

Letters from Omagh

October 1945 — December 1945

9, Holmview,
Omagh.
Friday Oct. 10

My own darling,

I should have written this two days ago but a boy I am very much in love with is to blame. Can you imagine anyone receiving 26 letters during her lunch break at school & remaining normal. Yes, darling your wonderful diary is safely in my possession & I have not ceased reading it night & day since it arrived on Wednesday. I am now at page 136 & how I love every word of it. You poor, poor dear, what trials you have come through! How you are alive & still sane is one of the miracles the good God has allowed happen to us. I have laughed & wept by turns. I have followed every detail of your 3½ years. (Can you blame me for reading the last 2 first? – I could not have stood the terrible hardships of the earlier letters.) Each time I read of your illness I keep saying “Sept. 26th Excellent health”. This makes reading bearable. Paddy McElligott sounds a darling & already I have listed him as my friend. I do so want to meet him & *all* your friends. Excitement is simply devouring me these days. I read your diary till 1am & lo & behold I’m awake again at 5.30. I don’t want to eat & yet I feel well. We shall read the diary together sometime & you will answer all the questions I want to ask. Details were scant often but I knew why. I *tried* never to believe all the horrible Jap atrocity stories which circulated in press & radio during the past 3½ years. Yet, darling I heard every one – my heart bled for you but how I prayed that God would give you peace of mind & strength of body to do your job & come safely through. Many, many masses were said by priests for you alone – sometimes one a week. The bombing of Muroran in mid-July had me really frantic. Fr Hegarty said Mass for you then in Portstewart & Fergus served – all the family & Mona’s family (the Campbells) turned out & offered it up for your safety. Now please, oh please let nothing prevent you from coming safely home to me – So many accidents are occurring. Should you come by Canada & are near Quebec you could visit the Convent of Perpetual Adoration in 6 Ave. Bellvue, Sherbrooke, Quebec. There lives a saintly Irish girl Sr Edouard Marie, a wonderful friend of our family. She has prayed unceasingly for you & recently sent me a delightful missal. “To Eileen, on the occasion of her marriage.” My only other friend in America (no relatives) is Mrs Violet McElliott, 128-43 226th Street, Lanelton, Long Island. Don’t go out of your way to make these visits my darling. Hurry home.

Your idea of a honeymoon abroad leaves me speechless with delight but will we be allowed. My dreams were of Scottish Highlands or Glorious Devon. Now they are thrown on the scrap heap & I’m off to Yankee land. Sure darling it doesn’t matter where we go or what we do. We are together & that is heaven.

Space is growing short so I must tell you I handed in my notice to the Convent on Wednesday & cease teaching at Christmas. I have succeeded in getting Miss McGuigan, otherwise things might have been difficult. You are wondering what I worked at in Belfast during 1942-3. It was a huge secret. Tot Heagney worked with me (Bill McGinley’s fiancée) & because she told Billy in a letter she was sacked – Postal Censorship. The change of work, where I made many friends, did me a world of good. More of this anon. I got a permit form from the barracks. This I fill in & send with 2 photos & thus am enabled to get a sailing ticket to meet you in England. You have no idea of the red tape to move across the water. We might me P/Ws!! Won’t you give me warning of day, time & place of your arrival if it is at all possible. My divorcee suit is 3½ yrs old & my best boy must see me in something new. I won’t tell you what – you’ll be wondering what fellow this “dazzling beauty” in – (colour) has come to meet. You are the one. All my love darling.

Your own Eileen.

9, Holmview,
Omagh
Sunday, 14th Oct.

My own darling,

On hearing of the terrible typhoon which swept Okinawa I was so anxious for your safety. I hurried off to arrange to have Mass said for a safe voyage for you. St. Gerard Magella whose feast is Oct. 16th will bring you home safely to me.

Yesterday morning – Oct. 13th I offered up my Mass and Holy Communion for the happy repose of your dear mother's soul R.I.P. Strangely enough Oct. 13th is also Frances' birthday. I have *never* failed to write for her birthday in all our years of friendship until this year. These days, amidst your wonderful diary I am in a world apart & poor Frances was forgotten. I wrote today & told her all *our* news. She is now the proud mother of a daughter Marie Patricia. She longs to have us living near her & we (she & I) have spent 3½ years planning evenings together, Roland, you & the pair of us. About where you will practice dearest Frank when you return is for *you* to decide. Thank God I have not my heart set on anything or any place save to be with you. Should you care to remain abroad then I am with you. Whether we live in the country or in your beloved Beechwood I do not mind. My home & haven will be with you no matter where you will be.

