

27th Field Ambulance,

c/o Army Base Post Office,
Singapore,

Sunday, November 16th

Dear my darling,

I sent your usual weekly letter off today and also another magazine (Oria). I often wonder whether my letters reach you at all or not; you are so very far away and each letter has a long perilous journey to make ere it reaches you. Your last letter dated September 26th reached me on Friday last and you know how happy it has made me. My darling, you look lovely in the wedding group; the other two ladies may be very nice but you are the most stately and the most handsome of them all (or may be I am blind and lovers do not see...!). Your three snaps are here in my bible and also the wedding group, and I love them all. Need I tell you that I love you more than ever before and that I shall always love you. All this waiting can only strengthen our love; it gives us time for a real preparation for marriage and our preparation could not be better. This separation will only make us realize how much we mean to each other and when we are reunited again we shall appreciate one another and our love. We cannot pray hard enough to God during these trying days, while the future is so uncertain; we need all His help and all the graces He can give us. I know He will bless our love and our marriage, because we have placed ourselves in the care of His Blessed Mother. If only I could pray half as earnestly as my father does, then I would be happier. I feel that I am not doing enough toward our cause and that you and your dear ones seem to be doing all the praying. I would give anything to be stationed at a place where I could have daily Mass - I miss Mass so terribly and it does worry me. However, it has made me realize how

much I love brass and it has made me determined never to miss a single one again when it is possible for me to go. I wrote to Father Girard today and arranged with him to pay a brass ^{each} for mother, Josephine, and Charlie (R.I.P.); I told him how welcome he would be here in December when he comes. I asked him to send me the addresses of the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Redemptionists in Singapore.

You are very good to be working so hard for our home. As I cannot actually make things, I fear that all the making will be left to you, Helen. I want you to buy things with money from our account, but the money must be mine - you must not spend any of your own money. In this way I shall be doing my bit. However please everything entirely to you, your choice of things will always please me, because you have much better judgement in these matters. I hope and pray that the stuff I bought in India for our home will not all be eaten away by moths and ants! Wait until you see the lovely hand made Kashmir silk tea table set, and the wood carvings, and the penicillery box and the carved cigarette box and the pictures and my white elephants!! As usual my purchases are all useless, while yours are practical and sensible. You poor child, what a stupid fellow you have chosen as a husband. However if you ever want any advice about what you should buy or not buy for our home, I shall try to help you out as best I can.

I had a glorious day in the sea today. It was raining hard when we entered the water and the sea very rough - the waves were terrific. I was the first man in and the last man out of the water! I love bathing or swimming in the sea because I have a grand sense of freedom and well being immediately I slip in a bathing costume and start running down to the water's edge. The day cleared up well, and we had lunch under the palms. Then we all walked towards the rocks and the big headland about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile down the beach. I made

the first discovery - a cave hidden away among the rocks. I thought of the bad old days when pirates were rampant along these shores, I pictured smugglers using this old cave as their secret rendezvous! Nobody seemed keen to explore the darkness of the cavern so off I went alone; I crept up and up along the narrow passage - it was very exciting walking into the unknown. An octopus would not have been a welcome creature to meet! Eventually I saw the light of day above me and lo and behold! I found myself out near the top of the headland. I was dazzled and amazed by the view below me as I looked down through the foliage - a seething mass of foam; tropical waves crashing against the rocks below and sending spray 20 feet in the air. Straight ahead was that lovely stretch of sand that runs for 7 miles along the shore. I was awestruck of all I surveyed! I did not want to leave this beauty but it was growing late and I could not keep the others waiting - I could hear their shouts and whistles away below. I picked a bunch of wild flowers at the entrance to the cave and brought them back to camp to beautify our dining table! And now it is 12 midnight and I have to get up at 6.30 a.m. It would have been a perfect day if you had been here with me to share it. Good night and God bless you, Ellen.

