

**Eileen's Returned Letters**

**3<sup>rd</sup> October 1941 – 8<sup>th</sup> February 1942**

9, Holmview,  
Campsie,  
Omagh  
Friday, Feast of Little Flower  
October 3<sup>rd</sup>

My darling Frank,

It is such an age since I last heard from you – on Tuesday next it will be 5 weeks. I wonder has the “Clipper” failed us or have you been unable to write often. You are more than good Frank to write me every day and especially on those particularly heavy days. I love your letters and I love you and as each day passes I find it becomes stronger and better – it is wonderful how love grows – becomes deeper & more sincere as we get to know one another. I feel that when old age creeps upon us both we shall love each other more than we ever do now and that is saying an awful lot. You are never out of my thoughts. I am still at Mass & Holy Communion each morning and the bulk of my prayers are for us, darling one. This is Mother Teresa’s Feast Day and as I was giving her a mass card she said “I did not forget Frank today, Eileen.” She is a little Saint, but I fear like all good people she is not long for this world. For the past few weeks she has been in bed threatened with pleurisy. She suffers a lot but never complains. She is the most selfless person I have ever met. God bless her because she has been such a very good friend to me.

Today I attended my first cooking class at the Technical. I loved every moment of it. Aileen, Mrs Murnaghan and I set out immediately after school. Mrs Ray prepared our ingredients. There are 20 of us in the class, half of whom I know, not to mention 2 past pupils. The Technical is only built about 3 years & the cookery kitchen is a treat in which to work – bright, airy and very well stocked. The trains pass the very window. We made a meat roll & jam rings. Aileen did the meat roll & yours truly the rings. It is only 2 hours later & there is ne’er a ring in Holmview. Mrs Ray, Celeste, Mary (maid) Major, Aileen & I – in other words our household – devoured them hot and did they taste good? said she boastingly. Being Friday the meat roll is still in the land of the living. Next week (Friday) we are making Apple Cake and Dropped scones. Do you think you will like these? Tell me your taste Frank because I must perfect myself in your special favourites. On Monday we attend the sewing class. When I produced my supper cloth Miss Lyons declared it to be beautiful. She says *when* I have it finished it will be priceless. There is a terrific amount of work on it but how I am enjoying doing it. Now, although I brought *our* cloth along last day to class I do not intend to do it there. Instead I am attempting a “bolster cushion” [diagram] something like this shape. I want to insert 2 panels of smocking so last day I learnt my stitches and practised them on a piece of material. Next day I start the real thing. The cushion is of black satin and the smocking will be done in many gaily coloured threads – or perhaps in one shade, gold. I am undecided yet. The latter sounds very rich but the former colour scheme would mean that it would fit in with any furnishings. You shall see it some day soon. I hope it will turn out as nice as I have dreamt it to be.

Now to tell you the story of my tea knives, bought to present to the golf club. They are so lovely that I am *not* going to give them away but keep them for our home. This is on the advice of all my friends. Should some of the nursed handicapped people win them I believe it would break my heart. I must go shopping tomorrow. Aren’t you glad Frank I kept the knives? The jeweller where I got them told me I got the best bargain in the shop. Cutlery is so poor now and then there is scarcely any to be got.

Mr Gore left last week so Aileen has gone to her own room. I am glad to have my room to myself again. I can write to you oftener and feel more beside you when doing so. Yesterday afternoon I enjoyed myself thoroughly. With the aid of Mary we changed all the furniture in the room – I should say re-arranged it. So you have flitted too my sparring partner. Your beautiful photograph stands in a most prominent position. I can see when I come into the room, as I write my letters as I lie in bed. You are with me always. Have snaps of yourself taken more often. I love the views of your beloved Malaya but I must admit I love you to be in their midst. You can never send me enough images of yourself.

I am afraid I have disappointing news about my photograph. The proofs of one were so disappointing that I would rather not send it. It is not that I look a show in it but that it doesn’t look like me. The frock looks very well – it is an American one – light navy with very attractive white collar and cuffs (short sleeves), my hair

looks remarkably well too but my expression is not good. So Aileen said rather tactlessly "It is a photograph of a very nice girl, Eileen but it is not you." There is no twinkle in the eye but a sad far away expression. The photographer touched it up too, to make me look sort of glamorous. Surely that could not be me. Now about the second group. I had word from home to say they were lost. Now isn't that provoking? They were lost by the photographer himself so I have got to sit again when I go home for my next weekend.

There are rumours floating around the convent that the boarders retreat will take place on either the weekend of October 11<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup>. I am quite excited at the thought of going home. I have hosts of things I want to do but I will tell you all about them later. Drowsiness has overcome me so I will wish my best boy goodnight and send him myself with all my love. God bless you, Frank darling. Do hurry home to me soon. I need you so much. I could never bear to lose you so do be very careful of your precious self. You are a part of me now and that the most important part.

*Sunday, October 5<sup>th</sup>*

Since I was speaking to you last I have received another of your marvellous letters – how I love to get them. It was dispatched on Aug. 25, only one week after your last letter which I received 5 weeks ago. Can you explain this young man? With it arrived a long 10 page letter from Anne telling me how much she and your father enjoyed the huge letter I wrote them last week. They are both well and happy. Your cousin, Pat, she tells me is back in the shop with your father and is living at Beechwood. He appears to be a very quiet type of man. Philip is preparing to recommence his studies at Queens. He is growing a moustache (is that the correct spelling?). When I write letters in the future Frank dearest, you must be prepared to have me call to you "How do you spell "this" and how do you spell "that"?" I can hear the retort already "What woman, can't you see I am busy?" I will answer "Imagine Mrs So & So knowing that your wife cannot spell such an easy word." Then you will scratch your head, look the very essence of overtaxed patience and spell my word. I will smile, continue the good work until the next word baffles me. Are you wondering how I have kept my job so long? Anne tells me she is praying for us both every day – she is a little saint, Frank. I hope, but perhaps this is wrong of me – that she will not enter a convent as you predict. We want some good people in the world you know!! Next time I go home I intend to ask her to take me to your mother's grave. We will visit it together you and I, some day soon. They had received no letter from you to Beechwood since I left them.

Frances shall have your letter by this time. I had a nice letter from her last week. She is spending next weekend in Belfast with the de Meulemeesters and she is persuading me to go home. Roland wants to take us both to the St. Brigid's dance which I presume is on then, but unless the Lord inspires the Rev. Mother to arrange the Retreat for the 11<sup>th</sup> then dancing is off for me. I have also another invitation for my famous weekend – to the McEvoy family who now live in Ardglass. The two girls are at the Convent here. The older members of the family have jobs in Belfast. They are all keen on dancing and have some dance arranged for my visit. I am undecided about going, because I want to spend most of my time with Daddie. Mammie had gone to Carlow for a wee holiday to an Aunt. I hope to have Anne over to meet him. She has met none of our numerous family up to date. Perhaps during the Christmas holidays it may be possible to have Anne and your father meet us all. The unfortunate thing is that, as yet I know not where we are going to spend the festive season – in Belfast or Killough. I imagine it will be Killough, but the long lull in air raids over the city may make both my parents rather bold and they may think Belfast & home the place of our reunion.

While I read your last letter for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, this morning I made myself believe that you actually would come home next Spring. How marvellous it would be, my own darling to have you home again? I shall never forgive you, if you do not warn me. The shock would be too much for me and besides the anticipation of your homecoming would be too much of a pleasure to be missed.

I hate to think of you living in such a horrible climate. Surely you will not be left there too long! It is unnatural to ask a white man to live for long periods under such climatic conditions. I am so happy because you are happy. Do not feel sad about things happening around you. We all have these small annoyances and disappointments but it is good to be above them all. Now that we have each other we must see every thing through rose-coloured spectacles. Our contentment and happiness makes this possible. People tell me I am always in the same form – they think so but really I have my 'ups' & 'downs'. I do try to turn the best side out and you know it helps me. Is this auto-suggestion or is it?

So your Mater Hospital days were not your happiest ones? Poor, Frank. Isn't it such a pity we did not know each other then as we do now. We could have been such a help to one another. I nearly died of loneliness when I came Omaghwards first. How often I set off to walk to the station, go home & thereby throw up my job, nobody knows. I think it was the thought of looking rather foolish which prevented me. I seldom visited anywhere in my first year but Una Walsh & I walked miles & miles each afternoon, each trying to console the

other. Weekend about we went to each other's homes and the break helped us. Occasionally we went to Derry on a Saturday afternoon or met a whole host of Una's Donegal friends. I was 2 years in Omagh before taking up golf. I remember writing to Frances one Sunday. I had the most frightful fit of the blues. Page after page was rattled off but that letter never reached her. I kept it and ages afterwards I enjoyed reading it. My first impressions of Omagh, its people, my seven colleagues at the Convent and my pupils were rich.

Tonight there is to be a party at Birchfield (Murnaghans). We are to spend a profitable Sabbath playing cards. Before going I hope to attend the Holy Hour in Omagh's beautiful church for our intentions. I must say adieu now for the time being as I promised to call out at Hughes. Annie is home from Fortwilliam of the weekend. I will be a breath from home. Tomorrow, Monday, will be a busy day. In the afternoon there is our sewing class & at night Rosa Murnaghan (the girl in your snaps) & Mattie Marshall (my cousin) are coming to Holmview for a "chinwag". I hope to do a few more of the daisies for *our* cloth during it. God bless you, Frank.

*Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> October*

So you see my dearest one I have found a few moments during my busy Monday to write you a few lines. The ladies have not arrived for the fireside chat as yet, so here I am with you again. Frank, does it tire you to read these closely written pages? Do tell me & I shall try to write a little larger & space the lines more generously too – but if I do I cannot get everything I want to say into my letter – & I always feel like saying so much. When I commence your letter I could go on & on for hours. I never seem to get tired & I am never lost for something to say. It shall be the same when we meet. I know I shall never want to be parted from you except of course where your work calls you to one visit, while mine calls to another. Yes, my good man, whether you like it or not I do not intend to sit by & let someone else do my housework. Unless I do the thing myself I never believe it to be done correctly – said she conceitedly. (Now don't blame me for giving you my thoughts – you must know me on all sides good & bad.) I have so much to find out about a house, its care, its furnishings, the daily work it entails, the cooking, the washing & the mending. It is all so exciting to delve into the unknown & find things out for one's self. I shall not be lonely when you go off each morning to earn "our bread & butter" to use your own dear words. I shall go prowling around my home – our home – & I bet when you return I shall have many interesting things to relate. How on earth could you imagine this to be a dull time?

Now I have a very big crow to pluck with you. Are you ready? How dare you declare that you *bet* I haven't done a thing about our bottom drawer. I wish with all my heart that you had made your bet known because then I should have collected it with alacrity. Do you know, young man that I have lost all my interest in clothes & now all I want to buy is something for our paradise. I wish I had more time to prowl around Belfast shops. I intend to make quite a few purchases during my weekend & also to take them to Killough where I have left my trunk to take the place of our bottom drawer. I am very proud of the same lovely trunk. I have never had a trunk – we always used a family trunk at school. First it was Felix's at Armagh. When my turn came a black stroke was painted at the tail of his F to make it into an E. for our initials were rather similar – and so the cumbersome trunk passed down from one to the other. Well this Summer I decided to invest the money I earned while superintending in Strabane, in a trunk. I got it in Erskines of North St. It was old stock (everyone looks for old stock these times because the new stuff is usually inferior) & there was no purchase tax on it, yet it cost £7. I made my purchase all by myself but when it arrived in Killough all agreed it was worth & well worth the money. It is dark blue hide and is fitted beautifully inside. It is now Tuesday night. Last night I was forced to end my letter rather abruptly. Who do you think walked in while the ladies were engrossed with their needlework, knitting, etc? Lance Corporal Harold Andrews. I think I have told you about Harold. He is just 21 years old, lives in Belfast but about year ago he was stationed in Omagh. He was a budding architect. He was in the same digs as myself & we were very good friends. He taught me to paint, to shoot, to play darts & many other such occupations. He painted me a lovely picture of a Donegal scene which I since have framed. Well, to make a long story short he was transferred to new work in Portadown. I had many nice letters from him. The next thing I heard was that he had joined the army & was being sent here. Since his arrival he has had many interviews and the outcome of this is that he has been granted his commission. He is to become one of the Engineering Corps. His one desire is to get out to the East, particularly India so who knows you may run into him some day soon. He has promised me to let me know if he is going & and when so I shall send all kinds of messages with him. I wanted him to put me in his pocket & he has agreed!! I showed him your photograph, Frank & although he likes you, he is disappointed that I am going to get married. He says he does not believe in this marriage business!! Harold is a Plymouth Brethren & is very religious. You are not jealous of Harold, Frank? Our friendship is truly a platonic one.

Our Sunday night party at Murnaghans went off very well. They taught me to play a new card game called Bezique. It is a game for two so they told me it would be useful to know such a game. I thought it was a very difficult game.

Today was my competition at the links. The weather was not too good. I had a quiet time sitting in the Clubhouse while the others were all out playing. I tried to make myself useful by preparing the tea. Some hungry men arrived in & persuaded me to give them a part of our "scrap" tea (each lady brings something). The competition was a "bogey competition" so I had quite a lot of calculations to make as each pair of cards came in. My poor old brain is rather tired tonight as a result. I did not get home until 7 p.m. & was I feeling cold? Guess who won? Joan Moorhead. The sad part about it is that we only succeeded in pulling her handicap down to 33. So ends the competitions of the season. Black out now is about 7.30 and it is quite dark in the mornings getting up. You should have seen me setting off for school this morning complete with oilskin coat, oilskin hood & gum boots. It was the Fair day in the town and I almost "fell" badly for two cows.

The Mother Provincial of the Loreto order arrived today. She is going to parade around the classes tomorrow. All the girls are to appear in their Sunday frocks – many with white collars. This has been a very uninteresting 2 pages. I am very content & happy tonight my own darling and it is because I love you so much. Our separation can only make my love for you grow stronger & better. God bless you tonight and always.

*Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> October*

I have a grand surprise this morning dear Frank when I received a letter from Daddie enclosing 2 grand letters from you, the first posted August 31<sup>st</sup> & the other September 4<sup>th</sup>. Believe it or not I had not a moment to read them as the post arrives in at 9.15 or thereabouts & we are due in school at 9.25. How I longed all morning to open them but I did not. I hurried home at 12.30 (you should have seen the speed at which I came down our "courthouse hill") & of course forgot to make a call in the local grocer for some provisions he has promised me to make an Xmas cake. I warned Aileen that I intended to read them at our lunch & very rudely I sat perusing them while I gobbled my lunch. I could only manage to read the first. On my return at 3.30 I delved into the second and I have just finished it. The snaps you enclosed were wonderful – the most wonderful being the snap of yourself seated at the wheel of your Austin. Why did you give me the wrong impression of it? It looks very posh indeed! And instead of looking funny, you look very well indeed – the cheek of them laughing at you!! I am glad you are above such annoyances. I am afraid I am not quite aloof from the sayings of my fellow men. I should love not to care a jot for what others think of me. I must admit I do not like others to dislike me. I do not dislike anyone in my own heart & no matter how people have wronged me I cannot bear them any hatred or even snub them. Others think I am too soft but it is not softness, as they call it. I learnt my lesson in forgiveness many years ago when I was a very little girl. I do not admire sulky people or those who hold spite against their neighbour. It seems such a waste of time. The enlargement of the beach with waving palms was a remarkable snap. Are you sure you did not buy it as a postcard at the local shop!?? The "Wild Waves" could be the Atlantic breakers at Ranafast. It is very like a snap you gave me years ago at the Irish College. All the other snaps you have mentioned have not arrived as yet. I am dying to see your 500 mile journey through beautiful Malaya.

So you got my "Trans-Pacific" letter. By now I suppose you have my second one with the medal attached. For goodness sake, Frank don't say you are ashamed of your letters. They are all marvellous & full of interest for me. No matter what you might say I know my own limitations as regards letter writing – but if they convey to you how much you are being loved each day by this poor heart of mine, then I am perfectly satisfied. You can never send me enough love in them as I do not mind in the slightest being called darling – as a matter of fact I like it very well indeed.

I have Daddie's letter in front of me as I write. He is looking forward to my weekend at home with him (Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>). I told you about Felix & his thoughts about Killough or Ballynahinch practices. Well, this is what Daddie writes. "The Ballynahinch practice is still in the lap of the Gods. Felix & Mona were at the dance in Fruithill last night & met Dr J. A. McAuley, who is doing locum in Ballynahinch. Felix had a very interesting conversation with him, after which Felix's chances seemed better. He is advised to keep as much as possible in Belfast this week. He is also advised, if this fails, to start in Killough at once." I will surely give Daddie & Mammie your special message & shall be very proud to deliver such a beautiful message. You speak very nicely about them and I love you for it.

I was very interested to hear your news on Mr Walsh. Strangely enough I am to go up to the Convent to meet himself & his wife this very evening. I shall quote the high opinion you hold of him. Knowing him, I know just how he will be interested. He is the most simple man I have ever met. He was up in Dublin to give a broadcast on Sunday night last which unfortunately clashed with benediction in Omagh so I missed hearing him. When passing through he sent me very nice messages. Did I tell you he gave me a very nice book written

by himself, "The Next Time". Perhaps you have read it? He autographed it & wrote "It is better to have lived & to have loved as she had been". This is an extract from the book & was given to me quite a few years ago.

Our boarders' Retreat is the weekend after next. We are off from mid-day Friday until midnight Monday (this is the unearthly hour the train reaches Omagh – but don't be worried, Aileen will be with me). I have written Anne & asked her to ring Spring Villa that Friday night. She is lonely, Frank and feels your dear mother's death very much. I love her very much and if I were candid I would say that one of my chief reasons for going to Belfast is to spend my time with your father & Anne. They seem anxious that I should go up to Beechwood very often. Mairead, our masseuse in Dublin, beseeched me in her last letter to go down to her in Dublin. She even blackmailed me into going but she has failed. I shall have all the latest news of both our homes for you when I return.

It was very stupid not to think of sending you a paper. Poor Frank must ask for it. Please forgive me. I shall post off one tomorrow & when at home I shall order each week's paper to be sent to you. Are there any other papers you would like? Don't be afraid to ask me to do anything for you. It gives me the greatest possible pleasure – now don't deprive me of this.

Snapshot albums are not very plentiful here so I am asking Mairead to buy me one in Dublin. During my Christmas holidays I shall insert all your lovely snaps. I shall have them all ready to show you on your return.

Are you trying to frighten me off from Malaya? Apart from accomplishing your object you have made the country of your adoption a very enticing one. I must admit however, that the "snake in the grass" disturbed me quite a bit. Don't worry about my eight stone. It can be no longer that figure as I feel so strong & fit. I must tell you now, Frank that had the Loreto Convent staff remained at No.15 John St. we should have been skeletons. No joking, we were almost starved. The nuns got real worried about me & eased my timetable. Mrs Hughes invitation to Rozella was well-timed indeed, otherwise I should probably have been sick. She knew this, like the kind-hearted soul she was & she even tried to persuade me to stay out with her. They are very good friends to me slipping me "pats" of nice country butter, taking me away for car trips, inviting me out so often, giving me cream to drink. Do not think that "drinking cream" is a penance. I adore cream – by the way there is no such thing as cream to be bought now. Slimming never appealed to me, my good man! I eat all I can get by fair or foul means. There goes the tea gong so excuse me for this evening. God bless you always.

Here I am back with my beloved one again tonight. It is a weird night. The sky is murky & overcast, the rain is falling heavily. It is a night one would feel depressed but not your Eileen. I am as happy as a Queen sitting in my room, all alone and finishing my letter to my own darling, 7000 miles away so that I may send it off to him in the morning with *all* my love. I missed seeing Mr Walsh this evening but saw Mrs Walsh. She was most interested to hear all about you, Frank. I gave her the gist of your words about her husband and she was mighty pleased. Did I ever tell you that Mrs Walsh once confided in me that she would have loved me for her son, Louis. It was quite an honour to be so selected. However her hopes were doomed. That was about 5 years ago and even then I knew my heart was no longer mine to give. The "keeper" was away in one of England's large & important cities and the sad part of it all was that he didn't know for years afterwards. Had you known then I wonder would you have given me up for the son of the man of whom you think so highly. Woe betide you if you would!!

Looking through an old school album of mine I unearthed this miniature snap taken when the O'Kane family numbered three. You have me as a schoolgirl, as a grown up school teacher so here is one of me aged 3 years. I am seated on Daddie's knee, Felix is behind and Mattie is on Mammie's knee. How do you like Daddie & Mammie? Mammie has grown much fatter but has the same beautiful face. She has lovely brown eyes, just like yours. Daddie is very little changed and today looks as young as ever. Which of them do you think I resemble?

You asked about the address for my letters. Either the Convent or Spring Villa will do. You know we shall go on holidays about Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> returning about January 10<sup>th</sup> so those posted to arrive in or around those dates would come to me directly, if addressed to Belfast. I still think it is marvellous of you to sit down every evening to write me. If you only knew the pleasure I get from reading your letters but when your O.C. invites you on this trip or that *please* go with him and when you return tried *get* under your mosquito net right away. My letter can wait.

