

Letters from Belfast

November 1945 — December 1945

“Beechwood”,
Sunday [25 Nov. 1945]

Eileen, my own darling,

It is Sunday morning (8am) and I am sitting up in bed writing to someone I have been dreaming about. I want you to have this wee note on Monday if possible, because I know how I shall be feeling then with you so far away.

My darling, what a wonderful, *wonderful* week we have just had together. It has been the happiest time of my life and if you have had the same happiness then you must be in the seventh heaven of joy. It's just no use trying to tell you, Eileen, how I feel about you — you will have to read it in my eyes in future. You can have some idea of how much I loved you in the prison camp (from the diary), but since Tuesday last my love for you has become really frightening. I awake in the night at times and think I am in prison still and begin longing over again to see you; and then I suddenly realise that I *am* really back home, that I saw you a few hours ago and kissed you good night — after that it's hopeless trying to sleep again!

My darling, I have felt so proud of you during the past week, no matter where we went together. I am proud to love you as I do and now I do not wish to love you more and more — I *know* that will happen just as sure as day follows night. Each day I find something more lovable about you. You *know* that there never was a love like ours, Eileen; there was *never* such happiness — so how could we ever thank God enough for such favours. God has been so good to us, darling, even to the point of embarrassment, because we are hopelessly incapable of ever repaying Him for it all.

You have guessed that I am in love with your family too — and that not just to please you, Eileen. I feel so much at home with them all and ever at my ease with them, as though I had always known and loved them.

You know that I haven't much time to write to you while my Eileen is still in Belfast, but when she goes back to Omagh I shall have more time for writing to you!

God bless you, Eileen, and may He keep you always as you are today.

All my love,

Frank.

“Beechwood”,
Monday afternoon [26 Nov. 1945]

Eileen, my own darling,

What have you done to me? Since you have gone and left me there is a large vacancy in my heart — and you have only been gone a few hours. Heaven alone knows what I shall feel like on Friday! I thought yesterday that my poor being could not contain any more love for you, but I might have known differently. Oh, my darling, what has been happening to us during the past week? Surely we have not been dreaming of such happiness. I always imagined the happiness of heaven to be like that — how could it be possible on earth?

And now I am missing you terribly, Eileen. I feel like a man who has lost his right arm. You have gone off to Omagh and you have taken a large chunk of poor me with you and as a result I cannot attempt to do *anything* properly. Don't you feel just a little bit ashamed of yourself? You are the only one in all the world who knows how happy I was last week; and only you can know what it means not seeing you every day as usual. Your love makes me so very happy even though I cannot see you. So do not imagine that I am being miserable without you, because I'm not! Sure, darling, how could we be miserable in days like these. Your weekends will be all the more wonderful when they come.

You will laugh when I tell you what happened on the phone this morning. When I had lost my first half-crown (it was really yours) in small change, I had to race across to the barber's shop, get another ½ crown changed and dash back again to you. I was sure it would take another 2¾ minutes to find you again! It was such a relief to

hear your voice at the other end. I agree that ringing the convent is not a big success and that the hotel would be much better.

Darling, I had a grand time at the dinner last night. I met Bradley, Maguire, Marron, Fitzpatrick, Felix, O'Kane, Scott, O'Neill, Fr M. Kelly, John A., Coleman, etc. They gave me a great reception and were all genuinely glad to see me again. All this limelight is going to my head. Jackie O'Kane tried to drag Felix and me off to the Ceilidhe but without success. However we were firm and went off to Campbells to collect Mona. I had a "nasty" shock there when I found *no less* than *six* ladies awaiting us. Well you would know, being a lady, what happens to two poor defenceless men when they fall foul of six ladies!! But, I did enjoy myself and the supper too. All the while I was comparing them with my best girl and though they were nice and I liked them, they were found wanting. What an awful habit I have of dissecting people! It is almost ghoulish. We left Campbells about midnight.

On reaching Beechwood I found a supper party in full swing – 5 females and a priest from Magherafelt. Nellie London was one of the former. Again my dissection was continued with the inevitable result! And then at 12.30 a.m. Anne and I discovered (when the party had left), Philip's and Anne's coats on the back door!

I met Anne this morning and I think she is a grand girl. She seems so capable and sensible too. She will be a mother to Philip as well as a wife – and that's what he needs. Father and I went to the bank and closed our joint account transferring £129 to his account. I refused to touch a penny of it. He still raves about a practice over the shop! He plans to leave everything (money etc.) to me and says that I am to dole it in small quantities to Anne or Philip as they need it! He says they are spendthrifts – Anne spends £40 a year! Anne agrees to all the arrangements because she knows I want nothing to do with the money or the houses! She told me this morning that she is very happy and contented – thank God for that.

