with all my heart. I sent you a birthday telegram this morning and sent you heaps of love. I sent one to father too. How happy it made me to know that you will receive my greetings tomorrow. How lucky I am to be here as you can see by the stamp or maybe it's not lucky to be in 3 air raids in one morning. My darling I heard the bombs whistling down, so they were quite close to your beloved one! I was not afraid and when in my car during one raid just carried on as if nothing was happening – the work must go on.

I shall go to Mass and Communion tomorrow and every morning for our intentions. I have found out where the Redemptorists and the Little Sisters are living and so I shall try to visit them tomorrow if I can find the time. You see my darling, I am now an O.C. in a new job; the war is on here and I have a terrific lot of work to do. I work from early morning till 8 p.m. and also for me it is mostly office work and non-medical too. So you understand why I haven't much time for visiting.

My darling, I went to the bank this morning and drew some ready cash and bought a lovely new Swan pen – did you notice my good writing or didn't you? I also sent you £100 as a birthday present – it is all for you to do what you will with it, to buy what you like for yourself or our home or to put into our joint account. You will agree that this money is much better with you at the moment than with me. I shall send some more next month if I can manage it – we need to have lots of cash in the bank before we can get married! My own beloved Eileen we have got something more precious than all the gold in the world – our love and our religion. Those two will never let us down; they are so strong and so reliable and so true; they will both last forever and ever.

Can you forgive this awful letter and understand why it is so patchy. I shall always love, Eileen. May God bless you and my His Blessed Mother watch over you and keep you safe from all harm.

Ever your loving

Frank.

P.S. Love to all at home and Frances

Frank.

No. 1 Malaya M.A.C.,
c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,
21st January [1942]

My darling Eileen,

I have had a wonderful evening and now that it is ended I feel so terribly happy. At 4 o'clock I sought out the Redemptorist Fathers here. I found that they lived in an ordinary detached house and had a beautiful little chapel at the side of the house. It was the smallest chapel I had ever seen, but it was perfect in every detail. After confession I paid a visit to the house and met a grand priest – Father O'Rourke. He is a New Zealander but his mother comes from Belfast – so he tell me all about Mrs. McSorley's adventure under the table! He knew many of the Clonard priests and painted a vivid picture of Father Reynolds. He entertained me royally to lemonade and biscuits and sent me on my way with the knowledge that I have a good friend in Singapore. He will offer up Holy Mass tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. specially for you and your intentions, Eileen – this is my birthday present to you, belated though it may be. The other priests there are all Irish – fathers Cosgrave and Moran. I told Father O'Rourke all about you and your association with Clonard. He wants me to visit the Good Shepherd nuns here who are all Irish and particularly a Sister Augustus who live near Clonard in Belfast!

At 5 o'clock I went off to see the Little Sisters of the Poor. My darling, let me tell you that of all the nuns or communities that I have ever known there are none to compare with the Little Sisters. I drove up in my military car and was received by a little American sister who ran off to the Chapel to fetch the Rev. Mother. The latter is a French nun; she is old but her skin is like parchment and oh she was a picture of goodness. I told her my story and why I had come. I told her about you and Mattie. She was very interested to hear about Mattie being at La Tour. I gave her my long-promised Christmas present (\$20 = £2.10.0). She said that God had sent me to her this day because the begging Sisters had a bad day on account of air raids. They have a home for the aged and infirm there and all the buildings are new. I was shown around all the wards but most of the inmates were Chinese but I did meet an Irishman from Tyrone called Corrigan! Then I met an English nun called Sister Constance(?). She said that she must have met Mattie in France and that several of the nuns were called Bernadette du ... (something) when she was there. My darling, these nuns do wonderful work for God; they are so good and sincere and natural – I could not help loving them. They have promised to pray for our good intentions. I was sorry leaving them at

6 p.m. but they had to go to prayers. They are a bit afraid of the air raids and are worried about their old people. They have a very large Chapel and it is new also; everything about it was lovely.

