

27th Field Ambulance,

Malaya,

21. 1. 41

(Monday).

Eileen, my darling,

Here I am again doing my "daily doings"! It is 26 hours since I wrote to you last and that seems so very long ago; in fact it seems ages since I sent your letter off this morning! I am still in my wooden palace and I should hate to leave it now that I have grown to love it so much. Also there are many rumours in the air that we may be moved to another station in the very near future - in fact it will probably happen before this letter reaches you. How I shall loathe the plains and all its horrible stickiness and unpleasantness - not to mention the awful air down there. Up here everything is so lovely; the air is so bracing; the birds actually sing here; there are games and walks. Won't you please pray very hard that we may be left up in this heaven that so many other units do not like because it is so very far away from life, as they call it. Up at this place is teeming with life - real life as God intended it to be; nothing artificial about it. By the way, Eileen, my address will remain the same no matter where I shall go in Malaya. I am still a major but as you know it will not be for long - "What care I for wreaths that can only give glory!" (More Beyond!). My successor is not really my successor because my O.C. has decreed that I shall hold all my present jobs in the Field Ambulance, so that my position is not a bit changed except that my crown must go!

And how are you, my darling? Do you still love me and

Do you still pray every word for me? I need your prayers as I have always needed them in the past. I am sure that your prayers have got me out of many troubles. I have always felt your prayers and have always sensed that something was making me do the right thing. You must be asking God as I am asking Him to pour down all His blessings on our love; you know that it could never be a success without His blessing. I still love you, Helen, with all my heart and everything that I can give to you and I know that I shall always love you. If only I could see you for a moment now and tell you all about it - that would be better than all the letters in the world. I never could write letters, Helen, and it is a bit late now to learn. Do you remember the first letter you wrote to me while you were at St Louis, Missouri? Do you remember how you signed it - "Zand zo leor, o Eblin"? My darling, you cannot imagine how thrilled I was to read those words from you whom I worshipped in my own romantic schoolboy way! And now I worship you in a very manly way, I hope, my love is grown-up and it is so very deep and true, it could never weaken or change.

This week is going to be a hectic one for me because my Company (H.O.) will spend every day in the field doing intensive training. Still it is grand fun and I can still make it seem like a pic-nic for the men. I cannot give you any details of our daily programme but I must tell you about the score of lads who came to see us perform. They were all Madcaps and they looked perfect in their multi-coloured sarongs; they laughed at us in our respirators and thought it all very strange that we should come and perform near their colony in the valley. This colony is like something in a story book; it is a world all in its own - fenced in, in a crude fashion. They are self-supporting - they have herds

of cattle and goats grazing all around; have their own school etc.. And yet I have not described them to you at all, Selam! I am helpless! Good night and God bless you my darling. P.S. I managed two sets of tennis this evening and now you must listen very carefully. I came across two lads with golf clubs this evening out near the football ground. I borrowed a No. 5 and sent three perfect iron shots down the fairway! No look ~~you~~ out, young lady! I love you.

Tuesday - July 22nd - I am so very happy tonight and I have been happy all day long. And now you will hear all about it. This morning a very welcome visitor arrived at the hospital and asked for me - the messengers gave me a weird message in Hindi which I did not understand. I was all dressed up in my battle kit ready to move out of camp at the head of the column. I rushed over to the hospital and found a very charming French priest awaiting me. I liked him immediately I saw him and we had a grand chat together. He informed me that Mass would be at 8 a.m. tomorrow morning; that he would only be able to come to this district once every three months. I arranged to meet him at the Rest House tonight at 8 p.m. as my guest for dinner there. And now I have just returned from dinner and we have had a lovely evening together. We had a good meal and then set off in our respective cars to his hut in the village. He showed me the small wooden chapel and really, Selam, it was beautiful without being ornamental. It was built by a Catholic District Officer once upon a time; later it was enlarged and now it can hold about 30 people. You would have surmised that I have seen to night - the little grassy lane leading up to the chapel, the quaint little compound containing the chapel and the priest's hut. I went to Confession tonight and it was made in the strangest of surroundings - a tiny wooden

but with two of the smallest rooms inside it that I have ever seen. I cannot tell you how happy I was. And now here is something for you - I have arranged with Father to say Mass tomorrow morning for my special intention. Need I tell you what that special intention is? Well, it is to ask God's blessing on our love, that He may bless us now and that He may bless our marriage. Now I shall pray for both of us tomorrow morning especially after Communion; I can always pray best then. Oh, if only I could get to Mass more often. That's why you must never forget me in your prayers for a single day, my darling. So very much depends upon you and I know that you could never let me down. I trust you as I have never trusted anyone before.