Philip and Anne are due to go to Bangor this evening. They have invited me down to visit them. Darling, Philip showed me *our* present, the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. It is lovely, Eileen, and I only hope we can have one like it too. Everyone is in love with my dressing gown – all the ladies want to wear it as a coat. I must bring it up to Mammie tomorrow when I have my bag again. I shall go up to Spring Villa for tea today (uninvited) and see them all. May be *they* will give me a picture of you for my room if you won't!

I have written to all my boys in England this afternoon and now I have the cramp. You must excuse this paper, etc. and you must *not* expect such long letters daily from me.

Please, my darling, have plenty of rest and sleep. Take care of yourself because I am selfish and do not wish to die of a broken heart.

God bless you, Eileen,
All my love,
Frank.

"Beechwood"

Tuesday. 2 p.m. [27 Nov. 1945]

My own darling,

I am writing early today because I shall be busy later being entertained, *as usual* – O'Kane's at 4 p.m.; Wright's at 6 p.m.; and O'Kelly's at 7.30 p.m. Your fiancé is still in great demand!

Oh, my darling, I am back to the old days again when I spent my time yearning to see you; but of course there is a big difference now. I am so very, very happy that it seems almost like a sweet delirium. Thank God for the phone, so that I can hear your voice each day. I could dance with joy every morning coming from Mass because I am so much nearer to you then, Eileen. Besides you know my ideas after Holy Communion. I feel ashamed at times to have the King of Kings actually in my heart. I am so very grateful to Him for my deliverance, but above all for you, Eileen, and your love. My gratitude seems so very inadequate to the wonderful blessings we have received. Yet I keep on asking Him for more favours each morning – to bless our love, our marriage, and our home. Darling, I *know* that two people in this world have *never* been so privileged as we, two people have never felt as we do about each other and everything; there has never been a love like ours, a companionship, or a happiness like ours, Eileen. And so we pray that it will never change in any way – I know it won't darling. It will always be the same.

I must tell you something now and *please* think about it. I *have* got faults and plenty of them and you must *not* get the idea that I haven't got any at all. You are so much in love that you can see no wrong in me. I am

only human, Eileen, and so are you, so please do not imagine that I am out of the ordinary. I do not want you to suffer from disillusionment when you find out that your idol has feet of clay. You are higher up on your pedestal than ever before and nothing can ever shake you or touch you. I still worship at your shrine as I did so many years ago in Malaya and long before that too. When I am writing to you or for you I cannot stop! But I must get on with the news.

I went to Spring Villa yesterday afternoon and had tea with them all. I told them that I just came for *tea* and not to see them! Mairead produced a chess board and we had a couple of games and showed Josephine how to play. While showing Mairead some tricks she beat me! But things were different in the second game. I bought a chess book for them in town today. I walked with Mairead to St Malachy's for her choir practice. She was exhausted poor child when we reached our destination – she had done the walk in record time. She finds Hugh a bit trying at times and feels sorry after the argument. Eileen, you should tell Mammie that Jo is too thin and works too hard. I don't like interfering.

I rang up Frank Duff last night and he seemed glad to hear I was back alive. I am to go down to see him next Tuesday. When I reached Beechwood I found Pat Murray and his sisters in the kitchen. Father produced one of my Manila cigars and nearly choked poor Pat with one! I went to Ardoyne this morning and came back walking on air (as usual). My happy morning was complete with your letter, Eileen. Need I tell you how much I love you – sure it's better you should hear it every day now, as you will hear it every day of your life afterwards. You might as well get used to it. By the way I had a letter from Mr Wimsey, my Irish friend of Ipoh days. He survived the horrors of Thailand thank God, but his wife is ill. He is living at Balbriggan. I went to town after breakfast and phoned my girl friend – I mean my present one – because I have had *so* many; all the girls love me! I am very modest just at the moment.

Father keeps talking about the practice above the shop. Did I tell you that Felix is *beseaching* me to become his partner. He thinks that I am worth £1000 a year to him. He wants me down *any* time to see how the practice is run; he says I should try my hand at it. He's keen to get away for an occasional weekend and I promised to do it for him any time at the New Year. What do *you* think, Eileen? He says he is not the quarrelling type. Well I was with MacSherry for over 2 years and never a word did we have! I want to hear your opinions about it all.

I must have lunch now and dash off to Spring Villa with the dressing gown.

God bless you, darling,
All my love,
Forever yours,
Frank x x x x

P.S. I was not allowed to put "x x x" in my cards from Japan. They thought it was some code.

Frank

P.S. Shall ring you at 1 o'clock 124

Frank.