I went to mass this morning and offered it up with my Communion for our intentions. Later in the morning the bombers came but they did no damage, but they lost 20 planes. It has been a happy day and I have loved you as never before. My darling, my love for you just grows and grows and will never know when to stop. Oh, if I could only see you for a moment what a difference it would make to us – I want to tell you how much I love you. Thank God you are not here as so many wives are – it would break my heart; how I thank Him that you are comparatively safe. Do not worry about me, Eileen, I shall be alright. Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

Thursday, January 22nd

My darling, how have you felt today? A whole Mass and Communion were offered up today for your intentions and for your dear self. Father O'Rourke celebrated Mass at 7 a.m. for you in that tiny chapel. Rarely have I felt so happy as I knelt there at your Mass and prayed as hard to God and asked Him to bless you and give you everything that you stand in need of. I was the only European at Mass – the others were Eurasians, Indians, and Chinese. You will say that this is surely a strange congregation, but then this place is a strange one with its mixed population. We had a quiet morning here except for an air raid, but that is really nothing. You must not get the idea that a Jap air raid can compare with a German one, because there is no comparison – the Japs do very little damage and the raids are not intense. The bombing is not accurate because the planes are too high up.

I met L. Col. Murphy today and of course we have never met before. He has red, wavy hair and is a wonderful chap indeed – great personality. He has met all my medical friends in Belfast and was president of the Irish Students Association in 1936. He was surprised to hear that Frank Reid was in Malaya – they were great friends and both were anti-partitionists! It was nice to hear a good brogue again.

My darling, did I tell you that I love you with all my heart today and that I am yours forever and ever. My Eileen, I could never love anyone but you. Now that I have left the Field Ambulance I have now got a base job and that means being far removed from the front line, but it also means more bombing. You know that I will always do my best no matter where I am. And now I must be off to bed as I have to get up before 6 a.m. Good night and may God bless you my dearest one.

Friday, January 23rd

My darling, I am sitting in our Mess and listening to John McCormack on the gramophone – “Ireland Mother Ireland”. I bought a few records today for our home, Eileen, and I know you will love them all. Some day we'll both sit together and hear these lovely records – “Little Boy Blue” is now playing. Oh my Eileen, won't it be wonderful when we have our own home; it makes me so happy to even think about it. Yes, my darling, I am very happy even though we have an air raid every day. You know that I have found happiness beyond my fondest dreams and it was you and your prayers that brought this joy to me. How can I ever thank you enough or love you enough for all that you have given to me and oh how little you have received in return. I can only offer you my love and my devotion; I pray hard each day for you at Mass and Communion. I am not as good a prayer as you, Eileen, but I do try my best – I shall never cease praying for you and loving you until I die. You can well imagine what wonderful grace God has given to me by allowing me to have daily Mass and Communion – your prayers have been answered, my darling. A week ago I would have given anything for this blessing and yet it seemed impossible and very remote, but there is nothing impossible to prayer. I found out today that Fr. O'Rourke's name is Fr. Bourke! He said Mass this morning at 6.30, so I was up at 5.30 p.m. shaving in the dark!

I had a busy day, but I like being busy. I saw the sea today and all the ships in the harbour, but I have no desire to leave this place where my duty lies. It is natural to always want to be at home, but there are other things in life and we must not be selfish in times like these. I shall send you another telegram tomorrow if I can find time. I met a Major McGarry RAMC today and what a brogue he has – maybe he is related to your friends Dr & Mrs. McGarry. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Saturday – January 24th

Oh what a day this has been – I have been on the move all day long since 5.30 a.m. and I am still going strong! I did not have time to send you a telegram today; I scribbled a few lines to mother late in the evening while waiting for a phone call. As tomorrow is Sunday and first Mass is at 6 a.m. I shall have to rise at 5 a.m. – it gets earlier and earlier! However I get to be at 10 p.m. and so early rising is no effort at all.