Never say that any of your friends will be disappointed in you. They all love you and are so proud of you. You have done your job with super-human success and I am so proud of you. Excuse me but I was whipped off for a golf foursome & it is now 3 hours later. I was just thinking we shall be able to have a round of golf together at Christmas & young man this will be the *first* game I can beat you at! I am afraid I have not played as much tennis as I would have liked but then the two games don't agree. Golf is head down, tennis head up. You may not know just how precious golf & tennis balls are. Well I was given a present of 6 "65"s in their papers & by a gentleman too. *Now* aren't you jealous? Balls simply cannot be bought. Men would willingly give £2 for a "65". But my darling guess what I have for you – an even more precious commodity than golf balls – 3 new Spalding tennis balls! I am longing to see you smacking them over a net. Wouldn't it be wonderful to get off to some sunny clime where we could bathe, sunbathe, play tennis & eat ice cream.

I finished your most interesting diary on Friday night & was as pleased as punch with George's letter. While reading it I would neither eat, sleep or teach. Such reading – how you are still alive & in excellent health is a mystery to me. You shall *never* suffer a moment's unhappiness again that I can prevent, so help me. You think you will feel like a fish out of water (as you say). Well darling, if that is the case we shall take 2 headers into the water together. During the past 3½ years I have experienced so much that I know perfectly well every mood known to human beings. I can understand anything. Oh how I long to open up my heart to you & tell you all that has been stored there for years. People croak of how loyal I was to you darling. I feel like laughing. Did they not realise that there was simply nothing else I could be. If waiting for you had cost me my life then I should have died willingly *because* I could not help it. That is how deep is my love for my poor prisoner. I bet I shall never be able to put so clearly in words.

How I long for your next letter. Nearer & nearer you come. Make any plans you like for our honeymoon. I shall be agreeable. Don't even think of Felix's suggestion about Ballynahinch. He is a slave to his work. I don't want you to be that. Mona sees so little of him. Hurry home darling to your loving Eileen. Mary Fox's brother is married & living here. He resembles you. We have never spoken but he does stare at me. His wife was in P.O. Can you understand why my cards had really so little love in them.

9, Holmview,
Omagh
"Feast of All Saints" [1 Nov. 1945]

Darling,

This is being written in the P.O. as I want it to leave on the 1 p.m. collection. Should you be in Canada another week it should reach you. Yet it is quite possible that none of my letters will arrive. But dearest there is no doubt about the reality. I will be at whatever port in England you arrive. I am thinking of travelling by air but that may not materialize. Daddie is anxious that Mammie accompany me. However even if she does I

will be *alone* at the docks. Berths for sailing are almost impossible to obtain unless much notice is given. Tommie Cunningham's family received a wire from Halifax on the Ile de France being on the water 8 days.

Was your 2nd wonderful cable from Victoria really an answer to mine? I phoned mine from Belfast at 12.30 Monday & your reply came back by phone on Tuesday at 10 a.m. Isn't that a wonderful service?

Have you heard that my notice is in at the Convent & I leave at Christmas. Miss McGuigan once again fills my place. I know I shall feel very lonely leaving Omagh. Even when I left the Censorship Office after a 6 months term a few tears came. But my fellow workers gave me a lovely farewell party.

We are having a Friday to Monday weekend off on Nov. 9th & a Saturday to Tuesday one Nov. 19th and a final one December 8th. So even though I shall have to leave you for a time I shall be home often. How do you feel about a visit to Tyrone? One of the brothers masters said to me yesterday, "Eileen, I feel you are going to be terribly happy." "Why?", I asked. "Because you have always made a success of anything you ever do." I could not start to tell you of the good wishes I am receiving on all sides. It is almost 1pm so I must finish off.

Your letters should arrive next week & I am longing for them. I am now re-reading your wonderful diary. I am so happy to love you darling as I do, so proud of all you have done & how untarnished you have come through. My *only* worry is "Can I really make you happy". I am so full of faults & failings.

Hurry home my dearest boy.

Ever your own loving

Eileen

9, Holmview,

Omagh

Monday 5.30pm [26 Nov. 1945]

My very own darling,

It seems an eternity since this time yesterday and yet it is not 24 hours. What have you done to me? I cannot sit down to read, sew. I cannot think of going visiting & yet how am I going to pass the remaining days of the week until we meet again. I have decided today that this is a small sacrifice (not seeing you) which I must offer up in thanksgiving for the countless blessings we have both received & I do offer it up with all my heart.