Never say you are not good enough for me, Frank dearest. You are too good. It is I who falls so miserably short. I am not aping humility when I say this. I know my own limitations so well. I always think that people who like me must be blind to these. The main thing is that I love you Frank and I want to make you happy. If I succeed then it is I who shall be the happiest girl on earth. I pray so earnestly for this. Do not worry about my over-doing the praying. I love my prayers and *always* they have been my greatest consolation. When I

was ill all advised me to ease off the prayers but their words fell on deaf ears. I went to mass and Holy Communion every day during the year I was at home. I offered up a lot of these prayers then for you, dearest Frank. The last letter you wrote me from Birmingham reached me on my birthday morning during this time. You must have been at home that Christmas. Had you known I was ill, would you have come up to see me? I think there would have been no need for an American holiday had you come up and told me that you still loved me. I should have been better right away. But the good God who loves us both saw differently. He wanted to make our separation more complete so that our reunion should be the happiest one in the world. God bless you Frank for giving me such happiness already. I shall write out & enclose our special prayer. I say it every day. What more appropriate picture could I write it on than one of the Holy Family. May our family always try to imitate the beautiful family of Nazareth. You have St. Joseph as your patron, and I have Mary.

God bless you and may He watch over you every minute of every day and forever.

Your ever loving Eileen.

P.S. The P. Office declares this over 1/2 oz, so I must remove prayer & snaps for next letter.

All my love

Eileen

P.S.S. Am posting Irish Weekly with this letter.

9, Holmview,  
Omagh  
Co. Tyrone  
Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup>

My own darling Frank,

I sent off a lengthy epistle to you on Thursday last. Unfortunately it was over the 1/2 oz so I had to remove the prayer & snap, which are now enclosed. The snap is a very old one but one I always loved – my father & mother look so well in it & I like myself too. In all snaps taken during my babyhood I find myself always in Daddie's arms. Vaguely now I remember thinking how safe & secure I was in that coveted position. You have taken his place now Frank darling and how safe & secure I feel with your love, you have no idea. It means so much to me to know that you are always with me, loving me and wanting home to me. Time has become valueless now. It is flying & how I want it to fly on & on until the day my exile will return bronzed with a tropical sun and so happy to be at home again.

Frank, so you think you will find it easy to settle down to a humdrum life in Ireland after globe trotting such an awful lot? You say that your idea of home is one in a half country, half seaside town near the city and its amusements etc. What more could I ask for than this. I am not a lover of the city at all. As a matter of fact I do not like cities, but much prefer life in a provincial town or village. Why am I airing these views? Honestly Frank, I am indifferent to where we shall live. In these times when practices are few & far between we must just be content with what turns up. When we are together that is all I ask, no matter what sky shall cover us. Were you anxious to become an army doctor and have only decided against it in favour of me? Do not do anything you might regret later. You must be content and happy no matter where we are or what we decide to do.

I was delighted to receive on Friday morning last two more of your wonderful letters (10<sup>th</sup> Oct.). They were sent to S. Villa and registered. Daddie got them & sent them up with a note of his own. Do you know Frank that Daddie *never* writes to any of us but last week I got 2 letters from him, each enclosing two of your letters. Since then I have re-read the said letters 3 times & the more I read them the more I love them. One had the enlargement of yourself seated at the Austin. Really, Frank it is very good, so clear. Why do you have a wiper for the windscreens when there is no windscreens? The camouflage came out very clearly, even the "Dunlop" etc on the wheels? Now I am going to give you a lecture – you have got thinner than when you had that snap taken on the brink of the Kabul River. Please do not overdo it in such a trying climate, dear Frank. You must think of your health as one of the most cherished things you possess. When it goes, everything seems to go. When we have our health we have everything & crowned by our love it just makes our old world a heaven-on-earth. It seems a shame that you have had no "leave" for such a time. When you get it, take it & go off up to the hills rather than to more unhealthy places like Singapore. Nothing must happen to you Frank. You must keep strong and well.

It seems now that all your five monthly letters reach me within one week. For five weeks I had no word and then lo & behold 5 letters come, one to the Convent & 4 to S. Villa. Oh, it was just grand last week, reading them over & over again & looking at the beautiful places which you see daily. That brings all your letters up to date – the last one was posted on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Isn't it wonderful that none of our letters have been lost! You must have, by this time my 2<sup>nd</sup> Transpacific letter containing the miraculous medal. I am so anxious to have you wear it always. It was disappointing about your little statue. Poor darling Frank, you are so good & holy and I love you for it.

I shall "shoot the boats" of you if you ever mention again about your "boring", "awful" letters. You are annoyed when you have nothing to tell. Well let me tell you that news is only of 2<sup>nd</sup> rate importance to me. I only want to hear about yourself, your thoughts, your worries, your joys & above all your love. The other happenings in far away Malaya matter not. If you never once mentioned a single item of news I would still love with all my heart your lovely letters. It is grand to think that I shall receive some by ordinary air mail & sea mail. Perhaps then I shall not have to wait 5 whole weeks for word from my beloved. I have sent off a sea mail letter about a fortnight ago. I have another almost ready to go. I shall send a Transpacific letter to reach you for December the 4<sup>th</sup>. I hate to think that you are disappointed by the non-arrival of my letters. That postman must *always* have a letter for you. It is such a pleasure to write to you Frank. I find it no trouble in the world. Though I have no news to relate I could just ramble on & on. I am so happy to know that you enjoy my letters. What was so wonderful about the 1<sup>st</sup> Transpacific letter? I really cannot believe that any of my letters are wonderful. Though there is lots of writing, they are badly written. The family always ask me to write to them when they are away from home. They like my letters too. Daddie wrote to thank me for the "lovely" letter for his birthday. This is very high praise from him.

Just address my letters as you wish. When sending them to the Convent be sure to add Eileen & the B.A. part of it because oftentimes letters reach the children who bear the same name as myself. However the lynx eye of our Reverend Mother Vincent – Mother Teresa has been "de-moted" (is this a Murray coinage?) to mistress of schools – knows your letters & I'll bet they shall never wander into a child's hand. Speaking of "demotion" I want to congratulate you on the wonderful way in which you took your change from major to captain. Do you know I believe I now love Captain Murray much more than major? Honestly Frank I was not in the least upset about your "demotion". Those who knew you were a major know it from other sources & not from me. Why then should I set out to tell them you are now a captain. The majority of my friends have no idea what is your rank so there is no telling to be done. Poor darling Frank; to think that you hated putting Captain on the back of my letters lest I should feel disappointed in you. I am so proud of you, not for what worldly honours have been heaped upon you (& they are many), but for your sterling self. I was really delighted at the way you stood up to the demotion (if this is the proper word). Now you must not be disappointed. You are doing your job well & that is *all* that matters. Some day soon, you will want not only your crown but another few pips too!! You are worthy of these & soon the "powers above" shall agree with me. Then I shall have another opportunity of cabling you my congratulations.

Now I have very good news for you, my dear one. Last night (Saturday) it was such a glorious one I called for Rosa Murnaghan to come for a 4 mile tramp with me. She had been in Belfast for some law lectures (she hopes to become a solicitor like her father & brothers) and met Frank Martin, Felix's solicitor. You know him, Frank. He claims acquaintance with you on the rugby field in Queen's days. I know him very well & like him too. Well he sent me word with Rosa that Felix has got the Ballynahinch practice & he & Mona are leaving Derry to settle down as an old married couple in Ballynahinch. I am so happy for them both. Derry was alright but I felt for poor Mona having no home of her own because they lived with the Thompsons. Next weekend I hope Daddie will take me down to see his son's new home & then I shall have all the details for you. I shall put them in my Transpacific birthday letter to you so the news will be quite stale when this ordinary air-mail letter reaches you. We saw the northern lights last night – it was a glorious sky. There is a queer little star which always holds my attention. I wonder do you see it. It is more yellow in colour than the normal star, very big and very bright. It always reminds me of the Bethlehem Star which must have guided the wise men to the first crib. I have asked many people about "my" star but no one can name it. Do tell me if you can see it too. I should love it all the more then. "Chance" the dog came with us on our hike but it was so dark before we returned that the poor fellow had to be tethered. I love a dog. They are such grand company. While I was "sick" at home we had a grand little terrier called "Joker" (The card sense of our family!!). Joker & I climbed all the mountains around home. He walked for miles with me, but alas he is dead now. Somehow we can never keep a dog at home – they either die or are stolen. Last Christmas I was given a present of a Persian kitten. I called her Nodlaz. She was very playful & the boys loved her. When you least expected it, she would spring onto your

shoulder & walk across your back to the other shoulder. After I had come back to school she was stolen too. We were all heartbroken.

The weather has turned very cold now & light frocks have been replaced by tweed skirts & warm pullovers. Soon silk stockings will be scrapped for lisle & golf socks into the bargain. One cannot parade in bare legs in the town where one teaches you know. However on the links it is different. Lecture me as much as you like dear doctor about taking care of myself. I don't mind it in the slightest. I shall take your advice & stay out in the air as much as possible. "Our four ball" i.e. Mrs Sheffield (pal of Mat Kelly who when I meet him asks for his friend, Mrs Glasgow), Miss Cusack & Mollie Hughes play golf all winter through. We are the only ladies in our club who do this. Of course the men are all foul & fair weather golfers. Sunday afternoon is the day set apart for our game. You should see me in the bitterly cold days of January & February (much colder than Belfast). A warm Donegal tweed skirt covered by a rainproof skirt – on top about 3 warm pullovers covered by my brown gold jerkin. On my head a very woolly looking "pixie" covered by the same in waterproof. For stockings I have a pair of handknit ones in a very nice shade. They were a present to me last Christmas. They are the latest rage in the fashion world. Over these I wear golf socks & Dunlop rubber golf shoes. Now I ask you could I possibly feel cold. Are you wondering how I manage to hit the ball at all? Well, to be quite candid, winter golf is not so hot, but we are in the fresh air & that is the main thing. The golf skirt (waterproof) is not so comfortable as the now popular waterproof slacks. Some of the ladies have them here but I think our nuns would not like me to parade in them & so I don't. Are you very averse, Frank to ladies wearing slacks? For ordinary wear through the town they are vulgar as well as being ugly for golf, cycling, gardening, etc. I think them very useful indeed. While on the T.S.S. California in April 1939 I wore a divided skirt in grey flannel. I have lots of snaps taken during my trip to the western hemisphere but I don't think you would like any of them – there are so many young men in them and some even with their arms around my shoulders. I shall tell you all about the said men sometime when I have less to talk about. I received a postcard last week from one of America's famous seaside resorts posted during the month of August. It was from a gentleman called John Millar. He was an actor & had acted in New York with Ann Harding the film star. He writes "Hello, Eileen – often wonder how this chaotic world situation is affecting your life". He spent the summer before war broke out in the British Isles. We came over on the boat with him. He writes for Christmas & occasional letter or card throughout the year. I have not written to him for a long time so I must sit down sometimes & send him a note telling just how this chaotic world situation has affected my life. He was not at all handsome but very clever. His friend Robert Lamont Hill was the Poet, of whom I have told you. "Bob" was the gay dashing handsome type who reminded me very much of the film star Robert Donat. Like you, dear Frank he was ever with his camera & he gave me many of his snaps. One, we shall look at together when I tell you about the other men in my "past". It is one of the two of us taken on the wind blown decks of the Transylvania. John Millar took it. Bob was inclined to be a bit serious so I never wrote to him at all. Though a professed atheist he came to Ireland (his ancestors were Scottish) to climb Croke Patrick. Do not think, darling one, that I had any interest in this man. He meant less than nothing to me and I believe I hurt him by telling him so. During that trip – when you were still so near me and yet in reality *so* far away I loved only you – that was why I was so flippant with everyone else. Does this type of news make you wonder what kind of a girl you have given the honour of asking to become your wife. Somehow I feel loath to talk about these things & yet I want you to know everything that happened to me during the years we were parted. I do think it is a great honour you have conferred upon me and I believe every girl should look on a proposal as such.

In your sea mail letter I shall enclose one I recently got from Hugh. In it you are mentioned. You will know Hugh a little better after you have read it. He is a very good boy. One time we got talking about what he would like to be when he grows up. Quite suddenly he said "Eileen, I don't think I shall ever be a priest, because I am not good enough." Recently too I had a letter from an Aunt & Uncle in Carlow (Mr & Mrs O'Regan). They told me that each night a full decade of the family rosary is for "Frank & Eileen". They are looking forward to meeting you & have issued an invitation for us to come and visit them in their home at Bagenalstown. Felix & Mona spent a week of their honeymoon there & loved it.

The evening is wearing on & my friends on the links will think I have deserted them so I must be off. Imagine you making me go out & play golf when I want to stay in and continue writing to you. It must be night time now with you and perhaps you are writing to me this moment. You looked very well seated here beside me in your doorless car. How I wish I could hop into that empty seat. All my love dearest one until such time as I can return to you. I have heaps of letters to write tonight. To Daddie, telling him to expect me home Friday next; to Mairead telling her I am not going to Dublin; to a former pupil Marie Bradley who is training to become a Domestic Economy teacher in Edinburgh. Marie's uncle is your curate in Sacred Heart Church (it was he who gave your father such praise of me!!). Her father and family live about 6 miles from here in a place called

Fintona. He is a doctor and a very clever one too. They are relatives of the Hughes & Molly & I cycle out there often. Only last week we spent a lovely evening there & the tea table is one which I shall never forget :— home made bread, butter, jam, salad, honey, cream. Dr Bradley is very interested in farming. They have their own cows, vegetable & fruit gardens. Doctoring is only a side line.

Before I finish for today I must tell you, lest I forget, that Sean Murphy who was in his 3<sup>rd</sup> medical has given up his medical career & taken a job as Lecturer in mathematics at Queens. He has his M.Sc. I wonder will Philip come across him. Hugh Marshall, your classmate, is now a fully fledged chemist with a place of his own (with another qualified assistant) near Shaftesbury Square. He is doing well, I hear. I must refresh his memory about you. He knows about our engagement but I don't think he realises that Major Murray of the Army Medical Corps & the 12-year old schoolboy with whom he played football are one & the same. Everyone is claiming friendship with you, Frank. I never believed you were so well known. One of the bank clerks in the Munster & Leinster Bank here remembers playing football with you, in O'Connell's team, I think. He says you were a powerful footballer!! And that was not in order to please me. His name is Henry McGrane. His father was the Bishop's Secretary. They lived in St. James Park. Surely I shall make it my business to meet your friend, Gerry McGuinness. I do not know him but I know I will like him. Imagine he thinking I was a very "ordinary looking" person. But why should he not, because I *am* a very ordinary person.

Did I say about a page back that I must be off? This love does strange things. About a year ago, nothing on this earth would have made me be even a few minutes late for my golf. Now I am really very late & you are to blame. God bless you darling and keep you safe now and always.

*Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> October*

You are a lucky boy today dearest one. Winter cold has certainly settled down on poor Omagh. Fires are kindled, lights are on and "black outs" are drawn yet it is not even 6 o'clock. How I envy you the natural heat of the sun. Today has been exceptionally cold with a nasty east wind blowing. In class today I had to send one little mite out to put on her coat. Now don't you realise your luck?

Our famous week is drawing very near & the nearer it comes the more excited I become. This letter must go off tomorrow but before it goes let me tell you once again how much you have been in my thoughts and how much I am loving you every day. Whether letters reach you constantly or not do not feel worried about me. Should I have to get into the blankets you shall hear from me by cable. Nothing will happen to me that you shall not hear about. So you are not to worry ever about me. I am well and strong, thank God and very ready for a good winter's work. I shall not work too hard either because now I have learned the happy medium between overwork and overdone leisure. Classes are going along famously and we, students & teacher, share the work.

If I find time I must send you a sea mail letter tomorrow. Your Irish Weekly too must be posted tomorrow. It is published on Thursday. I had another lovely letter from Anne. She is in Dungannon visiting Margaret. The Rev. mother there has invited her to stay at her home (in Dungannon). I wrote Anne about my weekend & she is ringing "Loreto" tomorrow at 2 p.m. to hear on which train I am travelling, so that we shall be up to Belfast together. I shall give you the latest details then, before I post this.

On Monday morning I had a nice letter from Felix giving me some details about Ballynahinch. He commenced work there on Tuesday (that was yesterday). I am invited down for my weekend so if petrol permits Daddie & I will probably pop down to see the happy pair established in their new home. How I am looking forward to seeing them. He (Felix) hadn't written to any of the family (save Daddie & Mammie) & telling me I had more time than he, he asked me to do the part of informer. Now just imagine thinking I had more time than himself! — I scarcely had time to read his letter. By the same post I had a letter from Frances thanking me for her birthday gift. She loved the tara brooch, Frank. We are both invited up to de Muelmeesters for tea on Saturday next. Frances is going to spend her weekend with me in Spring Villa (unfortunately that is only Saturday and Sunday night). I have not seen her since Lough Derg & I have still to hear all about Annie's wedding. The last night I was in de Muelmeesters was the famous Easter Tuesday blitz. I do hope history will not repeat itself. On Friday there is another friend of mine coming up to have tea with me. (There will be no one in Spring Villa save Daddie & yours truly.) She is Loreta McNamee, French teacher at Loreto until a nun was found to take her place. Now she has got a grand job in the Censorship department. She has been in France for many years and is very "Frenchie" in her ways. Now won't I have lots of news to give my darling when next I write??

I mentioned to you about the Workers Educational Association which is about to open up a branch in Omagh. We had our first meeting about 2 weeks ago when the secretary, treasurer & committee were elected. The subject selected was "Elements of Social Justice" and the lecturer is a Mr King from Queens. I voted for the

“Historical” background to the modern conflict but the majority won. I think the former subject was a rather risky one to take considering the religious & political bigotry in Northern Ireland. However, we had our first meeting with the lecturer on Friday last. There was quite a turnout, about 30 people including Fr McNiffe, military chaplain. The lecture lasted almost an hour and the ½ hour debate which followed was given over almost entirely to Mr King & Fr McNiffe. It was grand listening. I felt so very proud of the beautiful & learned way Fr McNiffe spoke & debated his point with the utmost confidence. They concluded by agreeing to differ. The town has been talking about it ever since.

*Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> October (Feast of St Gerard Magella)*

I was forced to abruptly conclude last evening’s diary and I am sorry for my rudeness leaving you without even an apology. To finish the “Social Justice” topic, Fr McNiffe has been transferred and a Fr Jacobs is taking his place. It will be a big loss to our side and to the debating section of our lecture. I hear Fr Jacobs has been told to call upon me by some of our medical friends from the city. Frank, please forgive me if I repeat any of the news items. I have an awful head & goodness knows how many times you have to read some facts.

Anne did not ring up today – at least not before I left at 3.30. She may not have gone to Dungannon. I am enclosing a cutting from one of her letters. Is it rather conceited of me to send you it but I want you to know what your sisters think about me. For myself, I was really delighted at such praise and I know I reciprocate every word that was written here. Are you pleased dear Frank? So you *must* like me all the more *even though* your family like me too.

So we are off tomorrow. I have everything ready to fly home to Holmview at 12.30, snatch a bite of lunch & rush back for the 1.30 train. Last night – a wild one – I was round in Murnaghans for supper. They are a very happy family. They have made me promise to come one night every week. They are rather an unusual family, as they rarely have any local visitors. They praised my cloth which held aloft for the admiration of all. On next Wednesday I am to come back with all the ingredients for a Xmas cake & Rosa, Mrs Murnaghan & I are going to bake it. This is to be a surprise for Mammie at Christmas. She will never think of me being able to manage such a present living in digs, but my good friends in Omagh have made that possible. Murnaghans have a grand Esse cooker so surely the cake will be a success!! How I would love to bake one for you my own darling. If only you were in Birmingham now.

I was counting my treasures today and I have 26 of your marvellous letters. My greatest delight is to pass away the hours in reading them over & over again but somehow your “last letter” is always my favourite one. It was posted on September 16<sup>th</sup> & it is now over a week since I received it.

If the prayer & snap are not inserted in this letter then it is again because of overweight but I have *only* written 8 pages, so that I might enclose them.

The hair must be washed tonight. When I do so I hope to carve you a piece which you will already have received when this reaches you. It is only lately I have taken note of the colour of my hair & I actually find an auburn or “ginger” tinge in it – this accounts for my bad temper!! With *all* my love I send this letter off to you. St Gerard was asked many petitions this morning at Mass for us both. *Beannacht Dé agus grádh go leor.* (God bless and lots of love.)

Your loving Eileen.

9, Holmview,  
Omagh  
Co. Tyrone  
Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> 1941

My darling Frank,

I have just returned from my second weekend at home since the beginning of September. This time it was the boarders turn to have a break from lessons so of course the “carefree” teachers just had to take one also. I sent off your birthday letter just before leaving on Friday last but it will be quite stale when this reaches you. Isn’t it just grand that all our letters have reached their destinations safely!