My darling, I shall send that letter telegram tomorrow if possible and if not, then on Monday. I made the discovery that I could have phoned you up from Singapore when I first came to the country and now it is too late as phone calls have ceased. I would gladly have travelled specially to Singapore and phoned you up no matter what

it cost. Still I did not know your phone number, so you had better send it to me quickly because I want to ring you up immediately the war ends in Malaya. Yes the war will end soon here and the Japs shall not win. "Hurricanes" are shooting the bombers out of the sky, the American "Fortresses" are near at hand, we are holding them on land, and our ships are getting through in spite of the Japs at sea. So cheer up my darling, I am coming home to you soon, and we shall never be parted again. You know that I have always loved you, Eileen, and that I shall always love you. Nothing can ever change our love or change us – we have a perfect love. All we can do now is to pray and leave everything in His hands, because He will not let us down. My darling, I wish I could tell you all about this place, then you would not worry about me. I have so many, many things to tell you that our meeting can never come quickly enough. Good night and God bless you, Eileen.

Sunday – January 25th

My own darling, I have spent most of my day in the front line visiting the various medical units there and now it is late. It has been another happy day and as usual it has been you who has made it so. My Eileen, you can never know what you mean to me; my whole life and all my happiness are centred in you – I could not live without you. No man has ever loved so much as I love you, my dearest one.

I had a sleep in this morning till 6.30 a.m. as my alarm failed to wake me at 5 a.m. So I went off to 7.30 a.m. Mass in my Austin 8. Did I tell you about my posh new (really new) Austin car; it can do 50 m.p.h. – and what a change this is from my windscreenless car which I had in the past. I could have a much bigger car as I am now an O.C., but I like the smaller cars. I visited my old Field Ambulance and saw all the lads there – they seemed glad to see me. Away in the forward areas I met a Catholic Chaplain (Army) called Fr. Kennedy – of course he is Irish and refuses to leave the front line. He says it is amazing the amount of good a few bombs have done to many souls in this war! I promised to visit his chief in Singapore and give him details of his whereabouts. I forgot to tell you that I met a very charming young Dutch schoolmaster yesterday and we talked for hours together about Holland, Java, and Ireland. You know that the Dutch are doing wonderful work in the Far East against the Japs.

My darling, I shall always love you and only you. Good night and God bless you.

Monday – January 26th

Now, Miss O'Kane, this is Major Murray writing to you and you should be very honoured to have such a high personage corresponding with you!! Yes, my dearest one, I have become a Major again and the powers above did not forget about me. You know that this promotion means nothing to me; I did not ask for it, but somehow it has pleased me because I thought I owed it to you to get my majority back again. You know that it will not change your Frank – I am still the same and always shall be please God, loving you more and more the longer I am alive. Please tell father about my promotion, he too will be pleased. You see my darling there are so very many young medical men awaiting promotion on this island that I have been very lucky indeed to have been chosen.

My darling, you may have noticed a big change in my letters, but you can blame the war for this. It is not easy to write nowadays and may be you can understand why. I want to write so much more but I have not the peaceful surroundings that I used to have up country; I haven't got a room of my own, and so I am writing this amid the clamour of four other officers in our little Mess. I sleep in the front verandah of this Chinese school, but it is not the same as my stretcher bed in the jungle. Those were grand days. They will come again when we push the Japs back up through Malaya again. I always forget to tell you things in my daily letter. On Saturday night I dreamed of you and Frances – we three were in a house in a Malayan village when the Japs attacked. I was very gallant and kept the enemy at bay with my little automatic. Eventually we all got away to safety in an ambulance and had my brother Charlie safely in the back on a stretcher. Last night the sirens went but nothing happened – the Japs are very poor pilots by night and by day. Today has been peaceful even though I was at H.Q. during an air alarm. I had an interview with my big chief and it was a big success indeed.

It is quite a big night in the Mess tonight – a new major, a new Captain, and a 2/Lt. Getting married tomorrow! I was phoned today by the Senior Catholic Chaplain to the Forces in Malaya – Father (Major) Rowles. He is very anxious to meet me and says he has heard all about me many months ago when I was in the North. I haven't time to visit very much, in fact I haven't been out for a single evening since coming here. I work till 8 p.m., have dinner, write a line to you, my dearest one, and then go to bed – always with the knowledge that I shall be called to the phone at least once during the night! But I don't mind all of this; because it is my job and I am happy at it.

Good night my own darling and may God bless and keep you.