Yes, last week has been *the* most wonderful week in my life. I scarcely remember what we did or where we went. All I remember clearly now was that I was with you all the time and I was happy – so very happy. I wanted to cry at Holy Communion each morning. I felt so unworthy of all our dear Lord had done for me & for most of those blessings was your love for me. Why have I been chosen by you to share your life? Why, why and still why? For *any* man to ask a girl to be his wife is to bestow upon her a great privilege and yet *you*, the most wonderful of all men have asked me.

I have never felt more sincere when I say I am and always shall be so very proud of you. I want the whole world to meet and know you. When I compared John A & Jackie with you they appeared to me like immature little boys. You certainly held your own that night at Mrs O'Hara's.

Everyone is singing your praises & many of the same folk are not usually quick to praise. They all tell me I am a lucky girl and I *know* it.

I felt so happy about Anne. Tell her so. I want her to be happy – she deserves all that we can give her and much, much more. I am so glad you like Philip's Anne. She is privileged like I am to be asked to join the Murray family. May God bless Philip and herself and grant them long life and much happiness together.

I was so sorry darling about that telephone call today. The Convent clocks must be slow. I could have cried with vexation when the operator cut us off. My idea was to ring the Hotel (Melville) after 5 any evening. Omagh 124. If you could say what time I shall remain there until the call comes through. I usually go up past the hotel to the church between 5 & 7. We have afternoon tea at 4 and high tea at 7.

CEMA (Council for Education of Music & Art) are coming to Omagh on Thursday and Friday night with some players in "She Stoops To Conquer" and another play, I have forgotten (as usual) so Aileen has booked for us for both nights.

I neglected your sage words of advice & worked like a nigger at school today. The children deserved it. They covered a tremendous amount of ground in my absence. They were so proud to show me what they had done & all the nuns gave them great praise. Do you know that not a single nun or teacher went near my classes – they worked in silence on their own – & for high spirited schoolgirls to do that was a 1st class achievement. I was delighted with them. Children are so lovable when taken the right way.

This afternoon Moyra McKenna (Irish teacher) & I went for a 8 mile walk – the afternoon was heavenly. She was up in Belfast for the final of the Sigerson Cup & was itching to know did the Galway Captain make any nasty cracks at the dinner.

I'm off to post this now so that you will have it first thing tomorrow morning. Then I will go to the church and *try* to thank God for everything – for sparing you to me, for making me love you as I do. To feel as I do is a wonderful change for me – I was always accused by men of being cold and distant. I have *never* told anyone I loved them until I told you darling & then I meant it with all the strength of my being.

I read your letter – so wonderful – before the train left Belfast & then dreamed about it all the way to Omagh. I couldn't read, I just closed my eyes & thought & thought.

Mother Teresa believes that Rev. Mother will waive all rules aside and let you visit the Convent next week even though it will be Advent. Aileen says she was hoarse answering questions about us. I know many were just curious but many too were our friends & well-wishers. I could write on forever but must stop until tomorrow. May God bless you and keep you too, as you are. Oh never change darling, never. All my love

Ever your own Eileen X

9, Holmview,

Omagh.

Tuesday 4.15 [27 Nov. 1945]

My very own darling,

I wanted to tell you all day long how much I love you but could not until this moment. I have missed you today so much – I felt so very lonely without you. Many, many times during class I read and reread this morning's wonderful letter. I could not exist here without your letters. How have I existed all these years with typed cards going off to Japan and nere an echo in return!! I prayed always that I should love you very much and God has answered in an abundant way. My heart is not here at all. It is all yours dearest Frank and never has it, or could it belong to another. To me you are dearer than father or mother, brothers or sisters and it *always* shall be so. I want to give you everything I have and yet that is not enough.

Saturday seems an eternity of time away. Today I felt as if I must take the first train home. I ran into the Convent Chapel and told Our Dear Lord how I felt. He seemed to understand and gave me peace and the resignation to wait, work and do my duty to these Loreto children.

On entering Form V (33 girls) this morning they one & all chorused "You are very welcome back, Miss O'Kane" and I felt the tears coming to my eyes. These girls I have scolded often but they seem to realise it was their interests always I had at heart. Yet at the moment I want to run away home to you and leave them, without a regret. Am I very foolish or is it a bout of homesickness that I am suffering from? Do tell me, dear Doctor!

I was uncertain whether you would phone or not at 10.45 but to be sure I left class at 10.35 & took up my position at the telephone. Who appeared on the scene at the same moment – Mr Ford, Irish Inspector! I had a long chat with him later & he remembers me from Ranafast days, so long, long ago. He even remembered my attempts to sing at the Ceilidhes. I told him about you & he was so interested. Miss McKenna thanked me for delaying him so long.