Monday - November 17th

I am disgusted with the letters I am sending you nowadays and I wonder how you can read them at all. This station is much less invigorating than my station in the mountains; it is hotter and stickier, and were it not for the sea I would have nothing here in the way of amusement. There is no adventure, nothing to tell you about, but thank God I never allow myself to become depressed in this home under the trees. It is prayer and your love that make me so very happy - without these I should be utterly lost in this place. My next door neighbour (Major Hill) came to me last evening as I sat writing, outside my door and told me how terribly depressed he felt - this life and this place and this climate are getting me

Dawn. Early in the day he had asked me why did I seem so happy - I was singing
 this morning! Some shaps cannot sleep, some cannot eat, others have different complaints
 and others depressed - and yet your Frank has been spared all of this. I do not forget
 to thank him for all he has given to me and all the blessings I have received during
 the past year. I know, my darling, that your prayers have been the cause of all this
 and how can I thank you enough for everything. This has been the happiest and the
 holiest year of my whole life - and you know the reason for it all. When we meet
 again, Cileen, and are married, think of the happiness we shall have together, think of
 the good that we two can do together, think of the prayers and masses and Lough songs
 we shall offer up. And all the time you will never have an unhappy moment - I just
 could not hurt you intentionally, my dearest one; there will be no quarrels. Did you
 know that the only thing I really detest in life is quarrelling and worst of all I cannot
 endure but being on speaking terms with people. I have very rare quarrels with folk
 I who are not my friends, but I have to make it up again about 10 minutes later! So,
 my darling, how could I ever quarrel with you whom I love so much - how could I
 ever stop speaking to you?

As you know there is another crisis looming up in the Far East
 again, but you must not worry about this, Cileen, because there has been a crisis
 every week here for years. Does it bring you any comfort to learn that I am prepared
 in the way that you would want me to be prepared to meet whatever lies ahead
 of me. And all this I owe to you and your prayers, my dearest. I am lucky to
 have inherited my father's complete lack of nerves - it is not bravery or bravado, I
 just feel that if the house fell down now I would sit here and finish my letter to
 you as if nothing had happened! Poor Philip has been less fortunate and I do sympathise
 with him. Have you met him yet, Cileen, and how do you like him? Yes you are

Like an absent minded professor you did not tell me a thing about Felix's wedding, but the newspaper cutting really told me everything! Do not take this seriously; I think you have done wonders to have sent me so much news, and more important, so much love. I shudder to think what would happen to me if your letters did not come and I pray to God that they will never cease. And if the war should interfere with our correspondence, He would give me strength to carry on and not allow me to despair. I shall love you until I die, Lileen; this is the only thing I can be sure of in this life.

It has been a glorious day in camp today. Somehow I feel happier as the days slip by and this may be due to the fact that each day brings me nearer to you. I seem to love the men more every day and they are very lovable; they need lots of understanding and sympathy being away from home for the first time in their lives. I make life as pleasant as possible for them and they appreciate this by working very hard. It is odd since I have had a man charged with being a minor breach of discipline. The Red Cross people sent cigarettes and sweets today for them, the latter for non-smokers. I had I tell you that many a grubby-looking and sticky sweet was offered to me today in a sticky hand. They are just like children wanting to share their few sweets with their pals - and I am very proud to be one of their friends. In many ways I am thankful to be with an Indian unit in preference to a British unit. These men from the villages of India are honest, generous, and good - and they are clean. They are deeply religious and pray hard every morning and evening - and they live up to what their religion teaches them.

And now there is only one more thing to tell you and that is, you will be wearing a very nice engagement ring ere Shasthmas comes! Will you be very annoyed if the mate I sent with it does not arrive ^{at} the same time as the ring. I wanted you to have our ring so desperately that I could not wait. Good night and God bless you my darling.

TUESDAY - NOVEMBER 18th - I have just bought something very nice for our home and yet I am not allowed to tell you what it is, nor can I send it to you! Yet another secret! but it may bring you some joy to know that yet another item is waiting to adorn our home. We are fortunate to have so much time on our hands to get things ready for the future, but how I wish with all my heart that we are not given too much time. Oh, my darling, this waiting will come to an end some time, this war must end soon, and we shall be together again new to be parted.

