

27th Field Ambulance,

c/o Army Base Post Office,

Singapore,

Thursday, December 18th

My own dearest Eileen,

The war is still on in Malaya and still I am not in it - as yet. Apart from a couple of very poor attempts at air raids we have had nothing here at all. I am very, very happy still because I find myself loving you more and more each day; because I am praying better than ever before. I am especially happy to night because I shall, please God, be at Mass and Communion to-morrow morning at 7 A.M. Isn't this wonderful, darling! The little French priest did not let us down in spite of the war; he has kept his word. Now I prayed and prayed that I would have the grace and privilege of one Mass and Communion before going into battle - and God has answered my prayer. I know that you will feel much happier about me now that you know I have received these graces. My Mass and Communion will be for our combined intentions and you both know what these are; to-morrow morning you will be in my thoughts every moment - and yet you are always in my thoughts. You are in everything that I do or say or think. My love for you is reflected in all my actions and thoughts of the day. Now I wish that I could love you more than I do; I could be even happier than I am to night; I want to do so much more for you, to give you so much more. All through my life you will find me trying to do this and I shall never be satisfied that I have succeeded.

Oh my own darling, if you could only see my heart this night and all the love that is there for you. Loving you is my life and what a sweet life it is.

I would have no life unless I were loving you. I know that nothing will happen to me
 Cileen and that I shall be spared to you; I place all my trust in God. He will send me
 back to you. It may be His Holy Will that I should not return to you; if that should
 happen then you must not be sad for my sake because you will not have really lost me
 - I shall be yours more than ever before and always I shall be close to your heart. I know that
 you will always pray for me as I shall for you - nothing will ever separate us; we belong
 to each other now and forever. God has made us for each other and He will not let us
 down because He is all-good and all-holy. Put all your trust in the Sacred Heart and
 then you will not worry about me at all. Just you keep a stiff upper lip and keep your
 chin up; I shall feel so proud of you when I know that you are carrying on so usual
 and smiling all the time. I am stoving my bit here, Cileen, and I manage to chew them
 all up here a bit when life should be so grim and slow.

Good night my darling and God bless you.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 19TH

Oh my dearest one, what a happy day this has been for
 me and I must tell you all about it quickly. I was on duty last night and so I slept
 in the office beside the phone. I had two calls at 2am & 3am. but that did not
 prevent me getting up at 5 a.m.! Away I went to the mess to wash and shave - and
 as I went I was "walking on air". I collected my little band of batholies - six in all -
 packed them in my truck and drove off to our rendezvous with the priest, which was
 a tiny village about 8 miles away. Father Grand greeted us on the steps of the local
 Chinese School; he was really glad to see us, but not half as glad as we were to see
 him. He escorted the seven of us into a tiny whitewashed school room (the infants)
 and there we knelt at those small desks and faced that little altar (on a low table). On
 the black board was written "Good morning Sir!" and numerous Chinese words and figures.
 It must have been the strangest setting that Mass has ever been celebrated in. These

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were three others besides ourselves in the Congregation - my Irish doctor, a Chinese dentist, and another Chinese. Our party consisted of three Anglo-Indians, three Europeans, and one Indian. I am happy to say that we all went to Confession and Communion (I know that it had been a year at least since this happened to some of the latter!). I managed to persuade them a bit!

I had a private talk with Father Girard before Mass and he agreed to offer Holy Mass up for my intentions (which are our intentions). I asked God to bless us both and to bless our love; I asked Him not to allow you to suffer on my account but to send me back safely to you, my own darling. He knows how much we love each other and He knows that when we are married we shall spend our ~~life~~ lives in loving Him and doing His Will on earth. Need I tell you that it was the most wonderful Mass I have ever heard and what a glow of happiness and peace came to my soul this morning when I received Him into my heart. You would not worry in the least about me if you could have seen me this morning and shared my happiness with me. I prayed to Him that He would comfort and console you at this moment and until we meet again. My own Eden, you have never been so precious and dear to me as you have been to day; you mean everything to me my dearest one. I could not be happy to day without you; I owe so much to you and your love. I would not be so near to God this night without your help.