I have told you how truly marvellous I found your 2nd diary. I simply could not leave it down until the last line was reached. Sometimes I laughed outright at your description of those army folk you met. You thought that Paul & Mary had a happy home. Well I believe that ours shall be even happier. But Frank you must finish the story – the days and months between Rawalpindi and Singapore's fall. Do you know that I haven't even started to talk to you and tell you everything that is in my heart.

Yes, I am taking plenty of rest. Alas tonight I cannot be rude so must go hiking. Omagh folk are rather touchy in this respect.

Today has been the first day of Winter. The countryside is covered with a white frost. It would be ideal for a walk but there is no time. I want to surprise you with a phone call to O'Kelly's. The enclosed snap was taken some months ago to send to Japan. If you look closely you can see our beautiful engagement ring. Did I ever thank you for it – it twinkles so.

I am so happy you enjoyed the Sigerson dinner and your visit to Ponsonby. I am not surprised the way the ladies gravitate towards you. I know they must all love you and yet I have been the lucky one. A very saintly nun at the Convent today called me aside & said "I said when you came to Loreto years ago you were destined for great things. Remember Eileen until the day I die I shall never forget you in my prayers. The others will be giving

you wedding presents but I want you to know that my personal one will be the sacrifice of the Mass said for you both."

I had a visitor for the past $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Now she has gone & I am with you again. Alas I used my last envelope yesterday so must hurry up town & make a purchase. This letter must make dreadful reading. Forgive me darling.

Do not worry about the broken heart. I'm hale & hearty for many a day to come. With this letter goes all my love & affection.

Ever your own
Eileen.

9, Holmview,
Omagh
Thursday 4.15 [29 Nov. 1945]

My own darling,

Just another day and I shall be with you again. Isn't it wonderful! Each day away has been like an eternity. This has been a cruel sacrifice to make in duty's course but it will soon be over and I will never, never leave you again. The nuns do appreciate what I have done and the children too, though they cannot say it in so many words.

Did my Tuesday letter upset you? I did not mean that you had disappointed me – only that I felt so lonely & when Auntie said you weren't at Broadway I felt a choking lump in my throat.

This morning I wended my way to Mass and Holy Communion, to make our second "Thursday" in the Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Succour. I thought of your thoughts as I received our dear, good and kind Lord into my heart. I tried to tell Him how happy, how grateful I was. I asked Him too to bless our love, our home and our marriage. Before all lectures at the Kilkeel past pupils' retreat, Fr Prendergast said this prayer. I loved it & say it many times daily, especially when in doubt. "Direct we beseech Thee, oh Lord, all our actions by thy Holy Inspiration and carry them along by thy gracious assistance, that every prayer and work of ours may timely begin from Thee and by Thee be happily ended, through Christ Our Lord. Amen." Can we make a mistake about our practice when we say this constantly? It has guided my footsteps all these years and yours too, my darling.

Today's short letter received when I returned from School was more wonderful than all the others. I couldn't live without you darling either. I know that some folk lived in hope during the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years that I should change my mind and marry them. But darling one, I also promised myself that I would marry you and no one else – and this *long* before you sent your Christmas card from Rawalpindi (*without* any love on it). I hate speaking to you of other boys – it sounds boastful but believe me it is not. I just want you to know that the whole bang lot put together would not equal in value for me, your little finger. I love *you* and *you alone* of all the men I have ever met. Should it have been God's will that you did not return to me (whether in heart or body) then I should *never* have married.

You must be so proud of those beautiful letters of gratitude. I am, darling. Do keep them all as souvenirs. Wait until I show you my box of souvenirs. They are all your dear letters written in far off Malaya and treacherous Japan. We must read them over together by "our ain fire side".

I slept last night solidly – the first since November 16th and furthermore I ate a hefty lunch today. You rascal you, to get up at 2am & write to me. I bet you just wanted to hanel your new dressing gown!

I renovated my blue skirt last night & found the entire back to be a full inch below the front. Joe is small, so I always got the job of turning up his new trousers. Thank God you are tall darling; that job will not arise. Just imagine I have not put a stitch in your chamois gloves yet? Oh when am I going to settle & get things done! I never want to feel different from how I feel today. Thank you darling for all your lovely presents but above all for yourself. Without you I have nothing, with you I have Heaven. It shall always be you,

Always your loving
Eileen.

9, Holmview,
Omagh.
Monday, 4.10 p.m. [3 Dec. 1945]

My darling one,

Here I am back in Holmview and feeling even more lonely for you than last week (and then, I thought that impossible). You could not possibly have seen the tears in my eyes as that train laboured its way away from you – tears of love, of happiness and loneliness all combined. The carriage was packed and all were chatting familiarly on my return but my heart was too full to do anything but gaze at the scene of our first walk. I remembered every detail of it, everything you said, everything you did.