Beechwood,
Wednesday
2 p.m. [28 Nov. 1945]

My own darling,

I can feel that this will be a dreadful letter. I began the first few words in Gerry's house and now I am finishing it in O'Kelly's!

Darling, I have missed you today so very much. I find myself unconsciously peering into girls' faces in town wondering will one of them be you. You know that I am longing with all of my heart and soul to see you again. And now today I *know* how much I really love you – you have all of me and a bit more; you have all of my personality past and future – they all belong to you. I *now* realise that you have come through hell for my sake while I have been away. I knew you would be suffering and that made me sad in the camp, but how could I know how much you have endured for my sake.

I am ashamed of this letter, Eileen, but I haven't had a moment all day until now. I went to Mass and Communion this morning to Ardoyne; then dashed off to Gerry's sister's house to find out his address. It took me an hour to reach Belmont Road. I explained things to Gerry and Nan that I would have to postpone my visit to

them this evening. They were very nice and gave me lunch. Then I went to Beechwood where I collected the dressing gown and rushed off to Spring Villa to show it off. They all fell in love with it, Eileen! Daddie and I might go to a C.B.S. lecture on Thomas Davis. And here I am at Auntie's having a lovely time. They were very good to allow me to write you from here. So please, darling, understand my awful rush today. I send you all the love of my heart; it will always be yours. One of the enclosed letters is from Athel's mother (the authoress) and the other from a grateful parent. This is the worst letter I have ever written in my life to you. I shall love you forever and ever. Father now talks about selling the shop *if* I didn't want it. I broke the sad news about his health to him. He took it well. Eileen darling hurry home to me quickly or I shall die. I know I could not live without you.

Forever your own
Frank.

Beechwood,
Thursday 1 a.m.! (*Bed*) [29 Nov. 1945]

My own darling,

I have felt so unhappy about that dreadful letter I sent you last night from O'Kelly's, and now I must try to make amends. I love you so much tonight that I could cry and yet I know so well that my love cannot compare with yours, Eileen. I have been re-reading your letters of the Malayan campaign period and am convinced that if I were to spend the remainder of my life on my knees I could never make up to you for the misery you have had on my account. Why, it almost killed you, my precious darling. You love me much, *much* more than I deserve. My poor love seems so very inadequate and puny when placed beside yours. I have good reason to love you with every fibre of my being and I know that I can never give you enough of that poor love or of my poor self. And now I want to ask *you* the question that you have asked me so very often – *why* have *you* selected *me* as the one on whom you shower your affection? Why am I so fortunate? I do *not* deserve the happiness which you and your love have brought to me. Why oh why have I hurt you so much in the past? What kind of a stupid, silly fool have I been in those days to cause you so much unhappiness? I know that I can never satisfy myself about it at all. I can but do my best to make you the happiest of all women on earth. If I can but give to you a small fraction of the happiness which you have given to me, then I shall have had my reward. I live only for you, Eileen; my life and very, very self are yours. You are my inspiration and my pattern. *If* I am good, it is *your* doing; if I achieve anything in life, *you* are responsible for my success. Do you still remember this – “*you* are me, and *I* am *you*”? I would cease to have any existence without you – you are my ideal, and the essence of my very life. We have been chosen by *God* for each other and I sense in my soul that we can rise to the great heights and achieve great things together. But, without you, Eileen, I am worse than useless. I can never thank God enough for giving you to me. I have never done anything in my life to deserve you as my life's partner. I know so much better than you how much more fortunate and blessed I am than you. Don't you see the awful discrepancy – I have got you, Eileen, and you have only got *me* for life. I don't envy you a bit. I keep on *telling* you that I am only very ordinary, but you won't listen to reason. And now my life's problem is how on earth am I to span this awful bridge between us? I can but pray to God for help and give you all my love, my heart and myself, my talents, and my *all*. And now can you realise how much I love you, my darling? No love has ever been tested as ours has been; no love has ever been purified in the hot flame of suffering as ours has been. With God's help our love will become more perfect in His sight each day of our lives. You must *not* worry one little bit about our marriage – we put it in the hands of God and His Holy Mother and do our best at the same time. You will never know a single moment's unhappiness at my hands. You see, darling, I have always had a very special reverence for you that I have never entertained for anyone else on this earth. This being my 5th page of this paragraph, you must be out of breath reading it.

I had a lovely time at O'Kellys and have promised to return soon again. Uncle Eddie, daddie, and I went to a lecture at 8 p.m. in St. Mary's Hall on “Thomas Davis” by Sean McName. It was truly wonderful. I then went to Spring Villa to collect my dressing gown and also had supper. I hope my letter reaches you today even though it is *terrible*. It was posted at 7 p.m. at Broadway.