Father (no names) shall come from Brittany and has a sister a nun in Paris. His brother was captured in the Magmat Line during the war and taken prisoner. He never hears from either of them. He has been 12 years in Malaya and has many interesting tales to relate. I shall only have time to have a word with him after Mass tomorrow and then dash off to camp and lead the solemn rout in our daily exercises. We had a glorious day in the sun in open spaces today and the men can still treat it as a pic-nic. We are working hard and have reached the stage where we are just polishing up the very small points. I think we are well ahead of anything else in Malaya at the moment - and that is not boasting! My darling, our football jerseys arrived today and the colours were my selection - Green and white stripes across!! So please tell Felix that Belfort Celtic is going strong in Malaya too! May I say God might bless, Calcutta. God bless you and keep you safe. I do love you so much more to day; and I trust that tomorrow will find me loving you still more. I must tell you before I go

that I have been selected as this District's No. 1 tennis player in an inter-district match to be played shortly at a place 30 miles away from here!

Wednesday - July 23rd - Well, my darling, today has been wonderful. I got up very early this morning, collected all the Catholics in the camp together, and off we went to chapel in a truck. We found all the natives already there saying their prayers ~~aloud~~ aloud as they sat on the floor; it was a lovely picture, Helen. The priest was hearing confessions at one end of the altar rails and he looked like a saint - and he probably is one. We found two forms near the back of the Chapel and further we were sheltered by the native wooden... We were the first white people who had ever been to Mass in this district and we created quite a sensation among the natives. I should mention that by natives I mean Tamils who come from Southern India - no Malays or Chinese were present. Can you imagine how happy I was during our Mass; how hard I prayed for you and for me. After Communion I asked and prayed for so many blessings that God could not grant them all at once! When Mass was over it was 8.40 a.m. and I had to rush back to camp, change, have breakfast, and lead the Convey out of camp at 9 a.m. Strangely enough I managed it, with a minute to spare! Maybe I do not deserve to be so happy, but all day long I have been walking on air. The O.C. came to inspect my show in the field today and could find no flaw in it anywhere. My men worked like horses and they liked it. The rain came down in torrents at 3 p.m. but today the rain could not wet me even though I was drenched to the skin! I always make it a point to get much wetter than the men because then they can have no cause for complaint; I make them realize that I am willing to do the same or I ask them to do. Well, it has rained ever since 3 p.m. and so to night it is really cold and damp.

I have a big "show" laid on for tomorrow morning. I am taking the company out to a spot 15 miles away, setting up camp, and we shall be receiving and evacuating "casualties" for hours without ceasing. Tomorrow is also pay day and as usual I have to pay out at 2 P.M., then we should have football at 4 P.M.. The lads are very keen to wear their new green and white jerseys - I wonder how many of them know the sentiment that lies behind my choice of the colours! It reminds me of the "weanin' of the Green"!

I have been surprised at some local news I heard today. A large bear was shot about 200 yards beyond the village a couple of days ago; the Post House keeper bought it and cut out the heart as a lucky charm! A tiger has killed some cattle recently about 10 miles from here. Did I tell you about the Dublin man whose wooden house was nearly wrecked by a herd of twenty elephants a few nights ago? He is district officer of a neighbouring area and is the only white man around the place. The stampede occurred at 4 A.M. in a bright moonlight night and though very terrifying it was a lovely sight!

I should like anything to know where you are this evening and what you are doing and what you are thinking of. I only hope that you are very happy - that is all I can wish you. Maybe I envy you if you are now among the 'Hills of Dinegal'. Some day, Eileen, we shall see all the beauty of Dinegal together and I promise you that it will seem more beautiful than you have ever seen it before. We shall cycle and walk and drive through it, we shall play golf at Rosapenna and Buncrana; we shall swim in the Atlantic - there are so many things we must do together when I come back to you, my darling. God bless you and keep you safe from all harm.