Do you know darling already I feel an infinitely better girl – and yet I know the more I know you, the better I will become. You have so much to teach me and I have so much to learn from you. You must criticise me. I *really* want this. You *must* scold me about my nails, my baths, my lack of courage about the dentist's chair, my ignorance about furniture, my bad spelling, my often mistaken ideas about dress. I know you are doing this because you love me *and* I love you more for it. It means you *are* interested in me. I want to aim at perfection in everything. There must be nothing slipshod about anything we do. To put my very best into everything I do has always been my motto and now it is our motto. Since the day commences with our morning offering, it means we are really offering our *best* to God. Does He deserve one iota less?

Darling, you feel so strongly about my inheritance you frighten me. I *know* you are not marrying me for money. You know I always had that fear when men were attentive towards me. I would always have preferred to be penniless. That was why I was so happy when you told me – you loved me at a ceilidhe in Ranafast believing me to come from Dundalk. If you prefer the property to remain in my name then it shall be so but I simply cannot promise to spend it only on myself. Here is an example of your terrible independence of which you asked me to sure you. Darling mine can't you see that if you (who are me) were in financial straits it would be my privilege as your wife to help you if I could & I will, I will. I will never use that money because I *want* to be entirely dependent upon you. I want to ask you, even to coax you, for the things I want. Can you understand this. My grandfather built those houses with his own hands. He worked with the men & built them brick by brick. I am proud to own them and my only desire is to make them worthy dwellings for the many families who dwell therein. Being my husband you *must* interest yourself in them – because they are my inheritance. You *must* not think the question is sordid, that it will spoil our love. If I thought *that* I should hand them back at once. Nothing on this earth must spoil this wonderful love of ours. It is more precious to me than anything in the world & least in importance is a handful of houses.

Today at 2am one of our boarders died at the Fever Hospital. She was taken there early in November with jaundice. She was a delicate little girl of about 13 years with a pair of glorious blue eyes. I was privileged to teach her for 2 years and she prayed with all the others and me for your deliverance my darling Frank. She is in Heaven I know and I am happy for her but mourn for her sorrowing parents.

Frank Reid, his wife & baby are in Belfast. He is staying with John B. O'Neill & hopes to practice at the Bar shortly. I know you will be interested to hear this.

I am enclosing Fergus' letter to you. I received his letter and yours when I arrived back from school.

Darling, you will receive this awful letter on your birthday. Since it will arrive before my phone call I want you to know that I wish you the very happiest birthday possible. Your Mass will be said and I will offer my Mass and Holy Communion for you and all your intentions. May you have many even happier returns of the day. Isn't it a shame I cannot kiss you on such a day. It will never be so again. You will always be my sweetheart no matter how many years we are married. Our courtship days will just never end – and even as an old grey haired man & woman we shall be sweethearts to the end. I feel my love growing stronger and better each time I see you. I have prayed so hard for this and the answer has been fuller than I ever expected.

I intend to have my bath early and off to bed to dream about you. Tomorrow evening at 8 I am to have my tooth taken out. The dentist says it is so badly gone that she will have to have 3 tries at the roots. I am scared but I will offer it up for us. What little courage I have, *you* have given me it. I had a dreadful experience with an extraction at the hands of Maurice Maguire. Hence my terrible fear.

I hope you have a pleasant day at Portaferry. Do come safely home to me. I know if anything were to happen to you darling, I should die.

Forever your very own

Eileen. X.

I forgot to tell you how very much I love you.

9, Holmview,
Omagh.
"Frank's Birthday" [4 Dec. 1945]

My precious darling,

More than any other day I have been with you every moment of today. It commenced with Mass and Holy Communion in Omagh Church at 8 a.m. Your Mass was offered by Fr McKenna of Cappagh at 9 a.m. I prayed so very hard for my darling this day – I asked God not to let him change ever and to make me more worthy of his great love. Before every class from 9.20 until 3.30 we offered our prayer for you and now the 4th has passed for another year. It has found us inseparably united. Thank God and His Blessed mother for this.

You cannot know of all the presents I wanted to give you this day. My inquiries on all sides met with no success. I did not want just anything. Only the very best must be given to my Frank. When war time restrictions are over you will see what I mean. Have you commenced reading "The Robe"? I did not find time to write on it but I will. I must also write my letter of thanksgiving to the Mother of Perpetual Succour, so that it will be in Clonard before Thursday – the 3rd day of our Novena. Let us not make any real decisions until the Novena ends.