Now I have good news for you too, dearest, about the snaps and magazines. On Friday morning last the 2 Asias and the “Straits Times Annual” arrived intact. They were magnificently packed and had such a permanent wave in them that I am still trying to permanently unwave them!! If you don’t hear from me for some time, you are to blame, because *you* sent me such interesting literature!! Honestly Frank, there is grand reading in them. I sat this afternoon in front of a nice turf fire and read article after article on

Japan in *my* first "Asia". You see I told you that we are studying Japan at the moment in the Senior class (26). You should have been listening to me today. I was quite an authority on Japan's position in the Pacific and her chances of success or failure in China!! All my friends who see my interesting magazines are claiming to have a peep at them, but the convent children must come first. The Straits Annual is a beautiful book. I fully intend to keep all these books. They will never grow old or out-of-date for me. You shall see every one of them when you return home. Besides these books there arrived also your letter via Durban enclosing all the snaps of your journey through Malaya. I followed you every step just as if I were in that little Austin & not that huge Sikh who stood by it and made it look so diminutive. Isn't he a lucky man to have travelled with you through so much beauty? I wonder did he realise it? You have completely changed my poor opinion of Malaya – it *must* be beautiful country. Those stalwarts of yours are certainly marvellous looking men. I never saw such well-formed bodies, God bless them. What religion are these men? If they are Catholics – which I am led to believe because you spoke about bringing some to Mass with you – from whom did they get the faith? I have always thought that India was rather a new harvest for missionaries. These thoughts may have been due to the many sermons preached in Clonard about the Indian Missions. St Francis Xavier's work was done chiefly in the south.

You are very good, Frank dearest, to spend your precious free time in making out those little albums. My problem is how to put them into my album. I wouldn't touch them for the world – *your* "album" must remain intact in my album – Don't worry, I shall find a way! The sayings accompanying each snap are so appropriate. You are quite a poet in your own way, Frank!! How do you think them all out. Believe me you must be a very clever and gifted young man instead of "never very bright" as you declared yourself to be.

I am sitting all alone tonight as Aileen has gone off to bed. I intended turning in early too but I did want to write to my beloved. Those "trans-Pacific" letters upset the continuity of the arrival of my letter to you, Frank. You have a few together and then none for some time. Mrs Ray has found us two very nice easy chairs & so we sit each evening like Darby & Joan, one on either side of the turf fire. I am writing this letter on my knee which accounts for the bad writing *and* the bad slant on the last page too. How you enjoy these letters, Frank, is more than I can understand. They certainly do not make such good reading to me.

Now would you like to hear about my weekend? You wouldn't!! Well, you just shall hear about it. We did not get away until the 4.30 train because some inspectors were on the horizon. The result was I missed Frances in Belfast (her bus left at 6.20 & my train did not get in until 7 p.m.). I got another disappointment that same morning when I heard that Mammie would be unable to get home from Carlow for my weekend. She wanted to have Mairead spend a weekend with her before returning & the only weekend Mairead could manage was Hallow'een. So my dearest when I arrived at Spring Villa it was to find no one at home except Mr McCann who keeps the vegetable garden at the back in trim. But was I lonely? I was not & now I shall tell you why. On the table reposed a box from a very dear friend of mine who is in Malaya. Do you know him because if you do then give him *all* my love. Yes, Frank, it was your box of 60 snaps. It came without even a corner torn. Well, I made my Hallow'een's repast & while taking it I opened and delved into your box. Did I enjoy myself for the next couple of hours! I looked over every snap & then back over all of them again. I am lost for words to express what I think of those snaps and they came at such an appropriate time. One would have thought you knew that I should be alone & quite "neglected" that October night dearest Frank and you sent me those snaps to cheer me up. It was the pleasantest Hallow'een I have ever spent. It would have been a tragedy if that box had gone astray I shall surely keep them all safely for you. You would be quite elated if you heard the praise those snaps received by everyone who saw them. Daddie & I spent ages going over them together when he came in later. In his pocket reposed your letter to Mammie. He did not forward it. I was dying to have a peep at it but we both had to await Mammie's arrival on Monday (yesterday) at 7 p.m. to read its contents. Mammie read it out to us both then. I cannot tell you how pleased she was with it. I wanted to take it away with me but would she part with it. I know she will always treasure it. Never was such a beautiful letter written by a future son. Both Daddie & Mammie kept telling me that I was a *very, very* lucky girl. But, sure I know that, Frank darling, only too well. They were both very touched when they read that letter together. I think it brought back old times to them both. They were amused at your "cheek" in saying that we should be even happier than they. If we love each other as much as they still love each other then it will be a very wonderful love indeed. You should have seen them after their short parting. Daddie was as excited about her return home as any romantic schoolboy. Need I tell you that tea was forgotten until your letter was read & re-read – and I was rushing for the 8.40 train to Omagh the same night. What a rush I had but it was worth it, well worth it. Though it is quite late now & I am a bit tired I haven't told you all my news of the weekend but I shall "see" you tomorrow. Good night darling. I am so happy that you love me and so proud that I love you as I do with all my heart. God bless you.

Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> November

I have just about 3/4 hour before tea so I am going to spend it with you, Frank. Tonight is Murnaghan's night and tomorrow night the five of our staff are invited to Birchfield for tea so you see how "busy" we are kept with their social calls. To tell you the truth I prefer to stay at home and get on with my many jobs for *our* bottom drawer but alas one cannot be too frank in these matters.

This morning we were all at breakfast when in came the maid with your cable telling me you were well and safe. You are so thoughtful for me Frank darling, and I love you for it. Please God you will always be safe & well. I cannot get to Mass every morning now as it is too dark & bitterly cold too so I have got a new habit for getting all my prayers said – the army of Holy Souls must grow whether Mass is heard or not. School stops at 3.15. Afternoon tea is not until 4.30 so I must spend the time in the convent chapel. Do you know I really enjoy myself then because I feel we are closer at prayer time than any other. How can I thank you enough for all those Masses & Holy Communions you have offered up for me last September? To think that a Mass was said for my intentions by a native priest in far off Malaya and attended by you, dear Frank is just too wonderful. I am a very proud girl indeed to get so much thought. I do feel the benefit of all your prayers in so many little ways that I shall tell you all about some day. I have had wonderful answers to my prayers in the past few months and I feel sure that your prayers Frank are in a very big measure responsible.

Now to give you some news of your dear ones in Beechwood. Anne has been troubled since the blitz days with a sore toe. She has had a discharge from it, on or off since then. Well Dr Wright had a look at it & decided to operate upon it. This operation was carried out in the Mater Hospital last Tuesday. She wrote me from the Hospital so on Saturday I went to visit her there. She was looking splendid & there was no pain in the foot. She was allowed home that night. Maureen was there when I called so we all had a grand chat together. I brought my box of snaps along & we all delved into them. I promised before leaving to go up & spend Sunday afternoon in Beechwood. We decided that Jean (the maid) would be allowed away for the afternoon & I, under Anne's instructions should make the tea. Your father seemed very pleased to see me – he shook my hand very soundly & drew up my chair before the kitchen fire. Pat, your cousin, was there & I was introduced to him. He told me about (your father I mean) the two letters he had received from you, one written over a month before the other. He seemed delighted to get them. I never saw a man with his heart so much set on having us married soon & settled in Beechwood. Where would Anne, Philip and your father go Frank if we were to live in Beechwood. It seems so heartless taking their home from them. Beechwood is a beautiful home & nothing would please me better than to make it our home but Anne & Philip, I wonder how they will feel about it. We must never have our pleasure at anyone else's expense. I love them and I want them to be happy too. I *think* it is your father's idea to retire from business soon & probably sell the shop. Again Frank would you be able to find a practice around Beechwood? You know about all these matters best but one thing I do want you to know and that is – I shall *never* mind how poor we are or how hard we have to struggle to make our living. To me it will be a grand adventure. It will all be so easy when we have each other and our prayers to help us along. Your father thinks you will have no difficulty and told me I was to write you to this effect. However do not worry your dear head over these matters. Everything will work out as God planned it for us and in His own good time.

I think your father already treats me as one of the family. On Sunday night he brought down to the kitchen a huge black tin box in which reposed many interesting documents. We went through them together & as we did, we came across a small white box. It contained your mother's wedding ring. I took it out and put it on my finger. It fitted me perfectly so her fingers must have been the exact same size as my own. I told him he should wear it but try as we might it would not go on to any of his fingers. Sunday night was "All Souls Night" – now wasn't it strange that we should have spoken so much about your dear mother that night? I felt she was very near us in that kitchen on that night. May her soul rest in peace and may she watch over us both all the days of our lives.

I was glad to read in your recent letters about your modified view about the "domestic" trouble as you put it. Anne is a grand little girl but after all we must make allowances for her youth. She is only 21. I can also understand your father's point of view in wanting her to be at home more often – surely there is the happy medium. If I were at home I would go up and keep your father company and Anne could go out, but here I am tied hand & foot. This would be a real pleasure for me because I *do* enjoy chatting to your father. I find him very interesting indeed.

Philip was in on Sunday night so I met him for the first time. He is not at all like you, Frank – in fact I do not think he resembles any of the family. I think he is a very clever boy and this I discovered from my own conversation with him. He was very friendly towards me & I think we shall be good friends. It was about 9.30 when I rose to go. Your father got on his hat & coat & when we came out, it was such a gorgeous moonlit night that he said he felt like a walk. So we both set off & walked from Beechwood through Clifton Park Avenue,

Agnes St, on to the Falls Road. It was a lovely stroll. He was most interesting about all the places through which we passed. He waited until I got my bus & before I hopped on it he presented me with a little parcel. These little gifts are becoming a habit with him. I told him, if he gave me any more I should not come so often to Beechwood. He always asks when I shall be back again. I made him promise to write to you soon – I know how much you look forward to his letters. It is time I got ready for my visit to Lisnamallard – still more news for you but it must wait until tomorrow. Don't worry Frank dear about Anne's foot. She showed it to me & it is wonderfully healed. God bless you tonight wherever you are. There is still no sign of the enlarged Polyphoto. It should be here next week. When it comes I shall send it with Felix's wedding group. You simply must see that bridesmaid in her lavender with *no* lace. She is trying to tell you that you and you alone are ever in her thoughts.

*Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> November*

I have another Weekly to send off today. I am being *most* economical. I buy it every Thursday, then read it and post it. Strange to relate the only paper my landlord will read is the Irish Press so it is like home to see it lying around the drawing room. We had quite a gathering here yesterday. They were all friends of Hubert's – the son. I wish you would pop in some day along with these uniformed young gentlemen. Instead of keeping out of their way I should get very much into the way. I was amused in one of your letters when you said maybe some fine morning you would knock upon the door of No.15 John St. Believe me Frank you *would* get a warm reception there. Having lost their 3 boarders I don't think even friends of the said 3 ladies would receive too kindly a reception.

Winter has now descended on poor old Ireland. The Convent paths are thick with Autumn leaves. There is a nasty east wind blowing which makes cycling quite a push, though it may help the complexion. We could never have pale faces in this bracing land of ours.

You want me to tell you more about Josephine & Mairead. Well I think the best thing I can do is to enclose in this letter a snap of each. Josephine is small in height and I think she is 23 years old. She is a very confident little lady and well able to do the prowling around England which she does. Everything she does, she does well. She is a grand little catholic & is quite a catholic activist in Yorkshire where she instructs the Yorkshire lasses in the arts of cooking and sewing. We write very other week to each other. She is dark with hazel-coloured eyes & is very "nifty" about her appearance. In Kilkeel days she was an ardent gaelic enthusiast & every year turned up at Ranafast for her Summer course. She holds the gold fáinne & I want her to take her ceard teastas exam which will enable her to get a good job in Eire. We are all anxious to have her home so she may give up her job to please Daddie & Mammie & come home. She may be home permanently at Xmas. This will be a sacrifice for her as she loves the independence that only a job can give. She has made many good friends in Staincross where she teaches (it is 4 miles from Barnsley). She is particularly friendly with the games mistress & at all free times the pair of them go off hiking through the Pennines. She has a second home in Staincross with Dr & Mrs Drake. They have not been long married and have one darling little baby, Philip. Mrs Drake is one of a large family of Irish extraction (O'Hara) & she & Jo get on particularly well together. Jo asks about you, dear Frank in every letter. She is praying lights out for you and your safety. She is just dying to meet you.

Mairead is 21 years old and is as tall, if not taller than I am. I can never think of her as grown up – she is such a child. To play with Fergus, Joe, and Hugh is her greatest delight. She sings beautifully and can sing anything under the sun. She is not so industrious or hard working as Josephine but is a great favourite wherever she goes. She is the greatest little saint at all. You think I am holy, Frank. Well just wait until you meet Mairead & Jo. They leave me streets behind. Both are praying hard for your intentions. Hugh got home from Armagh for the holiday Nov 1<sup>st</sup> and a Hallow'een parcel. He landed in punctually at 12 o'clock & it was good to see him tuck into that plate of rasher & egg. The meal over he set off for the pictures. I was going over to visit Anne in the Mater so we went into the town together. Very proudly he looked over his shoulder at me & declared "I am taller than you now, Eileen". He is just 16, so if he goes on growing he will leave Felix too behind. I may find a snap of *my* 3 big brothers to send with this. When I told him about you Frank, he gave me the most comic of smiles. I have a letter which I received from him some time ago. In it he asks about you, Frank so I shall send it with an ordinary sea mail letter. He wants to go to Queens, like Felix he says. What did he purchase when down town on Saturday last! – an aeroplane book. The money was supposed to be spent on goodies but Hugh's thoughts were on something else. It gave me quite a start to see along what lines his thoughts were running.

Joe's letters home from Limerick are very amusing. One week he signs himself "your loving niece", in the next "your loving son". He has "Spring Villa" more often at the head of his letters than Mt St. Alphonsus, Limerick. Fergus must be acting the "big brother" this term although Joe needs anything but a big brother to

initiate him. I am already looking forward to seeing them both at Christmas. There will be some tales to hear. There is great rivalry between Armagh & Limerick – our boys have made that possible.

*Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> November*

Were you only dreaming when you spoke of me going out to Malaya on my next summer vacation? Could you really get permission for me to go to Malaya? It all sounds very exciting indeed. When, in the course of my conversation with your father I mentioned this he shook his head. He thinks if I went out to you neither of us would ever return. I *think* you would find it very hard to send your wife home again once she got there. She is a very determined young lady so what if she would not go back!!! Of course I dream about going out to you. If the war should go on indefinitely which is quite probable, and if you should be left permanently in Malaya could I not find a suitable job somewhere near you where I could be doing my work and yet seeing you on these "leaves" which you should be taking. How about getting a job in that Frazer Hill convent you spoke about? Perhaps they would not take a married woman as one of their staff. In this country they do not, so once we were married Frank, then I must stop teaching. Do not think that I love my teaching so much that I do not want to give it up. I should give in my notice tomorrow if you wanted it but until we can be together always, I want to be doing something. If this idea of mine about getting a job out east does not appeal to you, then just consider it one of my day dreams. The "Clipper" is such a wonderful means of bringing us so close together – would it not be possible for you to come home for some leave soon. Then you could return to your post. Sometimes I think if such personalities as Mr Duff Cooper realises how anxious I was to see you, then he would willingly give up his seat in the Clipper to you. Day after day I listen to the arrival of this Australian politician or that. Why oh why couldn't they slip you into their pockets?

Yesterday morning I had a pleasant surprise when I found on arrival at the Convent an unstamped letter from my beloved Frank. It was written at the end of August and contained 4 enlarged snaps – the same four as I had received in my box of snaps. They are beautiful. I love the "Mutual Friends" especially. What a marvellous collection of snaps we shall have. I am looking forward to my holidays when I can fix them into an album.

Yesterday too I had a letter from Frances. She has received your letter and intends to answer it shortly. She is a very busy girl now and her bottom drawer is growing apace. Every letter is full of things she has got. Many household things, Frank are almost impossible to get. Would you like me to tell you about all the things I have got? I have quite a lot, you know – especially of those commodities, like cutlery which are *not* being made now. Are you pleased? I had my "Clonard" framed last weekend. The lady in Hirsts called over her assistant to admire my work so needless to say I was very proud. I have taken years to do the fine work on this picture. When I commenced it, it was intended for Mammie. I am selfish enough now to keep it myself. I can see it going down the generations as an *heirloom*. What do you think of my cheek?

As I write this there is glorious opera being broadcast over the radio. Music has a wonderful effect upon me, Frank – it just transplants me into realms of lovely dreams. In order to fit my 3 snaps into this letter I should be writing no more but I just must go on. If there are some of the 3 missing, then the reason is that the letter is over the  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz allowed. I am posting the Irish Weekly today also. There is an article in it by our friend "Louis G.". Are you receiving these papers, Frank?

The post has just come bringing me a letter from home. Poor Mammie is up to the eyes helping Mona & Felix to furnish. She tells me that *our* cutlery has now been sent to Ballynahinch for safety. I got it wholesale, Frank, and it is really beautiful. There are, I think 113 pieces of the very best quality. 1 doz. of each article, even down to carvers, salt & mustard spoons. They are compactly laid out in a solid mahogany table. It will be a lovely article of furniture for our home – it can remain in the dining room and be a serving table at the same time. Mona was very envious when she heard about it. With this I also bought a tea service in good quality electro plate – teapot, cream jug, hot water jug & sugar bowl. They are much nicer & more serviceable than the solid silver & I *know* that the teapot makes much nicer tea than the silver. Frances intends to get the same, if she can. Are you pleased with my purchases Frank darling? It is my greatest delight in spending my money on such things. I have always dreamed of making such purchases & now it is actually happening & I feel so happy – much more so than if I were spending money enjoying myself. When you come home we shall look at them all together. How curious you made me when you spoke of the things you collected & have packed in your trunks. Do tell me what that trunk holds? I don't think I can wait to hear until you come home. I hope you still have the 5 white elephants. The Far East is the land from which most beautiful things hail. Your statue and crucifix must be beautiful. Where shall we put them, in our home? You asked me did I like gardening. I love a garden but alas I know nothing about it. I am a dangerous person to send out weeding – because I know not the difference between weeds & shrubs. Will you teach me, dearest one? At home, our garden produces all our

vegetables, potatoes, etc. Mr McCann spends most of his time pottering around it. He feels so proud landing into the scullery with the "spuds" & greens for the family dinner. He will help us, if we should need him.

So you were in "Spring Villa" once upon a time, Frank!! I never knew that you had crossed our threshold. Where was I when you came? Who did you meet? Thank goodness it was before I got my degree because if it had not been you would probably have seen a very ugly photograph of me standing on the piano. A boy once told me that his photograph reminded him of a "handyman with neuralgia". That's exactly how I feel about mine. That boy was Barney Cosgrove. Do you remember him? He has not qualified yet. Una McAlister is married since to a solicitor in Newry called Luke Curran. Do you remember Una?

Did you know, Frank that Hugh Marshall's father was also a very good friend of your father's. I only heard this lately. He thinks he stood godfather for one of the Murray family.

Have you bought the ring yet, Frank? If you have, do describe it for me in your next letter. Could you take a snap of it? I am just dying to see it but I know I must wait until you bring it. Did you go to Singapore after all? Do tell me how I could be responsible for your deciding not to go there. For the life of me I cannot understand this.

I didn't tell you that we got an unpleasant shock on Tuesday morning last when a girl arrived down to Holmview while we were breakfasting to warn us that Dr Heron (Inspector of English & Geography) was in the town. We had just reached Omagh at 11.45 p.m. the previous night, half frozen with the cold. Dr Heron did not put in an appearance but the central heating went wrong & since then we have had absolutely no heat in the school. Instead of teaching Geography I have become a kind of drill instructress in order to keep the girls warm enough to do any work. Belfast weather is so much more mild than Omagh. The 'flu has commenced to claim some victims for the blankets but thank God I have had *no* colds so far nor have I missed an hour's class. I do feel very fit & well, thank God.

Yesterday was the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday. The moon was shining brightly as we set off to walk to the church at 7.45. It was a beautiful morning & it was edifying to see the crowds at Mass. This is my 4<sup>th</sup> Friday, Frank. You know what my intentions are – nothing must ever happen to either of us. We must meet soon again and may our home be one of the happiest on earth.

At the technical yesterday evening we made "Potato Apple Cake" and "Mock Goose". We are having the latter to tea tonight. Do not forget to send me your pet dishes. I must become proficient at your favourite dishes.

Another letter has come to a close. Have you enjoyed reading it as much as I have enjoyed writing it? I am unable to write any other letters save yours Frank dearest and an occasional one home. People must understand that I cannot write often to them now, but do they?

Do you still love me? I am so sure that I love you and only you dearest one. With this letter I send all my love and all myself. I am *your* Eileen & I shall always be,

Your loving Eileen.

9, Holmview,  
Omagh  
Co. Tyrone  
Monday, November 10<sup>th</sup> 1941

My darling Frank,

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

You talk about receiving no answer from your best girl when on the crest of a South China wave you ask her does she love you? Well I tried the same little game but alas there was no answer, not even a smile from that very important officer who stands in such a prominent place upon my dressing table. But you do love me, Frank? and I love you too. Our love shall never change. It shall only grow stronger & better the longer we are separated. Will you excuse me dearest? At this point I stopped writing in order to sing one of my favourite airs which has just come over the radio. Surely this will tell you how happy you have made me too. I sing or hum all day – in the morning before breakfast (not superstitious at all), cycling up to school, moving from class to class – in fact I must be quite a nuisance to all but what care I? I am happy & I must express my feelings somehow. What will you think of a wife who goes singing around the house all day? Frances & I are rather odd in that way. Often when away for a walk together she recites poetry to herself whilst I just sing. Will you teach me to

whistle some time Frank? I believe you are quite a professional at it. Don't ask me who told me or I shall say like the mothers of old "a little bird told me". In my childhood days before I was contemplating a "crime" I always looked carefully at every tree to see that there were no little birds watching me. Can you credit so much innocence in one who thinks she was always a rock of sense. In my various excursions to Beechwood it is my greatest delight to get your father or Anne talking about your childhood days, Frank. You shall have very little to tell me on that score, Frank when you return but then sure it will be grand to hear it all from you again. Won't we have the grand chats together? You will be everything to me – my best boy friend and my best girl friend too. Frances must sink into 2<sup>nd</sup> place as I too shall fall into 2<sup>nd</sup> place with her. Isn't love a wonderful thing too! All our old loves fall into insignificance once we fall in love. I have noticed the change it has made in me already. You, Frank come first in my thoughts, in my prayers, my dreams and I know it must and will always be so with me.

