

27th Field Ambulance,  
Malaya,

4. 7. 41

(Friday)

Dearest, my darling,

You need not expect very much from me to night as I am sitting on Mother Earth inside my 40 lb. tent! We have been out in the open spaces all day long and we are spending the night under canvas. How I wish that you could enjoy all of this as much as I do. There is a very wonderful moon out to night, the stars look lovelier than I have ever seen them look before. I wonder are you looking at the same moon and stars to night? Everything is just perfect - except that you are not here to see it all with me.

And how are you today, my darling? I hope the hols. have begun and that you are having a hectic time and not worried about old exam results. I know that your young ladies will come out on top in the exams - they could not let you down. Teaching must be a grand profession in its own way. You meet so many different types of girl; you watch their character developing day by day; you remember their first days at school and then they leave the convent walls and go out into a very unkind world where so many are struggling to exist and so many are thinking only of SELF! I have often thought that many boarding schools in Ireland are not ideal institutions - especially boys' schools and seminaries. The lads are usually subjected to too much

Discipline. Then when they leave school and go to a University, they just run wild. They imagine they are free at last and must have their fling. These ideas of mine may be quite wrong but that's what I think about it all - but why I should tell you about it under this stormy sky as I sit in the middle of a field, I know not. I only know that I love you, Eileen, more to night than I have ever loved you before. How can I help loving you, since I gave myself to you so many years ago.

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

SATURDAY JULY 5th - My very own darling to day has been the happiest day of my life - and I have had my share of happy days. About an hour ago I received two telegrams from you and one said that "the answer is yes". My darling that is the answer I have been wanting to hear for so many years, and now that it has come you may guess how happy it has made me. It seems so useless trying to thank you, Eileen, because words mean little on occasions like this - they are out of place. All I can do is to give you all and that is so very small. You know that you

will always have all of my love; you know that I am yours entirely and I shall always be yours; you will have my every thought. I shall never grow weary of giving, where you are concerned. Cuten, my darling, I just cannot express my feelings to night - I don't know where to begin, and heaven knows where I shall end. In all my happiness I shall not forget to thank Him for it all; He must have made you say that you would marry me because I have been asking Him for this favour for 10 years! He must have grown tired of me and decided to end it all. I know that I have not much to offer you but what I have will always be given freely. I shall spend my life making you happy, Cuten; I shall live only for you - and yet there will never be any suggestion of me being your slave! I have mentioned in another letter that we shall share everything; there will be no head of the house - we shall be real partners. As well as being in love, we shall be friends - and that is so vital in married life. We shall be the good companions and shall always be happy together no matter where we may be. It will be so easy for us to be happy when we are married because we shall always be in love with each other, and nothing could ever shake that love. Is it really true, Cuten, that you love me and that you will marry me? It is just too wonderful and it will take another day until I fully realize what has happened! Please forgive this awful letter to night; it is just a jumble of words but you may be able to have some little idea of how thrilled and excited I am today.

My darling, now that we are really engaged, we have got to make plans about the future - the very uncertain future. I want you to tell me what your ideas on the subject are. There is a war on at present and unless I am sent home, we have not got a hope of being married until the war is over. It is an awful thought having to wait so long, but it is inevitable and we shall have

to put up with it. Helen, you must have the nicest engagement ring that was ever made and I can arrange that easily if you send me your size. You cannot be engaged without a ring even though I shall not be able to put it on your fingers. I do not want anyone to come along and steal you away from me, now that I have found you! And yet a ring is only a symbol of something much deeper and more sacred than mere show - it means that we love each other, that we are united as two people have never been before, and that we are pledged to each other. You must tell me what kind of ring you would like so that I shall know what to send you. It is a shame that I cannot see you now and tell you everything that is in my heart. When that ring really does reach you and you put it on your fingers, will you remember that I am by your side.