I know it was selfish of me to say I wanted to live alone with you darling. On thinking it over, perhaps God wants this sacrifice of us for all that He has given already to us. Should this be so we shall accept and make the best of it. Were you the father, I would like your son to open wide his arms & welcome you into his home. Again we must *always* do the right thing whether it hurts or not.

Do not worry about me in planning where we live. What will help *you* most & help us find our feet is just what I want. My happiness is centred in you darling. I could be happy anywhere with you.

On passing under a ladder en route to school one afternoon lately the man aloft shouted good-humouredly "You'll only be married once, Miss". Just as if I should ever contemplate marrying anyone else! They would give me nausea.

Hubert Ray – a dashing young Captain – has just arrived on leave from Austria. The house is all excitement with the happiness of the reunion. It makes me think of ours and all the happiness I have known since then. Thank you darling for it all. It is only you – of all the world – can make me feel so deliriously content & happy.

Gerry Kavanagh lunched with us in the Melville today. He says we both saluted him in St. Mary's Hall on Sunday last. I told him I didn't even remember. He says you were looking wonderfully well and he was right. Wasn't that the most marvellous concert ever listened to? The years I sat there dreaming of the day when you would be at my side. Do you know it took a lot of will power to prevent me throwing my arms around you and kissing you on Sunday night in the publicity of St. Mary's Hall. Am I not a very bold hussy?

We scolded Gerry about bungling the date of the dance (Newman). I long to go to that dance with you. We must go to some dance during the Christmas festivities – otherwise you will have no opportunity of seeing me in my black evening frock & it's a very pretty one. I know you will be coaxed to turn out to the Newman dance. Go darling if you want to and I'll make believe that I am dancing every dance with you.

Remind me to sing some selections from "Show Boat" during our High Town walk next Sunday. "Only Make Believe" & "Why Do I Love You". At one time I sang those songs over & over again. Now they are a reality and no longer "make Believe".

Tonight at 8 I shall hold your hand very firmly in that Dentist chair. Tomorrow at 5 minutes past 6 I will be at the Melville to receive your phone call. We must be sensible and take advantage of the cheaper rates. We have so much to do with our money.

So you had a date yesterday with Jo? What was the date may I ask? I like the way you let me read Auntie Meg's letter! You have secured a very favoured niche in all their hearts darling. I am so proud, so very proud of you. Kathleen McLoughlin said on Sunday night after you had gone "He is a darling, Eileen and you are a lucky girl". How well I know this.

Did you enjoy your visit to Portaferry – and how is "your beautiful Violet". I am very jealous of her really?

Tomorrow night I am going with Aileen to play solo in Smyths. They joined me at Lurgan on Monday morning but I slept soundly (rudely enough) from Dungannon to Omagh. Aileen is now sharing my bedroom (to give the returned Hubert a room). She says she envied me last night I slept so soundly.

Do give my love to Father and Anne. Perhaps Anne would like to go to the Newman Dance. Ask her. All my love goes with this letter.

Forever your own
Eileen.

9, Holmview,
Omagh.
Wednesday 5th 4.30 p.m. [5 Dec. 1945]

Darling Mine,

You worried me yesterday by allowing yourself to get wet & foolishly enough writing & phoning me instead of changing, having a good warming by the fire & eating in peace a hearty lunch before your bus journey to Portaferry. You must never do that again. Good health is too precious a gift from God to jeopardise in that way.

I loved your 2 page letter. It was so good of you to write at all & you in such a hurry. I was only pretending to be disappointed.

Today I am feeling slightly shaken but thank God my tooth has gone & what a rotter it was. It was really only a shell with a septic root – my 6th year molar, I believe. You must have prayed for courage because Mrs Donnellan *actually* complimented me on how brave & good I was. Yes, darling the tooth took a full ½ hour to be extracted. Four different pairs of nippers were used in the operation. At the first pull the whole thing smashed and feverishly again & again (7 times in all) the dentist probed for the roots. I thought the entire face was coming each time. She told me afterwards she could give me no words of encouragement. She was actually afraid that the force of probing would break the thin wall of my antrum (is this the correct spelling). At 8.20 the last root came complete with abscess & then my face had to be washed – there was so much blood on it. She did it, for I was limp. I came straight home, had my bath & went to bed. At midnight I had another mouthwash & Aileen brought me my Bournvita. I slept well & feel so much happier that all is over. I have to have 2 further fillings but don't mind these at all.

Any courage I showed darling you gave it to me. I gripped your hand fiercely and made the pain an offering of thanksgiving for all we have received.

