

27th Field Ambulance,

% Base Postal Depot,

Bombay,

Thursday 28th July.

My dearest Helen,

Again I must ask you - what have you done to me? I actually sent you two letters today - one was my usual 12 pages and the other was only a few pages but it contained a lock of black hair and a snap of yours truly! I call it the height of vanity and think that you should stop this feeding of mine. You have got a very great influence over me even though you are 7,000 miles away; and I know that your influence for my good will always last. I have loved you today more than ever before but you must remember that this is inevitable as it happens every day. Have you ever wondered, Helen, what an amazing thing love is - I mean real love. Take my poor case now. I start my morning by praying for you and I end my day in the same way; I think of you at all times whether working or playing, wondering what you are doing and all the time wanting you to be very happy. I would be a very wretched person if I did not love you as I do. May God grant that it be always so. I am so terribly sure that I shall love you forever no matter what happens - nothing can ever change me.

You may have noticed that there is a crisis on in the Far East - and that crisis concerns me very much. This may be my last letter to you, Helen, though I hope and pray that it will not be. If it should be my last, you must know that I shall be loving you just the same though no letters are reaching you. I am not exactly a knight in shining armour, but I can promise you that I shall

never shrink my duty - and yet it will be no easy for me to be brave while I have got your love to strengthen me. You understand that I command the largest company in the Field Ambulance and a lot is expected of me. I shall never do anything spectacular but I would rather die than ever be dubbed a coward. You know that the Red Cross means nothing nowadays and it means less to the Japanese than any other race; so I am not seeking any protection under its banner. Eileen, my darling, I cannot live now without your love now that I have found it at last and caught a glimpse of it in your letter. Writing about love can give very little idea of how deep a love it may be.

I had a really hectic day out of doors today and it rained almost continuously and I had no raincoat! The day began in a rain storm as I set out for my training ground 14 miles away - no such luck as a windscreen in Army trucks or lorries! So before I ever reached the place I was wet through to the skin - and wetter! Then I tramped around for hours in heavy rain and I loved it all. Do you like tramping in the rain, Eileen? I had my usual lunch of sandwiches and tea. I rode a large motor cycle all the way back to camp in the evening when our work was ended - I led the way. I wrote away today for the Straits Times Annual to be sent to you but I expect it will take years to arrive in Ireland. I wrote to my bankers and to my film expert for more snaps - they are all for you, my darling. What a hopeful I have collected for you now! The day is done and a new day is at hand - in fact it will be here in five minutes time! I must away with me to mine bed. God bless you, Eileen. And keep you safe.

Tuesday July 29th - My darling, as I write this thing to night I am very sad. We have got orders to leave and proceed to another station 470 miles

away. It is awful to think of leaving this beautiful spot in the hills and going down to a strange place in the plains where everything is so hot and sticky. There is a war on and so these things must happen. It will take about four days by road to reach our new home and during that time I may not be able to write to you - and yet I know in my heart that I shall send some short note to you daily even though I should be sitting in an open field. Nothing can ever stop me from writing to you, Lileen, just as nothing can ever stop me from loving you with all my heart. I shall always be yours, my dear one. Do you know that you are nearer and sweeter to me to night than you have ever been before?

We are to join up with our other company at our new station. There I shall meet my successor to the crown; one fine day in the near future he will parade as a major and I as a captain; he will take over my company because he is entitled to do so. Heaven alone knows what will happen to me or where I shall be pushed next I do not know. The crown never meant a thing to me, Lileen, I just carried on as if I were still a lieutenant; what does matter is that all the work I have done in this unit ever since it began seems to have been in vain - another man steps in by accident and takes over everything. The O.C. is furious about it all but can do nothing about it. Pray very hard for me that I may be granted the grace of carrying on with my job no matter what it might be. I shall have very much less work to do when I hand over to my successor but I do not ask for a long time. My men have heard rumours about my impending change and each day they come to me for confirmation of their rumours but I never give any. They swear that they will come with me no matter where I may be sent but I have to calm them down and say that that is impossible. I even boost up my successor as a very good officer even though I have never met him. I have grown

to lose each one of those 100 men; - that is what will really hurt me at my next station - losing them. I have never been very soft with them - they worked when they should have worked, they played when they should, and they rested when they needed it. During my spare time I went among them and talked to them as equals - and yet they always respected me as they did no other officers. The lowest among them in caste had a sweeter salute from me than I have ever given to any General. Well, are you tired reading my self-praise? I think you must be and so I will tell you all the events of the day.