Seven happy men bade good bye to that gallant little French priest after Mass and went back to camp through the morning mists. The countryside looked more lovely and green than ever before; it seemed so peaceful and quiet. The simple peasants passed on by on their way to the village market to sell their vegetables and buy tea and sugar in return. There was no sign of panic, no sign of war. As I said goodbye to Father Girard, I realized how truly wonderful is the vocation of the

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priest - he is privileged to be God's medium in bringing Grace and joy to man. That little priest is just hampering on with his body work - he is travelling dangerous roads alone in his little car, he is stopped and questioned by police and military. He shows no fear and will not run away at any cost; he will stay with his flock in time of need. Somehow I think that Catholics can be braver than most people, because they realise that death should have no terrors for them if they are at peace with God. I shall always have a special affection for Fergus both for himself and the great vocation he has received. I remember well at school when I was a small boy of 13 we had a Maths master called Tom Ivory (brother of Fr Ivory). He could not teach me Maths because I could not be taught that subject, but he did succeed in teaching me to have extra special respect for all priests; he always said that we should not say a single thing or think anything bad of a priest because he is God's Anointed. I knew all this so well already, but it was particularly impressed upon me by Fr Ivory. Priests are only human beings but I always manage to find good things to say and think of them. A priest cannot stand in the pulpit and say "I have the most awful neuralgia and that is why my temper is short at times!" People can be so thoughtless and so ready to condemn others so quickly, instead of taking a charitable view of things.

Now I thanked God for sending me Mass and Communion today when I needed them most. He has always been so generous to me and to us both, Eileen, and we shall never be ungrateful to Him. Nothing much happened today or may be I was too happy to notice things happening! Plans came - but that is nothing! How I wish I could speak to you and tell you everything that is in my heart. We heard on the radio to night that my little town of Grex has been captured - do you remember I described my visit to it one Sunday; it is a miniature of London. It was built up by a Catholic District Office in 1909 - Capt. Berkeley; Berkeley Square was the first London

name to be given to a street there. I am wondering what has happened to the present D.O. and his beautiful bungalow at Gink - he is a Catholic too. My good friends at Gole, the Wainseys must be worried too at the moment. It would have killed me if you had been in Malaya at such a time as this; thank God you are at home in peaceful Ireland.

Good night and God bless you my dearest one.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 20th My own darling, I am still here and still very much alive. I was out today at another spot doing a job when a large formation of Japs bombers arrived; bombs dropped all around me and my little party. I was not afraid in the least bit. Honestly, Eileen, I just cannot make it out why I should find all this courage; I know that you must have something to do with it as well as He. Now I do thank God that I can remain cool and unafraid in times like these. I find that I have a knack of putting everyone at ease around me and making them forget the grim reality of what is happening up above. In the first raid today I had everyone in the trench laughing and then in the second when the bombs were dropping fast all were at ease. When the latter was over I made a tour of the area in my lorry with the men, but we did not find a single casualty. The men were very interested in the bomb craters and were amazed to see that so damage had been done but that the molten earth was studded with holes! Really darling there is no danger from bombs in country like this, it is only in cities where bombs can wreak such destruction. The bombs here simply sink deep into the earth and suspend themselves there! Those little yellow bees away up in the skies - how harmless they are! - and yet they imagine that they are doing great things and poisoning everyone! I always invoke your friend (and mine too) Our Lady of Ours; she will never fail me in an air raid. You must be praying very hard for me but you must not spoil me because I am not worth all your prayers. I shall try hard each day of my life to

became more worthy of you and your love, Ellen. I know that I can never do
enough to attain this end.

My darling, you will have to change your dentist when I
come back home!! I don't mean anything personal by this and I don't doubt that your
dentist is a very good one. Well, today after the big raid I came back to camp,
and found a dental case awaiting me. Somebody else would tackle the job so I
scrubbed my hands and extracted a huge back molar in grand style. The poor lad
was in awful agony with toothache and I could not bear to see him suffering. I am
quite an expert at dentistry and have extracted hundreds of teeth even as a student at
the Univer! Today a motor cycle caught fire and while everyone was shouting their
heads off and clanking off for fire extinguishers, I coolly put the fire out with my
handkerchief! Now I am boasting again - I have told you over and over again that
you must cure me of this awful habit but you don't seem to pay much attention to
poor me! My darling, you will have an awful time when we are married having
to listen to my story of the day as we sit by our fireside in the evenings. You will
have to listen to the failures as well as the successes.