And now I want to make things clear about our future. You have listened patiently to my fathers dreams and plans for us to settle in Beechwood and you did not know how I would react to all those plans of his. You were sensible enough to realise what I have realised so very long ago, that a practice does not exist on the Cleptonville Road for me. However I can promise you that we shall settle down in Beechwood if it is at all possible and it is possible if I can have a practice somewhere in North Belfast such as Ardoyne, Old Park, or Hennington district - or even further afield. I could have a surgery in the middle of the practice and we could live at Beechwood. It is practicable my dear Cileen, but I would like your opinion in the matter. You see, my darling, when this war is over, a state controlled medical service is sure to come into force and though this has many disadvantages it should suit us very much. It may abolish the old idea of a family doctor but the patients will get better attention than ever before. I shall be able to visit poor patients more frequently because it will not cost anything to them for extra visits and special attention. That's what I loved about the panel system when I was working in Birmingham; I did work hard for those poor people in the slums and it brought me great joy. It is part of the glory of a doctor's life - one feels that one is doing something useful in life.

without gaining anything from it by way of recompence except great consolation and happiness - and what better reward could one ask. You will find me an idealist, Eileen, and not ~~very~~ very practical in my ways. You will have to teach me how to be more practical - I wish I could be half as methodical as you, Eileen - and yet I think that if I had been different and less idealistic I might not have loved you so constantly during all these years. You were my ideal and so I cling to your image ever since I first met you. I was a queer kid when you knew me in the past and I must have frightened you horribly in those ~~past~~ school days and afterwards at Queen's. Did I seem very rough and uncouth to you, Eileen? I shall never understand why you ever loved me at all. It was my dear mother who was instrumental in bringing us together again - she hoped and prayed that some day we would get married, and yet I thought that she must have forgotten all about you because it was years since I had told her about you. Imagine, she loved you so much and died without ever having met you. So many people love you, Eileen, and I am so glad that they love you. And you have accepted my poor love and given me yours in return. I treasure your love above all else in this world, I shall always respect it and keep it locked away in my heart where it will be safe for ever. I only wish I could love you even more than I do today; it would make me even happier than I am - I want to keep on giving and never grow weary of it.

I have worked very hard today and that makes me happy. My whole day was spent in camp with the men and as I am on duty I shall tuck them all into bed very soon. I now write to you in the evenings before dinner so that I can go earlier to bed - my after dinner letters need finish at sundown and I had then to get up at 6 am. or 6.30 am! Growing boys need their sleep and though I have stopped growing I am still a boy - I love sport, simple things,

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How innocence and children. I am still a queer lad! Good night my darling
and may God bless you and protect you from all harm.

WEDNESDAY - NOVEMBER 19th - How do you expect me to compete with
your letters, Lileen?! A wonderful 10 page letter came today and yet it was only
last Friday when your latest one arrived - you are spoiling and missing me. It
was sent on September 14th and oh how very happy it has made me this day. I
do not tell white lies - your letters are grand and mine could never bring you
the happiness that yours have brought to me. You write about all the little
things that happen to you in your daily life - and all these are very dear to me.
Margaret's little snap of mother arrived safely thank God - you are a darling to
send it and it is typical of Margaret to think of me in this way. That little
snap and the verse will console me immensely while I am so far away from
home. I know you would like Margaret - she could not have a dull moment in her
company, she is so gay and so very happy; nothing ever worries her. She has marvellous
pluck and yet withal a perfect nun. She was very keen on dancing, like you, Lileen,
and many a scrape we got into at Beechwood for being out late at a dance - and
above all missing the family Rosary! The latter was the greatest crime that anyone at
Beechwood could commit - and my father was right to insist on a full attendance.
And I shall insist, aided and abetted and urged by you, my dearest, on having our family
Rosary every single day of our lives - we shall never miss it. Earlier in this letter I
told you how much I loathed quarrels and that I would never stop speaking to you -
and now I read in your letter that you feel exactly the same as I do about this. Any
kind of strife or unpleasantness just kills me too. God has been too good to us in
all these things - we always feel the same about things that really matter in life. It
will make our married life so much easier; it will be a life of great happiness

for us. We shall pray even harder than to God and His Blessed Mother and ask them to bless us both. We cannot be happy without prayer; it is the secret of our present happiness and contentedness. A most awful war is raging, we are thousands of miles apart, and yet we are not unhappy. Our Great Love would be lost without prayer.