I had a long jungle march today with the men - 13 miles in all - and it was really hard work plodding along in the mud and undergrowth. We began our march at 8.30 am. and reached camp again at 2 p.m. - very slow marching! My shirt had not a dry spot on it all all, so you may guess how we sweat in this country when laden with all this equipment. The men had their morning meal at 11 a.m. and I picked a lovely spot for them to rest in - on the ~~bank~~ banks of a jungle stream beside a waterfall. I sat for a full half-hour on a large rock above the falls and thought about you and how much you would like it all. I was sorry that I had neglected my knowledge of trees and flowers and plants otherwise I could have described them all to you in detail. I "collected" a couple of leeches on my legs today and at 5 p.m. the punctures still bleed a little! I had lots of work in camp to do on my return from the march - and all in a hurry, with no time to change or have a bath. I love you, Helen, but "I am tired and want to go to bed!" Good night and God bless you. I have packed 6! Snaps and 25 men of Hyderabad in a box and all are ready for sending to you to-morrow.

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Wednesday July 30th - I am not sad any longer, Celen; in fact I have been very happy today. I have no reason for ever being sad now that you love me and that you have promised to become my wife. I should be the happiest man on earth and I would be if only we were together again. My darling, I am living only for that day to come and we must pray hard that it will come soon. How you will everything I have got and yet that is nothing to the love you will have from me when we meet again.

Can you advise me what to do about your address, Celen? I have sent the parcel of snaps today to Spring Villa. What will happen to them should there be nobody there to receive it? What happens when I send a telegram to the same address and no one receives it? Would it be better if I addressed all correspondence to Kilkenny? I am sorry to have bombarded you with so many questions all in a row! You see, Celen, I love you and I want you to have all the love that I can send to you - you must not miss any of it, because it is all for you. Do I squeeze too much love into these serial letters of mine? As you know I have only read one of these letters over when it was finished and it made the most careful reading unimaginable! What you have to endure until the war is over - I am sorry for you Celen, but it's all I can manage. I have never been a prolific writer. I hope the Snaps will reach you safely my darling; they are the picks of my snaps even though they are a poor lot. However I am improving slightly as the year rolls by! It is a grand hobby and I love it - this does not mean that loving you is another of my hobbies!! Thank God it is something deeper than that. When, oh when is your photograph coming?? I am longing to put it in my camp battle and I shall then feel that you are so much nearer to me than ever before.

Today has been a busy one. I have arranged all the stops on our long journey, and fixed up all the feeding arrangements. I spent many hours at the nearest town (50 miles away) buying food for the officers mess. I am rather looking forward to this trip as it reminds me of a long journey in the old covered-waggon days of the Americas! It will be fun cooking by the wayside and sleeping in our tents at night. I would rather sleep in the open but alas that is not possible in Malaya where mosquitoes abound in areas beyond the reach of modern anti-bacterial sprays; so we have to sleep in a tent under a mosquito net! While shopping today I met a Chinese boy of four years old - a refugee from Shanghai. We became great friends, especially when I had filled him well with sweets! I took a snap of him and I am hoping to send you a print if it is good. The local regimental mess invited me to dinner tonight and I have just returned to my palace again (11.15 P.M.). I shall have a hectic day to-morrow packing everything on the horses and as usual I have all the extra mess work to do. Maybe I need a rest from all my strenuous jobs but I don't want a rest particularly in such times as these. You may be glad to hear that I am going to a seaside station and that will be a big compensation for losing these lovely hills. The sea has ever been my first love - including you, Lileen! Mine eyes grow dim and I am half asleep! Good night and God bless you.