If you could only see Malaya's sky to night you would
say how beautiful and peaceful it is. You would see millions of stars that are
never visible in an Irish sky at night - it is the same all over the East at
night. I love the evening star away out in the west (Venus) and to night it looks
like a large silver sphere; I know that it shines out there near you my beloved one.
Today I had a talk with an officer who was in Belfast four months ago; he is
living in our mess now and oh the questions I fired at him about our native
city. He was killed at the new Queen's Chambers and dined at the Eastern each
day. He told me about the "blatant" buildings and all the very latest that you

were not allowed to write in a letter to me. Now if you had only known that this man was coming out to Malaya a few months back you might have sent me a ship load of love with him! You might even have sent me some Christmas cake! It is really Dec. 20th and is it really near Christmas; I should be doing my shopping with you now! However we shall do it together next year, please God, and oh how happy we shall be then.

Good night my own darling and may God protect you and Bless you.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST - Today is our day and though the work has been hard (and I am still on duty) I have not forgotten that it is ours. When I got up this morning I asked God to Bless you in a special way as you lay asleep, to always give you peaceful sleep and never be troubled. In the afternoon (7 a.m. your time) as you were getting up to go to Mass I asked Him never to allow a single tear to come from your eyes on my account. We should both be happy because we have so much to be happy about. Eileen, my dearest, we have a very beautiful love and we should be so proud of it. No matter what may happen to either of us our love will never change - it will always be holy and good. Who would have thought that the friendship which began between that shy Schoolgirl and that self-conscious Schoolboy so many years ago would ever grow into such a great love. There were wonderful days in both our lives when we were growing up into woman and man, but we did not realize it. These are wonderful days too because our love has reached its height; somehow it could not be more perfect than it is to night. I love you as much as it is possible for any man to love woman. You and you alone could have brought me the happiness I have known during the past months. I always wanted you to love me; I never wanted any other love but yours, Eileen.

We heard today that Penang has fallen to the Japs - that

lovely island with its golden sands and its graceful hill. I thought of the rich tin mine owner & whom I met in Upper Perak - the King who had that lovely castle. He had built another castle on top of Penang Hill and now both his castles have toppled to the ground. It makes me realize that money does not really matter in life; it cannot bring happiness because happiness cannot be bought for gold. Things are going better in Upper Perak now and today's radio says that we have successfully counter-attacked Kuala of Ipoh. Today I attended a wounded Jap prisoner of war and he received the same treatment as any other casually - the usual cup of tea etc! He seemed very pleased with himself in spite of his grave wound. May be doctors in a war should not have time for sentiment, but I wondered if this young man had any dear ones at home whom he would never see again.

My darling, I am worried about the precious bundle of your letters. Should I burn them or should I keep them. I don't want to part with them but it would be so much better to destroy them than to let them fall into other hands. They were meant for me alone to read and that is why no one else must touch them. I have read them all over and over again, and each word is dearer to me than life itself. At present I cannot destroy them - it would hurt too much. I shall wait until they are in actual danger, ^{and then} I might destroy them. My dearest Helen I love you so much that I could not part with your letters. You know that your miraculous medal, your lock of hair, and your little soap are all close to my heart night and day - they will remain there always. Night and day you are in my heart and it all belongs to you - there is no room for anyone else but you. May God bless you this night and may He keep you safe from all harm. An atheist officer to night said to me "By the grace of God, I shall have a quiet night on duty". I was amazed at this very Irish expression and inquired where he had heard

this expression; he replied "From you!" Early this morning he had declared that even if bombs were dropping near him he would not believe in God. How I wish that I had more of God's grace to guide me through life. May He bless you again and again.