I am a terrible coward, Celeste, and only now have I had enough courage to tell you about your beautiful Rosary beads - the Lourdes pair you sent to me in England. Believe me, my only reason for not mentioning this before was my dread of ever hunting you - and now I hope you will not be hurt. Yes, my darling, those lovely beads did reach me in Birmingham and a nice note with them and I who loved you did not acknowledge them. I thought you did not love me then and that you were just a very religious Irish girl sending a token of regard to an old friend. I treasured that Rosary and brought it to India with me but I also brought another pair of beads (a Lourdes pair) to India - the latter were sent to me from that good little nurse I told you about. She might have been to Lourdes at the same time as you! Many (her name) sent her gift as a token of regard too and wanted me to pray hard with those beads. These two Rosaries remained with me in India until January 1941 and then I gave them away under the following circumstances. It was in Kavalpundi and as I was coming out of Church one evening after a visit, I saw two small Indian children kneeling in prayer at the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in the grounds. I came up and stood behind them and oh they were so devout and did not take their eyes from the Statue of Our Lady, but I noticed that they had no beads. Next evening I came again to the Grotto and found the same children there, but this time your Rosary and Manji were in my pocket. Their eyes opened big when they saw the beautiful beads - my darling I had to give them much as I treasured them. I am very sorry now that I gave those beads (yours) away, but it may console you to know that an innocent Indian child is

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kneeling at Our Lady's feet every evening and is praying for me with your Rosary in his tiny hand. I would never have parted with your Rosary if I had any idea that you loved me; I was convinced that I would probably never see you again. Has this hurt you, my darling? It has taken me a long time to make up my mind to tell you about it all. Please forgive me, Helen, if I have hurt you in any way.

I was so very glad to hear that all my letters have reached you safely - imagine 5 coming at one time. I was terribly worried in case any were lost; you did not have a letter for a whole month at one period. I never want you to have a moment's uneasiness or unhappiness as long as I can avert it for your sake. Oh, how could I ever be jealous of your male friends; I want you to have such friends and I shall like them when I meet them. May be they are jealous of me instead! I loved my first day at Omagh concert with you and I loved all those nice girls who saw me there!! It is so typical of you, my darling, to tuck me under your arm and carry me off ~~to~~ for all your friends to see and listen to all their flattery!! And the greatest compliment of all and the most galling (for me) was when someone said that you resembled me!!! Oh, my own darling, I do love you for being so very very human and natural. I did know that we resembled each other in appearance but how I wish I resembled you much more in every way. Yes I do feel annoyed at times because I am thin on top - my father's heritage to me! I suppose my hair was too nice and waving at one time and I was too proud of it - and pride must have a fall! Do you mind terribly, Helen, about this scarcity of hair in your beloved? Don't worry about it now for your sake.

Your friend Mrs. Bell is a sister of my former boss Dr. Macaskemy. The latter is very fond of his only sister, even though her son, Louis, almost broke his heart (my boss's heart) in Birmingham. I have met the bank manager brother when he visited

the doctor in Birmingham a couple of years back. Give him my regards when you see him again. The poor old doctor is very upset about the loss of his elder son who was killed in action with the R.A.F.; he was a Sergeant-pilot in a fighter. I write often to the old man, but I haven't had a letter from him since I came to Malaya. However I did have a letter from his former dispenser, Miss Finney, who is now in the Land Army. The Finney family were very good to me in Birmingham, especially their schis haired mother who was like a Queen in spite of her broken leg (which did not mend). Miss Finney very flatteringly wrote that the patients were broken hearted when I left the practice!! Of course it isn't true! You need not be jealous of my girl friends - they are only friends. I shall tell you more about them anon.

Another busy, happy day in camp and now it has vanished like magic. Good night and God bless you my own darling.

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 20th - You would be amused at all the queer jobs that I have to do in the Army - everything except doctoring! This morning I spent five solid hours bug-hunting among the men's kit and beds!! Everything was disinfected and also disinfected, boiled and steamed. It is rather good fun, though, because all work stops for the day, the men are happy and as busy as bees laying out their boxes and beds in the sun. For hours I sat on a soap box and pronounced "sentences" on each man as he filed past with all his belongings - no one escaped my vigilant eye. In the afternoon the sports officers of all the units here assembled to discuss hockey and football matches and arrangements about grounds. I was very happy at this meeting because I was in my element and discussing my favourite subject - sport. For some reason or another the others regarded me as a sort of authority on these matters - they were amazed at our Field Ambulance having so many games to play and considered us very versatile! The officers were all young chaps and really very nice indeed; I was so happy among