THURSDAY - JULY 31ST If you could see me now amid all the devastation of my home sitting on the ground writing to my best girl you would smile and maybe sympathize with me. All my things have been packed except camp bed and that will be hurriedly put away in the small hours of to-morrow morning. The happy days I have spent in this very room

the happiest of my whole life and you made them the happiest. I read your first love letter here and that wonderful telegram in which you promised to marry me. What my next station will be like I know not, but it could not compare to this little heaven in the clouds. I have had a terrific day loading and arranging everything for to-morrow's big move. However I was not so tired that I could not go out for a 20 minutes walk to say farewell to this grand spot. The sun was setting behind a golden horizon of hills and trees; the palm trees were silhouetted against that lovely background; multi-colored clouds were more beautiful than I have ever seen them before; the far distant mountains had a transillous purple tinge and their outline was perfect against a dark blue sky. As I approached my home among the trees the sun suddenly disappeared and the spell was over; I found myself once more in the shadow of the trees and oh, it was so depressing. And that was my real farewell to —. I have a large scale map of Buralaga beside me now and some day you shall see it. You will have all my journeys pointed out one by one; you will see all my stations and hear what happened to me in each of them. It will be so much better hearing about it all than reading it in my poor letters. We have all been sent to dinner at the rest house to night because the brass is all packed up and ready for the road. I am the leader in to-morrow's big convoy - I must look an awful sight perched in that little stoolless Austin! If you were here I would ask you to pray that all will go well to-morrow with my convoy because there are over thirty lorries and ambulances.

Thank God I shall find time to write to you every evening when we stop for the night as our three main stopping places are at quite large towns. You do understand about the delay in posting this letter. I cannot send my letters through the Civil Post Office - all must be sent to the Army

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Post Office having been burned by our own censor and stamped accordingly. So my darling, you will have to wait for four more days until this is posted.

I love you, Helen, and nothing can change my love for you. Good night and God bless you my own one.

FRIDAY AUGUST 1ST - My first day is over and all is well, thank God. I cannot concentrate to write to you under these conditions of chaos and turmoil. I only know that I love you more and more no matter where I may be or what I am doing.

I can only give you a few notes, ^{about} today my darling. I had a narrow escape from death today on the journey when I discovered one of the back wheels of the Austin almost hanging off - thank heavens I discovered it in time! The bolts were all loose and almost dislodged. There were many sad farewells from the local population before we left the hills. When I arrived here I found a note waiting for me from an R.P.C. officer who was a very good friend of mine in India. He invited me to dine with him at the local club and now I have just returned after a very boring evening - he was bored too, because he hates clubs! I have bought out a chapel and tomorrow morning I shall go to Mass and Communion - and how I shall pray for you, Helen. Good night my darling and God bless you.

SATURDAY AUGUST 2nd - My second halt and still all is well and still I love you! I started my day with Mass at 7 a.m. but as we had to leave at 7.30 a.m. I had breakfast beforehand. We started off in a drizzle of rain but soon it cleared up and became a glorious day. The sun shone down upon the plains and it was hotter than I have ever known a sun to be in

Malayan. You should see my face, arms, and legs - all sunbrowned in a few hours sitting in my small Austin (open car)

Another friend I met on my arrival here - Humphrey Thomson son of W. W. D. Thomson. He has been very pleasant to me since my arrival. I have had tennis with him; he showed me around his hospital; allowed me to read his Weekly Telegraph (Belport), ^{"PRO TANTO AUO!"} - saw all the air raid pictures; had dinner at the mess with him and now it is bed time (11.15 P.M.). This is the half-way house on our long journey; I am sleeping in my camp bed in an empty room of a bungalow - and I am writing this as I sit in my suitcase! Another big day tomorrow ahead - to morrow and another early rise in the darkness at 6 a.m. Good night Cileen and God bless you.

SUNDAY AUGUST 3rd - My dearest Cileen, this is the life that I love best of all - wandering! It is 10 P.M. and I am sitting by a Malayan roadside and writing to you by the light of a lantern. There is a tiny Austin car just beside me and behind is an equally small tent in which I hope to sleep to night. It is my idea of life. There is a musty moon high above with a very lovely halo around it; there are stars peeping out here and there in the heavens; there are Malayan houses (campings) close by and there is a low murmur of voices all around; a hundred yards down the road stands my convoy with everything intact. I had a very welcome bath in my canvas bath-tub and a very lovely dinner served up outside my tent - fried eggs and onions + a tin of pineapples! Oh Cileen, this is the life I have always dreamed about especially for a holiday and some day please God we shall spend many happy holidays in this way. If only there were two tents here instead of one; if only you were sitting by my side on this ground-sheet and sharing this joy with me - I could never ask for anything better - how terribly happy we should

be. Maybe you love this kind of life as much as I do and maybe you have had good times like this in Senegal during July.