Thursday - July 24th - My darling, after due deliberation and careful thought I have arrived at the inevitable conclusion that I love you even more today than yesterday! You must never tell me that it is possible for me to love you too much because I know that I can never love you enough or give you enough no matter how long I may live. I am wondering if all is well with you at home? I sent you a telegram about 2 weeks ago and there has been no reply as yet. I am only being stupid because you must be in Dougal just now and probably out of touch with things. I still write to you every day and send a letter off by ^{the} trans-Pacific air mail on every 6th day. One you receiving these dull and uninteresting letters or have they met their deserved fate floating in the Atlantic waves! I am longing for your next letter, Celine, and to hear from you what I have wanted so badly to hear for such a long time. I have only received one of your letters since I came to Malaya that came about 2 weeks ago and was forwarded from Kuala Lumpur. I only tell you this, Celine, to let you know how long it takes letters to reach the East Malaysians. I have promised to send you lots of snaps from Malaya but so far I have only sent about a dozen in all. I have collected about 20 more for our album and some day when I have time I shall send them all to you. I seem to be working all day long and have no spare time at all, except after dinner and that is always reserved for your letter. My O.C. has just peeped around the corner of my door and asked me "what in the world can you find to write about every night"! He complains that although he only writes home once a fortnight he is always stuck for something to say! May be you find me too long winded and boring - and I am sorry if it is so but alas it is the only way I can write to you and tell you how much I love you. I read through my last letter to you just now and I found it was really awful but all my letters are

the same - at least they all mean the same thing and that is a very short three
 -worded sentence! I am looking forward to your "vacation letter" telling me of all
 the wonderful times you had. I want a very detailed description of Lough Derg,
 Donegal, and Killough - it will be as good as a holiday for me! Have you
 ever met in your travels, a very good friend of mine called Dr. Duff who
 has a practice in Portaferry? His name is Frank and I wish I were as
 good in every way as he. He taught me a lot when I was a student in
 hospital and he was house-surgeon. I have not written to him for a couple
 of years now but he may remember me still. You should meet him
 sometime, Celine.

I had a hectic morning working all over the
 countryside on my "manures"! All went off without a hitch and at
 last I can say that we are really ready for anything that may come. I
 paid out a couple of hundred men in less than an hour this afternoon. We
 had grand fun with our usual weekly football melee - the lads love it.
 It was too late for any tennis - besides I was too tired for such frivolity! I am
 going to bed now with a prayer for you. God bless you, my darling, and may
 you always be happy.

FRIDAY - July 25th - As it is now 1 a.m. it must really be Saturday!
 I have just returned to camp after a very strenuous day in the field - you may have
 guessed that we did lots of ingotwork too. My darling, please excuse the awful
 mess that this page is in but I'll explain it all now. I took my writing pad
 along with me on the business today. I remained a quiet evening in my small
 tent doing a spot of writing. We had settled in for the night at 9.30 p.m. and
 I sat down to my dinner on the floor of the tent (another castle) - my wonderful

dinner of bully beef and cheese sandwiches, when along came a string of 'Caruathies'
 for treatment and evacuation. Your letter and my dinner were left unperished in my
 tent for the rest of the evening, but I have just finished my dinner and now your
 letter comes second to my awful greed! I am very selfish, Helen, and you will have
 to cure me of it. However you will never cure me of my habit of loving you no
 matter how hard you might try. You know that my love for you has become a
 part of me - the most important part. Some people think that their work should
 come first above all things but I could never think that way. Loving you, Helen,
 comes before all else except God; in loving you I have to do my job well and
 I have to love God better. So you see that your love is all-important to me. I have
 got other loves too, my darling. I have spent today with a hundred men and they
 say that they love me too (said he shyly). I was lost for an hour this evening in the
 darkness and when I reached the path again I found 100 men armed with torches,
 lamps, and matches making good efforts to recover the dead body they expected to
 find! When I met them they all gathered around me and touched me very
 gingerly to make sure that it really was me. Poor lack had been starving all the
 day and then had to hunt for me! This afternoon a snake pined about a foot
 ahead of me in the grass and it was in a real hurry. It was about 5 feet long
 and one is supposed to kill snakes but that never appealed to me. The poor old
 snake was frightened, so why should I be afraid of it.

My darling, please forgive me if I go off to bed as I have to
 get up early tomorrow. God bless you and keep you.