Gerry and Nan are very happy together and I am in love with Brendan. He and I had some grand fun on our hands and knees all over the sitting room! We have been invited to visit this happy home next Sunday afternoon about 4 p.m.

Darling, I have *millions* of things to tell you at this moment but maybe when we meet again I shall just look into your eyes and not say a word. I am off to Magherafelt in a few hours (it's now 2 a.m.) and I'm not a bit

keen about going, *because* it might interfere with letters and phone calls. Darling, will *you* promise never to leave me again, once you leave Omagh at Christmas? I just could not bear it. Each day you are away becomes more and more hard to endure.

God bless you, Eileen,
All my love,
Frank x x x x x x x x -

Beechwood,
Friday 5 p.m. [30 Nov. 1945]

My own darling,

I arrived back safely from Magherafelt at 4 p.m., thank God. I am so much in love with you, Eileen, that no matter where I go I find myself taking *great* care that nothing happens to me because then you would suffer. Will you please do the same thing for me, Eileen. I dare not think of you having an accident – it's too horrible to think about. I always prayed so very hard when you were on your cycling tours; it worried me no end. But God has watched over us both and brought us together again in a very miraculous way and we cannot be grateful enough.

Darling, I keep praying *and* praying to God that you will *never* be disappointed in me. I keep on and on telling you that I am human, but you don't pay any attention, you're a terrible girl to love me so much! You must take off those rose-tinted glasses you have been wearing all these years! It is very different in my case. You see, Eileen, I came home loving you with everything that I had got; then I found that you were *much*, much more wonderful than I ever dreamed you would be. So my obvious problem was – how to love you even more than before? I have prayed so much harder since coming home for *grace* to love you more – because it is grace in our case. And my prayers are being answered daily.

Oh how I am longing for tomorrow to come. You cannot imagine the store of love that has been accumulating in my heart during this never-ending week. Darling, you have promised faithfully *never* to leave me again and I must keep you to that promise. Surely it is a lovely thought that everything we do and everywhere we go for the rest of our lives we shall be together always. Joys are much more wonderful when shared; and sorrows much lighter. Our successes and failures will be the same.

I will not attempt to tell you of my day in Magherafelt; it was rather dull and I found no thrill in visiting the scene of some very happy childhood experiences. Two very special things happened – I had two 6-minute phone calls with my best girl. Darling, I know it is expensive but I *cannot* do without hearing your voice every day of my life.

When I reached home today I found your letter waiting for me and oh I could have danced for joy. *We* had a Christmas greeting air mail letter from Nair in India. I am enclosing it for you.

I am going up to Spring Villa this evening. Father says that Hugh got the buttermilk yesterday! Darling, *we are going to have a quiet walk this weekend* and nobody will stop us. We have so very much to talk about that it cannot be done in Beechwood or Spring Villa *or* in tram-cars either!

I shall not ring you tomorrow but you'll find me at the station with wide open arms long before 4 p.m.

All my love, Eileen,
Frank.

“Beechwood”,
Saturday 2 p.m. [1 Dec. 1945]

My own darling,

You are a terrible person making me write to you every day! And yet I would not feel happy if you spent a day in Omagh without a line from me. If letters will make you feel happy then I shall write to you every day of my life – even when we are married. I would do any mortal thing for your happiness, Eileen. I shall spend all my days trying to make you happy. I love you so much, darling, that my very self belongs to you; my whole life is yours. I have always said that there never was a love like ours, Eileen, and every day I can see how very

true my words were. We must have been chosen by God for each other; He has given us this great love. Maybe He allowed us to suffer badly during all these years, but oh what happiness He has given to us during these past few days. I think that that first moment at Larne when you were in my arms just made up for everything.

And now each day I am finding out more lovable things about your sweet self, and I am loving you all the more for them. These are little things about your character which would never appear in any letter you might write; little things you say; your various facial expression which were unknown to me before – I love them all and want to love you more than I do. Can you understand all of this? Do you remember the snap you sent me (to Japan) of yourself standing on the steps of Spring Villa – all dressed up and showing the engagement ring? When I received that snap I thought you looked perfect! And now I think it looks *awful* compared with the young lady who met me at Larne! I mean this, darling. May be you think I am very unstable to be changing so quickly, but where you are concerned every single thing has changed for the best. I shall always be proud to have you by my side and to take you into any company, all the while knowing you to be so much better than any woman on this earth. Please, darling, understand that if I do not spend my time with you lauding you to the skies, I do not love *everything* about you. I love you for your own dear self.

