

3 Ping Tsang Hsiang,
Nanking.

February 26, 1938.

Dear Nina:-

The steamer that brought the beans goes back to Shanghai tomorrow morning, twenty-four hours earlier than the British Embassy expected her to leave, so our time for letter writing is cut short. It is often this way in these days of irregular mails. The relief work never lets up, and our time is generally not our own, so that we can sit down and write letters as we would like to do about all that has happened and all that is still occurring. Twice at least in recent weeks I have sat up nearly all night to get letters off, and even so there are many friends both in Shanghai and elsewhere to whom I have not written as I would have liked to do.

I spoke above of the steamer that brought the beans. These beans were ordered many weeks ago. At last today they have been landed. Even so they are not yet in the city, but at Hsiakwan; some of them are in a godown there, most of them are still at the spot where they were landed, guarded for the night by a Japanese military guard. Tomorrow they will be brought into the city. Believe me it is no easy matter to get a cargo of beans from Nanking to Shanghai, or rather from Shanghai to Nanking, these days. For a long time of course there was no boat coming up river. Then next the permission of the Japanese authorities had to be secured. This was not easy, but finally Claude succeeded in getting the permission of the Japanese Admiral in Shanghai to ship them, and we understood, to land them here. However it seems that the permission of the army authorities here had also to be secured. This they were not willing to grant unless we promised to turn the beans over to the new "Self-Government Committee" for distribution. Now we have never had any misgivings about entrusting the distribution of the beans to the "Self-Government Committee" if only our Japanese friends would let the Committee alone and let it really govern itself. We are on good terms with the Committee. Many of them are people we have known before, and some of them have worked quite hard and quite well with us in connection with the Safety Zone. We are not of course under any illusions as to the character of some of the men who make up the so-called "Self-Government Committee," but nevertheless our connections with the Committee are such that we felt quite sure that we could effect a satisfactory distribution of the beans if only the Japanese would let the Committee alone. What we were afraid of was that the Japanese would try to place restrictions on the distribution of the beans, and especially that they would try to prevent their use at our camps within the Safety Zone. As you know there was some publicity about the beans in Shanghai. They were mentioned on the radio and in the papers. The British and American Embassies also took the matter up. All this was helpful. At last we got a promise from the Japanese here that they would not place any restrictions on the use of the beans anywhere in the city, so we then consented to turn the beans over to the Self-Government Committee. I think things will work out all right now, but the whole affair has been an interesting episode from start to finish. Even up to yesterday afternoon we did not actually have the written permission of the local military to land the beans. I say "we"- I mean of course the SGC. And to cap the climax, after all these days and weeks of negotiations, we were told yesterday that we must produce some document to show that

the beans had come from Shanghai! So Sone who is Director of our relief work in the absence of George Fitch, had a hectic half-hour yesterday afternoon trying to get such a document. In the very nature of the case there was no such thing as a bill of lading, for the beans were shipped not on a commercial steamer but on a boat that was proceeding up river purely for salvage purposes. Indeed there are no commercial boats on the river now other than Japanese, and I think even these are now chiefly used by their military. The Wantung, the steamer that brought the beans, was going up river to conduct salvage operations on the Tatung, the boat that was bombed last December near Wuhu at the same time that the Tuckwo was bombed. The Wantung of course brought the beans along purely as a relief measure, and so there was no bill of lading for them. She would have left the beans here as she went up to Wuhu, save that at that time we still did not have the permission of the Japanese military to land them. What Sone finally did - Claude will enjoy this - was to go over to the American Embassy, get them to give him a copy of Claude's original telegram about the bean shipment, and take this over to the "Self-Government Committee." This proved to be a thoroughly satisfactory document, for with it in their hands, the SGC finally got the permit to land the beans. Such is life in Nanking today!

There are so many things that happen to us under the new conditions that now prevail that one despairs of ever getting them all told. Here is just one out of today's happenings. After repeated efforts Mr. Allison of the Embassy finally secured some two weeks ago permission for the officers of the American gunboat stationed here to come ashore. The British did the same for their men. I met Capt. Sheehan the other day at Mr. Allison's and I said to him then that our Ping Tsang Hsiang group would also like to have them for lunch some time. Accordingly it was all arranged later for today, and Lu-si-fu and the cook got all ready for a party of twelve, eight of us and four of them. What was our surprise shortly before lunch to learn that they could not come. The Japanese refused them permission to land. At first we were told that it was because the naval officers were only supposed to come ashore every so often, and they had just been ashore two days ago. But later it leaked out that the real reason why the military did not want the officers to come into the city this time was because they would be getting into with the missionaries! I am not kidding you. This is the fact. Mr. Allison asked the Japanese Embassy representative what was the difference between the officers coming ashore to lunch at the Embassy and coming to lunch with us. Mr. Kasuya replied quite frankly that he did not see any difference, but that the military did! Again such is life in Nanking. The thing is doubly a joke when one considers that we have been three times entertained at the Japanese Embassy, the last time being especially to meet Lt. Col. Hirota, who has been sent here to serve as liaison officer between the various Embassies and the military. Yet we cannot have our own officers to come to see us! But cheer up, we will probably wangle it some way or other sooner or later.

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Some time ago Lewis and I were detained for two hours at the British Embassy, because their "hsien ping" (military police) who is supposed to go out with them was not there, and the sentry at the gate would not let any one out without a guard. This in spite of the fact that we had had no guard when we came in, and indeed have never had

any since the Japanese came into the city. The Embassies are guarded, and their staffs have their military police or gendarmes when they go out, but we ordinary folk are left to shift for ourselves and are more free therefor. Many is the time that we have been glad that we did not have a guard. We do wear special armbands, given us before the Embassies returned to Nanking, "to avoid misunderstanding with the soldiers" as we were told. These have been quite serviceable, but I think the chief need for their use has now passed by. To continue however about the guards. Mr. Jeffrey of the British Embassy said he was going to protest about having such foolish guards at his gate as those that detained Lewis and me. Whether he ever did or not I don't know, but it has been easier to get in and out of that Embassy ever since. Still the story does not end there. Some time after our "detention" Mr. Jeffrey and Mr. Williams were here for dinner. They did not have their gendarme with them. It seems that their gendarme was then on an eight hour day of his own like Mr. Allison's, who stuck to him by day, but never went out with him at night. However the other night when we had a farewell party of all the foreigners here for Mr. Rabe, the British people were the only ones who did not come. Even the Japanese were here. Later we found out that the sentries at the British Embassy would not let them out that night as they did not have their gendarme! Once more, such is life in the one time capital!

Bob Wilson has just gotten back from the Embassy and brings another and more accurate version doubtless of the reason for the refusal of the Japanese to let the navy men have lunch with us today. It seems that there was probably nothing so much against us as such, but just that the permit previously granted our ~~navy~~ officers was to come ashore "to lunch at the Embassy" and so they couldn't lunch with us! It's comforting to know that we are apparently not wholly in the bad books of the Japanese military. Hope is held out, I understand, that we may yet have the privilege of having our own officers lunch with us. We cannot move far afield, you see, or do anything out of the ordinary, without "permits". One sighs for the old days of unrestricted freedom.

With all my love,
Plummer