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

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

This morning I had a very pleasant surprise when two of your lovely letters arrived. They came via Durban. One was posted September 14 & the other September 17<sup>th</sup>. They carried intact the snaps – one carried my own darling posed at the wheel of his Austin – how you must have hated having it taken; the other had 5 lovely enlargements of snaps I have already got. You are not going to allow me to miss any of Malaya's beauty, Frank. Our snap collection will be the most marvellous collection ever. I have them all in a nice box at the moment – which I stole from some felt-work I am doing. My embroidery work has lost its box also. The latter now holds all your letters and cables. Up to date I have 34 letters, all numbered. You would smile if you saw how neatly I have them all arranged. I have *every* letter you ever wrote to me, even those in which you told me about your girlfriends. Often and often I wanted to burn those earlier letters but somehow I could not. Now I prize them as I prize my later letters. So you have a nice blue ribbon for your love letters? Some time I shall sing you my mother's song "Old Love Letters". Daddies just loves to hear Mammie sing it but nowadays when we can persuade her to do her party piece her "singing" daughters must stand by to help her take the top notes. Daddie's party piece is a recitation entitled "The Women of Mumbles Head" – it tells of a shipwreck which happened in the "blue of Swansea Bay" and the bravery of women who gave their lives to save drowning men. My father holds many medals for elocution – he took 1<sup>st</sup> prize in one competition and the famous Charlie Kerr came second. Charlie Kerr died a few months ago – it was particularly sad because he has left a very young wife (his second) and a large family. Daddie was also a great athlete in his day. He represented Antrim many times in the All-Ireland Football final at Croke Park. In the team was also Uncle Jim (R.I.P.). The captain was Harry Sheehan (R.I.P.) a first cousin of Daddie's. Why am I telling you all this, Frank. Perhaps it is because I am so very proud of my father or perhaps it is because I have no news of interest to tell you in this letter. I am just writing because I want to write and because *you* want my letters in your jungle home.

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

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

*Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> November*

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

Since teatime I have been working like a black at my teacloth. You should see how well I have got on. I am not rushing it off with any easy stitches. People tell me I am mad to do the difficult stitches I am attempting but they admit it will be a very beautiful piece of work *when* I have it finished. Josephine has begged to launder it for me. On my next weekend to town I intend bringing it along in order to buy 2 doz. serviettes to go with it. When you see it on *our* tea table I bet your appetite shall improve a hundred fold.

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

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

*Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> November*

How are you feeling today, my dear one? The weather here was so mild that I actually set off for a game of golf. We had a very interesting 4 ball. Owing to the bad weather recently, we are now “teeing up” which is a wonderful help to one’s game, although it is terribly bad habit to get into. You were nearly losing me this afternoon. While we were playing the 6<sup>th</sup> hole, some officer pulled his 5<sup>th</sup> tee shot, which ball missed my poor skull by inches – I could actually feel the breeze from it as it passed. You must have said a special prayer for me today. Did you Frank? I suppose you cannot remember. Do you know, Frank when you tell me of some narrow escapes you have had I can feel a shudder run down my back. I know you will be careful of your precious self not to mention my heart of which you are the only custodian.

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

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

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

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

Those were certainly very high words of praise written about me by your father. I *know* I do not deserve them but nevertheless I believe I am even more pleased than you, Frank to hear that he likes me. I know we got along very well together. I never feel ill at ease in his company. You remember the letter I wrote you at the time of your mother's death (R.I.P.) and addressed it to Beechwood to be forwarded to you? You have asked about it Frank so now I shall tell you what fate it met. Your father confided in me that he had opened it and seeing it was from a girl, without reading its contents, other than the address, he burnt it. I was glad he told me because I always wondered what had become of it. I explained to him that it was solely a letter of sympathy and although I said nothing further I felt he was sorry that he had burnt it. He then explained about the many girls who were interested in you. In his eyes I was just another so into the flames went my note. Don't be annoyed Frank because I am not in slightest. Had it been my next letter (dated Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>) then his action might have been so much more tragic. If that letter had not reached you that would have been a major catastrophe. Thank God He helped so much in bringing us together. At the time I wrote it was all so hopeless. Incidentally, on your Christmas card last year you did not send your love, nor did you send it on any of the other Christmas cards which you sent me from time to time. If you had, Frank darling, we might not have been so far apart today. I am not blaming you, dear Frank in any way. I have always blamed and shall always blame only myself for our long separation.

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

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

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

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

*Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> November*

My darling one you appear to have been neglected for the past few days but although I was unable to find a free moment to write, I did think of you such a terrible lot. Yesterday afternoon, I was feeling a trifle homesick and lonely too. I suppose it was Aileen going off home for the weekend. She goes rather often but then she has not to be in school until 11 a.m. on the Monday morning. It makes the weekend worthwhile but tonight I am not envying her the 2½-hour journey to Omagh which she shall have to take in the morning. I do not go home any

weekends, Frank unless for some reason or another we have either the Saturday or the Monday free. My next break is December 6<sup>th</sup> (December 8<sup>th</sup> is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception – and a very big day at the Loreto Convent, Omagh). We usually have an opera, play or concert on that day but there is no word so far. How I am looking forward to seeing all at home again. I wonder when I am married Frank shall I still want to trip home? If we live at Beechwood, it will be most convenient. Mammie never lost her love for her home until the death of dear grandpa. He was one grand old man. When he was a young man, he lost his young wife and he had to be father and mother to his nine children, 5 boys and 4 girls. Fr Padraig's father was the eldest and Fr Joe the youngest. A few years ago I wore a hat which grandpa swore made me the walking double of his wife – my grandmother. I could even see the resemblance myself between her photograph and Eileen complete with hat. This only goes to prove, Frank that the modern styles are a return to the old fashioned styles of the 1890's. There was another likeness between us – a small curl which for years hung down over my eye. She had the same annoying curl.

I set off to tell you what I did yesterday afternoon & look at the digression I took! Well, I had intended following the hunt with my bike. Mrs Ray's cousin is "Master of the Hunt" so we have all the details about it in Holmview. I have never actually seen such a meeting, but please God next Saturday I'm going off to the Leap Bridge to see what is to be seen (about 4 miles off). Mollie Hughes is a marvellous horse woman but she has no horse at the moment. She will probably bike it with me. It was after 3 p.m. before I had all my household jobs done so I set off in the teeth of a nasty gale for a good walk. At the outset the sky was overcast but before long the sun – a watery one – came out. I walked and walked until Omagh, its people & its traffic were left far behind. I was deep in thought all the time – they were probably the very same thoughts you have Frank as you sit each Sunday afternoon under the shade of a Malayan palm and gaze out to the blue of the China Sea. Suddenly I had the bright idea of taking out my rosary. There was no one in sight so I did not feel in the slightest self-conscious about parading my beads. I said two rosaries (out loud too), the first was for the Holy Souls (this is November and besides the ranks of *my* army must grow) and the second was all for you, Frank. I wanted so much to squeeze in a few intentions of my own but I did not. It was absolutely and entirely for you, Frank. It was 6 p.m. before I got back and did I lower a well-filled plate. Afterwards I did some ironing and then wrote a long letter home. I was a very tired lady as I popped into bed about 10 p.m. & slept the sleep of the just. I don't think I even turned once during the night.

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

The Far Eastern question seems to be simmering to the top. Please God it will not boil over. If war should break out in the Far East and you, Frank dearest become directly involved then my worries would only have commenced. Nothing must happen to you, Frank. Please let nothing happen to you. I had a lovely letter from Mammie yesterday in which she tells me she is still reading your letter. She sends you her love & blessing & asks me to tell you that she never forgets you each morning at mass & Holy Communion. Both were very touched at your writing to Mattie. I wonder had you the correct address. "La Tour" is only the name of the convent. "La Tour St Joseph" is the full address. The remainder is En St Pern, Ille et Vilaine, Brittany, France. You see the convent is the mother house of the whole order. It was a regular town in itself and is completely self sufficient. In the centre stands a tower – (as high as Nelson's pillar!) but upon it is St. Joseph the Patron of the order as he is the patron of the dying. There are a few houses on the outskirts of the convent but really no town. What address did you put on the letter, Frank? Surely we shall both go to visit her when the war is over. I shall never forget August two years ago when the whole family went over to Greenock to say our farewells. We knew she was returning to France for her final progression that Autumn and after this she would probably be sent on the missions. The war has upset all these plans. Mattie very seldom sheds any tears but on our departure she

broke down completely. War was expected at any moment so she probably foresaw our long separation. I wonder will we ever see her again. I shall try and find a snap of her to include with this letter. If you knew how highly I think of Mattie you would smile, I am sure – she is a saint besides being a very capable nun. She was the comedian of all the Kilkeel school plays & she still has all the humour of those days. Her one ambition is to make us all nuns, Frank so your letter must have come in the manner of a slight shock. Strangely enough the “Little Sisters of the Poor” is an order which I admire above all others. Do not worry, Frank, I have no vocation. I am not one of the chosen few so I shall never leave you by entering a convent. Who on earth told you that I *had* entered Frank? Una greeted me with the same question, “I thought you had entered”. Why do people make up such stories. Goodness knows we have had stories galore made up about us both but thank God, we have found each other in spite of all. Nothing can ever separate us again.

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

I hoped to finish this letter tonight but I hear supper being prepared so I must be off. Do not think I am in bad form, Frank. I admit this letter is not of the brightest but let’s blame the bad weather! God bless you as you sleep soundly at this present moment (10.30 p.m.) in far off Malaya. Shall I waken you by a lullaby? Or what about a serenade? I could tell you that I love you if you were only awake but then you sleepyhead you *must* sleep!!

*Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November*

This letter must definitely go off tomorrow as I want to start right away on my Christmas letter to my darling. Do you know who he is, Frank? Well, I haven’t seen him for ever so many years – my last glimpse of him was briefly saying goodbye as he made across Royal Avenue, Belfast to get a Cliftonville Rd. tram in the year 193? Do you remember the day? When shall we meet again; where too? We shall *never* say goodbye again. We should *never* have parted. Our “might have beens” can make me very sad but then I say to myself, all this just had to be and it will end, as you say, in God’s own time. How I prayed for you today as I made my 40 stations in the Convent chapel. My favourite station for contemplation is the 11<sup>th</sup> – Jesus is nailed to the cross. He has promised that *anything* we ask the Eternal Father in His name shall be granted. At this station I ask for all the graces & blessings we need – whether we realise such needs exist or not.

I have just returned from Monday afternoon sewing class. I at last commenced smocking on my cushion. One lady smiled over at me as my head was buried in my work & said “That cushion should surely be handed down as a family heirloom” it has been so tedious to make. However, no matter what the turnout I have learnt to smock. My next ambition is to learn some “Richlieu” work – which means cut work – that is work, the majority of which is cut away from the stitching. It can look very effective & I understood it is not too difficult. Then there is appliquéd work to be learnt – but that will come later. How would you like me to do a nice luncheon set in appliquéd work? I suppose you are bored to tears with these feminine topics. Miss Lyons, our teacher, admired “our” ring today. I explained it was only a temporary one but she thought it very beautiful. The diamonds do sparkle beautifully in it but I must never turn my palm face upwards as the back of the ring is all padded to make it fit.

Mattie Marshall has just arrived in complete with knitting. She is Hugh’s cousin. She is looking at the wedding group while I finish my letter. She is enraptured with it so as soon as the enlargement of myself arrives you shall have both. We both send our love & she is a very pretty girl.

God bless you, my own darling. May no harm come to you & may you return safely and very, very soon to your ever loving Eileen.

9, Holmview  
Omagh  
Co. Tyrone  
Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941

My own darling Frank,

What I have dreaded all these months has now come to be a reality – the Far East and Malaya especially, is at war with Japan. What can I say or do! I feel so terribly at a loss to express just how my heart is aching for you. I know you are happy to be doing some fighting at last, to return to your doctoring and to do your bit in bringing this scourge of war to a close. What can I say when I know that this is what you want, except God bless you and protect you every step of the way. May Our Lady Immaculate, on whose Feast Japan threw down the gauntlet to Britain & U.S.A. and whose medal you wear as your shield, may she guard you by night and by day from every danger from land, sea or air. I have given you over completely to her maternal care. May she never leave your side for a single moment until you return to Ireland's shores & me. Each day we shall say our joint prayer to her and her son for your safety and our speedy reunion.

The news of the declaration reached us in Spring Villa on the 9 p.m. news on Sunday night. I need not say I was surprised. It has been evident for some time that militarist Japan was insatiable and was determined to plunge her people into another war. What the outcome will be God alone knows but should this letter reach you darling, always remember that I am with you always. I love you and I shall wait for you, no matter how long or how trying that wait may be. I need not try to hide the fact that I am worried to distraction about you but tonight I asked Our Lord to let my suffering be as acute as He likes if only He will spare you to me. If I have prayed hard and earnestly before I am now going to quadruple my prayers. Your life *must* be spared should I hammer on Heaven's gates forever. I am getting prayers said on all sides – children & grown-ups alike. I have had Mass said for you already since your war began. Surely our good Lord could not let such a good man as you, Frank darling, die? An yet I re-echo your prayer written at the beginning of November, "May Thy Holy will be done, O Lord".

Darkness or no darkness, rush or no rush I shall be at Mass & Holy Communion each morning for your intentions. I have been to Mass for the past five mornings & on each day, with one exception, I heard 2 Masses. I am going to commence the 15 decades of the Rosary each day too. It will give me such consolation in knowing that I am doing my little bit to help you. I wish I could be of some material help. Frank dearest, I do so want to see you & speak to you tonight. If I could but see you and tell you how much you mean to me then I feel the wait would not be half so bad.

I cannot write more tonight – when one's heart is so full words seem so inadequate. Goodnight, darling and with all my heart and soul & self I say God bless you and guard you now and forever.

*Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> December*

Another day of your war has come & gone. News looks black but I am now relying absolutely on prayer. Why am I worried about you darling when I trust so much in prayer? My heart is very heavy. I am afraid to think of you or even to read your letters – I break down completely when I do. It is stupid, I know but I am praying for more courage and strength. My whole day is one of prayer now. I keep saying the aspirations to Our Lady & the Sacred Heart every moment I am able. From 11.30 p.m. until 3.30 p.m. is my most anxious time because this is Malaya's day. Are you still saying the 3 Hail Marys to Our Lady of Quito? Today I was given "St Patrick's Breastplate" by Mrs Andrews. Her husband swears by it. He came through the last war & had a miraculous escape from death when his steel helmet was split in two upon his head. He says it, as also does his family, every day. Won't you memorise it darling and say it daily? I shall say two every day, one for each of us until I hear that you are saying it. I am also enclosing in this letter Pope Benedict's prayer for peace. You asked for it in your last letter. It is my own copy, hence it's well-worn look. I know it off by heart now so I do not need it.

I received on the night I went home (Friday Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>) your grand letter between Hallowe'en & November 4 on which date it was posted. It actually arrived on Tuesday but Mammie decided against re-directing it. I got such an amount of consolation from it – you told me about your return to doctoring & that from 15 to 50 miles behind the front line, should the war clouds break over Malaya. Certainly I shall agree to your suggestion about giving one of my expected photographs to Beechwood. It shall be framed and put beside yours. I told Anne & she is delighted about the suggestion. I also called about the enlargements. The girl said they were expected "any day" and that I should have them by post in a few days. Sorry my darling for disappointing you so much about my photographs.

I was unable to get up to Beechwood at the weekend but Anne met me in town on Monday morning & came around with me doing my shopping. Afterwards we went up to Spring Villa for lunch & then persuaded Mammie to join us in going to see a very nice musical film programme in the Hippodrome. Anne said she thoroughly enjoyed her day & as expected has fallen a victim to Mammie's charms. She did not meet Daddie. Your father has invited Daddie & Mammie over to Beechwood during the Christmas holidays. He is a little troubled with rheumatism & prefers not to leave the house. So darling, the forthcoming holidays should see the meeting – the momentous meeting of our parents. Anne had a friend of Margaret's up for the weekend (Lucy Hegarty from Castlederg) otherwise I might have managed a wee nip over to see all of your dear ones.

I suppose the extension of hostilities will mean many delays in our letters – it may even mean that you, darling Frank, cannot write so often. Do not let that worry you because I shall understand. I shall continue to write my weekly letters & post them constantly. I shall cable you too, often, in case my letters are not getting through. You have often said darling that your only aim in life was to make me happy. You can accomplish this so simply – by taking every precaution of your precious self and coming home safely to me soon. This is my earnest prayer for you tonight, my own darling. God bless you, us both, in our love & His.

*Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> December*

Never in my life have I been so near you my darling as during the past week. Day, and I can add truthfully, night I am thinking of you and praying for your safety. All the prayers of our good friends are reinforced. Already in the past few weeks I have had 3 Masses offered up for you dearest Frank and your safety. Father Joe said your birthday Mass, a Redemptorist priest said another Mass during the past week. I wrote also to my good friend Fr Cleary to have another Mass said for you. I have asked him to remember you daily in his Mass. Fr Jacobs, our military chaplain here has promised to do the same & I attend his Mass each morning in our Omagh Church. As a matter of fact I hear 2 masses each day & receive Holy Communion. Everything I can do is being offered for your safety. You *must* be spared to me. Never have I felt so worried. I cannot ever bear to look at your photograph or read a single letter or my courage goes, a lump comes in my throat which almost chokes me and the tears are never far away. I am fighting hard to be as brave as you are darling (I know I am not). It would distress you to know that I was fretting so I shall redouble my efforts to keep a bright exterior. I shall offer my suffering up for your safety.

*Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> December*

There have been many lapses in this letter darling. I did so want to write to you but I could not pluck up enough courage. Had I written during the past week then you would have been distressed at my anxiety. To tell you how worried I have been is useless – I couldn't ever attempt it. I couldn't bear to even mention your name, to look at the newspapers, to listen to the radio. My great fear was that I should have broken down in class before the children. All the nuns have been so thoughtful for me. From Rev. Mother down they came & told me how hard they were praying for your safety. Never a day passes without some little prayer or irresistible novena leaflet being left in my press. Mother Teresa has the children praying every morning after mass for you. I have arranged to pay for the upkeep of the sanctuary lamp perpetually burning until you are out of danger. Day & night it shall burn brightly in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament for you darling and your safety. Thus while I am sleeping, your cause is ever before Jesus in the Tabernacle.

Fr Cleary's reply arrived today. He says he offered Holy mass for you, darling on Sunday morning last (Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>) in Athenry where he is now stationed and he added "I shall not forget him in my Masses & prayers".

Another friend of mine – a Fr O'Leary of the Maynooth Mission to China (Navan) paid Omagh an unexpected visit yesterday. He came down to visit me and I told him of my troubles. He too is going to say a Mass *all* for you and also he has promised to remember you in his prayers & masses. The poor fathers are very worried about their own missionaries in the Far East especially in the Philippines.

In my desperation too, I wrote to my saintly aunt in Carlow. Such a beautiful letter I had by return. She says, "I have got a few of the Saints here to pray for him. I am giving him all my prayers today (Monday Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>), Masses & Holy Communion and I am fasting also." Enclosed in her letter was one from a very good friend of hers in Canada – a nun in an order of Perpetual Adoration. Auntie asked her to pray for me when I was ill. She now writes, "I am delighted about Eileen and hope her future husband will be preserved from all danger and that they may be very happy together in their own and God's love. Tell her I pray for her sweet self every day, God bless her." These words gave me such consolation because I know this nun to be one of the world's many saints. I intend to have a Mass said weekly for your safety darling. To take you from me now that I really know what you mean to me would be surely too much to expect of me. I only want your life to be spared and your return to me sometime. It does not seem a very large request and yet if it is granted to me I shall

never cease thanking God until the day I die. We both shall. I shall give you every support in having our family rosary said daily commencing on our wedding day.

Now darling to tell you how hard I am fighting for you. I am at mass & Holy Communion every morning (this has been going on for the whole month of December). With God's help it shall never cease again. The mornings are cold and black & often very wet & stormy but I thoroughly enjoy making the sacrifice for your sake. All the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to & from the church I say two of my favourite aspirations – "O Mary, conceived without sin" and "O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee". Cycling to school I do the same. All the prayers I say with the girls before class are for you. Any free time during school hours I slip away to the convent chapel & say rosary after rosary. In the evenings before returning to my digs I say the Stations & at *each* station I fervently say the prayer to the Sacred Heart which you wrote to me some time ago. Often times I return to the town church at night to speak again at Mary's son for you, my own darling Frank. I only wish I had more time to spend in prayer. It is only when I am praying that I feel confident that nothing will happen to you. I have reasoned everything out with my Friend in the Tabernacle – he has convinced me that you shall be saved and shall return to me very soon. This great sorrow is on the eve of a great joy – our reunion. How happy I shall be when I shall have you home again. There will be no more worrying for me. With you, my dearest Frank by my side *nothing* will ever worry or frighten me again.