Monday December 22nd - Eileen my dearest one, here I am sitting on the steps of the office in the gloaming and oh it is such a heavenly evening. There is a red glow away out in the west among the trees and everything is peaceful. An old gramophone is beating out "The Blue Danube" and how very inappropriate it is just now! At this moment as I sit here writing to you I am wondering will any of my letters ever reach you. All air mail has ceased and sea mail must be at an absolute minimum - and all the routes must be perilous ones just now. But I place all my trust in Him who created everything - the sea and the Japanese - and I know he will guide this letter safely to you. And now the cracked gramophone is playing "Teppany" - yes it's a long, long way to the sweetest girl I know. I have met many girls but never never could a single one compare with you, my darling, my first love and my only love. Besides loving your character and everything about you, I have always seen in you something which appealed to me very much; that something I could never quite understand but I have never found it in any other. May be it is something in your personality - I cannot explain it. May be all lovers are like us, they cannot fathom that something which makes them fall in love. I only know that I love you with my whole heart and soul, and that I shall never cease to love you.

According to the radio the Japs are now meaning Kuala Kangsar. Once upon a time I travelled by car from Ipoh to this place, which is the residence of the Sultan of Perak. What a journey that was (to m/p/h); what beauty I saw at the Sultan's palace - the splendour of it all. But I have told you all about it in my early letters. And now these little yellow men from the land of the rising sun

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one coming means to my beloved Iphigeneia - my first love of Anaxagoras; and that sturdy Irishman from Co. Mayo will go out to meet them with his rifle and he will fight as he fought in the troubled times in Ireland. These little yellow men are coming near to your Frank, but that does not worry him a bit because he has nothing to be afraid of.

It is now nearly 11 P.M. and I must get some sleep - have to get up at 6 a.m. as I am on duty to night. Life is not dull for a moment nowadays and I am doing the work I was meant to do. Good night and God bless you my darling child. Pray hard for me.

TUESDAY DECEMBER 23rd : My dearest one, I had a wonderful dream last night about you and when I awoke this morning I was as happy as if I had just seen you and spoken to you. Will you be very annoyed and embarrassed when I tell you all about my dream? I dreamt that ^{we} were married and together again at home and that we were expecting a baby; we were so very very happy about it all. My darling if you think that I should not tell you about such dreams, then please tell me and I shall not mention them again. Eileen, my dearest one, surely there is nothing wrong in such a dream; surely we understand each other well enough and are grown up enough to talk of such things. How often have I wanted and longed to speak to you about my thoughts and dreams of the future. How often have I pictured us in Beechwood, the happiest couple in the whole world; and yet we both know that our joy will not be complete until we are blessed by God with children of our own. Can you imagine greater happiness, Eileen - our own home, our own practice, our love, our prosperity, our happiness, and then to have children of our very own. My darling, what a happy home that will be because we shall model it on that home at Konyetta; we shall love those children as children have never

been loved before and yet methinks we shall love each other just the same. I know that I shall only adore you more than ever when we have children around us. Can you imagine greater happiness than to see them grow up from tiny things to grown boys and girls; I can see you teaching them their first prayers and oh how happy it makes me. I know that they will always worship their mammae - and I shall not blame them or be jealous of all the attention you will receive. I know that we shall sacrifice anything for them because God will have given them into our care and we must give them back to Him as good and as pure as when they came to us. Do you ever think or dream of all these things and do they make you happy too? Have you ever thought of those two Catholic families at Spring Villas and at Beechwood; the happiness and the holiness that has been in those homes. The love of both our parents; the blessings which God showered down upon them. I have always wanted our married life to be even happier than theirs and I know that God will hear our prayers. Eileen, my darling, please forgive me for mentioning all these things to you; I know how sensitive you are and how good, but believe me everything I have written is sacred and holy to me. Our marriage and our love would be mockery unless we wanted to have children; I cannot imagine our home without children - it would be such a vain, selfish life for both of us and against all the teachings of our faith. Oh why do I give you lectures on religion when you know more about it than I! How will you ever be able to endure all these lectures from me when we are married; why did you ever fall in love with such a man as I am!