By the way, Eileen, I *cannot* marry you until you faithfully promise me that all your money and property will *always* remain in your own name and that it will not be spent on anyone but you. I should hate to marry you, darling, and leave any doubt in *your* mind about my attitude towards your money. I don't care what other people think. I want to marry you for yourself, Eileen; there must be no sordid details about money coming into *our* love.

And now I must have lunch and run off to meet my best girl at the station. I have a surprise for her too because my scroll has arrived from Canada. Nobody must see it but my beloved one – father and Anne must always come after her. May God bless and protect you, darling, and bring you safely back to me today.

All my love,
Forever and ever your own
Frank.

Beechwood,
Monday 6 p.m. [3 Dec. 1945]

My own darling,

It was the heaven of yesterday that made me realise how much I do love you, what real happiness means, how much I am dependent upon you and how very unworthy I am of you and your love. And then to part with you for another long, dreary week – I didn't know what I did today other than go to the dentist after Mass in the morning. I have walked aimlessly along, around the shop, through its rooms, over to Beechwood and through its rooms, sat around the fire – and all the time missing you terribly, as though you were thousands of miles away. Darling, the sooner Friday comes and we are together never to part, the better for us both. I *cannot* and *could* not live without seeing you every day of my life. I have not had a very exciting day – maybe we had *too* much happiness yesterday. But oh, my darling, those precious priceless moments of pure joy we had, they are worth all the countless hours of suffering we have had in the past. It will always be the same in the future, one moment of joy together will obliterate all sorrow.

Eileen, we have never known each other as we have during the past two days. How am I to tell you about it when it is all in your heart already? If I could only be good enough for you, my darling; if I could only deserve the happiness which you have given to me? I knew you were always good and holy and pure; but when I got a glimpse of the real purity and sanctity of your soul, I felt ashamed of my love. And now you have soared away above me on a higher pedestal, and I shall have to climb to greater heights to ever reach you. Can't you understand, Eileen, that anything decent I have ever done during all these years was due to you – I wanted to reach your heights, I wanted to be much better in every way so that I might be worthy of you; I wanted to come home and make you feel proud of me; I wanted to make amends to you for all the unhappiness I had caused you – I wanted you to be very, very happy because you deserve it more than any woman in the world.

And now I have an awful confession to make – Eileen, you were really beautiful yesterday. Your face radiated such beauty as I have never seen before in any face. Your very soul was shining in your eyes. I wanted to tell you this, but you must have understood from the way I looked at you. Won't you *please* tell me to stop writing, because I have a date with Jo! But, Eileen, my darling what of what is happening to this love of ours? It's soaring higher and higher every day; in fact one of these days our feet will not be treading this earth at all and we shall soar away with it.

Darling, the dentist was very pleased with my teeth and I only needed *one* filling. I had a bit of drilling this morning. He is to polish the filling on Thursday and then I am finished! Now, young woman, the first thing you will do on 19th December will be to make an appointment with Gilmore and have that tooth out. I shall go with you and hold your hand – I really mean this.

Father won't hear of me using his precious shop as a surgery – I *must* use the rooms above the shop! The rooms are quite suitable for a surgery but I could *never* ask you to live there. We *must* live at Beechwood, at least for a time with father. It will all turn out for the best in the end. I *know* so well, darling, that we should be alone and if that is possible I shall fix it, but darling if we just haven't got the money to but a practice, a house, and a car we may *have* to be content with this. But we must keep on praying as never before. I had a letter from the Army Pay Office and according to it I have been paid as a Major during my captivity. My total credits are in the region of £1,600; my annual income was £600 p.a. of which £200 p.a. went on Income Tax!

Darling, tomorrow morning I have to go to Mrs McOscar's funeral and will not be able to go to Portaferry until the afternoon. I might even postpone my visit until Wednesday. So, my darling, I shall have to ring you at the hotel at 1 o'clock as usual. Are you very annoyed, my darling? I did not thank you enough for your lovely birthday gift. You know that it is the most priceless gift that any man could be given. What do ordinary presents mean to us, Eileen? You can buy them with money. Do you realise how many, many priceless gifts that God has given to us that all the money in the world could never buy?

I have been very happy since I promised you never to drink again. It is just another link in the chain of our love, which is binding so closely together. I don't think that *you* have any more links to add, but I feel that I have many more to put in. It would be truly wonderful if I could write down everything that is in my heart at this moment.

God bless you, my own darling,
All my love,
Frank. x x x x x x x

Beechwood,
Tuesday 12.15 p.m.
Dec. 4th!

My own darling,

My hands are frozen and I am wet to the skin and I have just returned from the funeral and I have to ring my best girl at 1 p.m. and have some lunch and catch a bus at 1.15 p.m. *and* so you must not expect a letter at all. I'm in a *mad* rush, as usual.