them - it was like Queen's day again. You would love those days, Helen,

I have a very astounding thing to tell you about my Queen's career. If you had been very nice to me in those days, if you had accepted my love and told me that you loved me - it would have ruined everything for us and our future. I would never have passed my exams at Queen's, I would never have qualified; you see, my darling, my love in those days was ^{so} romantically inclined as to be impracticable! I was living in a dream and spent my whole day in a dream during my first two years at medicine, and did not bother to study and try to make my dreams about you come true. It was only when you began to shun me that I was stung into action and proceeded to study for the first time in my life! I wanted so much to show you what I could do; later on my reason for working hard was to please my father and mother, how I dreaded exam results in case I should have failed and let them down. And yet all the time I was quietly confident in all my exams because I loved the subjects - it was my "trade" and I could never have been anything but a doctor. At the beginning it was to please father that I started medicine at all, but later I realized ~~the~~ ^{his} wisdom in choosing this career for me. God had surely strange but wonderful ways in bringing us together again after so many years drifting apart. He allowed you to meet other boys and to like them; He allowed me to meet other girls, to like them, and compare them with you, Helen. And all the time I knew that there was no girl like you in the world, that I would always love you and never marry anyone but you my darling. It has been a good thing for us both to have met other, because now we can love each other as never before in our lives. It makes me happy when you tell me about your past romances; you confide so many things in me and I love you for your faith in me. Your illness was a strange one but it was God-sent and what a blessing

it turned out to be for us both. In England I could not understand why you suddenly wanted to write to me and Oh how stupid I was not to have realised what it all meant.

You wanted to know more about the very beautiful young lady with whom I was "romancing" in England at the outbreak of war. Like your young man from Dunage, she had blue eyes and golden hair; she was a Catholic (nun), was very young and innocent. Her mother was a life-long friend of my boss Dr. Macsheehy (he too is fond of ladies!) and it was through him that I met these people. I took pity on this child who had a very lonely existence in a strange household - I cannot write about the latter but shall have to tell you verbally sometime. I brought her to pantomimes and pictures while her mother was working. And then one day she grew up and told me that she loved me; I had an awful shock when I heard this - I did not and could not love this child. Still I was enamoured a bit by her beauty and she was a good companion for me. We corresponded while I was in India, but that did not last because another young man (rich) with a big car captured this fair lady's heart! I was happy because I knew that Paddy and I never loved each other - we were direct opposites in every way. And then came my mother's death - it was she who brought me back to you, Eileen; she always prayed that I would one day marry you. She disliked Paddy immensely even though she never met her, however Anne did meet this young lady and she disliked her too though Philip was a bit spell-bound when he saw her! If you would like to ask Anne all about her, I do not mind. The sad ending to my story is that poor Paddy grew tired of her other young man and decided that she wanted me back again! I had telegrams and letters from her and her mother, but my answers must have made them realize how hopeless it all was. And now they know that I am engaged to you, my darling, whom I have always loved; they know that I shall never change my mind

all this they have heard from me. I doubt very much if we two shall ever meet Paddy - she does not belong to our world. And now my dearest one you have heard it all and it needed some courage to tell you about this romance; I am sorry if it has bored you, but I had to get it off my chest! Paddy has helped to make me love you more and more, to appreciate your worth and your goodness. Please do not be annoyed about this romance of mine, I have always loved you, Ellen, and I never could love anyone but you.

I sent you a telegram this morning (by messenger to town) telling you that the ring had been sent to you. I shall not rest until that precious ring is safely on your finger. How I hope and pray that you will like it and love it Ellen; I am sorry that I could not possibly have sent it from Malaya from me - I had to have it sent from a London firm to you. Now I should hate myself if you are disappointed in this ring. For alas neither of us quite knew what to do about buying an engagement ring, but thank God all the misunderstanding has been cleared up and you will be wearing our ring soon.

My darling, you must not be hurt about anything I have written in this awful letter. I love you with all my heart and soul; and I am yours for ever and ever. You know that I would rather die than let you down in any way; if I could give you more love, I would, but already you have all my love and all of me. Give my love to all your dear ones and to Frances; thank them for all their prayers and tell them that I do not forget them.

Ever yours lovingly,
Frank.

P.S. I am starting a sewing campaign for us, so do not expect too many telegrams; I shall write daily as usual! All my love, Darling - Frank