On Saturday last your lovely Christmas and New Year Greetings cable reached me in Omagh. Although I knew it had been sent before hostilities really broke out in the Far East, it was a link with one, who in the past fortnight seems to have drifted into the unknown. I realise that for weeks nay perhaps months to come cables & letters will neither reach nor leave Malaya but this will not deter me from writing. I shall never forget all the messages you have already given me in your letters. This holding up of our letters will mean a lot to us but we shall offer it up for our one big intention – our individual safety & a happy reunion.

On Tuesday morning arrived two of your precious letters. I rang up home on Saturday night to tell them the contents of your cable. They are all praying so hard for you darling. No one ever misses daily Mass in "Spring Villa" darling so your intentions are in all those Masses. Your letter which arrived 2 weeks ago was censored. It was the first letter from you which has ever been opened on this side by censor. Neither of the recent letters was censored. However, I am afraid one letter is missing so far. The first was posted Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> and told me of your lovely weekend "up country" and the 3 belts you bought for me (imagine you daring to think that I should not wear them!!), the second was posted on Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> and contained your "confessions" about the Rosary beads and "Paddy". You commenced this letter on Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> with having posted a letter that morning. This letter has not arrived up to date.

I am glad Frank you told me about the Rosary beads. I felt you were undetermined whether to tell me or not. I had made up my mind that I should never mention them again to you, if the history of their whereabouts caused you any worry. Now you have told me & I don't feel the slightest bit hurt – as a matter of fact I am proud to think that they are now in possession of some little Indian boy who is praying for my beloved Frank. "Mary" sounds a lovely girl. I think I would have loved her. I do not like the sound of "Paddy". Are you annoyed with me, darling for being so candid? Yet I feel sorry for her. She must have realised as I realise your wonderful qualities yet I have been the lucky one to have my love reciprocated. It would have broken my heart had you written a very different letter to the one you did write last February. God has been very good to me. Fr O'Leary told Violet Cusack (he is really her friend as her brother Fr Tom Cusack belongs to the Maynooth Mission & is now stationed in Korea) that he thinks you are a very fortunate young man. I know he has a very high opinion of me, which I do not deserve. While he was on a visit to Omagh last year I met him & in the course of the conversation I told him about Fergus away in far off (comparatively) Limerick. Within a few weeks his travels brought my good friend to Limerick. He rang up Fr Director at the Redemptorist College & asked to have Fergus out for the afternoon. Fergus wrote home concerning his pleasant outing. "Not knowing who this priest was I put on my good clothes". How Fr O'Leary laughed at this when I told him. I had out my writing materials to write to you this letter last night but fate stopped me. This past fortnight has been an awful rush. Thank God for it because I was prevented from thinking too much. Now all the tests have been given and corrected. All marks are now neatly inserted in the mark books and the holiday spirit is abroad. We break up for the Christmas holidays on Friday, Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> at 12.15. We do not return to harness until January 13<sup>th</sup>. Isn't it a grand holiday? The days will be beginning to lengthen then & spring will soon be upon us again. "What will 1942 hold for us Frank?" Is the Lord merciful in not disclosing to us the future?

This afternoon I spent in Murnaghans icing Mammie's cake. The whole family assembled in the kitchen to see the operation. Now all is over & my precious surprise is looking very "Christmassy" in all its decorations. It will be on show until Friday morning when 2 of the convent girls are going to bring it to the

station for me. They suggested coming to help me and I was very grateful. I must tell you how it tastes & how Mammie in particular liked her surprise.

I am not attempting to answer the various questions you asked in your last few letters. I intend to write a few respectably long letters during my vacation. I want to post this going to mass in the morning so that, by air mail, it will be in London tomorrow. Will you forgive me sending only 6 pages darling? I am going to bed earlier now because of my early rise. I shall keep strong & fit & I shall be ready for any endurance tests in hiking, climbing, golfing, etc. when you return. Proof of what I am saying is to be seen in my term record. From September 1<sup>st</sup> until Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> I never missed even one single minute of class. I have not been ill & I have not been off colour either!! Thank God for his goodness.

Will you say every day darling "St Patrick's Breastplate". I say it for you every day. Where the prayer says "me" I say "him". It is a beautiful prayer.

If I see the Bells of Downpatrick I shall surely give your regards to Mr McSherry. Isn't the world a very small place? Eleanor Bell is a keen golfer & she & I have played a lot of golf together but since Fr Joe left Downpatrick I have seen very little of them although they write very often, asking me to call and see them. I have many snaps in my collection taken with this family.

I did not see Gerry at the weekend as expected but I shall explain all in my next letter.

Good night my own darling. May our blessed Lady and Christ crucified shield you from all harm. You have *all* my love dearest one.

Your ever-loving Eileen.

P.S. I am very excited about *our* ring. How I shall love it because it is your choice. I shall cable the moment it arrives. It shall never be off my finger, day or night, darling. Thank you with all my heart. You shall be there when I put it on, I promise you.

Eileen

Spring Villa  
195 Springfield Road  
Belfast  
22<sup>nd</sup> December 1941

My own darling Frank,

What I wouldn't give to hear from your own dear lips where you are and how you are tonight. The Far Eastern war has been waging for 2 weeks and still there has been no news. Kuantan has appeared so often in the press & in the news, Kuala Lumpur, the home of our good little priest Fr Ashness is also rather prominent not to mention Ipoh. I know them every one, from the mountainous Perak State in the north to Pahang in the south. My knowledge has come from you dearest one, from your letters, your magazines and above all your beautiful snaps. I have enjoyed Malaya's beauty with you. I had Hugh doing some shopping for me today – he searched the booksellers & educational establishments of Belfast for a good-sized wall-map of Malaya. I want to follow every phase of the war in that far off peninsula. He was unsuccessful but there is a promise held out to us that maps should be published soon.

As I look at your beautiful snaps, darling I cannot help feeling sad. To think that now those beautiful places and simple peace loving inhabitants are suffering their homes being bombed and their very lives being endangered. When, oh when, is this terrible war going to cease? Though I said I had no news of you since the war, I really mean written or sent by you since hostilities began. It must be difficult, perhaps even impossible to get news out so I pray to God each day for patience. Some months ago, when I foresaw this war I felt that when the time would come I should have gone crazy – the uncertainty of not knowing whether you were alive or dead, well or suffering in danger or not. Well darling, for about the first week after December 8<sup>th</sup> I did really believe I was going crazy. I taught, ate, slept and I knew not what if I did – you filled my mind so completely. Prayer was the only thing in which I found any relief. As each day dawned I felt as though I could not survive it. I could not pray for myself or anyone at home – my prayer was always for you. I am telling you all this now dearest Frank because this unbearable depression has gone. I am still very worried but I am stronger and much better able to work for you (in prayer) and to look after myself so that I shall keep strong and well. You are *not* to worry about me. I promise to try not to worry unduly about you, darling.

I am still praying with all that I have. I go to 2 Masses every day now and two on Sundays. Since it is my holidays, Mammie asked me not to rise too early so I go to 8.30 Mass in Clonard. After breakfast I go down

to 10 o'clock Mass in St. Pauls. If there is devotions in the evening your Eileen is there again, if not I go to make a visit and say my stations. Often, during the day, while I am walking especially, I keep saying our two favourite aspirations to Our Lady & the Sacred Heart. This morning I called round to speak to Fr Ryan, the Director of Our Lady's Confraternity. I had not known him before but I wanted to question him about having your name in the Community's daily Masses & prayers. He has promised to mention your name every morning in his mass & also to ask a few of the Fathers to do the same. He knows of Fr Cosgrove, the Director of the Redemptorist's monastery at Singapore. Though the latter house is supplied from Australia, still Fr Cosgrove was educated in Ireland. This will be surely a link with home when you should meet him. I am to *remind* you to visit Singapore before leaving Malaya. Do you still want to be reminded???

Have you had any word from Mattie yet? Do not be disappointed darling if she does not write. She is only allowed to write 3 letters home *yearly*, Christmas, Easter & Summer. We still have not had a single line from her. Josephine is expected home on Christmas morning for good. She is a very courageous little girl, though on the face of things it may not appear so. You see Frank she loved her job in England and did not want to give it up. It was absolutely to please Daddie & Mammie that she did so. How they are longing to see her. It is a nice thought that she will be with them during the remaining winter months. I am particularly glad about this, because with Josephine's company Mammie will go back to Killough. It is lonely down in that small village especially when the days are so short. The nuns have no electricity in St. Josephs so to the dwellers of Spring Villa that is unbearable. We city dwellers are utterly ruined with our modern conveniences.

It is now 9.15 so I must slip round to Clonard before it closes at 10 p.m. How I shall pray for you in the darkness & quietness of our beautiful church.

God protect you, my own darling, from all harm. May He & His Blessed Mother find a way of sending you home safely to me soon. Good night darling and God bless you.

#### *Christmas Eve*

Though there is nothing but excitement & fuss within the four walls of the O'Kane abode, I have dropped all my jobs & here I am trying to write at the table with excited human beings flitting about & wondering how on earth I am able to concentrate. I do feel like hollering for silence but knowing the response it would receive, Eileen just keeps quiet. I do want to write you a little note today and tomorrow, to tell you how much I love you, how much you mean to me and how I am longing and praying for your safety and for our speedy reunion. During these days of danger you are *never* out of my thoughts. My prayers are going up to Heaven continuously day and night for you, my dearest Frank.

No parcels have been received from London or the Far East up to date. I am sorry our candlesticks were not here so that I could perform to the letter your wish about welcoming Our Lady & St Joseph to our home. It was such a beautiful thought. You have so much to teach me darling about our native Irish customs. I am so ignorant of them. The blessed candles were duly purchased some days ago; at 6 p.m. tonight I placed them in 2 small glass candlesticks, lit them and placed them on Our Lady's altar which stands on the landing at the head of the stairs leading from the hall. Fr Joe blessed them for us. There is a war on, my darling and so I could not place them in any window – all these must be completely blacked out – Our Lady will understand. I am going out now to Christmas Eve devotions in Clonard. Tonight the family rosary will be recited as usual before the picture (a family heirloom) of the Holy Family but our two candles will be placed before that picture. Do you know darling that our family rosary is said each night for your safety? You are so well known in our family now that to say "we offer up this rosary for Frank's safety" is quite sufficient. I may find time to write a few more lines when I return.

#### *Christmas Day 1941, 9.15 a.m.*

Good morning my darling and a very, very happy and holy Christmas to you. You are very close to my heart today, on this the first anniversary of our coming together again. Lying on the table before me as I write is your beautiful Malay Christmas card and those even more beautiful words you have written within it. I shall treasure them always as I shall treasure that card. Often throughout this day I shall read your card because then I feel we are really together. Mammie was really delighted with your card to her. She loves you darling as any one of her own children & I know that during these dangerous days for you, she has put you first in her prayers. It was so nice of you to sign yourself her loving child – she will always be your loving mother. Each morning, we go out to Mass together, she goes to the altar of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour & there lights a candle which burns all through the Mass which we both offer for all your intentions but above all for your safety & early homecoming. May the divine Infant, in his manger this morning hear our joint prayers and the prayers of hundreds of my

friends (this is no exaggeration) for your speedy return to family and friends. She calls the candle "Frank's candle".

I have just put out our two candles. They burned before Our Lady's altar last night – Christmas Eve – from 6 p.m. until almost midnight. This morning they were re-lit. There is just enough left to burn for another hour. That hour will be 11 to 12 noon. Father Joe is saying 3 masses from 11 until 12 and the first one he is saying for you darling. This is my Christmas box to the one boy in all the world whom I love. I was so thrilled that the mass could actually be said on Christmas morning. I intend to go over to St. Brigid's for "your" Mass. Please God I shall write again, later in the day to you. I do so want to spend Christmas with you darling. I am happy amongst all my dear ones but now I know that never will my happiness on earth be complete until you are here. There is a void in my heart darling which can never be filled until you return to me. Each time I see your father he says "Tell Frank to hurry home" (at times he does drop "Francis"). You know that I want to write those words in every line of my letters & in every letter I write. Do hurry home, darling. There will be such a welcome for you that the very thought of your arrival gives me such pleasure. For the moment I shall say adieu darling. See you in a few hours.

#### *8.20 p.m. Christmas Night*

Josephine arrived home from England this morning. She is home to stay and we are all delighted. She feels very much giving up her job – it was to please both Daddie & Mammie. You should have seen the excitement when her expected telephone call came through at 10.15 a.m. There was a wild dive for the phone, but yours truly got there first. Everyone tried to shout through the phone at the same time so I gave over trying.

I have not told you yet that the whole family – 8 of us – were out at 6 o'clock Mass this morning. It was inky black but we crawled round to Clonard in two rows of four deep. I never miss 6 o'clock Mass but for years it was down to St. Malachy's church I went, to sing in the choir. With Felix gone I would not go alone. Perhaps next Christmas morning you will take me to St. Malachy's to 6 a.m. Mass!! Will you darling? Before we left home this morning for Mass, we were in a very frivolous mood. The 3 lads – now young men in their "longs" – had hung up their stockings. The holes in the toes were ungainly tied by a piece of string so that the contents!!! would not fall out – that's the way our college boys land home to us – no toes in their stockings, not to mention a few other "no's" that also exist.

Everyone of us remembered your intentions darling. I waited in the church until 8 a.m. during which 2 hours I heard 9 Masses. Each priest said 3 Masses. Masses were going on at all altars & it was just Heaven to be present in that beautiful church this morning. When I received the Divine Infant into my heart I did not forget to pray for what you asked – for God to bless our love and our marriage and that he may send you back home to me very soon.

Tea is ready so I shall join the others & say goodnight. God bless you.

#### *Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> December*

Do I seem very careless my dearest in taking such an age to send off this letter? Though I have been home for over a week I have not got a single one of my many jobs done. Many letters have got to be written (in answer to nice letters, cards and presents sent for Christmas), many friends have got to be visited not to mention all the attractive embroidery hours I should love to spend. Did you ever try to write a good letter darling with 3 boisterous boys doing everything but climbing over you? "Where are they now?" you might well ask. I am alone, because Hugh, Fergus, Joe, May, Josephine & Mairead have gone to the Gaelic devotions in St. Mary's Church. Such devotions take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month, when there is a rosary, short sermon in Irish and benediction. All hymns are sung in Irish. Mammie has gone to the "3<sup>rd</sup> order" meeting in St. Peter's and Daddie is, as usual having his afternoon nap.

I believe darling after the terrible omission of the news of Felix's wedding I shall have to keep a diary, then there will be no chance of such a mistake happening again. When I have told you all the latest news I shall return to the wedding, the details of which are still very fresh in my memory.

Since I came home I have been over twice to see all at Beechwood. I wanted to go over before Christmas so that I could bring my good wishes myself for the Holy Season. I met all 3, your father, Philip and Anne. Your father was in wonderful good form – his shoulder pain seemed to have eased somewhat and his cold was gone. As he always does – he made me very welcome, pulled an armchair up to a cheery fire & made me sit down. He is most hopeful about your safe return to us and really it is such a relief to speak to him. Instead of considering your danger he insists on speaking of the time you will relish, how we shall make our home in Beechwood; in which districts you should have a surgery. He could talk all day long about you Frank and he

knows that in me he has a very willing listener. We both love you so much Frank and we both want you back soon.

Anne was looking very well too. She has put her hair into a new style now which suits her very well indeed. She gave me a beautiful evening bag as a Christmas box which I thought was very sweet of her. I really never considered the possibility of her giving me a gift. I tried to tell her how much I loved it but words failed me. I had a very nice little tara brooch (I *have* learnt to spell this correctly) for her, just like the one I gave Frances as a birthday gift. The two stones in it are blue & it looks very nice on the burgundy frock you bought her in Birmingham. The blue stones also suit her eyes. She has been wearing the brooch ever since & she says she loves it. I left your father a bottle of Daddie's best whiskey. Although I know he has never been a drinker yet he once told me that nowadays he found that a little did help him. Every Christmas Mammie always sent a bottle of whiskey to grandfather Murphy so I really feel as if I am carrying on a family tradition.

Philip too made me very welcome, shook my hand warmly and complimented me on how well I was looking. I was wearing my tweed costume and French beret (which Anne has gone crazy about). I think Philip looks better than when I saw him some months ago. I would like to get to know your younger brother much better. I should imagine him to have a very admirable character if one could but get to know him. "They" say he is getting very like you Frank, but don't worry darling – it is only because he *is* your brother that I am interested in him. There is only *one* Murray for me and that is you, Francis Mary Joseph. It is such a beautiful name. Speaking of resemblances, both Anne & your father think that in manner, personality, nature etc. I resemble your sister, Margaret. When told this I declared it the nicest compliment I have heard in years. Don't you think so darling?

After a long chat & tea on Sunday last with your dear ones, your father & I set off for my bus. We decided to go over & pay a visit in the Sacred Heart Church & then I was to "put on" a bus at the end of the Oldpark Road. However the strains of sweet music attracted us to the Parochial Hall where we found a pantomime practice in progress under May King. Fr McLauran insisted on us coming in & prevailed upon his parishoner to buy some tickets. Your father declared that Anne, Philip & I were to use the tickets but I prevailed on him to join us which I am glad to tell you he did and what's more he enjoyed himself. It was on Boxing Day I returned to Cliftonville & all were set up for the Panto. There were eight of us in the party & we almost occupied one whole row. From left to right as we faced the stage the party were your father, Fr Teddy Sloane, me, Fr Jackie Sloane (I was definitely in the bosom of the church that night), Freddie Sloane, Anne and Mrs Sloane. The Sloane family are friends of Anne's and I think Freddie (in the Air Force) is very interested in Anne. The pantomime (Red Riding Hood) was very good but a small deformed little man called "Dickie" was the turn of the night. Your father tells me he is a married man with 2 children. The costumes were wonderful & the chorus' too. The wise cracks were not so rich. However I did laugh when I heard that the hens were now so "stuck up" (2 eggs per person per month = ration) that they had to be serenaded to lay some eggs.

Mrs Sloane refused to say goodbye to me & insisted that Anne should bring me up to her home in Deerpark next day. I forgot to tell you darling that your father asked me to stay at Beechwood that night. Well, we had our supper together, after which your father went off to bed. Well, Anne & I got chatting & I was 2.30 a.m. before we could tear ourselves away. We slipped up to bed & I had the *honour* for a second time of sleeping in your room, Frank. I promised myself to have a good look from the window at "your" view the following morning but alas it was a rotten day & the mountains were enveloped in a mist. However though the hour was late (or early) I did dream – morning dream – of your dreams in that room. May everyone one of them come true. That home holds many memories for us both darling.

Next morning Anne & I went out to Fr Teddy's Mass in the Sacred Heart Church at 9 a.m. There were only a handful at Mass. I did pray very hard for you, darling as I knelt in those seats in which you prayed for many years and especially when I received Holy Communion at the altar rails. I must excuse myself now for an hour or two. You see I promised to make the tea for our mob. They will be back any time & like an avalanche they will devour all before them.

*Sunday 9.30 p.m.*

Here I am back with you again darling. I have since been to devotions in Clonard. The sermon was very appropriate. We were urged to do some stocktaking with regard to our souls – to look over our accounts of 1941. The Te Deum was then sung in thanksgiving for all the graces & blessings we had received during the past year. How I thanked our good God for us both. I never say "I" or "me" in my prayers now. It is always "we" or "us". Some time ago I sent you a short version of St Patrick's Breastplate. I asked Fr Joe for the full version. He tried to get me a copy for you but could not, so he gave me his own. I shall enclose it for you in this letter. Do not worry about him giving it up. I shall write it out again for him.

Yesterday morning while still at Beechwood Anne & I went down to visit Margaret & Maureen in the Convent. Margaret is back in Belfast for a few weeks holiday. She returns to Dungannon on January 6<sup>th</sup>. They thought at home that she had got thinner. She is working very hard in Dungannon. In the afternoon we went up to Sloanes & spent quite a pleasant evening with that family. They were very anxious to see a snap of you darling so I produced the one I like best – the one taken on the Kabul banks. Mrs Sloane, in order to get a better view took out a magnifying glass. I thought to myself “Poor Frank is having quite an examination”. She decided finally you were rather like Philip. Fr Jackie was returning to his post as Chaplain to the Dominican nuns in Portstewart that afternoon. Freddie was also returning to Scotland. Fr Teddy is a Mill Hill missionary teaching in one of the Seminaries outside Kilkenny.

Today, Sunday, I have been to my usual two Masses. I had a big temptation not to go back to my second. Daddie & Mammie invited me to come with them for a walk along the Lagan's banks. They had not known my darling that you used to walk along those same banks with Fr Michael Kelly. I did so want to go but I thought that self must be forgotten in these times, so back to 12 Mass I went. Daddie promised to take me that walk again. When I told him about you, darling he told me that it was on the Lagan's banks that he proposed to Mammie. He remembers the exact spot, so I have a double interest in visiting the Lagan's banks.