I had your lovely letter this morning and so began my first birthday at home. Somehow it is awful having to spend it without you. I had a nice letter from the War Office telling me nice things about myself, but father has grabbed it for the next 24 hours to show around to the neighbours! But you shall have it for keeps very soon.

Darling, I love you, I love you and will love you for ever and ever. Please hurry home to me.

God bless you, darling,
All my love,
Frank.

Beechwood,
Wednesday 4 p.m. [5 Dec. 1945]

My own darling,

My head is going round and round and I don't know where to begin. I am terribly ashamed of the letter I scrawled to you yesterday. Please, darling, *never* go away from me again. I love you too much to allow it. I just *cannot* do anything without you. Never did I dream that my love for you would reach these dazzling heights. *I*, above all people, who was *so* independent in the past now find myself entirely dependent upon you, Eileen. Do you mind if I lean upon you for support in my awful plight? I refuse to attempt to tell you how much I love you, but I do love you with my heart and soul. I felt you beside me all day yesterday and that was so consoling

for your absence. *But* it must never happen again this way because we *must* be together forever and ever and never be separated.

I had a nice wet day at Portaferry yesterday. Frank and Violet were overjoyed to see me again – they prepared for my return morning and evening. They lead a very quiet life down there – no dances, no company much, but they are happy. However, I could see at a glance that we shall be much happier than they. Darling, they gave me lots of advice about the practice *and* about being married to a doctor! “He promises to be back for lunch at 2 p.m. and turns up at 3 p.m.”! Will *you* be *very* annoyed, Eileen, if I do this sort of thing. Also I was warned *not* to go off places without taking my wife with me. Oh my darling, how unnecessary to tell me this. It seems that Frank used to go off playing badminton and left Violet alone many evenings! They forced me to stay the night because Frank had afternoon and evening surgeries and wouldn’t have had time to talk to me. I did *not* envy them *because* we shall have a happier home please God.

I have just had a wire from Finucane saying that he is coming tomorrow morning. He should have been here today and daddy had a seat booked for him at the play tonight, but mammie has cancelled the booking. I am due at Spring Villa at 5 p.m. this evening.

I have received an invitation to Mr Evans’ wedding on Dec. 31st at Carrickfergus. He was a sergeant in the prison camp. You will like him Eileen. He has invited us to lunch with him on Saturday. What on earth poor Finucane will have for entertainment this week I do not know. Darling, I don’t know where I am today.

Anne says father has shown this War Office letter to *every* customer that came into the shop in the past 24 hours! And he also tells them that I am starting a practice above the shop. A big secret – Anne is talking of getting married to Stanley Wood, a Naval officer who wishes to become a Catholic. I think she is really doing it to solve her problems. You will not tell anyone, Eileen? Poor kid does not know what to do. I am to meet her boy friend tomorrow evening at Kathy Bennett’s house. *Again*, will poor Finucane be invited? If not I cannot go either.

I had an official letter from the War Office saying that it is *official* that I have been a Major for the past 4 years and paid as such. Of course *pa* is charmed! I had two birthday cards from Birmingham – one from Mrs Day and her mother (90 years) and one from Dr. Lucy. Apparently they still love me. Paddy is married and is having a baby this month! So you need *never* be jealous of Violet, Paddy, *or* Mary!! – they are all married and have babies. So they couldn’t have loved your beloved Frank at all!

Darling, it will not be possible for us to have a practice at Beechwood for many years to come. I haven’t told father this, but according to Frank Duff it will take nearly £2,000 to start a practice & equip a surgery. So we could not equip two places at once. *Besides*, what are we going to live on for the next two years? Darling mine, it is a terrific problem and all we can do is to pray.

Eileen, darling, I shall ring you tonight at 6.5 pm as you suggest. We certainly need to save our money in every way. But how I hate being miserly about anything where you are concerned. I must be off to Spring Villa.

God bless you, darling,
All my love,
Frank.

Spring Villa,
Wednesday. 7 p.m. [5 Dec. 1945]

My very own darling,

I cannot rest until I tell you that you are more dear to me than anyone or anything or life or death. You must have had a terrible time in the dentist’s chair with those awful roots. Thank God it is all over now – you will be much better for it. But my darling, you should have waited and had it done in Belfast where I could have been with you in person. You *must* promise me that we will always be together no matter what we face together.

And now they are calling me to go to the Group.