I forgot to tell you about a lovely present I received last evening from a Sepoy. He came up to me with a most beautiful shell in his hand - you know the type I mean, beautifully speckled by dark brown spots and looking very delft like. We have two of them at Beechwood and when I was a

Mother I used put them to my ear and listen to the sea waves! However this one was particularly lovely and I was ashamed to accept it. The sepray shyly explained that we were really "brothers" as I prayed on my beads twice a day just the same as he! He is a Brahmin by caste and this is the holy caste among Hindus. How did he know that I had beads? Well, one night on board the ship which brought us from India to Malaya, I saw this man sitting on the deck praying upon his beads. I was surprised because I thought that Catholics only used beads to count their prayers besides having them as holy things; so I showed this Brahmin my Rosary. He was very pleased and since then has been a good friend of mine. This shell will look very nice in our home, Eileen, and it is one more addition to our bottom drawer. You have been making too many contributions to our future home and I have done so little.

My darling, will you think me really silly if I ask you again to marry me? "And do you, Eileen Patricia O'Hare, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband; for better or for worse; for rich or for poor; in health or in sickness, till death do you part?" Please say "I do!" when you read these words! You know what my answer is - so now we are married in thought over thousands of miles of land and sea! Some day our dreamings will cease and reality will come and oh what joy that reality will bring to us. Do not set your eyes in Amargment and ask yourself "Is there a war on in Malaya? and what is my Frank doing about it?" Yes my darling the war is still on and that Japs tracing my steps from the far north. They haven't got very far yet and they'll never manage to emulate my feat of 500 miles without a mishap! They have had severe casualties; yesterday they lost 9 planes and that is a lot for these parts. Your Frank will soon be working really hard at his job and will do his job, please God, to the best of his ability. Good night my darling and God Bless you.

WEDNESDAY - CHRISTMAS EVE

Ellen, my dearest, this is a wonderful night at home in lovely Ireland - and it is a wonderful night in Malaya too. I am sitting in my little room and on the table before me is a beautiful coloured picture of the Nativity painted in the 15th Century by Botticelli. It is my Christmas Crib and oh what a treasure it is in times like these; there is peace and joy and goodwill in this room to night. My lamp is shaded on account of the black-out but a beam is shining on that Nativity scene, and beyond is the gilt figure on the Cross - I shall carry that Crucifix with me no matter where I may go. And there stands my little treasure box (cigarette case) and I can see you smiling in that little snap. You are now in good company in this little box - Mother on one side and Mena on the other; Josie is in the opposite compartment with your golf snap; your lock of hair, your little medal, my small Crucifix, my identity discs, my Red Cross protection certificate, and last of all a tiny slip of paper which concerns you very much. All these treasures are pressed close to my heart day and night, and oh how happy they do make me. I can see you at any moment of the day or night because you are always with me. My thoughts are all with you this night because it is a Holy night; you will be at midnight Mass and you will receive that Divine Infant into your heart. That Child, who was born so many years ago, will bring you peace and happiness and consolation. God will not allow you to suffer, Ellen, because He loves you with a special love. Promise me darling, that you will not worry or grieve for me; I love you and I shall always love you no matter where I may be. We can never be separated, with a love like ours to keep us close together and with prayers like ours which span the oceans. We have never been nearer to each other than we are to night. Do you remember this time last year when you were debating with yourself whether to write to me or not? I was thinking of you then as always and I wondered if you would ever

write to me again. Eileen my dearest, I had hurt you so terribly in the past that I thought you would never forgive me or write ever. When you receive this letter please tell me again that you forgive me for all the wrong that I have done to you and all the heartache and unhappiness I have caused you.

This may be my last letter to you for a long long time but you know that I shall be writing to you each day no matter how short my day may be. You know that I shall be loving you every moment until we meet again and we shall meet again soon please God. You shall not leave my thoughts no matter what condition I may be living under. I shall love you always; I am all yours Eileen and I shall always be yours no matter what happens. My people will always have a warm welcome for you, because they love you for yourself and not so much because we are engaged to be married. I want them to love you for your own dear self as I love you. In case I do not have a chance of sending any more letters I wish you a very happy Christmas; I wish you all the joy and happiness in life which you deserve; may you always live a contented and holy life - I know you will. Do not allow memories of me interfere with your happiness; I only want you to have happy and holy memories of me, as I have of you. You must never be sad because you were not made to be sad. God will send you consolation when you need it most.

Good bye, my own darling, and may God bless you now and always. May many an angel protect you and keep you safe for
 Yours loving Frank.

P.S. Love to all at home.
 Frank.