Now I have another interesting episode to tell you. On Christmas morning I went over to St. Brigid's to be present at your Mass. Fr Joe's 3<sup>rd</sup> Mass was a High mass. The Deacon was Fr Michael Kelly. It was all very solemn & Michael sang beautifully. Afterwards we met to have a cup of tea in the Parochial House. He knew me immediately & heartily congratulated me on our engagement. He was very interested to hear all about you, Frank & complained bitterly that you had not answered his last letter. I told him where you were and he has promised to remember you in his mission. Fr Joe has the very highest praise of Fr Kelly. He thinks him one of the best priests of his year. He is in charge of the Catholic students at Queens & is he making a success of his job? He has formed a Sacred Heart Sodality which meets monthly in St Brigid's Church. They have a monthly Mass and Holy Communion too. The famous Jesuit (Fr Nash) has been asked to give the Retreat, commencing on January 18<sup>th</sup>. Fr Nash is a great friend of Mother Teresa of Omagh. The family have reassembled for supper so I am forced, much against my will to stop. Before I go let me tell you that you are still and ever shall be my only love. God bless you, Frank. May He and His Blessed mother protect you every minute of the day and night now and forever.

*Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> December*

Good morning darling! What are your thoughts about this morning? Does the date bring anything to your mind? I shall never forget December 29<sup>th</sup> (it also happens to be Josephine's birthday). It certainly was a milestone in both our lives. Will December 29, 1942 see us together again? How I would love to know the answer to my question. So much can happen and will happen within the next year.

Do you know what I did this morning darling? After mass and breakfast, I offered to make the dinner with Josephine's help. This was no small job as there were 10 of us to dine. We made a 3 course dinner – 1<sup>st</sup> course turkey broth, 2<sup>nd</sup> was meat rissoles served with vegetables & white sauce & mashed potatoes. The 3<sup>rd</sup> course was the usual tea & a piece of “Mammie's” Christmas Cake (the one I baked her in Omagh). By the way the cake has got wonderful praise on all sides. Poor Mammie – I never saw such pleasure on her face. She has a weakness for sweet things. She voted it the best Christmas box she ever got. I quite fancy myself now as a cake baker. Really darling I am not a good baker but if enthusiasm will make me one then I shall not fail you. I was just in my element this morning. Josephine is really a grand little teacher. I am lucky to have her to help me.

We have just been listening to the mid-day news and Kuantan was mentioned. The Japanese had attacked the British troops there, we were told. I wondered how you, my darling Frank came through that? You must be overworked, tired and anxious. The strain must be frightful for you. Yesterday, the day it happened, I finished a very fervent 9 day novena of Masses, Holy Communions & acts to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. I felt certain today that there would be some good news of you but the 2<sup>nd</sup> and last post has gone. This afternoon I shall call at the cable office to inquire if cables can get through. I am not blaming you dear Frank for this heartbreaking silence. It cannot be helped. If I were to think too much of the future I should go crazy with worry. I just live from day to day, saying each morning – the war and Frank's homecoming are nearer by another day. This keeps my heart up. No one must worry, because I am worrying. It is my worry so no tears will be shown to anyone. Can you find where a tear fell on this page?

While sitting dreaming over the sitting room fire I asked myself a strange question. “Knowing this worrying time would be my own cross, would I still have acted as I did last December?” To me this question had only and could only have one answer. I love you darling above all else in the world. I shall *never* regret having given you my love no matter *what* happens. The past year – our first together will be one which will live

forever in my heart. May our Loving Saviour who has conferred so many blessings upon us up to date, finish this wonderful work in bringing us together very, very soon. I shall never tire of praying for this intention. You need never worry about my ceasing to pray for you. You are now such an important part of me that ever to forget you would be impossible. It would be like forgetting one's self. Do let me know if ever these letters reach you. I am still writing constantly. I send this with *all* my love and all myself. I belong entirely to you darling and ever shall I be

your loving,  
Eileen.

P.S. I forgot to tell you dearest that I received last week two of your diary letters posted on Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> & Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>; also a sea mail letter containing beautiful postcard snaps of Malaya. I have read every word of them over & over again. I shall reply to them in my next letter.

Love,  
Eileen.

Spring Villa  
195 Springfield Road  
Belfast  
Tuesday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1942  
Feast of Epiphany

My own darling Frank,

I often wonder are you receiving these letters at all. Everything seems so upset now in the Far East. To think darling that I do not even know where you are or how you are and yet I am placidly writing to you as if you were only a few miles off and in no danger at all. It is a wonderful grace I have got. I prayed so hard that I might be strong and brave for your own dear sake, so that I could pray harder for you, so that I would not communicate my worries to those at home. I have succeeded to a certain extent. I am anything but indifferent to your danger my own dear Frank. You mean more than life itself to me. Day and night you are in my thoughts. The very thought of losing you is so terrible that I cannot bear to let my mind dwell on it for a single second. I love you, Frank. I have always loved you and no matter what happens I shall always love you.

Yesterday morning, January 5<sup>th</sup> I received your cable from Kuantan – so famous now over radio and in the press. The cable people – I should say my good friend Mr Jones – sent the message to me over the phone. They knew how anxious I was for word so they promised to ring me. We tried to discern when it was sent. The cable folk think December 17<sup>th</sup>. Now my worry is “What has happened to you during the past 3 weeks?” Are you annoyed with me for being so anxious?

Anne spent yesterday afternoon with us here so now both she and your father have received the good news. You were a darling to send such a long cable, with so much love in it and you in the thick of the fray, probably tired, weary and worried. God bless you darling. May He spare you to me. May you soon return. This morning, I finished a 9 day novena of Masses and Holy Communions to the Redemptorists Saint Gerard Magella for your safety. May St. Gerard watch over you this day and every day until you return to me. I do love you so much that praying for you is such a pleasure. On all Sundays and holidays I hear 2 Masses. You shall always have *your* Mass darling, no matter what effort I have to make to be present. I had another Mass said for your safety yesterday. Surely Our Lady and her little son cannot refuse to hear our joint prayers, darling?

*Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> January*

When Anne arrived back at Beechwood on Monday it was to hear the good news that your father had received a cable also. They were so happy to have news of you. Do not worry darling, we are all praying, praying and still praying for you. We shall not cease until you are in our midst once again.

Now I have good news for you but you asked to have all news in detail so I am going to give you all the details of my first meeting with your best friend, Gerry McGuinness. I was to have met him during my last weekend at home (8<sup>th</sup> Dec.) but the Christian Brothers were having a play in St. Mary's Hall. Gerry was an usher so just had to attend. Fr Joe was very anxious to take me to see the play. Knowing that Gerry was there I spent quite an amount of my interval time in trying to place him. Frank Martin was very much to the fore and was very decent in giving up his seat to me. (We had not booked unfortunately). Well, on Tuesday last I was

invited to tea at the home of 2 of our Omagh boarders who live in Belfast. Josephine was with them. After tea two of the big brothers asked us to come to a hop in St Mary's Hall given by the Christian Brothers past Pupils. Knowing that Josephine was keen on dancing, though I did not really feel like going, we set off. About an hour after the dance commenced over came this gentleman and asked to dance with Miss O'Kane and offered his apologies to my partner – Mr McEvoy. I felt in my bones it was Gerry and before he spoke, I quickly asked was he Gerry McGuinness. Well Frank, dance, partners, all were forgotten. We fell to and talked down the orchestra until we had a pair of very sore throats. There was so much we had to talk about – so much I wanted to hear about you from his own lips. I believe we had a few dances together but I scarcely remember them. Yes, he asked did I do the latest Belfast dance – The Moonlight Saunter (a very beautiful dance). I could do it so we danced it together. I am afraid I was a very rude girl that night. I completely forgot about our partners but when I explained to them afterwards who Gerry was and his connection with you, darling, they understood perfectly. We must have talked for about 2 hours and still we were not satisfied – at least that is how I felt & I believe Gerry felt likewise. He wants to take me out tonight & is calling for me at 7 p.m. I enjoyed meeting him so much simply & solely because he was & still *is* your best friend. I congratulate Frank on having such a friend. I like him very, very much. How happy I felt talking to him about you. What on earth shall I feel like when I speak to your own dear self. Gerry felt most confident about your coming home safely, to put it in his own words, "that fellow could come through anything". Jokingly I teased him about saying I was "a very ordinary person". He was very serious & explained carefully what circumstances had led up to his making such a remark. The more I spoke to him, the more my old worries returned to me – how I must have made you suffer in the past. You are a very wonderful man ever to have forgiven me. Why, oh why was I so blind, stupid and silly in the past? I never realised that you were suffering on my account. If only I had been able to talk to you, to explain to you how I felt – you would have understood darling and my mind should also have been put at rest. I do remember *our* celidhe at Ranafast, when you came up to ask me to dance. I remember feeling very pleased that so tall and handsome a boy had asked me to dance. Do you remember in the midst of a 16 hand reel I asked you some trivial question about where someone lived. You excused yourself, went off & asked some boyfriend of your own & returned to give me my answer. I thought to myself, "Isn't he very good to go to such trouble to answer my question"? Then, do you remember being absent from the next celidhe. I was looking forward so much to seeing you again & lo when the dance commenced you had not come. I felt terribly disappointed – the fun seemed all to have gone from that dance. Actually you were ill, but I felt you couldn't be bothered coming. Then came the day when our crowd left Crolly station. I was so pleased that you had come. I thought you had come to say goodbye to me, though you never came near me. You just stood back and smiled as the train puffed out. These were my first impressions of the first boy I ever had and the only man I shall ever love. I thought you were perfect. There were no bad impressions in my first meeting with you. I *never* thought differently of you. When I changed, it was fear & fear alone which made me act as I did. When we get talking about the past, darling you will understand how I felt. What annoys me is that, then, I did not consider how I was hurting you.

Gerry spoke a lot about the future, about the happy times which were in store for us all. He is anxious for me to meet Nan. In Gerry's eyes that was the greatest compliment you could have paid me to tell him I was like Nan. Won't we four have the grand times in the days that are to come? How I long for you to return. I was to make you the happiest man in all the world. Your friends will always be my friends. I shall love them & welcome them to our home always. You have very loyal & sincere friends, Frank – qualities which I myself love & look for in my own girl friends.

Roland came up to see me on Sunday night last. He is as happy as a king. The future was something wonderful for him. Frances will be in Mt. Charles for a few days this week. I am to go over tomorrow and I believe I shall be allowed into the secret as to when the wedding will be. They were overjoyed with our eiderdown & they thanked us both very much. I had him relate in detail every minute of his meeting with you, Frank. He thought you such a nice boy that he was worried lest you would snatch his Frances from him. I had a nice letter from Frances at Christmas. She was thrilled to get your Christmas greetings cable. I hear her bottom drawer has grown to great dimensions.

Today I met Anne in town by appointment. She asked me to accompany her to select a dining room table for Beechwood. It is your father's wish to have a new table for the dining room so now he has got a very nice mahogany table. Instead of a leaf coming up to reduce the size, a side table can be formed from the centre. It is very highly polished. Having finished our shopping we adjourned to the Royal Avenue Hotel for a rest & a little chat. While we sat in the lounge, in walked Fr. Collins, curate from somewhere near Magherafelt – the home of Clan Murray. Anne knew him & introduced me. He knew lots of my friends in Omagh & has

promised to come over some time for a game of golf. He made Anne promise to bring me to visit him, so at Easter, if all is well we shall go by bus to Magherafelt & cycle out to his place.

It is now 5 p.m. & I intend to have a nice bath before tea. I shall tell you tomorrow about my outing tonight. Oh, that it was you, Frank dear who was taking me out tonight. How excited and happy I should be. I can talk about you to Gerry, *so* I am looking forward to tonight. I am still at daily Mass & Holy Communion. I shall never willingly miss daily Mass. I feel I am doing something worthwhile, when I am at Mass. Good night, darling. God and his Blessed mother watch over you and protect you. I am now in the midst of a novena to the Holy Family – the Feast of the Holy Family is on Sunday. There is no need to tell you what is my intention. It is you darling and your safety, our love and our marriage.

*Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> January*

Do you remember Frank this day, 2 years ago? – it was the day you sailed away from us all. What a tremendous lot has happened in those two years! What is still to happen in the years that are to come? Shall I give one guess, just one? You shall be home again, the war will be over and peace will be restored to our demented world. We shall be married and living happily together. No pair shall ever be as happy as we shall be. We have known suffering, misunderstandings and partings, during which time our love grew strong and true. Today there *is* no love quite like ours. We love each other now and I know that in reality we shall only begin to love one another when our great day dawns. I too, shall never grow tired of waiting for you. No one else matters to me now but you, Frank. You *are* me now. I feel too, that I could not face life without you. More and more I realise how much I need you. I know you are going to make me happier than I have ever been in my life before. It will be so easy darling. I do not want anything but you and your love. With those I shall have wealth untold, without those I shall die. Realising how I feel darling can you appreciate my anxiety for your safety. I have tried to make many acts – some of which I felt some months ago would be humanly impossible. Today I can make them daily but unfortunately they are not hard – they are a pleasure, and that is the truth. What can I do which will cost me some effort? Do not worry, I am not curtailing my diet in any way. This would be very foolish. When you return, I must be strong and fit for all the walking, cycling, golfing, etc. that we are going to do when you come back. You will be pleased to hear how well everyone thinks I am looking. People who have not seen me for some months remark how well I look. My weight has gone up to 9 stone 4 lbs, so now, my good man am I talking the truth or am I?

You must be dying to hear about my date with Gerry and here I am rambling away about myself. He had a slight skid with the car & so arrived up about 15 minutes late. Poor Gerry, it was good of him to come at all, under the circumstances. He came in for a moment & I introduced him to Mammie. There was no one else at home just then. After admiring our Anderson shelter (perhaps it is a Morrison!) we went off to see lady Hamilton (Lawrence Olivier as Nelson & Vivien Leigh as Lady Hamilton) in the Imperial. It is *the* picture of the town this week & there were 2 terrific queues waiting to get in. However, our good friend had the foresight to book earlier in the day so we were escorted past the lines of waiting people to our seats. After the picture nothing would do Gerry that I should have supper with him. This was 10 p.m., mark you. So off we went to the Whitehall in Ann Street & lowered two well laden plates. It was then I showed Gerry my gifts from you, darling, which Fr Ashness selected and sent to me. They reached me a few days ago and how thrilled I was to receive them. It was like a little breath from Malaya. Before looking at a thing I searched thoroughly for some little note from you, darling. Had it not been there, my parcel would not have been the same. It is now over 3 weeks since I have had word from you so your little card was so welcome. I read it & re-read it, then slipped it into my notebook in which I keep your snaps, so that they shall always be with me. The paper knife is perfect. I have never in my life before, seen anything so uncommon – the more I show it around the more I love it. Have you seen it Frank? – the carving on the silver is magnificent. In the centre, where one would expect to find a monogram, there is a peculiar letter. I wondered was it Malayan, Chinese, Japanese or what language. Perhaps you can help me? It looks rather like this :- XXXX. The rosary beads are a work of art. I have used them every morning at Mass since they arrived and I have prayed very hard for Fr Ashness & for your friends in Ipoh. From now on I shall remember them all in my prayers. My heart bleeds for them and for you. It is your turn now to suffer those nerve-wrecking air raids. I wonder how Mrs Valda Roberts of Kumpar has fared. I do not know her personally. Have you heard of some John Lenaghan who holds some large post in Singapore. What has become of Martin McCall? John B. O'Neill was to have joined his friend in Kuala Lumpur but under the circumstances decided not to emigrate. McCall had some post for him out there. How is Humphrey Thompson? I have not seen his father since but I feel sure he is very worried. Such a digression I have taken while speaking about my supper with Gerry. Ere I return to take up the threads again I want to tell you that I am wearing my Malayan brooch every day and it has received great admiration. Thank you darling for sending me such a beautiful box of

presents. With the gifts was a nice card from Fr Ashness telling me of the "wonderful fellow" you were. (Just imagine Fr Ashness thinking I did not know this!) By a separate post came a letter from him enclosing a little map of Malaya. He quoted a letter written to him about you, Frank from the military chaplain. Here it is. "I have heard of Murray the M.D. but have not had the pleasure of meeting him. It is grand to meet such people, they are the salt of the earth." I let Gerry read this letter & he was as pleased as I was at the high praise you received.

After displaying my presents to Gerry I showed him the snaps which I possess of you namely the one taken in N.W. India, on the Kabul banks, the second taken 10,000 feet above s.l., the third seated at the wheel of your Austin and the last taken complete with topee. He thought the large hat made you look much thinner. I have promised to send him a copy of No.3 when I return to Omagh. I want to give a few copies to your friends and mine. He has asked me to send him word when I receive news of you, and always to let him know when I am in town. We talked so long that the last tram had gone. He suggested a taxi but it was a nice starry night so we walked home. I enjoyed my night very much. It was as near as I could get to speaking to you, darling. He is interested in gold so we have arranged to have a game when the weather gets fine.

There has been no sign of either our ring or the candlesticks. I am so worried about them both. I wonder which firm in London has your order. You once mentioned Mappin & Webb, so last Saturday I wrote to them inquiring. I do not want to cable you that the ring has not arrived – it may worry you. By the time this letter reaches you, surely it will have arrived. Wasn't it strange how Fr Ashness' parcel has arrived and yet your present sent some weeks earlier has not. Are you able to write at all now darling? I have made up my mind that henceforth letters from you will be rare. It will be a big sacrifice not to hear from you darling. No one can realise what your letters meant to me. But thank God I have them every one 44 in all. When weeks pass and no letters come then I shall pretend that some one of my earlier letters has just arrived. Besides my letters I have all your beautiful snaps. Then I have the magazines. I treasure every thing that has come to me from Malaya.

Did I tell you, Frank that Gerry's engagement to Nan has been announced. If I have already told you, forgive me.

On Monday next, January 12<sup>th</sup> I return to Omagh. The McEvoy sisters are being motored back by their brother & have asked me to accompany them. It will be so much more comfortable than going by the daily, overcrowded trains – a train run to schedule now is something unheard of. Sometimes the 8.40 p.m. leaving Belfast reaches Omagh at 1.15 a.m. I am not sorry going back to work darling. Work keeps me from thinking too much while in Omagh. I can write more often to you & pray harder because there are fewer distractions. During holiday time everybody seems to be perpetually on the go, old friends are ringing up asking you to visit them – only last week I got a card from a girl I sat beside in St Dominic's, Falls Road when I went to school there. She is Eileen Courtney. They live out Newtownards way. She has two brothers priests. Well, Eileen writes "I should love to meet you again to renew our old acquaintanceship". I have not seen her for years as she was teaching in Leicester. She is home now permanently. I intended, darling to finish this letter this afternoon but now Felix & Mona have arrived so I must stop. Please God tomorrow afternoon this letter will go. I have been writing for 2 hours – the time flies when I am writing to you, Frank. Good night, my darling and God bless and protect you now and always.

*Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> January*

Today, darling, I have got a few more things for our bottom drawer. It was in the china line. China, glass and delft of all descriptions are becoming very difficult to get so I got a beautiful tea set (41 pieces, i.e. 12 cups, saucers, plates, sugar bowl, cream jug, slop bowl & 2 bread plates). It is in cream & gold and I am very much in love with it. Mammie & Josephine helped me select it and this morning Daddie called for it in the car. I am going to check everything this afternoon & next Wednesday Felix has promised to take it to Ballynahinch for me. I also got ½ doz. glasses & jug to match (cut glass) and some Pyrex ware for cooking. Do not be annoyed with me, dear Frank because I am buying all these things with my own money. I never consider anything I have now as my own. I take an unbelievable pleasure in spending the residue of my monthly cheque on articles for our home. When you return darling *everything* will be scarce – it will be years before production will get into its stride again. Meanwhile we shall, please God, have enough to do. Do not think that you are taking no part in building our home – you have all the big items to consider – God help you darling, it is a monstrous task, but it will be all so exciting. We shall have to creep before we walk and plan everything before we plunge. Won't it be very interesting darling? How happy we shall be in our struggle! How I shall try to help you in every way!

Your father seems to have taken a new interest in Beechwood. He has delegated Anne to make many purchases for it. It seems that houses in blitzed areas are being "done up" free. Wrights have had their home

renovated from top to bottom & Anne & I are going to coax your father when I go over to say goodbye to him tomorrow. Anne is very keen & it would be of wonderful interest to her.

I have your mother's memoriam card which Anne gave me. I say the prayers every day. I have also one for you darling which I shall send with my next letter. I was over in de Meulemeesters last night. Frances was there – the professor was very interested in my presents from Kuala Lumpur. We talked quite a lot about *my* Frank. All those are praying for you. I had a terrible fit of loneliness last night. Sleep just would not come. Today's news is not good. Kuala Lumpur is in danger of falling. No matter what happens, you my dearest one must be spared. Fr Joe has given me encouragement by saying that nothing in the world happens by accident. Everything happens according to plan in the mind of God. Surely then the Good God who has guided us both in the past will complete His grand work and bring us together safely soon. All my love my own darling Frank. It has always been yours. I could never change. God bless you now & always.

Your loving,  
Eileen.