All my love,
Frank. x x x x

Beechwood,
Thursday 11 a.m. [6 Dec. 1945]

My own darling,

I am walking on air today because I know that this is the last day we shall ever be separated. This has been a long, dreary week and I never want one like it again. There has been worry and disappointment which I shall tell you all about when we meet. I find that I am useless, unless you are by my side – I have no confidence in myself at all. So now you see how *strong* your beloved Frank is – he is really a weakling and will always be as long as he is not with you. I am so happy when your letter arrives in the morning and then when I hear your dear voice over the phone. Thank God letters and phone calls will not be necessary when tomorrow comes – we shall find our real happiness in each others' company.

Darling, I felt awful about your poor teeth. To think that I sent you a letter yesterday and didn't even mention it at all. I am far too much of an egoist; my letters are all "I's" and not nearly enough "you's" in them. And yet I adore you and every single thing about you, and that includes your *faults*. You have *no* faults compared with mine. After what you told me on Sunday I am afraid to kiss you, Eileen, you are so good. I feel so very unworthy of you, my darling; and really wicked when in your presence. You will have to make me as good as yourself, because only then can I be deserving of you and your love.

It is now 4.30 p.m., so I must explain myself. Finucane arrived at 11.30 a.m. I made him his breakfast – fried ham, eggs, fried bread, fried pancakes etc. I really envied him this feast. Darling, would you like me to make you such a breakfast some day just to show you that I am not entirely *useless*. I know you would like it in bed on Sunday mornings! Well, I rushed off to the dentist at 11.45 a.m., had my filling polished, and back to Beechwood. (Gilmore would not accept any money for the filling.) Finucane and I then went to Spring Villa where we had lunch with mammie, daddy, Jo and Hugh. My visitor has not much to say for himself but the climate is not to his liking – besides I cannot take him off to Dublin to show him the sights. He can't even go to these places because of his uniform. Anyhow your mammie made him feel at home – everyone did. I showed him our Malaya snaps. Then we went shopping in town where I bought him some nice Irish souvenirs – Irish calendar, brooch with shamrock, and Eire stamps. Back to Beechwood where he met Father and Anne. And now we are at Beechwood's fire, writing. I was up before the lark this morning and waited at the Liverpool boat for 1½ hours for Finucane; he came via Heysham at 10.30 a.m.!

I am not going to the Newman dance tonight and nobody tried to coax me. Jo is not going either as she will be teaching late. Mairead and Hugh are going – the former in Jo's frock (a bit of a squeeze!). By the way darling, you will be disappointed to hear that your shoes are "non est". The lady in the shop sold them, but said they were a size too small for you anyhow. Darling, the first person I want to dance with is you, Eileen, and until *you* are available I *will* not dance. Jo was so very sure that I would not go to the Newman dance without you, Eileen. I have *no* frock, anyway, as dress is formal! (to keep out the dirt!). Do you know that I have "tails" in India that have never been worn yet. My dinner jacket, though, is old and grey.

Darling, would you be fit to go to this luncheon party on Saturday at the Abercorn at 12.30 p.m.? I hope your face will be better by that time because I want you to meet Roy Evans. It will be rather awkward for us this weekend with Tom Finucane, but we shall have to make our sacrifice and offer it up. However we *must* have that walk over Hightown which we promised ourselves. Darling, I am looking forward to seeing you tomorrow, because until you are in my arms again I shall know no peace. Somehow I am very restless and *unreliable* while you are away – so never go away again. I had about 7 letters today, but they will keep till the weekend. It will soon be time to ring you up and tell you how much I love you; but that is not possible to put into words. But I do love you, Eileen, more than any man could ever love a woman. I must tell you again that we have a very exceptional love and people do *not* make love nowadays in the very wonderful way in which we do. Darling, it is a sacred, holy trust and will *never, never* change it. It is pure and good in God's sight and it will bring us true happiness.

God bless you, darling,
Forever your own
Frank.

"Beechwood",
Friday 1 p.m. [14 Dec. 1945]

My own darling,

By the time this reaches you, you will know that I am in an awful fix and I feel that you have been let down. I arrived at Beechwood at 9.30 this morning to find that Fr. Kennedy had gone off to Moira and that he would phone further developments. Well, darling, he phoned Wright's at noon to say that he would be detained in hospital for 24 hours, also that he wished me to go with him to the Rugby match at Ravenhill tomorrow (I have just seen two 7s/6d tickets on the mantelpiece!). Well, my darling, at the same time a telegram came for me from the Moira Hospital ordering me to report at the Ophthalmic Centre (near St. Malachy's College) at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Eileen, my own darling, to think that I could have been with you all day today and here I am stranded in Belfast so far away from you – well I feel like a good weep at any moment! It would have been time enough to leave Omagh tomorrow morning. We should have had this evening to ourselves. Darling mine, you know how much I am in love with you. You are my all and when I have not got you I have nothing and I am nobody. Eileen dear this is awful being away from you – and I promised faithfully never to leave you, to see you every day of our lives, and now I have to wait till tomorrow evening to see you. I am at a loss what to say to you or how to console you; I feel so guilty about it all. But I *love* you Eileen and I am all yours forever and ever – that is all I can give you. We have had such a lovely week together; every moment with you was just too exquisite and every moment apart from you, you were in my thoughts. You certainly have become *all* of me. Please hurry and finish with school and then our partings will really end. That is the sad, cruel part of being so much in love – we suffer so much when separated, but darling, *please* think hard about our reunion tomorrow night. I did not imagine that I could love you so much, but now that you are not with me I know how very deep that love is. I would do anything on earth for you; I want to die for you to show you what my love is like. It's so painful at times that I think Cupid has been working overtime with those arrows!