Before tea yesterday I wrote out my letter of thanksgiving to the Mother of Perpetual Succour, enclosed it to Fr Rector with a note asking him to have Mass said in thanksgiving to Our Lady and to ask her blessing on our forthcoming marriage. I will be out at Mass both tomorrow morning & Friday (1st Friday) and of course on Saturday also. Shall I ever forget December 8th!!

There will be no visit to Smyths for me tonight. My face is slightly swollen & painful so bed (after bath) will claim me at 9.

Herbert came into our sitting room & chatted for an hour yesterday. He is full of interesting tales of the war & his present job in Austria. I did not like the way he spoke of Rome, the Vatican, Italian Catholics, etc. Did you know that Major Ray – a French Canadian – was born & baptised a Catholic?

Teaching has more or less finished at Loreto and exams are in full swing. They will continue all next week. So far I feel no pangs of loneliness. It will probably all descend upon me next week but seeing you each day will more than make up for anything I might feel. Are you sure you won't be bored stiff in Omagh. Come warmly clad because this place would skin fairies.

I'm dying to read the War Office's report on you. What did Fr & Anne think of our scroll? What have you planned for our weekend? I'm longing for Friday to come – this is definitely our last parting. Nothing & no one shall ever part us again. Did you not think darling that our reunion last Saturday after a week's separation was very sweet indeed. My love for you seems to grow & grow. What proportions it shall reach I know not. It is a love which makes me feel stronger and better in every way.

I must hurry off for my phone call. It seems such a lifetime since 1 o'clock yesterday – because I am very much in love with you my darling.

God bless you.

Forever your loving
Eileen.

9, Holmview,
Omagh.
Wednesday 5 p.m. [5 Dec.? or 28 Nov.? 1945]

My darling Frank,

I felt so miserable yesterday but today after speaking to you I felt deliriously happy. I was so excited at 12.30 that I told Cassie at the Hotel that I would scrap the main course of my lunch. She smiled – a smile which said “I know just how you feel”. She arranged to let me have my phone call in the office, alone. It was she who answered the operator first.

Should I commence to tell you of my love as in my previous letters then no news would be given. Now darling should you come to Omagh on Wednesday you would only have 2 days, as I am free to go Belfastwards on Friday evening (the 8th, your anniversary being Saturday). Already invitations are flowing in and I realise that it would be very unwise for you to visit *some* and not *all* of my Omagh friends. As I have already told you, Tyrone folk are particularly touchy in this respect. The alternatives are two – either you postpone your visit to Dr Duff and come to Omagh on Monday next (I don’t like asking you to do this) or you postpone your visit to Omagh until the following week. What do you think of this? As Loreto breaks up on the 18th December, this week will be my last in the old town and your introductions and my farewells will take place at the same time. I booked provisionally at the Melville for you today but can change that quite easily.

Our Domestic Science teacher (Violet Cusack from Tramore) married last April & insists that we give herself and Jim Wednesday night. She is inviting her friends and must be sure of our arrival. The friends consist of Dr & Mrs Johnson (he is in charge of the Tyrone Mental Hospital – his wife was Domestic teacher at the Omagh Academy & a friend of mine) and Dr & Mrs Lynch; she also is a doctor. He practised in Scotland before the war. He joined up & was invalided out later. They live permanently in Omagh & their children are at the Convent. I am to let Violet know our plans before the invites are issued.

Mrs Ray has just popped in to say that she bags another of our precious evenings & you are to come for whatever meal you like, afternoon tea or dinner. Major Ray is dying for a chat. You will like him, I know.

I could go on in this strain for pages but already I think you have got the idea – your visit to Omagh has resolved itself into a round of visits – studied so that no one must be hurt. What a girl you are going to marry! It is a weakness of mine – I simply cannot hurt anyone’s feeling. My real friend in Omagh is the little invalid girl Kathleen Cunningham & she is dying to meet you. Her P.O.W. brother had to go to Moira Military Hospital for observations (something about worms from which all the men suffered in Hong Kong). I had just received yesterday’s disappointment so we consoled one another last night.

It broke upon me today in school that I was leaving Loreto forever when Mother Teresa came from the children to question me about my taste in pictures. The purchase is to be made in Magees (opposite City Hall) and Miss Kelly, the art teacher is delegated to make the arrangements about framing, delivery, etc. I should have liked a Madonna by one of the masters but the only one they had I did not like. I always liked pictures by the Dutch artists & Magees are fortunate in having the recognised framing for such pictures. I never knew until today that there is a correct and incorrect frame for pictures of master artists. How would you feel about a visit to Magees next week with Mrs Kelly? I am to ring her at the weekend but we can talk about it meanwhile. They close Saturdays.