9, Holmview  
Omagh  
Co. Tyrone  
Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> January

My own darling Frank,

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

We came up by car to Omagh last night – I say night, because it was so late before we got away (5 p.m.) that the majority of the journey was made in the "black out" and it snowing too. The car was a Vauxhall 16, so it was quite roomy & comfortable. I was given the honour of the front seat & Mary & Margaret (my 2 pupils) got the back seat. It was 9 p.m. before we finally reached Omagh. I had the most pleasant surprise imaginable, for upon entering my bedroom Mrs Ray had a magnificent fire. Do you know Frank that it was glorious – so warm, so cosy – it made me feel so welcome back. My first act was to take out your photograph and put it back in its place of honour. A grand meal of rashers & egg made me feel A.1. Aileen came down & joined me & we chatted until bedtime. There has been great excitement in the McCann family this Christmas. Both her sisters, Sheila & Patsy have become engaged, Sheila to a boy called Dermot Hennessy (he is a nice fellow and a champion table tennis player), Patsy to Don Richardson, an engineer in the navy. Now hadn't we a lot to talk about – the rings, the trousseaux & the "bottom drawers". Before going to bed I did not forget to say my prayers for you with arms outstretched and also to say the remaining two of "your" 3 rosaries. This morning saw me at "our" Mass, again praying with all my might & main for your safety in this awful war. It was a nippy morning. The snow & slush of the previous night had become frozen so many times I nearly went "harp sine" before reaching the church on the hill. It is no effort for me now to go to daily mass. I still have had no colds, so please God my good fortune will continue, so that I shall never have to miss daily Mass again until your return. This is the only reason why I do not want to be sick. I see the Major & Mrs Ray have both had 'flu so here's hoping that no germs make me their target.

This afternoon Mollie Hughes & Judy (the dog) called in to welcome me back. Did you know Frank that your friend Gerry knows quite a number of my friends? He has known the Hughes for years (year after year they met in Bundoran). Both Annie & Mollie know Nan Gorman very well. Besides this, Gerry has met Vera Hale, who told him about me before he met me. You remember the girl I picnicked with in Strabane last summer?

You should have heard all the inquiries which were made for you at the Convent yesterday. Every nun & teacher I met asked had I got good news. The day was so frosty that we could not cycle so on my way to school I was again stopped or questioned. At news time, it seems to me all Omagh listens with bated breath for the Malayan news. Should I miss anything myself I have very good friends who come hurrying with the news

especially if it is good. Mr Vaughan in the Munster & Leinster bank called me aside today to ask me had I heard that some of the R.A.M.C. had been withdrawing to Singapore. It is now nearing 4 weeks since I received your last letter written on November 27<sup>th</sup> (strangely enough the Feast of the Miraculous Medal). I am not complaining darling. I know how difficult it must be for you to write under war conditions. Besides the Clipper Service is off and all your letters must come by ordinary air mail. It will be mid-February then before I can expect to see your dear handwriting again. I must toddle off to bunk now. Wherever you are this night I wish you God's blessing. May He protect us both. May He bless our love and may He bring us together very soon. You have all of my heart, dearest Frank. It could never belong to anyone but you.

*Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> January*

The snow covered ground of last Monday has now become a very dangerous frost – so that Aileen & I have got to go to and from school on foot. It is quite a change and so I am enjoying it. However it means we have very little time to browse after breakfast or dinner. I cannot help thinking during these bitter winter days of the soldiers fighting away in Russia. God help them, for they must be suffering. During the past two days there have been no new developments in Malaya. I have a feeling you may be in Singapore. I wonder how you are, are you in very grave danger!, are you suffering! How have your men whom you loved so much, fared. I pray for you all and you darling Frank, especially hard. Yesterday I finished a 9 nine day novena of Masses & Holy Communions to the Holy Family. Today I commenced another similar novena to your Angel Guardian & St Francis of Assisi, your patron saint. These novenas shall go on constantly until I have made friends with all the saints in Heaven, on your behalf, dearest one. I want to know more about your patron saint so I hope Mother Teresa can find me a book in the Convent library on the great St Francis. Have you read the life, Frank? I am trying also to have a Mass offered in Clonard each week for your safety dear Frank and early return to us all.

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

Only yesterday I received a very friendly letter from my teacher friend in Dungannon. You remember the girl I visited when I went to see Margaret? Well, great was my surprise to find that she entered the Convent of Mercy, Dungannon on Monday last (the same day as I passed through by car). Margaret & she have become fast friends. Grace is very fond of Margaret. She says since I intend becoming Sr. M. Teresa's sister-in-law it means that they shall be even greater friends. She prophesises your safe homecoming on the strength of Sr. Teresa's prayers alone. You must be a veritable saint by this time, darling! If you only knew of all the prayers

you are receiving. All the Omagh nuns are praying daily for you. The nuns & children in the Mercy Convent, Downpatrick are praying, not to mention the Community in the St. Louis Convent, Carrickmacross where my good friend Sr. Mary Fidelis is. Besides these there are the Poor Clare nuns in both Belfast & Nottingham. The mother abbess of the latter convent writes to me, "I have included you and your fiancé and all your dear ones living & dead in two novenas of Masses and in all our prayers & devotions during this Holy Season. We will also give you a share, day & night in our prayers & penances & daily at Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and in all our novenas & devotions". Now, how could any harm come to you darling? Our prayers must be cramping the style of your little yellow opponent.

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

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

*Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> January*

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

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

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

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

On last Tuesday I left your negative in to the shop to have six prints taken of it – you know the one I mean! The one, where a proud young officer is seated at the wheel of his Austin and feeling quite the martyr because he is posing for the camera. They are to be ready for Saturday (tomorrow). Then I hope to send one to

your father, one to Gerry, one to Una & the other home. All are asking for a snap of you, but of course I would not part with a single one. I had forgotten that you sent me the negative.

Today's news from the Far East was even more disappointing than yesterday yet I refuse to get too depressed. I am praying so very, very hard (never so hard in my life before) & making so many little acts & getting so many saints to pray that it would be an insult to Our Dear Lord, if I were to doubt Him.

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

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

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

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

9 Holmview  
Omagh  
Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> 5 p.m.

My own darling Frank,

I am playing truant this afternoon. It is Monday & I should have been at my sewing class but the weather was so vile that having been drenched twice already today and not having a 3<sup>rd</sup> raincoat to fall back upon I decided to make this afternoon an "at home" one. I washed my hair, waved it and curled it so now I am comfortably seated before a very cheery hearth. At first I was undecided how to spend this 1½ hours before tea – to put in some more of our snaps, to read some of my Asias, to do some mending, some embroidery (which really had prior claim) or to write some long overdue letters. Then I decided I shall write to Frank. I have nothing very much to say to him since I sent off an 8 page letter on Saturday morning except to tell him how much I am loving him during these terrible days of parting. Don't you think they will come to an end soon? I shall never be really happy until you are back home darling. I am simply wishing away the time that separated this day from that of our great reunion. As each morning dawns I look at my Maynooth Missions Calendar which hangs on my bedroom wall & say "another day nearer to seeing Frank". It is so like school days at Kilkeel when my greatest delight was in stroking off each day as it passed to make holidays & home come all the nearer.

Your half dozen photos have arrived so I must send them off to Gerry, Una and your father soon. How I wish I had good news to send with them but when I come to think of it I really have wonderful news – because no news is the best news in these terrible times.

Yesterday was "our" day, darling. I had a quiet one. Aileen went away on Saturday home and did not return until this morning. Being up each morning at 7.15 a.m. I thought I should take a sleep on Sunday & at the same time hear our two masses. It is not that I wanted to miss Holy Communion. I think Mary was glad to see me take the sleep. She brought me a beautiful breakfast at 8.45. After this I got up & heard both 10 o'clock & 11 o'clock Mass. So darling, you did not miss your Mass after all and my selfish body got the extra rest it wanted. The afternoon proved to be very mild so off I blew to the links. There were a few "foul weather" golfers

out so I had a very enjoyable 3 ball with Violet Cusack & Walter Murnaghan. I played their best ball & held them until the 8<sup>th</sup> hole at which both got bogeys. I had not been out for some time so my poor clubs were very "mouldy". Bob (green keeper) is going to clean my irons & varnish my woods. He says it preserves them. With rubber becoming increasingly scarce we golfers must be very careful of balls. One must be careful with everything these times. Our sitting room wireless needs a new valve (whatever that means) which means that we cannot use it at all. We miss it very much but this does not prevent me from invading the Ray drawing room at the appointed times when the news is on. They know me now & actually call me, wherever I am to come & listen.

From golf yesterday I went to devotions while the Blessed Sacrament was exposed I prayed fervently for you, dearest Frank, and for us both. Afterwards I made the stations & then home to tea. I was simply ravenous. This was 6.45 & I had lunch at 1 p.m. I lowered plates on all sides and fell like Lucifer for some fresh honey (in wooden square) which Mrs Ray had got us as a present. After tea I wrote out my petitions (they were principally for you, Frank and all your dear ones living & dead) and sent them off to the Salesian College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick where a 9 day novena of masses will be offered in honour of St. Don Bosco from January 22<sup>nd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>. Our petition will remain on that altar throughout the novena. I shall make the novena too.

I believe that I forgot to tell you about my visit to your mother's grave during my holidays. Anne came over early one afternoon & the two of us walked to Milltown. Have you seen the new stone which your father has erected? It is one of the nicest in the whole cemetery. It is in black marble with gold lettering on it. Anne told me how faithful you were to Charlie's grave when only a small white cross marked the spot. How I wish that the grave had remained unchanged so I could have seen it as you, in your grief saw it. I rarely go to graveyards and ashamed I am to say that it was only after much searching that we found Daddie's family grave (near yours) and Mammie's mother's & father's too.

Anne had often told me about an old maid who used to be at Beechwood and who was very fond of you, Frank. Since she lived so convenient to me – in Linden St. – Anne & I called upon her that day. She was a very cheery old soul and made very special enquiries about you darling. I felt attached to this old Annie right away simply because she knew & loved you, Frank. You have no idea of how much I long to see you. As the days pass, my love seems to grow stronger & better. I know that prayer is helping us both.

I have just listened to the 6 o'clock news. The Japs are now within 100 miles of their object – where & how are you faring my darling? You asked me in your cable not to worry. I am trying very, very hard but I do not always succeed. It is something that gnaws at your heart until the pain becomes so acute that you could shout. I shall write you again tomorrow darling. Will you forgive me if I stop here – my heart really feels too full to write further. God bless & protect you my own darling in every inch of your fight.

*Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> January, 10 p.m.*

I am writing these few lines from bed, my darling. No, I am not sick but as usual trying to get to bed early. I cannot get up if I don't turn in early the previous night & I *must* get up (7.15 a.m.) so there is no option. However tonight you must have a few lines because all day today I felt you were thinking about me & wondering how I was enjoying my birthday. I was thinking about you too Frank. I felt you were wishing me a jolly birthday. This was another of "our" days. I was more lucky than you in that I was able to get a birthday letter to you (thank God you were born on December 4<sup>th</sup> & not any later). There is no use my trying to deny how much I would have welcomed a letter from you. Letters, cards & presents did come but somehow I could not attach so much importance to them as to a single note from you. I woke at 5.30 (strange enough) & had a talk with you. Mary called Mary at the usual hour & off I went to Mass. At breakfast Aileen was the first to greet me. Instead of feeling very jubilant I had a very big lump in my throat. The post had not arrived so it was not disappointment. I felt I wanted to run away & have a good cry. Well, I did nothing of the kind. I made an act to pretend I was very happy throughout the day (for you) & at times I nearly deluded myself. After class I made my usual visit to the oratory & put my birthday forward to ask the good God to send you home to me. Spinning down home I nearly knocked down Gerry Cavanagh. Do you remember him, Frank? He is an old C.B.S. man & was a year ahead of you in those days. He remembered you quite well. It seems he has an office (fortnightly visit) here for accountancy. We talked until I was almost late for tea. Then came a very pleasant surprise. Mrs Ray had a beautiful cake baked for me & was actually looking for some candles to decorate it. There was a regular party at which Major & Mrs Ray, Aileen, Celeste & I did justice to. Afterwards Violet called & we had an hours walk, then tea & after that off to see a grand cast in the Ziegfeld Girl. I have not told you about presents or letters. This will keep for the next instalment. Good night my own darling. God bless you every minute of the day & night. Please God, we will be together on both our next birthdays, never to be parted again.

*Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January*

I have not re-read any of your letters darling for a long time but tonight I felt I might venture to read one without breaking down. The last one dated November 27<sup>th</sup> shall always be my favourite because it was your last before this frightful silence. It arrived in Belfast on December 17<sup>th</sup> & now it is January 22<sup>nd</sup> – 5 long weeks of waiting, watching & praying. Tonight I am alone and feeling lonely for you dear Frank. It was madness to read one of your letters while I was feeling low because I just wept until I thought my heart would break. Perhaps it was good to get it all off but now I am wondering how I shall get up to bed without anyone seeing my red eyes. I listened to both the BBC News & Radio Eireann. The Malayan news was very worrying. Singapore is in a very dangerous position & is suffering daily from air raids. Where are you, darling? My God, the suspense is terrible. If it were only possible to have a cable from you to say one word “ALIVE”. That is all I want to know. I am trying & praying to be brave but it is so hard. I sent off a cable to you this morning telling you about the non-arrival of the ring. I felt you should know but what I really wanted to say was “Am worried for news of you. Am praying incessantly for your safety. God protect you Frank darling – you have all my love and all of me.” I wonder will you ever receive it? Aileen has gone with the others to the pictures tonight. She wants me to join them but that would mean a late night. Mass *must* not be missed. I feel that your safety darling rests on my individual shoulders. If my prayers can protect you, darling then have no fear that I shall let you down. To stop praying for you would be like ceasing to breathe. I just couldn’t live without my prayers for your safety. Tonight’s note has probably worried you and how I hate myself for causing you any pain. Please do not worry about me, because I am fit & well and still have not missed an hour’s class since the school year commenced last September. I have not missed Mass a single morning since December 4<sup>th</sup>. I have small items of news for you but I feel a trifle spent tonight. Good night, my own dear Frank and may God, His Blessed Mother & St. Don Bosco watch over you and protect you from all harm.

*Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> January*

You have spoiled me, Frank dearest with these beautiful books you are sending me. On Friday, when I came down for lunch at 12.30 there reposed on the hall table a copy of the Straits Times Annual, posted from Singapore last October and informing me that it was ordered for me my Major F.J. Murray R.A.M.C., Kroh, Upper Perak. So now your secret is out! I have not a very clear idea of just where you were when you arrived in Malaya. Stamps on the letter were sometimes Perak & sometimes Kedah until later they were all Pahang. Since my book arrived I have little time for anyone or anything including your own dear self. I have pored over its pages & read its articles, many of which are sadly out of date. Already both Aileen & the Major have read it too & many others want a peep at it. The first Straits Annual which arrived last term has been doing the rounds ever since – it now reposes in Murnaghans. I intend to keep safely all these books. For me they shall never be out of date.

Now to tell you what I have been doing with myself for the past few days. On Friday we made our new year reappearance at the cookery class. The dishes were sausage rolls & Shah biscuits. Being Friday (the Friday fast has ceased in the diocese of Down & Connor but in Derry we are still “papists”) we could not sample our rolls but we were more than satisfied to hear that the major asked for a second one at dinner the same night. Any of the recipes which turn out particularly well I mark with a cross – it will only be the “crossed” recipes which I shall try on my husband’s poor stomach.

Having a touch of cold in my head, Aileen persuaded me to turn in very early on Friday night so 9 p.m. saw me safely between the blankets and sipping a piping hot cup of Bournvita which Aileen kindly prepared for me. Thank God I was not bad enough to miss Mass and Holy Communion the following morning.

Today, Sunday has been a very blustering one. Between wind, hail and rain the only place for a sensible person is indoors. I heard our two Masses this morning, the first was 10 o’clock Mass and the second 11 o’clock. Did you ever hear of the “Novena of Rosaries” Frank? If you did not, then here is the novena. The rosary with certain prayers accompanying each decade is said in petition for 27 days and whether the petition is granted, 27 days in thanksgiving. In all the rosary is said each day for 54 days. Well last week I read Fergus’ letter home that he had commenced the “Novena of Rosaries” for you Frank so I commenced too on January 20<sup>th</sup>. I have made this novena many times before and never once was I disappointed. Last time I made it 3 times in succession, i.e. 162 rosaries on 162 consecutive days. This was last summer & it was to restore peace, to prevent the Far East being involved in the war, but above all to spare you, my own darling. Well I feel confident my prayer for your safety will be heard.

After lunch today I completed putting our snaps into our album. I spent yesterday afternoon & today from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. Never have I enjoyed myself so much. Honestly darling I was no longer in Omagh

but away in Rawalpindi, Barian, Kedah, Perak and Pahang. I grouped them according to the places. Would you like a rough idea of the order. Well – now don't be annoyed – I placed "you, yourself and you" on the first page. You know the enlargement of the one taken at the wheel of your baby Austin? On the next 3 pages, there are the beautiful enlargements of "whispering palms" – 2 on each page. Next I grouped all the snaps of the men of your unit onto the next page e.g. The "Grand old man", Your prize picture (Lieut. Sridharan), "Tough Guy" (Naik Pahat Singh! Is this right). I labelled this page the "27<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance". Next came the page devoted to your mountain stream, then Rawalpindi (camels, home on the plains, R.A.M.C. mess), after this the hill station (Barian) and finally Kuantan. Under each snap I printed what you said of it. You are a marvel in the way you so aptly describe each photo. These sayings just make the album complete.

All the postcard size snaps are in a special album. I have not them labelled as yet but I am looking forward to doing them my next free afternoon. Now here I am owing Frances a letter for the past week – she sent me two beautiful pairs of stockings for my birthday. About *our* present she writes "I am not exaggerating when I say I know in advance that it's by far the nicest present I'll get. I think it is beautiful colour & all & the only fault I have to find is that it is far too good & expensive". Though I am sworn to secrecy I know you can be allowed into her secret (I shall tell her so). If all goes well they are to be married in the Summer. The moment the date is arranged I shall write you.

Will you forgive me darling going off to bed. It is not late but my nurse insists – you see I am still sniffing a bit. Please God next week will bring me some news of you. How I long for a letter. I know & feel that in all your trouble and anxiety you are praying for me. God bless you Frank. I shall write to the Red Cross tomorrow asking how I shall get in touch with Fr Ashness of Kuala Lumpur. I must write and thank him for sending me your beautiful gifts. Good night Frank. I am loving you more & more as each day passes. Do hurry home to me. Only then will I be perfectly happy. May our dear Lord protect you now and always.

*Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> January*

Today has been a very happy one for me dear Frank and you, you alone are solely the one to "blame". By this morning's post I received an Asia magazine from you. It was simply grand to see your dear handwriting again. The book was beautifully papered – you do take such care in preparing the books for postage. This Asia – June 1941 – was posted by you on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Do you remember? You addressed it home but Josephine forwarded it to me. I am still reading my Straits Times Annual – after this I have now another treat. Now my next pleasant surprise was a letter from Messrs. Mappin & Webb of Sheffield telling me that I was about to receive 2 silver candlesticks 7" long and a card enclosed. At the head of the note the word "Bombay" was written. So thank God, darling, your Christmas box to me has arrived safely even though it is 32 days late to carry out your Irish custom of burning two candles in them, one for you and one for me. How excited I am to see our candlesticks. I am writing to Josephine tonight to give them to our art teacher (Miss Teddy Kelly) who travels to Omagh every Thursday. Aileen wants to bring them back for me after her weekend but a whole week is too long for poor me to wait. I am very childish in this way. Now my 3<sup>rd</sup> surprise came by way of a little reasoning on my part. You told me, by letter, about the candlesticks about 3 weeks before you told me about our ring. This should mean that in 3 weeks time I should have it, if God is good. Now can you imagine how excited I am! How sorry I am that I cabled you to worry you about the non-appearance of the ring. I suppose I should have waited but then I *really* wanted to send you my love & ask for God's protection upon you and your ambulance. I shall wait for a reply for a while & if none is forthcoming then I shall cable again to tell you that your precious present and those sent by Fr Ashness have arrived. How I hope and pray that a letter or cable will arrive soon. No news of my best boy has reached me since January 5<sup>th</sup> – for 3 whole weeks I do not know where he is or how he is! And yet I am loving him, oh so much more. I know the mails are upset and I know you cannot let me know, otherwise you would.

Now would you like to hear my last piece of news? Well, at 1 p.m. I rushed up to the drawing room wireless after my lunch to hear the news. The Malayan news was still depressing. The Japs had taken Batu Pahat, 70 mls from Singapore. But for me there was some brightness. The announcer gave high praise to an Indian Regiment (Sikhs) which counter attacked the enemy in the region of Kluang yesterday. They inflicted heavy losses upon the enemy. Somehow or other I thought this *must* be where you and *your* men are? Am I right? How interested I shall be to hear all your experiences when you come home Frank. You shall grow tired of telling them because I shall want to hear them over & over again.

Here are the dates of the letters written to you since my last Trans-Atlantic letter for Christmas: Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> (family snaps), Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> (Christmas letter), Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> (snap of Daddie, Mammie & Mattie), Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>, January 9<sup>th</sup> (your mother's memoriam card), January 17<sup>th</sup>. I wonder how many have reached you.