It has been a strange engagement, my darling; I proposed by letter and you replied by mine! We are 8,000 miles apart and yet that made no difference at all to us! We shall be the happiest couple in the world - may be we are the happiest couple now. I am so terribly sure that I love you and I have always been sure about it - that's why I haven't not even wait for your letter before proposing to you. If we had been two very sane people we would have waited until we had met again before deciding such a serious question; but we are sure of each other and trust each other, and we could not wait. Helen, do you wish me to write to your father and mother now that you have promised to marry me. I expect you have consulted with them and talked things over. Will they be very furious when I take you away from them because they must love you very dearly. Unfortunately I have got nobody with whom to talk things over but I must write and tell my father the news. I know he will be very happy about it all. He has always prayed that I would marry someone

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like you, Cileen; I have always wanted to marry you!

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

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

my early morning tea (Chota-hazri)!

I had a surprise when I opened your first telegram this evening and it read "7/93/32"! I still do not know what it means, Cileen, and the awful part of it is that I have to wait till Monday before I can have it decoded at the post office. I haven't had time to send you some more snaps yet, Cileen, but on to-morrow is a day of rest I should be able to manage it. I have arranged a walk in the jungle for to-morrow morning with my O.C. and a few Indian officers. The route is quite unknown to us but that only makes it all the more thrilling because we can now look forward to being lost for a few hours! I put my tennis racket away yesterday for a few new strings - the team is 100 miles distant from this spot! It is the nearest 'tennis racket' team! It will take about a week to come back again and that means little exercise for me for many days to come. However there is always football twice a week and some badminton to keep me going. I was worried today when I read in the papers about a mail boat being sunk on its way to the British Isles from the East. My last two letters written to you from India may have been lost on that boat. Please let me know how many letters you received from me while I was in India.

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

SUNDAY, JULY 6th - At last it has penetrated my thick skull that you have really promised to marry me and I am even happier today than I was yesterday. I am not boasting or being vain when I say that you will never regret it, Cileen. I know and feel that I can make you happy. Don't home

will be built on very solid foundations of true love. Have you ever thought what our home will be like? Have you dreamed about it as much as I have? It will be a little world of our own - you will be the Queen of it and I shall be its King. We shall rule with kindness and we shall pray for wisdom to rule it as God wants us to rule it. May be you have seen it all as I have so often visualised it - it will be a very nice house in the suburbs of some city, not a big house but just large enough for comfort, it will have bay windows and very pretty curtains (selected by you); the front lawn will have many flower beds and there will be roses all over the garden; a very neat hedge will surround us, not high enough to cut us off from the outside and yet not low enough to let the universe see us having tea on the lawn! We must have at least a half dozen trees surrounding our house - lime trees, beech trees, and chestnuts. We shall have friends coming to see us in our paradise and they will marvel at our home and our happiness. Now I have dreamed about our home for years and yet I thought that it would seem materialistic - I thought it was a castle-in-the-air. So very, very important to me, Helen, is the fact that we are both Catholics and I know we shall always live up to our religion in every way. It will bring us untold happiness and contentment. It does not follow that we shall be discussing religion all day long and saying prayers at all times - we can be good without all of this. My darling, we shall lead a very ordinary life except that we shall be extraordinarily happy! Well, Helen, have you heard enough about our home or would you like many more pages on the subject. I can promise you one thing, and that is, we shall say a family Rosary every evening of our life lived in that home. We shall never be "Goody Goodies" or pretend to be, but we shall always love our religion and be proud of it. Our married life would be a failure

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

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

Good night and God bless you, Colin.



Monday - July 17th - My Darling, I have had your telegram de-coded and it was wonderful. You are spoiling me with all these telegrams and you must not because I am not worth all the money you spend on me. It was grand to hear that you are writing fortnightly and how I am looking forward to them all. The first one has not arrived yet, Eileen, but really I am not grumbling because I have nothing to grumble about - I am the happiest man in the whole world to night. I am more in love with you now than I have ever been before and it is the least I can do to give you all my love and all myself in return for what you have given me. Loving you is so easy to me because I have loved you for such a very long time and yet when I look back on those years they have passed so very quickly and hardship does not seem so far away. I have just been thinking, Eileen, that you must trust me an awful lot to say that you would marry me without even having met me for many years. I shall never betray your trust as long as ever I live, my darling. I might be a very wicked person and yet you have become engaged to me without hesitation. What must the O'Hane family think of their Eileen! My darling, I know that we have not made a mistake and only time will show to others that we were meant for each other. You must feel as I do, otherwise you would have waited. Never, never will you have cause to regret it, Eileen.