I suggested to Mother Teresa today to allow both the children and me off our Christmas tests and she agreed. I am to give them all oral tests in class and mark them accordingly. This will be very easy to me & incidentally give me more free time to make a peaceful withdrawal from the town. Isn’t this a wonderful stroke of luck. No more tests, whoopee!!

Don’t worry darling about the mix-up over O’Kellys. It doesn’t really worry me in the slightest except that your poor father – who visits so rarely – was upset. Auntie “Kate” is a strange woman – a curious mixture of genuine good nature and horrible selfishness. Your father liked her always & she is my godmother.

Such a small space in which to tell you what you mean to me! Did I tell you that I went up town on my bike today & forgot to come home on it. It lay at the hotel door for 4 hours!!

Oh I do love you Frank more than I ever thought possible. I will *never* change.

God bless you darling mine
Eileen.

9, Holmview,
Omagh.
Thursday 4.30 p.m. [6 Dec. 1945]

Darling Frank,

Words cannot tell you how much I loved your precious note just received. I had intended not writing to you today but now the urge is too great and I must. My writing pad is finished & I felt too miserable today to purchase another so forgive me for partly mutilating your wonderful letter.

Yes, darling, my face aches unbearably today (I was told to expect this). The weather is wet and cold and I miss you terribly. No time was more opportune for an unexpected letter from my love. I read and re-read and read it again before even taking off my coat & scarf. My heart bled for you last night during our chat on the phone. You sounded so terribly lonely. I now promise you faithfully never to leave you again – never to suffer anything without you, never to have any pleasures apart from you. It is all so easy to make these promises because it is *just* what I want also. No one could have made me believe a month ago that these short separations could be so dreadful. Darling mine, I am really only beginning to love you, you also have been king of my heart for so many weary years. Nothing can *ever* displace you from your niche there.

I was at Mass & Holy Communion this morning for our novena. I will be there again tomorrow. I am still not satisfied with my puny attempts at thanksgiving. Will you help me? Where you are concerned darling I shall never be a broken reed to lean upon – I shall be as strong as steel. You can confide in me, all your troubles, fears, plans & pleasures. They shall always be sacred to me and never discussed with anyone, even my family or Frances. For years I have held secrets of many people because they knew they could trust me. How much more trustworthy shall I be with your innermost thoughts – your thoughts are the only ones I really want to keep in my heart.

How I am longing to fly into your arms tomorrow shortly after 7 p.m. We leave Omagh at 5.6 p.m. Already I feel much better.

Your own
Eileen.

Omagh P.O. 6.20pm

My very own darling,

This has been the longest & most miserable day of my life. I am desolate here without you & I realise more & more how much I love you & how much you mean to me. I actually did shed a few tears today. I know I should be packing & a million & one other jobs but I just cannot. You fill my *every* thought. I cannot teach, I can only sit & think & long for the hours to pass more quickly until you come back to me.

It was such a disappointment for you darling to find Fr Kennedy in hospital. I am happy that you are not coming this long journey tonight – *one* early-to-bed night will help you – though I want you with all my heart. I did not feel intelligible on the phone tonight. Why is Fergus home? Is he ill. Should I post your letters. I have them safely in Holmview. All these questions I should have asked but all I wanted to do was listen to your clear voice. I shall hold the letters. I called at Tommie Thompsons & also at Lynchs. We all missed you at lunch today especially Miss McQuillan. She stormed when she heard that you were urgently called away but was very relieved when she heard you would return. I told Cassie about your plans. I am very sorry I shall miss Fr Kennedy. Will he be able to attend our wedding? Shall be waiting with open arms tomorrow night. Never again shall we part. It is torture.

All my love & self.
Your own Eileen

9, Holmview,
Omagh.
Dec. 14
7.50 p.m.

Darling Frank,

Aileen tells me that the train – last train – to Omagh on all nights except Sunday is 6.50 p.m. You said on the phone 7.35 & I was worried in case you would arrive at the G.N.R. and get another horrible disappointment. Besides, I am glad of the opportunity of writing again & telling I love you more than anyone or anything on earth. You must know this so well – but if you are like me you cannot hear it often enough.

I called to pay my dentist bill & found my “torturer” abed with ‘flu. I did not forget Una today. I shall never forget your dear dead. They have given us all the happiness we have experienced these past few weeks & I know there is much more in store for us. Your train is due at 9.25. I am back again wishing time away.

All my love, darling
Forever your own Eileen.