Tuesday – January 27th

"I feel you near me" John MacCormack is saying and you have never been so near to me as you now are my dearest one. I am alone with you tonight for the first time for ages and I love you so very much more. I have been with

you all the way to the front line area – did you enjoy your trip with me. There was a vacant seat beside me in my little Austin but you were there all the time and I told you over and over again that I loved you. I met my friend Father Kennedy at his post away up forward and gave him a message from his chief – Father Rowles. Since I became a commanding officer I make it my business to visit my men in the forward posts and see that all is well. I met thousands of Australians away up there in the wilds; they are grand soldiers and a very happy crowd.

I am alone here tonight with you because the others have gone out to the wedding dinner at a large hotel. I could not go because I arrived back too late from my forward visits. I was glad to have an evening's rest with soft lights (brown-out) and sweet music (MacCormack)! My day has gone, I know not where, but I was happy. I wrote to father this morning while I stood by waiting for important calls on my office phone. If you had seen your Frank this morning kissing a tiny miraculous medal, and a precious lock of hair you would have thought him a very sentimental young man; if you have had heard all the things he said to you this afternoon, if you had seen all the tears of love in his eyes when he read some of your letters last night – you would know how much he loves you. Oh my darling, how I wish your letters would come but it is most unlikely now. Your last letter (Clipper) was dated 29th October and your last ordinary air mail was sent on September 29th – nothing has come since then. I would give anything to have a letter, but I must be patient. It is now about 2 months since your last letter came. I shall always be glad that I love you so much, no matter how it hurts in times like these.

We had several raids this morning, but nothing much happened. There are more important things in life than air raids. I am off to bed with a phone call from the powers above hanging over me – at least they said they would ring me. They always ask for Major Murray and today I was puzzled and wondered who that could be!

Good night and God bless you my darling.

Wednesday – January 28th

Eileen, my dearest child, you have made me so very, very happy today – two letters from you, two precious, priceless letters to me. One was sea mail and sent on Sept. 22nd and the other your Christmas letter to me dated November 20th and contained letters from mammie and daddie. How I was praying for a letter from you and God has heard my prayer – He always seems to listen to me. I think He has spoiled both of us. Your letter of November 20th was a trans-Atlantic one and also contained another polyfoto of you my darling – it has now joined the other snaps in the little case which is close to my heart [AIR-RAID! Black Out!] The trouble about this place is that during the night raids, all lights must be turned out. My darling, I am in love with you all over again in your little snap – you look so very happy in it and I do love that funny look in your eyes! You poor darling, your Christmas greetings came too late, but I knew that you had sent them to me when Christmas Day came – in spite of the war I was happy. I could not be sad ever again in my life because you have given me your love; I have never wanted any other love but yours, Eileen, and I never shall want any but yours. And yet you ask me what I would like from you! It is your love I need, my darling, especially in these days – there is nothing else I need. I know how good and thoughtful you are wanting to buy something for me – that is love, my darling; I feel the same about you – I want to keep on buying things, sending you things, and giving you my all. You send me your wonderful letters – and they are you, your thoughts and your dreams, your love and your heart.

I had two letters from the jewellers in Bombay saying that the ring would cost £120 and would I please confirm. I could not confirm as I had sent the money to you, my dearest, and I consider it would be madness to spend £120 on a ring that I could not see. Do you mind terrible, Eileen, having to wait so long for our engagement ring – you must be weary of all these disappointments and all this confusion. Should you find a suitable ring in the meantime I want you to buy it with the money of our account – please use the money of our joint account in future. I was so very pleased to hear of all the things you have made and bought for our home – you have done wonders in such a short time. How I long to see them all; especially that wonderful mahogany table with all its cutlery; your screen, your Clonard, your tea set, the supper cloth, serviettes etc etc. No wonder I love you! Do not forget to thank Frances for her present to us – she is a grand wee girl. Now, young woman, don't you go scrounging furniture from your poor father – you are a shameless person, but I adore you just the same in spite of your awful failings!!!

Good night, Eileen, and may God bless you.