Darling, I rang up Spring Villa at noon and what a surprise to find that Fergus has come home unexpectedly. They are all overjoyed. I am going up for tea and will stay for ages. I am dying to meet Fergus and have a talk with him. Fr. Kennedy and I are going up for tea tomorrow after the match. Four of your Australian letters reached here this morning, also Margaret's and Mammie's. I am devouring them all, as usual.

You cannot imagine how happy Anne is nowadays. She assures me that Stanley is the real thing and that she is not doing it to escape. She had to wait till I came home and find out what her brother was like! She was very surprised about the cheque. She thought her joy was complete when I came home changed. Tom Finucane bought her a nice pair of stockings on the day he left.

Eileen, my darling, I have a surprise for you when we meet again tomorrow evening. Now don't be curious! I shall ring you tomorrow at 6 p.m. too. Remember that I worship you and everything about you. You have looked a picture during the past two days. Please have plenty of rest!

God bless you, Eileen.

All my love,

Frank. x x x

P.S. Thank Mollie H. for not allowing me to talk about Japan! Love to Aileen!

Frank

"Beechwood",
Friday 9.45 p.m. [14 Dec. 1945]

Eileen, my very own darling,

I have never spent a more miserable day in all my life. I know it is very wrong to feel so low at a time like this when we are in the crest of our wave of happiness – and yet I *know* that we have not really reached the peak of our joy. Oh, my Eileen, how I do love you this night above all nights of my life. I am in such pain that I have weepy myself silly this morning. Darling, I cannot live without seeing you every day – you are my life and I know tonight that I would go crazy without you for another day. Surely in the future we can arrange things that we must never be separated again. Darling, it seems awful that we should be parted like this, especially as Fr. Kennedy is no particular friend of mine; but I *did* invite him to stay at Beechwood when he would come to Belfast for his medical examination and so I had to keep my promise and entertain him. And now I haven't even seen him! If you hadn't told me that you would be going to bed early this evening I would have gone to Omagh on the

7.35 train and come back here tomorrow morning. Father would have thought me crazy but I know you would have understood my apparent craziness. You know that there is nothing I would not do to make you happy. That is the only aim of my life – you and your happiness. I want to tell you so much, Eileen, but tonight my heart is too full. Thank God you are having a rest this evening. You were tired at Mollie's last night – maybe you think I did not notice you.

Father and I have just finished the Rosary. Every single prayer was for you my darling one. I am a bit happier now that I have been doing something for you. I want to always do things for you. How can I ever love you enough, or do enough for you or bring you enough happiness. You, who have suffered so much on my account, how can I give you more and more love. Darling, I shall always love you with a tenderness and a gentleness which nobody but you will understand. We are so privileged to have such a precious love, Eileen, and the glory of it is that only we two know about it. I must tell you again that people do *not* make love nowadays as we are now doing! I shall always have that veneration and respect for you and your person, Eileen, that began so many years ago. We shall have untold happiness together. We shall thank God for the rest of our lives for all he has done for us. I think He has been very biased on our behalf, and has not been fair to others more worthy than us. Did you know that I owe a lot of my idealism to two people – Jane Austen and Schubert? When I was very young these two just gripped my heart in a vice and left their mark on me ever since then. So when you came along, Eileen, I made you the queen of my heart – you were my ideal. You will always maintain that place in my heart, you will always be my ideal because there is no other woman on this earth like you. It is easy for me to love you forever and ever – and that is not long enough.

It is nearing midnight, darling, as father has been talking a lot – poor man. I should mention that I have met Fergus and love him dearly. There was a 'flu epidemic starting in the college and they were all suddenly packed off home on 2 hours' notice!

Darling, I shall ring you at 6 p.m. and then run for the 6.50 train (due at Omagh at 9.23). I cannot be happy until we meet.

God bless you, Eileen,
All my love,
Frank X