I am very much alone to night as all the other officers have gone off to dine and spend the night at the local Rest House 5 miles away! Imagine preferring a stuffy room and a mediocre dinner to my idea of bliss! The poor lads have no sense at all! If only there were not so many mosquitoes buzzing around and biting me, I could write many pages to you to night. We had a very hot day again and my sunburn is even worse to night - at least it feels worse now! Tomorrow is our last stop and in a way I shall be sorry because I love wandering. Maybe my wanderlust will cease when we meet again, Eileen. My new station will bring many changes to my poor military career, but I shall have to grin and bear it. I could face anything and bear any cross as long as I have your love and prayers. I love you as no man could ever have loved before. God bless you and keep you safe.

MONDAY AUGUST 4th - Oh, my Eileen, I am so very happy to night. I had not arrived at my destination more than a few minutes when a letter from you was put into my hand. It was dated June 13th while you were in Strabane Superintending and it contained three wonderful snaps of you. The oftener I read your letter and the more I look at you, the more I love you. Yes, you are still the same Eileen whom I have always loved - you have not changed even a little bit. You must be very proud of your trophies, in fact, I am surprised that you should ever love such an insignificant Major in the Army ~~as~~ as I! Again I ask of you not to love me too much because things can happen to me and then you would have to suffer. One thing is certain and that is that I shall always love you and nothing that happens to me can ever make me stop loving you.

I am about to give you a lecture about your weight! So listen to me, Miss O'Hani, while I tell you off! Imagine you being a stone underweight - you must be starting! You know that I do not mind whether you are fat or thin, tall or small; you will never find me making a fuss about your health unless it is absolutely necessary. You will just please yourself, Eileen, about these things because I know that nothing can be so amusing as to listen all day long to lectures on one's weight or health. If God wants you to be 8st 12lb, then who are we to complain! And yet, my darling, you know that I would do any mortal thing in this world for you - you will always come first. By the way I like your sundall shade and all your sunny curls.

My big journey through Malaya is now ended and here I am packed once more in a wooden hut in the shadow of a plantation. Everything in this little room is exactly the same as in my last station but it is so much better now that your snaps repose on my table. I feel that you are here with me now and so my so-called letters will be even more in the nature of a daily talk to you than before. I am glad that you want me to just write down whatever comes into my head because it is the only way I can write. You see, Eileen, that I do not sit down each evening and write you a "stuffy letter" - I write only because I want to write and tell you every little thing that happens in my day and every little thought that comes into my head during the 24 hours. I was very proud to day loading my big convoy into camp after 500 miles travelling without a hitch - it was worth praying for. It will help the Field Ambulance a lot with the powder that he and it will help the morale of the men. You cannot picture the very narrow un-rolled wooden bridges we crossed today and all without an accident thank God. What a surprise awaited me here when I found that my successor to the

Brown is a Queensman (a classmate), who qualified with me! However, today was the first time I had ever spoken to him! 'Heff said!! Actually he was one of the bright boys of our year at Queens - at least he worked ten times harder than Frank Murray (and the latter missed honors by two marks!). Even Frank played games and went to pictures twice weekly in his final year, so he could not have worked so very hard - and now I have no regrets! My successor became a Major yesterday but strangely enough I have not been de-moted yet. I am 11 miles from the blue ~~ocean~~ sea and the Golden Sands, but I shall seek them out very soon, you may be sure. Here there is no tennis, no badminton, no football, no beauty, no walks - what a change from my hills - I have not even mentioned the heat, and it is sticky!

Celia, my dear, I am sorry that this letter should have been delayed so long. It is very scraggy and broken up, but I shall make amends with the next one. You can never realize how happy your letters can make me, so never fail to write if it is only a few lines. I understand that you cannot find much news to write about, so please do not let that part worry you. My darling, I want you to make our engagement as public as ever you wish and I want you to go with Uncle Eddie to visit my father. My love to all your people and to the little Frances. God bless you, my darling, and may He protect you from all danger.

All my love, Celia,
 Ever yours,
 Frank.