Thursday – January 29th

I have been thinking today how lucky I was to get your letters yesterday – your trans-Atlantic one must have just got through on the last "Clipper" before the war started here. Your sea mail has been tossed over many ocean waves before reaching me. How dare you accuse me of being Scotch – the Irish Murrays came from Derry; you just ask my father and he will tell you all about his mother and grandfather who all spoke Gaelic! Incidentally the O'Cahans also hail from Derry! No Irish Weeklies have reached me as yet. The missing letters to date are October 9th, 17th, November 8th & 18th. What an awful shame it is to have missed all those snaps of your dear ones which you sent

on November 8th. When oh when is your photograph coming – I am dying to see it; you are a terrible to keep me waiting so long for it! My darling, you know that I don't really mind because I now have so many snaps of you which are much more portable than a photograph – you see I now belong to the class "of no fixed abode"!

I am so glad that mammie received my letter safely – I was worried in case it went astray. Already she is proving a good mother to me in writing to me and treating me just the same as her own children. You can never know the comfort it brings me to know that both your mother and father love me and are praying for me. Now that the battle for Singapore is beginning, I have no fears, no terrors; my darling, why should I have any. So many good people are praying for me; your prayers and mine; our love and our faith – I have got all of those so why should I be afraid. The bombers come and go by day and by night, but they cannot stop me from coming home to you soon and oh my dearest Eileen how happy we shall be. You have been happy as I have been during the past year, but that is nothing – just wait till I come home to you and then we shall know real happiness. Everything that I shall do will be for you, Eileen. You have all of me, all my love, and everything that I can give you.

I hope you had a wonderful time at the Hospital Ball in Omagh and that you thoroughly enjoyed yourself. You were really dancing with me all the time; did you hear everything I whispered in your ear as we glided along. My darling you looked so lovely in your black frock – please wear it always when we go to dances, I like it best of all your frocks. You are a good dancer and I cannot dance at all. I am glad your day dream has not come true; I mean the one where you flew out to Malaya and married that worthless Frank Murray – then you got a job with the nuns at Cameron Highlands! My dearest child, the Japs are now in the Highlands and probably enjoying. I think the nuns were evacuated in good time. Many of the French priests remained behind with their flocks – Father Girard is still at his post. I have never ceased to thank God that you were not allowed to come to Malaya – anyhow I would never have asked you to come until the war was over. I heard with much concern that American troops are now in Northern Ireland; now don't you go off with any of those Yankees – I am terribly jealous of them being so near to you. I would give anything to be with you now Eileen, but my duty lies here and so here I stay. I love you with all my heart and soul, but I could not leave my post even if I had a chance of leaving it.

I know Aileen's cousin Raymond Magill very well; he qualified the year after me at Queens. He was a nice lad but oh what a book worm – there I go being "catty"! I do not envy him his degrees a bit because your Frank was meant to be a very ordinary general practitioner, and maybe that is a very wonderful calling. You will have to tick me off when I start criticizing my neighbours! I saw the sun setting on the sea for the first time in years, yesterday and what a pretty sight that red horizon looked. Of course there is not a hope of ever having a swim; I may swim home to you if that would bring me any quicker back to you.

Imagine you having ups and downs in the past! However I can quite well believe it because I was the same. I often became very depressed though I did not show it a bit; I was like this during all those years at Queens and especially when I qualified. I was unsettled and always thinking too much. My half holiday in Birmingham was often spent wandering from one cinema to the next – oh what an existence! An all the time I was loving you but that seemed so futile. My great consolation was prayer and work – I loved general practice and I loved the patients. But my darling what a change you have made to my life, now I am like you and have nothing but "ups". I am happy the whole day long and my heart is ever singing – AIR RAID!

