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3 Ping Tsang Hsiang,
Nanking.
February 3, 1938.

Dear Mina:-

My last letter, that of January 31st, ended with the failure of our efforts to establish a truce. But I have always been glad that we made the effort. Some people criticised us for making the attempt saying that we were discouraging the Chinese from seeking to defend the city. This criticism came both from foreign and Chinese quarters, but I felt then and I still feel that it was entirely unjustified. The facts in the case were (a) that foreign military was unanimous to the effect that the Chinese could not possibly hold the city once the defence line at Guyung and the forts at Kiangyin had been broken through, and (b) the Chinese troops outside of Nanking were so demoralized that there was no hope of effective resistance within, even granting for the sake of argument that the judgment of the foreign military experts might have been mistaken in regard to the opinion expressed above. It ought to be said that most of the criticism of the idea of a truce came from people who got out before the fighting broke out right around the city. They might have seen things somewhat differently had they remained throughout. But be that as it may, the fact remains that local Chinese military headquarters were keenly anxious for a truce, and I do not know of any Chinese who was here during the fighting who would not have welcomed it. Had we succeeded, and thus been able to prevent the destruction of the city that took place after its capture - you will recall that it was of the essence of our proposal that each side should pledge itself that there should be no further destruction of the city - that alone would have justified all our efforts, but it was not to be. It was just one of those cases where the forces of evil were too strong for us. We could only stand by and see the worst come.

By the middle of Sunday afternoon, December 12th, we knew there was no chance of effecting a truce. It then became, as the French say, a case of sauve qui peut. Troops poured out of the gate, or gates, towards the river. General Tang himself left some time during the evening. I have heard the time of his departure variously given, at eight o'clock or at midnight, but in any case he too left precipitately. Later on the I Chiang (Hsai-kwan) Gate, the main one to the river, was either closed or became choked in some way with debris, so that many soldiers were unable to get out of the city. The Japanese had kept up a fairly steady attack on the south eastern section of the city, and by Sunday evening there were probably very few Chinese troops in that area, most of them having either left the city or withdrawn to the northern section. Some Japanese troops may have entered the city Sunday night, but if so only a few came in, and it was not until about Monday noon that they occupied the city in force. Our first contact with the Japanese troops was on Monday, just after lunch, when we came across a detachment between the American Embassy and Hillcrest, at the point where Shanghai Road crosses Kwangchow Road. These troops were then behaving very nicely, and did not seem to be disturbing the Chinese in that neighborhood in any undue manner. Later Mr. Rabe, Lewis, and I went out together to try to find a high Japanese officer, to tell him about the Refugee Zone, about the hospital for wounded soldiers we had set up in the Wai Chiao Pu (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and also about some soldiers we had disarmed

and for whom we wanted to ask clemency. No, I am wrong about this last. At this time we spoke only about the Zone and about the wounded soldiers. The officers with whom we talked were with troops who were resting along Han Chung Lu, just a little to the east of Dr. Handel Lee's house. They were not men of very high rank, probably not more than captains, but we could not get then in touch with men who were higher up. I said we "talked" with them, but it was a rather queer mixture of English, German, and Chinese that we used. However I think we succeeded fairly well in making them understand what we wanted. At that time the troops seemed well behaved and friendly, and we little dreamed what the coming days were to reveal.

But in my eagerness to tell you about our efforts to establish a truce, I have gotten a little ahead of my story, so I should go back now to speak of what took place on the 11th and 12th of December, the two chief days of the fighting around Nanking. The worst of the artillery fire was on the evening of Saturday the 11th. The guns kept pounding away at the Kuang Hua Men in the southeastern section of the city. At least that seemed to be the part which the Japanese were attacking most heavily. But the roar of the guns could be heard all over the city, and we ate supper that evening wondering whether any shells were going to come our way or not. It was I think on this afternoon, the 11th, that Andy Roy's house was struck. His coolie, Fu-si-fu, came by to tell me he couldn't stay there any longer, and of course I didn't blame him. I would not have wanted to stay at Andy's place myself. It was not within the Safety Zone, and while not even the Safety Zone was wholly safe, nevertheless there was reason to think it was safer than other sections of the city. During this time I slept for two or three nights in the basement. My bed here at Lossing's is on the sleeping porch, glassed in on three sides, and I thought that was too exposed a spot. Even if a shell did not hit the house, an explosion near by would scatter glass everywhere, so I felt it would be just as well not to be on the porch. In the basement I felt quite safe from anything but a direct hit, and I had two good nights sleep there. The other men, save Riggs who spent one night in the basement with me, took their chances upstairs, but then their beds were better protected by adjacent walls than mine. The servants were also all in the basement, Lu-si-fu and I sharing a room together.

I said above that the 11th and 12th were the worst days of the fighting. That is true, but we also had some occasion for alarm on the 10th and 13th as well. On Friday morning the 10th some shells fell in the general area of Hsin Chia Kou and Han Chung Lu. One of these exploded near the Fu Chong Hotel in which Mr. Sperling was living, and his hand was slightly cut by glass. Some people on the street were killed or wounded, and a motor car set on fire by the explosion. At the Kao Chia Chiu kwan, not far from the old Blackstone (Stewart Property) place on Kwan Chia Chiao, another shell fell, and took its toll of victims. Again shells fell in the compound of the Bible Teachers Training School and at Plopper's house, with some shrapnel in the seminary grounds as well, I think, but there were no casualties in these places fortunately, in spite of the large numbers of refugees congregated there. On the 13th, although Japanese troops were in full possession of the southern part of the city, some shells fell in the northern part. It was at this time that the Kulou Church, the University Dormitory, and the Stewards' house were struck. That afternoon when Bob Wilson was doing his most delicate operation for the day - he had put it specially at that hour thinking that things would be most quiet then -

some shrapnel came through the window of the operating room. Searle thinks, and he is quite likely right, as he happened to be in a good post for observation at the time - he was in the University Tower - that the Japanese were firing by mistake in an east-west position, units outside the city not knowing what units inside were doing. It seems foolish, but it may quite well be true.

And now I must again leave my story suspended in mid-air till next time. This letter goes by Mr. Bishopric to Shanghai. He is a lumber man, whom the Japanese specially wanted to come to Nanking, which is why he got here. "Mail" through him closes several hours earlier than I had been led to expect, and I have refugee work that cannot be put off now, so I cannot write more at present. I am hoping for word from you on the Bee to-morrow, but be sure to write by the Oahu when George Fitch returns.

With love to both you and Angie,
Yours,

P. S. In my letter of the 24th, page 2, sixth line from the end, when I wrote "two Japanese planes", I should have said "two groups of Japanese planes". There were three planes in each group, I think.

W. P. M.