

3 Ping Tsang Hsiang,  
Nanking.

March 2, 1938.

Dear Nina:-

In one of your first letters written after we got somewhat in touch with each other again, you expressed the fear lest we were suffering here, or had been suffering, for lack of proper food supplies. It never really came to that. Supplies of some things did run a little low, and even yet we do not have a decent grade of flour. I have scarcely tasted anything made of white flour since the fighting started around Nanking, or indeed for some time before that. Butter we were without for long stretches, sometimes getting a little from one source or another, and doling it out as a rather precious article. However from some cows that McCallum succeeded in salvaging for the hospital from a local dairyman, we have been able to secure a good many times a very good substitute for butter. This was a sort of cottage cheese which Mrs. Chang over at the hospital made for us. She did not have enough milk to churn into regular butter for us, but she did make this sort of cheese substitute which was most welcome. Once we got several pounds of butter from salvaged stock of the Metropolitan Hotel. This had all the properties that butter should have and then some. It was strong! But if you put enough jam on it, you got your vitamins all right, and did not notice the taste of the butter. As for jam, we raided every foreign pantry that we could get into, the Slocums I believe yielding the largest results to our larder. The Japs beat us to some of the pantries, but we were ahead of them on others, so honors were about even on that score.

Meat was for a time impossible to get and our meals for quite a period showed remarkable similarity. As Bob said we had "rice and beh tsai and peaches" and then "peaches and beh tsai and rice". Mc Callum had gotten somewhere a large store of Luchowfu tinned peaches. They were pretty good, but all of us and especially George Fitch, got rather tired of such a steady diet of stewed fruit. From other pantries too we got quite a lot of canned fruit, so this was one article of food we did not lack. It was good of course that we had this to fall back on, but none the less this did not keep us from getting a bit tired of it. You spoke once of the order that you and Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Mc Callum put in for us as being coals to Newcastle. Not exactly. Our order from here did cross in the "mails" with your shipment to us, but your supplies will yet come in handy, and some of it has already been put to use. Had we known that you people were sending us anything, we would of course have modified our order somewhat, but we sent our order in just after our period of leanness, and we wanted to be sure that we had a sufficient supply on hand to last us for a while. Then your order came on top of ours! But eight men who are out busy every day can eat a good deal, so none of it will be wasted I am sure. Though at the worst period we did not have the variety we would have liked, we always had enough food, and we fared so much better than thousands around us, that we felt almost uncomfortable to live as we did. Yet we did need to eat heartily for every one of us was working hard and often for long hours out of doors, so we came to our meals with good appetites, and we could not really have done the work we did with much less food than we had. A minor matter, but one that has helped our diet and that has been much

appreciated has been the lettuce that we have had from our garden and from the Drummonds and the Thomsons. This we have occasionally shared with the group at the Embassy and they too have enjoyed it.

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The above was writtenn last night and we hoped to get more time today to add to it, but once in the Relief office it is almost impos- ble to get out of it, and now the mail closes in twenty minutes. But I send this on as covering at least one phase of our experiences that I hope may be of some interest to you. The enclosed "Economic Notes" speak for themselves, and will also serve to bring present conditions somewhat more vividly beffre you. More later.

With love,

*Plumer*