Friday – January 30th

I always mean to write so much to you each day my darling, but the Japs are rude enough to interrupt my letter writing. Still they cannot stop me from loving you – nobody on earth could do that. I was in town this morning reporting to my big chief – I am becoming quite well known in Army H.Q.'s! Then I rushed off to the Post Office, but there were no letters from my best girl. You should see me when I invade that Army Post Office and take them by storm – I go behind the counters and ransack all the mails of 27 Field Ambulance and my own unit. I asked today if there were any cables for me and the reply was "No!". However I was not satisfied and proceeded to tackle a bundle of 1,000 telegrams one by one looking for mine and oh my darling there was one for me from my best girl! It was your Christmas and New Year greetings to me and you sent it on December 14th, but how happy I felt. You said that you were worried and asked if I were all right. Of course I am all right, darling; I never felt better in my life and please oh please Eileen do not worry about my safety. I sent off another cable to you, my dearest child, and may be that will convince you. I was "caught" in an air raid and the bombs did drop around me, but what bad shots those little yellow men up there can be. Then I met with our newly-wed officer to see his wife; she was not at home, but we found a Cork lady there called Mrs. O'Callaghan. The latter has promised to send you a wee penciled note from me should she reach Erin's Isle – I scribbled it in an awful hurry, but somehow it is a precious note. She has met my friend Father Bonamaye when she was in North Malaya; you may meet her some day, Eileen. Her husband is here too and they have been in this country for about 15 years – do not be jealous because she is old enough to be my mother!

Oh my own darling, if I could only fly home with this letter to you – but I would not be contented to leave this place. My heart, all my love, and all of me are in this letter; I give them all to you and still want to give you more. God will bring us together again in his own good time, but no matter what happens in the meantime I shall be loving you more and more every day, every moment. And now another long boring epistle has ended and I have told you so very little about myself – but you may blame the censorship for that – thank heavens they do not censor love! Give my love to all our dear ones at Spring Villa, at Ballynahinch, and everywhere; my love also to Frances.

May God bless you and may He watch over you now and always. May Mary Our Mother protect you and keep you holy and good – but you will always be that.

Ever your loving
Frank.

Postscript

Albert W J Beagley is believed to be the sergeant to whom Frank gave blood and treated on 8th December 1941. Albert, born in Portsmouth in 1920, was the only child of Alfred and Kathleen Beagley. According to Shores, Cull & Izawa (*Bloody Shambles, Vol. 1*, Grub Street, London, 1992), Albert was the gunner in a Blenheim Mark IV (L1530) flown by Sgt Nick Shannon from 60 Squadron based at RAF Kuantan. The formation of 8 Blenheims left Kuantan soon after 06:30 on the morning of 8th December. The plane was badly damaged by shrapnel and Albert, the gunner, suffered serious wounds. He was evacuated from Kuantan on 10th December and Frank had no further contact with him. Albert did eventually return to the UK where, according to an article in the Daily Herald (8th January 1948), he underwent numerous operations as a result of the injuries he sustained on 8th December 1941. The article states that when he went for his 40th operation at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London he met and fell in love with one of his nurses, Jean Farley; they were married in 1946. Albert died following his 64th operation and was buried with full military honours at Porchester, a suburb of Portsmouth. Jean died in 2001. For more information about RAF Kuantan and the role of the air force in the Japanese invasion of Malaya, see Shores, C. & Cull, B. with Izawa, T. "Bloody Shambles: The First Comprehensive Account of Air Operations Over South-East Asia, December 1941–April 1942". (Grub Street, London).

Frank's relationship with his patient and exile, Fr. **Johannes Messner**, is first described in his diary/letter to Eileen of 23rd June 1941 and then again on 15th May 1945. Before fleeing Austria after the annexation by Germany in 1938, Johannes was a prominent theologian and adviser to the Austrian Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss (1892-1934). He helped Dollfuss devise a new constitution based on Catholic principles, although it was thought to be a form of Austrian fascism, albeit more akin to Mussolini's Italy than Hitler's Germany. Following the assassination of Dollfuss by Nazi agents in 1934, Johannes wrote a book entitled "Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot" (1935) and helped his successor Kurt Schuschnigg. The book was critical of Hitler and Johannes fled Austria to Switzerland following the Anschluss. He was associated with the Cardinal Newman Oratory in Edgbaston, Birmingham during his time in England and was a patient of Frank's. Although he resumed his teaching career as a Professor of Ethics and Social Science in the University of Vienna in 1949, he still spent considerable time at the Cardinal Newman Oratory in Birmingham, unbeknownst to Frank. It is clear from Frank's letters that Johannes's experiences had a profound influence on Frank's thinking and probably contributed to his decision to enlist. See https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Messner&prev=search