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Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-08-07, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-08-07, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

Transcription
491 Avenue Joffre
Shanghai, China
7 August, 1917

My dear Emma:

Here I have been home almost three weeks, and not a word have I written you! Terrible, I confess! Yet I have written only one letter since my return, and that to Miss Burks. The weather is hot and enervating: consequently one does not feel like exerting oneself in the least. I have been to a great many dinners and teas, & other affairs.

We live way uptown. The further up the more exclusive, It is lovely here: but it is so far from the shopping district and the theatres and eating houses! We have a lovely carriage and two coachmen etc.: but horses are such bother. One can only use them just so much. Next week we are going to get an automobile for running around town, and let Mother keep the carriage for her private use. We have a beautiful garden [page break] lawn tennis, croquet ground. The house is one of the loveliest in Shanghai. The servants quarters are better than the rooms in Wood Cottage. We have verandahs, sleeping porches and what not. The house has three stories and has 16 large rooms not counting the kitchen, baths etc. My sister Mrs. Kung of [Shansi] is visiting us now with her children. Her husband is thinking of transferring his business to Shanghai, & if that is the case, we should move to a 30 room house (not counting servants quarters). It is really an immense mansion of five floors with roof garden. To tell the truth, I don’t care for it: it is too huge, and the ceilings are so
high that I feel lost in it. It is like a huge hotel and very formal although elegant. It is "too much" for a girl just graduated from Wood Barn to live in! By the way, I am taking charge of the house now. We have five maids and seven men servants. Let me tell you it is no joke! As it is now, I am so tired now from running up and down inspecting the house that it would kill me to have to inspect five floors every day. Mother still has charge of the financial end for which I am duly grateful!

It is very annoying sometimes, as I forget myself and speak in English to the servants. I forget that I am not speaking in Chinese. At times I cannot express myself in Chinese; then I ring for the butler who acts as interpreter! Of course ordinarily, I can express my wishes: but at times, when I am displeased, all power of speaking in Chinese flies!

It seems very queer to have a family. I am so used to doing what I please without consulting anyone that it is rather hard to remember that I am not at college and cannot do and think what I please. Of course, though, I am very happy at home, as I run this place as I please. Only I do hope that we won't decide to move to that huge place they are considering. Of course, I should like to have sister live with us, - at the same time 30 rooms will be no joke! I am rather plebian in my taste, - at least the family think so! Since I have returned home, it seems to me that I am always buying clothes. You know, Dada, during the last 2 years at college, I have outgrown liking for clothes, so it rather grates on me to hear my sisters say, "Oh we saw the most adorable dress at so & so a place. You
must have one like it." They enjoy dressing me up, as I am the youngest & the only unmarried one.

H.K. has been here from Peking, and so has Mr. Yang. I like them: but that's all. Oh, Emma, I might as well tell you that on board ship, I lost my head over a man whose father is Dutch and mother a French. He is an architect and was going to Samatra. He asked me to marry him, and the [page break] family here is greatly [wroupht] up! I have been having a rather uncomfortable time. Remember that this is a secret: don't tell it to a single soul, for heaven sakes!

Both my little brothers flunked last year, & the family is furious. The poor kids have two tutors (an English & a Chinese) to come every day. And believe me, they are working! I am also teaching them English grammar. One of the poor kids is learning to punctuate, & the other is learning spelling with me watching them now. The fact that the two kids flunk enhances the value of my Durant scholarship in the eyes of the family. They think I am a wonder, especially as the two kids flunked. I think the ten-year-old one will [page break] stay home next year, and have a Chinese tutor. I’ll teach him the other subjects. I have complete control over the 2 boys, as Mother is so disgusted that she handed them over to me bodily. They are hard to manage, because they are deucedly clever and lazy at the same time. I have whipped the younger one several times, & they both are afraid of me. You don't know what a good disciplinarian I can be!

Tonight, a Frenchman I met on
the boat is coming to see me. We
speak nothing but French. Write me
to 491 Avenue Joffre. And for love of
Pete do not tell anyone what I
have told you.

I have something for you kids,
& as soon as someone comes to U.S. [page break]
I’ll send them over to you.

By the way, will you subscribe
the Literary Digest, the Scribners
and a magazine on child psychology &
how to take care of them etc. for me. The last mentioned is for
Mrs. Kung as she has two growing
kids of about 2 and 1 yr old. But send
it in my name, & tell me how
much the whole thing is & I’ll
refund the money.

Oh, by the way, please send
me 1 dozen pair of shoe trees like
the ones you get for 3 for 25 cts at
once. Send the bill to me please.
I have quite a liberal allowance,
so I’ll be able to pay you, Dada.