I have spent the evening making up a very large album of snaps for you. I am sending you eight by air mail and they weigh less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. There is my front floor view, my back window view, four interior views, a jungle view, and a Malaya view. You will now be able to picture the conditions under which I live in this country. I should send you my masterpiece panorama but alas it would not be allowed to pass the sharp eyes of the Censor! You will see them all, my darling when the post is over.

I seem to be the official photographer to the 27th Field Ambulance. I have spent some of my afternoon in taking snaps of troops who want to send their portraits home to India. I do not find my job very lucrative! And may be I am happier with such a job. Well, my darling, I must tell you now about a feeling of mine - money means nothing to me. You will have to take me in hand and teach me the value of money even though I have an idea that your teaching will be in vain. I know from experience that I must give money away - to my father, to my people or somebody. I cannot understand why people make such a fuss about it and fight over it. When we get married you will have to take over our finances, otherwise I should make a mess of things. So, my darling, whenever I buy you anything, do not pay any attention to the cost of it, just remember that the thoughts behind it are of much more value. Maybe my sense of values are all wrong, but I shall never change. Another fault of mine is to side with all underdogs and when they have let me down badly on many occasions in this Field Ambulance, but I shall go on doing the same thing over and over again. It is very bad for discipline but I cannot help my feelings.

I have a wonderful 100 mile drive this morning to town and back again. It must be the prettiest part of Malaya. As I sped along at 7 a.m. this morning in the cool air, I thought of you and how you would have loved it all. I even thought of holidays for us here sometime or even joining the Malay Medical Service. I had a hectic morning shopping and came back laden with chickens, biscuits, beans, fruits, eggs, fish, sardines etc etc. I was back in camp at noon and got some work done before lunch. The lads were very pleased with my purchases. So to night we

had a royal banquet - a seven course dinner! And I am in active service. We had football again this afternoon but I was lazy and was content to be the referee! I am off to my bed now. Good night, Lileen, and God bless you.

Tuesday - July 8th. You are a terrible girl! You have made me love you to distraction and you have made me so happy! I never knew that anyone could be so happy as I have been since Saturday. This letter has been the usual disconnected string of words and phrases but my darling, try to understand how I have felt since you said that you would become my wife and that you would give me all your love. I have lived for years for your love, Lileen, and now that it has come I live for the day when we shall meet again. Waiting for that day may be a matter of months or years, but it can only make me love you more and more each day. I shall love you every moment no matter where I may be or under what conditions I may live under. I may be in the thick of the war very soon, my darling, but that will make no difference to my love for you. I shall always love you, Lileen, as I have done for so many years. There just could never be anyone but you. I am all yours and never could I belong to anyone but you. This war seems to be an interminable affair but it must end sometime and when it does you will find your Frank homeward bound by the first plane available. If I cannot come to you, then you must fly to me wherever I may be and we shall be married on the very day that you land. May be you <sup>had</sup> better not risk a plane, it would be pleasant and safer by air. I make plans about you, Lileen, without even consulting your wishes at all!

I have spent a whole day in my forest and not once have I seen the Sun. It was suspicious morning and I spent four solid hours going around the camp with the O.C.. It feels rotten when

I spend a whole day under my trees. I have been wondering where my day has gone to and now I vaguely remember one hours "darning" between five and 6 o'clock. You should see my vain attempts at mending my socks. I have to do it myself or all my things would be ruined by my Indian batinan! It is cold to night and I intend using my blanket for the first time in Malaya. You may guess how lucky I am to be in this cool spot because blankets are never used in Malaya. I sent off the maps today but heaven knows when they will reach you. I was glad to read in the papers today that my letter sent by Air Mail on June 10th reached Britain on June 26th.

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

Goodbye and God bless you, and keep you safe from all harm.

All my love,

Your yours,

Frank xxx