With this letter I send you all of my love – to my dear one I can only spare a letter – you have my heart for what it is worth. You have all my prayers too, dear Frank. God keep you safe, your own loving, Eileen.

9 Holmview  
Omagh  
27:1:41

My own darling Frank,

Yesterday morning I sent off an 8 page letter to you. I can well imagine you receiving all my letters together. The bundle must be waiting for you at Singapore. When you receive them – if you do as I have done – you will immediately look for the post mark on each letter & read them as they were written. Or perhaps you will make a “B-line” for the last letter as some book readers go for the last page! Anyway, I do hope they will bring you as much pleasure as I have got in writing them. With no news of you for 3 whole weeks and no letter for 6 weeks I feel like writing to you more often than ever. I hate having other jobs to do and other letters to write. I only want to write to you darling. It is only you who can understand how I am worrying about you because I am loving you so much. I have not been in letter writing form for many weeks now – in other letters I am inclined to voice my worries, but you Frank you enjoy my letters with all their faults & failings, you enjoy hearing about my doings, my dreams, my joys & sorrows. That is why I always *want* to write to you – it is like having a long talk with a very dear friend who knows you & loves you no matter whether you are in good form or bad. I am not in bad form tonight – only worried, worried about you, Frank.

This morning I had a nice long letter from Mammie. She told me that there was a box (wooden & about the size of a large biscuit tin) waiting for me at home. It arrived by registered post from Mappin & Webb of Sheffield. It must be your beautiful Christmas present of a pair of candlesticks! How keen I am to see them but I have decided to make the act & wait until Aileen brings them personally to me on Monday next. Before I send off this letter I shall tell you all about them.

Mammie crocheted me a very nice pair of gloves for my birthday. They were greatly admired here & are more than cozy for going to Mass in the mornings and spinning up & down to school on the bike. Well, in today's letter, she wants to know, would I like some nice burgundy-coloured wool for the gloves. You see a very kind big brother of the aforesaid Anne brought her a very nice wine-coloured frock and shoes to tone. The gloves shall make the ensemble complete.

There was also a letter from Fergus enclosed. In it he said “I have a special message which I want you to give to Eileen from me as soon as possible. It is this, tell her that all the fathers here, including Fr Director and all the boys are praying hard for the safety and the return of Frank. This should be a great consolation to her”. This is only one of many such letters I am receiving and no doubt they do give me a lot of encouragement. I commenced a letter to Fergus this afternoon. I may finish it tonight. Poor little fellow, he does love letters, so it will give him a pleasant surprise. My trouble is how to write him without offending Joe. The only answer is to promise to write the latter in the near future. Woe betide me if I should fail! Joe is not the lad to let his bone go with the dog.

Did I tell you Frank, that Felix & Mona were away in Dublin last weekend? Larry Higgins got his final in December & Felix asked him to do a locum. It was Larry's 1<sup>st</sup> locum & he was all pleased with himself. They wanted him to bring his wife, Pauline along (Pauline is a 1<sup>st</sup> cousin of Frances') but she did not come. So Josephine was called upon to do cook etc. As Josephine was going off to the Christian Brothers past Pupils dance in the Club House, Balmoral on the Friday, Mammie went down & Jo relieved her the following day. Mammie says “Larry talked a lot about Frank. He said he was one of the nicest & best liked fellows at Queens”. He recalled the day of some big match. You were ill, darling, so he, Frank Martin & some other student went up to Beechwood to tell you all about the match. Do you remember the incident, Frank? You were beloved by all your school fellows. Even Una spoke of the devoted friends who came daily to your bedside when you were ill. I did not *even* know you were ill darling. Wasn't this culpable ignorance. What would Mrs Murray have said, not to mention her son, if I have appeared at Beechwood to perform one of the corporal works of mercy! What would you have said if I had popped my head round your door some afternoon & asked “How's the patient?” The “might have beens” of our romance are many, dearest. They hurt me now because I realise that had I not been so blinded with fear, we both might have been spared this awful parting. I ask God, tonight, to hear our joint prayer from different quarters of the globe, “Bring us together again safely and soon”.

Yesterday was a frightful day so the 2 Convent teachers from Holmview were none too early for morning class. As I was putting the finishing touches to my coiffure who did I spy walking along the back drive to the Convent but my good friend, Dr Heron. You must remember him, Frank! He is the bane of every teacher's existence! I have experienced him both as a pupil & as a teacher. Well, there was a mad rush to make class before he appeared. I was his first victim. He came to Form V Geography class (1<sup>st</sup> year seniors). We were doing the "Basin of the St. Laurence", a part of America I have actually seen. The children were brilliant, drew magnificent maps for me & altogether the class went with a great swing. I asked him to question them, but he refused. He then went to Mother Vincent, then Mother Gerard & finally to Aileen. In the afternoon great was my surprise to find him again in my class. This time the Form IV A (distinction junior grade). We were doing Malaya & the East Indies. He appeared very interested as all the islands mentioned in the daily war bulletin were pointed out. He refused to question them again. I was the only teacher to whom he gave the doubtful honour of a double-visit. It could have been a compliment but the compliment I prefer not to receive. He returned to the Convent this afternoon & went to hear the choir, which is very good under the able guidance of Miss Boland. At 4 p.m. he entertained nuns, teachers & senior pupils to a talk (1½ hours) on Poetry. Tomorrow he is lecturing us on "Prose". The poetry talk was very interesting & most instructive but unfortunately I had heard it & the examples as a member of Form VI in Mt Carmel Kilkeel in the year 1932 or was it 1931?

Aileen has the supper ready & is calling me. Good night darling. God bless you & protect you always. I shall never cease loving you as I love you now – and that is with all my heart & soul.

*Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> January*

Today my dearest one is one of the happiest and saddest days I have spent for many weeks – today the postman brought me two of your "long look-forward-to" letters, dated December 3<sup>rd</sup> and December 11<sup>th</sup>. I was just getting into my coat when I heard the postman's step at the door below. Then I heard Mary's voice "Miss O'Kane, there is a large post for you. With that I took those stairs 4 at a time but not too quickly to notice that the letters were those beloved blue letters which I am ever longing to receive. Poor Mary, I think I swung round her neck a few times with sheer delight. Mrs Ray appeared & told me how pleased she was. Aileen had not come down so I simply shouted my good news to her. Little did I care if the good Major *was* listening in to some favourite radio programme. I just could not contain myself. Six whole weeks without a single letter & then two. Now, you admit Frank I had a good excuse for upsetting the whole Ray family! Alas I could not read them because it was then well past the appointed hour to mount my bicycle. However I did open a strange letter which proved to be one from the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Company, London. In it was a cheque for £100. This came as such a surprise that I was left breathless. I know, in a recent letter (last term) you did mention that you were going to send me money to put in the Munster & Leinster Bank, High Street, Belfast in both our names. Well, my darling, I know this money must have come from you although there was nothing amongst all the papers the letter contained to tell me so. Thank you so much. I love this money because it is your earnings. God bless you for thinking too about our home. You can rest assured that this money will not be spent foolishly. I would not think of using it for any purpose other than for our home but I am wondering if it will be possible for me to draw it – since it will lie in both our names. I understand, in that case, your signature was needed for every withdrawal along with mine. This may not be the case. Tomorrow D & I shall call with Mr Vaughan in the Munster & Leinster Bank here & explain my problem. I had not intended going home until our ring arrived. Then, I had planned (not mentioned to anyone yet) having a little celebration. I had hopes of inviting & having your father & Anne, Fr Joe, Mona, Felix & Frances to Spring Villa for the Sunday of that famous weekend. Father Joe could bless the ring & in the presence of your dear ones & mine he could take your place & put it upon my finger. In order to manage this I should have to ask Monday morning off (the train does not reach Omagh until 10.45 a.m.). I shall do this when they wire me from home (as they have promised) that the ring has arrived. Every detail of that famous weekend will be written to you darling. You shall also have a cable.

To return to my letters. I rushed up to school, but instead of putting the children to study (as I wanted) I made an act & taught leaving the letters unread in my bag. Later in the morning my opportunity came & I became oblivious to all that was going on around me – I was away with you in Malaya. The tiny snap of my poor Frank was excellent. At first my heart missed a beat! (you know what I mean) because I thought you were ill. When I read that it was taken in Rawalpindi I was able to enjoy looking at it. I thought that instead of looking miserable (as you said) you looked very pleased with yourself. You had an expression on your face which I know so well. Strangely enough this *is* the first snap in which I get a glimpse of you as I remember you. Not that you were invalidated when last we met.

I did enjoy your descriptions of our circular tour of Ireland, but my dear fellow you have left out many parts (how annoyed our friends would be). There is Bagenalstown (where Auntie says we *must* spend part of our honeymoon). Then there is Carrickmacross (Sr Fidelis would never forgive me if I did not bring you to meet her – she knew you, through me since Ranafast days) not to mention dear Donegal. How happy we shall be visiting all your friends and mine.

You were worried darling about your dread of hurting me and you want me to promise always to say if I should be hurt. Of course I promise you. If I am hurt I shall come & tell you right away. You could never hurt me dear Frank, it is probably I, who will, unthinkingly hurt you. Please tell me, if I do. Your happiness is my main consideration. I have made you unhappy in the past but with God's help I shall never give you an unhappy moment in the future. Our home will be the happiest the world has ever seen because we shall strive to imitate Mary & Joseph in Nazareth. Our happiness shall then be so complete that we are both asked to suffer a little beforehand. When I feel very lonely, these thoughts come to console me.

It was very encouraging to hear your news about the Red Cross. Yes, I think the fact that you are wearing Our Lady's medal gave me more consolation than the automatic you now carry.

Though I have still lots to say – mostly concerning your own letters – yet bed is calling. Yes, dear one I *am* a sleepy head. Instead of the recognised 8 hours I claim 9 and sometimes 9 ½ these nights. I am really thinking of you when I go to bed early. I want to be so fit & well when you return to claim me.

Our friend Dr Heron cried off his prose lecture. He was not feeling up to the mark. I am ungrateful enough to say thank God because it was such a glorious afternoon I longed for the open spaces. Violet, Aileen & I had a 4 mile walk along the banks of the Strule (headwaters of the Foyle, which really only takes this name below Strabane).

Good night, my own dear Frank. God bless and protect you. Thank you for all the happiness you have given to me this day. The sadness came with the knowledge that this last might be your farewell letter. That cannot be – I shall go on hoping, no matter how long, that another will arrive soon. Please never say goodbye again in any of your letters. It really does hurt so very much. Goodbye sounds so final – I hate the word as I loathe all goodbyes. I cannot end today's diary on such a note so I'll tell you a joke. You remember Jack Finnegan? Well he is qualified now & is in the R.A.M.C. in Palestine, somewhere. He writes home to his mother, "I am in the place where Christ was born & I wished to Christ I was in the place where I was born (Falls Road)". Fred Breen is in Libya somewhere. He has never seen his son (Fred).

*Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> February*

You are wondering dear Frank, where I have been all this time! I am ashamed of myself for leaving this letter so long unfinished but come what may, off it shall go today. No, my own darling, boy you were not forgotten – how could I forget you when last week brought me such a lot of happiness & all from you too. Your two wonderful letters have been read so very often that now I can quote at length from them. I have not them beside me as I write because every word is written on my memory. Surely darling these letters will not be your last! I could not bear to think of weeks, perhaps months of silence. Your letters *must* get through to me & mine have just *got* to get through to you – even if it means my turning Heaven upside down in an attempt to get my friends up there to listen.

Now my trouble is where to begin – I must tell you first about your – oh so welcome – cable which reached me yesterday. It actually arrived in Belfast on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Thank you, thank you dear Frank for your good wishes for my birthday. I knew you would not forget it. How relieved I was to hear that you were safe and in Singapore. You have survived two whole months of the Malayan war and I *know* that you will come through the siege of Singapore too. No earnest prayer was ever left unanswered. Our prayers *shall* be heard and we shall soon be together safely again, never to be parted. I am not saying this because I *hope* it will happen but because I believe it. How do you know, when a cable has been sent? The Belfast cable folk are not very definite. I have decided that you sent the cable & the cheque about the same time (January 21<sup>st</sup>), when possibly you arrived in Singapore. You have no conception dearest Frank of the relief those cables can bring me. All the nuns & teachers at the Convent were almost as excited as myself. When each item of news comes to me I set out to tell those who are praying for you & I know it makes them so happy. This morning, coming out of Mass, Mollie Hughes whispered to me, "I offered my Mass & Holy Communion this morning for Frank & you, Eileen. I give you both a day each week."

I have been waiting for many weeks now before writing to Una, Margaret & Gerry. I knew they would be anxious for news of you & I also wanted to send them your snap (in car). Well, this is what I have been up to lately. I wrote your father & Anne first, gave them all the news of your letter, enclosed a snap & quoted the part about your privileges under the International Red Cross. I wrote the same type of letter to the other three

(enclosing a snap for each – which I sent with both our love labelling it Kuantan, Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> 1941). Una was very prompt with her reply. How happy I was that I had written her. She says I have no idea how welcome my letter was – she had heard nothing about you since Christmas (nothing of your January cables). She was charmed with your little snap & did wonder how you had been persuaded to “pose” for the camera. Next letter shall tell you of my replies from Anne, Gerry & Margaret. Altogether, Frank, Una’s letter was really a very friendly one. She was so worried about you. She says, “Since December I have been alternating between desperate hope & hopeless despair”. She explained that she had both a letter & card from you – both sent before the Far Eastern war. I *do* hope darling to keep in touch with all your dear ones. Your letters & cables to be made known to the others. I do not mean that I shall send them – but tell of their arrival & of the news they bring. I think you would want me to do this, Frank.

Now to tell you about the candlesticks! Aileen brought them safely to me on Monday. Josephine – bless her – had got up early & brought the precious box to the station. At 10.30 I flew up to the staff room to unpack my box but alas, they were so magnificently packed in a wooden case & bound (twice over) with copper wire that I could make no impression. Violet & I took it to the kitchen but even the implements there proved useless – so a disappointed young lady had to return to class and leave her precious box. At lunch I hurried home with it & between Mrs Ray, Mary & yours truly we unpacked my gift. Darling they *were beautiful!* I have never seen candlesticks I love so much. To think that they are ours, to repose in our home, to burn our candles each Christmas Eve. They shall always be my most cherished possession. I intended bringing them home & to Ballynahinch but now I find I cannot part with them even for a while. They stand on my mantelpiece (a bit of a crush) with your photo, my clock & *my* religion (a little water fount which Mammie brought me from Lourdes; a statue of the Infant of Prague and Margaret’s hand-made picture of the Little Flower). However the nuns & teachers insisted on seeing my gift so up to the Convent they had to go again, packed neatly into my basket (which Mrs Murnaghan bought for me in Carrickmore – thereby hangs a tale which I shall tell you later). I placed them on slate on our staff room mantelpiece & escorted each nun to admire them – you should have heard their praise. Tell me darling – have you seen our candlesticks? If not, let me know because I should *attempt* to draw them for you. I did this for the Spring Villa folk but of course I couldn’t do the candlestick justice – what “artist” could?

I am expecting word from the Red Cross tomorrow concerning a letter which I intend writing to Fr Ashness. I have remembered him & all our Malayan friends in my prayers. I *am* still at Mass & Holy Communion each morning (have not missed even *one* morning since December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1941). I commenced a 9-day novena to Our Lady of Lourdes yesterday. February 2<sup>nd</sup> & Feast of the Purification was the date Mattie entered. St Francis Xavier’s feast is also drawing near. All of these prayers are for you darling, darling Frank. Do take good care of yourself and *please* come back to me. I should die if anything were to happen to you. How I wish I were with you. I would not mind being besieged in Singapore. God speed this letter to you and bring you *all* the love that is in my heart. May He protect you now & always. May Our Lady of Lourdes watch over you, your ever loving,

Eileen.

9 Holmview  
Omagh  
Omagh  
Co. Tyrone  
Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, '42

Frank, my own darling,

Here I am with you once again. Yesterday was a very big milestone in my life, because there arrived by registered post from Belfast the ‘grandest’ cable I have ever seen. It was not so much the news you gave, as the confident and matter-of-fact way you spoke about your coming home that made me so happy. My heart just sang all day long. I read that cable so often that I know every word has been written forever upon my memory. Thank God you are well and happy darling – that was my first worry obliterated. You remember asking me to pray for your special intention – to get to a place where you could have daily Mass. Well our joint request has been answered, even though it did take the battle of Malaya to bring it about! Then you told me of having visited the Little Sisters in Singapore. How pleased I was to hear this. What did you think of Les Petites Soeurs des Pauvres? They are the most wonderful nuns in the world because they are entirely selfless. How I long to hear all the details of your visit. Do tell me. I wrote to Good Mother Germaine (Kilmainham, Dublin)

to give her this news of her fellow sisters in Singapore. The 'Good Mother' in the order is the *Reverend Mother*. I wrote to Una yesterday to tell her my good news. She has been very worried about you of late so if letters will make her less anxious I shall write each time I have news.

I phoned home last night & quoted every word of the cable. How thrilled they were to hear. They do love you so much, Frank. The family rosary each night is said for you and this is only a small fraction of the countless prayers which are said daily by *each* one in Spring Villa for your safety. Anne was over in Spring Villa for tea on Wednesday. They all went over to Clonard afterwards to commence the novena of Wednesdays to St Joseph. Anne is going to make her visit to Spring Villa a weekly one – Wednesday evening. I am so pleased about this. She was telling them that she had a letter and cable from you. You can rest assured darling that all the news of you that I receive shall be sent to every one of the family. News of you is precious to us all so *all* must hear it as soon as the post will allow.

How sad I was to hear that all the 13 letters I wrote to you since September 28<sup>th</sup> have not been received including one trans-Pacific letter for Christmas and two cables, one for Christmas and the other about our ring. You must be disappointed, darling one, that all your corresponding with your jewellers in Bombay had come to nought. Please, do not be sad, Frank because it was to have happened this way. Had it been sent and perhaps lost, it would have been heartbreaking. True enough I should have loved to see the ring of your choice but how much more shall I appreciate the ring when *you* place it for the first time upon my finger. What a wonderful celebration we shall have that day – of course darling, I shall wear my signet ring. I have never ceased to wear it on the third finger of my left hand since the day I promised to become your wife (except when I play golf. In this game the left hand has so much work to do that the ring blisters my finger – I am just wondering what I shall do with my wedding ring! The only solution I can find for my dilemma is to give up golf *because* I shall *never* cease to wear the ring which symbolises our unity). Apart from golf I wear the ring always – at school, at home, cleaning or washing. This ring, you will see on my finger (right hand) in the golf snap & the other snaps as well which I sent to you last summer. It bears my initials and was given to me years ago by Mammie – "at a time when she had little sense".

Frances will be pleased when I tell her of the special mention she got in a cable all the way from besieged Singapore – I told you how you made my heart sing all day yesterday. In the afternoon I cast all my "Saturday jobs" to the winds, mounted my machine and with Aileen & Mollie on similar vehicles chased the hunt for well over 15 miles. It was at Seskinore, 6 miles from Omagh. The day was in perfect harmony with my heart – the sun shone, there was very little wind, the birds were singing, the sky was blue and cloudless and the first of the season's snowdrops were peeping out here and there. Arriving at Seskinore we left the bikes at a farmhouse & followed horses & hounds through fields, over hedges for miles. The hunt over we decided it was too early to go home so we crossed the remaining 3 miles into Fintona. One of the hunt, Captain Chambers was returning with his groom & 2 idle horses. Mollie, being suitably clad in jodpurs etc. was invited to mount "Gipsey". The groom cycled into Fintona & we all met in the hotel where the Captain (an old friend of Mollie's) invited us all to have a glass of sherry. Though I have no pledge darling, I never drink so I had my lemonade between my friends armed with sherries!! Does this recall anything? The Captain is very keen that I should take up horseriding & has invited Mollie & me to come out to him for my teaching. He says he knows by looking at me, that he could make a horsewoman out of me in a month!! I would adore to find myself perched on a horse and galloping along. What do you say, darling to this wild notion your fiancée has got. Mollie is very anxious to make me a rider too.

Today I composed a cable for a man who means more than life itself to me. I wonder when will he receive it and will it bring him even a small fraction of the pleasure he has brought to me. If so I shall be quite satisfied. Don't you know darling how much I love you and am loving you every day we are parted. The war may go on for years but it will never change me. I am yours for ever & ever.

I am sleepy tonight because I was golfing this afternoon. This open-air weekend has left me gloriously tired. But I shall be up as usual at daily Mass now. Our petitions shall go up to Heaven like rockets now. I know we shall see each other soon.

I almost forgot to tell you about our joint banking account. The Munster & Leinster Bank here wrote to their branch in Belfast (High Street) but alas we cannot have a joint account – to draw out money from this account our both signatures would be necessary. To start even the joint account, a written statement would have to come from you. This worried me quite a bit darling because I wanted to carry out all your instructions minutely. What am I to do? High Street cashed your cheque & the money will remain there in my name until you let me know what I am to do. This is your money and I am worried lest anything should happen to me. I shall call with Mr O'Driscoll, the manager in High Street, when next I am in town. He might find a solution to my problem.

Good night dear Frank, in whatever part of Singapore you may be. God bless and protect you. Our Lady of Lourdes watch over you.