SATURDAY - JULY 25th - I have been so very, very happy today and
 you are to blame! Sometimes I wonder if it is quite right for anyone to be so
 happy as I am - I know that I do not blame it at all. Your wonderful letter

dated May 23rd arrived today. At last I have read what I have wanted to read or hear for such a very long time - that you love me. Oh how can I ever love you enough for all that you have given to me - the one thing that I have put above all else in my life has been given. We shall never cease thanking God for the love He has granted to us - never as long as we live must we forget. Please always write me letters like the one you sent me today. You would blush if you but knew how many times I have read that letter. I know that we shall meet again soon and that very thought must surely keep us alive in the meantime. Letters are really our only way of communicating with each other and though they take months to reach their destination, they can play such a very important part in our romance. All letters may have to cease in both directions in the not too distant future, so my darling we must put as much love as we can into them. My darling, you know that I shall always love you and no one but you no matter what happens. Should we have to wait months or years before we meet again, it can never make any difference to my love for you. I shall write you the usual daily letter (or diary) even though I may not be able to send it; but some day you will be able to read it all. No amount of writing can ever give you any idea of how very much I love you, Eileen. Nothing in this world could ever stop me from loving you. Please do not love me too much, Eileen, in case something should happen to me - you would then suffer a lot and I never want you to be unhappy.

I am so sorry about the battered envelopes you have been receiving from me but I hope the present lot are an improvement. I have never sent you any snaps of myself because I have not got any, but I did send the photograph without you asking for it (such presumption & vanity!). I

wanted you to have it and I hoped it has arrived safely - parcels usually take about 3 months to reach their destination. My darling, you must not forget to send me a large photograph of yourself - I need you very badly in my wooden hut. I want to feel that you are with me always and praying for me. All those 7,000 miles will disappear and mean nothing because we shall be very close together always.

I must take more interest in Malaya - for the sake of your pupils! I shall redouble my efforts with snaps of the country and all the types of people living in it. You know that the Malays are not the original inhabitants of Malaya - the aborigines are called Saichais (that's how it is pronounced!). There are only a few thousand of the latter remaining in Malaya. They are a small race, very dark skin, black wavy hair, and African negroid features; they are nomadic and live in the jungle. They hunt wild animals and their dress is a loin cloth only. There is little record of how they came to Malaya but many believe that they are African in origin. The real Malaya has a dark yellow complexion, slightly Mongolian features, and usually small in stature. They are very pretentiously dressed in long coloured sarongs down to their feet and a quaint little fez hat on top of their heads (excuse bad English!). They are a bit lazy and are never in a hurry. They are shy of strangers but not as shy as the aborigines. I have failed miserably to give you any idea of what these people look like - so I shall have to supplement it with snaps!

Eden, would you mind going to see my father. I have written and told him all about our engagement and all about you. I would not ask you to do this but I feel that he should know you. You will find him just a plain country man with very little education but with a ~~shrewd~~ shrewd brain and a heart of gold. You have asked to meet my sister too and I want you to do so next time you are in Dublin. You will find a very great welcome awaiting you

Sister M. Villana O.P.,
Dominican Convent,
Sion Hill,
Blackrock,
Co. Dublin.

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Try Eddie Kelly
as escort!

Charles Murray Esq.,
155 Old Park Road (Shop)
or
95 Cliftonville Rd,
Belfast.

from Una, my favourite. She was one of the few people at home who really understood me at all - and that was no easy job. I shall write and tell her that you are coming to see her sometime.

I am very tired to night, as I have had another hard day, - not to mention my five hours sleep last night! I was actually sad yesterday for the first time for ages but today it has all vanished thanks to you. I had to pray very hard yesterday evening and I wish I could tell you all (INK!) about it. I wish you were near me Eileen; there are so many secrets I could tell you and I know you would understand. Yesterday's affair was concerned with my job and for a moment I was tempted to say "What's the use?" - that is an awful expression and I must never say it. Please pray very hard for me, Eileen; always stay near to me. You see, my darling, I have worked so very hard with this Field Ambulance and I helped in a way to make it the best that ever came out of India. You should have seen ^{them} ~~the~~ when they first paraded in Rawalpindi!

I must say au revoir once more, Eileen, otherwise I shall write 15 pages instead of the allotted ~~ten~~ ten! Give my love to all of your people and also my sympathies for having me as a future son-in-law! I am longing to see them all and also my little Frances - she might give you her Roland for an Oliver like me! Give her my love.

May God bless you, my darling, and may He hear all your prayers. I shall love you forever and ever.

All my love,
Frank.