With love
Daughter
My dear Emma:

How have you been this last three weeks, and not a word have written you! Terrible I confess; yet have written only one letter since my return, and that to Miss Burns. The weather is hot and uninviting; consequently one does not feel like exerting oneself in the least. Have been to a great many dinners and teas, other affairs.

We live way up town. The further up the more exclusive. It is lovely here; but it is so far from the shopping district and the theatres and eating houses! We have a lovely carriage and two coachmen etc. but horses are such bother. One can only use them just so much. Next week we are going to get our automobile for running around town, and let weather keep the carriage for her private use. We have a beautiful garden.
Dear tennis, croquet ground. The house is one of the loveliest in Shanghai. The servants' quarters are better than the rooms in wood cottage. We have verandahs, sleeping porches and what not. The house has three stories and has 16 large rooms not counting the kitchen, halls, etc. My sister Mrs. Kemp of Shanghai is visiting us now with her children. Her husband is thinking of transferring his business to Shanghai, so if that is the case, we shall move to a 30 room house (not counting servants' quarters). It is really an immense mansion of five floors with roof garden. The feeling is so big; too huge, and the rooms are so huge that I feel lost in it. It is like a huge hotel and very formal. Although elegant, it is too much for a girl just graduated from wood barn to live in! By the way, I am taking charge of the house now. We have five maids and seven men servants. Let me tell you it is no joke. As it is now, I am so busy now from running up and down inspecting the house that...
it would free me to have to inspect the five floors every day. Another task less charge of the financial end for which I am very grateful.

It is very annoying sometimes, as I forget myself and speak in English when I am not speaking in Chinese. At times I cannot express myself in Chinese, then I express myself in Chinese, then I interpret. Of course, ordinarily, I can express my wishes, but at times, I am displeased. I have no power of speaking in Chinese, or of speaking in Chinese. It seems very queer to have a family.

There's so used to doing what I please that it is rather without consulting anyone of what I want to do and think what college and can not do what I please. Of course, though, I am very happy at home, as I am this place as well as I please. Only I do hope that we won't decide to move to that
I wish place but am considering. Of course, I should like to have sister live with us—at the same time 30 rooms with us, at least! At first I was rather pleased in my taste—at least the family thinks so. Since I have returned home, it seems to me that I am always buying clothes.

You know, Joe, during the last 2 years at college, I have expressed liking for clothes so I rather think on me to bear my sister's say, "Oh, we saw the most adorable dress at so and so a place. You must have one like it." They enjoy dressing me up, as I am the only unmarried one.

If it has been here from Berlin, and so has been long. I like them. But that's all. Oh, Emma, I ought as well to let you know that on board ship, I lost my head over a man whose father is an architect and was going to Pennsylvania. He asked me to marry him, and the
family here is greatly uncrabbed. The
have been having a rather uncomfortable time. Remember that this
is a secret; don’t tell it to a single
soul, for heaven’s sake.
Both my little brothers flunked
last year, and the family is furious. The
poor kids have had tutors (an English
tutor to come every day, and
believe me, they are working! I am
also teaching them Spanish),
but one of the poor kids is learning to
pronounce, the other is learning
spelling with me watching their
The fact that the two kids flunked
enhances the value of my scholarship
in the eyes of the family.
They think it was a wonder, especially as the two kids flunked. I
think the ten-year-old one will
stay home next year, and come a
closer later. I'll teach them
other subjects. These complete
control over the two boys, as brother is
so disgusted that she handed them
over to me. Typically, they are hard to
manage, because they are decidedly
clean and lazy at the same time.

I have whipped the younger one
several times, so they both are afraid
of me. You don't know what a
good disciplinarian I can be!

Tonight, a Frenchman met me by
the boat in Casino. He took me
Speak nothing but French. He went
up to 49, Clement Toffe. And for long,
your Pete do not tell anyone what I
leave told you.

I have something for you kids,
as soon as some one comes to U.S.
I'll send them over to you.

By the way, will you subscribe to the Literary Digest, the Atlantic Monthly, and a magazine on Child Psychology—how to take care of them, etc.? The last mentioned is for Mrs. King as she has two growing kids of about 2 and 1 yr old. But send the rest as you get them for me. I tell me how much the whole thing is. I'll refund the money.

Oh, by the way, please send me a dozen pair of short trees like the ones you got for 3 for 25¢ for once. Send the bill to me, please.

I have quite a liberal allowance, so I'll be able to pay you, Dad.

With love,
Daughter.