9-15-1917

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-09-15, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-09-15, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

Transcription
491 Avenue Joffre,
Shanghai.
15 September, 1917

My dear Emma:

What do you think? Two more letters from you today, & one from Miss Burks! Both had the same major theme: namely: "Why I do not like a one-sided correspondence." Heavens alive! I suppose I am an "enfante terrible." Here I have received your seventh letter: & I am just writing my fifth! I suppose from now on, I shall have to write every single day till I catch up, for were you in a philosophic frame of mind when you receive this, you would surely say like our Confucius, "Let her too have a taste of watchful waiting."

And dear me, - I am in no frame of mind desirous of waiting to get your letters! No, Dada, - I look forward anxiously and eagerly for those "Broadway Breezes" "ala midnight Dostoevsky". Remember how we had our midnight orgies at college! Well, "them" days because they are gone have a sort of allurement.

So you have taken a job at 75 per! Well, good luck to you! I am awfully awfully glad that you are going to be busy and occupied, [page break] for sure as death itself, - the devil finds mischief for idle minds - No, I won't say hands! For mechanical movements do not prevent the brain from thinking, - that I know!

Tomorrow I begin my career as a Sunday School teacher. Mother is happy beyond words at my consent. There is so little I can do for her that I am eager to do anything I can. I shall likely be connected with some sort of charitable organizations this winter which would occupy two or three
of my afternoons a week.
I do not know Shanghai at all, & the friends here are more or less those of the family. I know quite a number of returned new students; but they are either all occupied with their business all day or not in Shanghai. The result is that the women I know are only recent acquaintances, & I feel quite shy and diffident with them. Mother told me several times that I ought to talk more: but someway or another, I do not care to talk. Since coming home, I seem to have fallen into a habit of "watchful silence."
I wish that I had some sort of work which would keep me busy & interested. I feel that in staying home, I am not contributing to the welfare of the family or to my own intellectual welfare.
I never go anywhere without either my married sister or my mother: in fact never during my whole life have I known such strict chaperonage. And the curious part is that I am not resentful in the least: I am just passively acquiescing. You cannot believe this of the little vehement spitfire, can you? Yet it is true.
And what is worse: - I dislike seeing people - men especially. I hate to go down to the parlor. I prefer staying upstairs reading. I just feel my mental powers getting more and more dulled every day. I must make an effort to be intelligent and keep up interest, and not be worried because I see a speck of dust on the mantlepiece! Heavens!
What I wouldn't give to have you here now!
By the way, I can secure two good positions for you and me at 100 dollars per month each, plus board & lodging at a school up north where you won't have to teach anything but English. If you come, I'll go with you.
At present the family wants me home. I have told you of my mother's desire to move nearer town. Perhaps now we won't move after all. I hope not!
Write me, & remember that I write to you oftener than to anyone else - although I don't write you much.
I shall begin saving "The China Press" to send you, for I cannot discuss political matters in my letters.

Love
Daughter
49, Avenue Joffre, Shanghai.
15 September, 1917.

My dear cousin:

What do you think? Two more letters from you today, one from Mr. Banks. Both had the same major theme: namely: "Why does not like a one-sided correspondence?" Having arrived I suppose you an enfant terrible. But they received your seventh letter: I am just writing my eight. I suppose from now on I shall have to write every single day till I catch up for you in a Philip. This form of writing when you receive this, your world surely will say like our Conferences. "Let her too have a taste of watchful waiting.

And dear me, — I am in no frame of mind desirous of waiting to get your letters. So, Dada, — I look forward anxiously and eagerly for those "Broadway Breezes" à la midnight "Dostovsky". Remember how we had our midnight orgies at college! Well, "then" days because they are sort have a sort of-allurement.

So you have taken a job at 75! Well, good luck to you! I am awfully, awfully glad that you are going to be busy and occupied,
for me as death itself — the devil finds mischief for idle minds — no, I won’t say hands! For mechanical movements do not prevent the brain from thinking — that I know!

Tomorrow I begin my career as a Sunday school teacher. Mother is happy beyond words at my consent. There is so little I can do for the thing I was eager to do anything for. I shall likely be connected with some sort of charitable organizations this winter which would occupy two or three of my afternoons a week.

I do not know Shanghaï at all, nor the friends there are more or less known to me. I know quite a number of returned men students; but they are either all occupied with their business all day or not in Shanghaï. The regret is that the women I know are only recent acquaintances, I feel quite shy and diffident when with them. I have only seen several times that I ought to talk more, but somehow or another, I do not care to talk. Since coming here, I seem to have
have fallen into a habit of "watchful silence."

I wish that I had some sort of work which would keep me busy and interested. I feel that in staying home, I am not contributing to the welfare of the family or my own intellectual welfare.

I never go anywhere without either my married sister or my mother, in fact never during my whole life have I known such strict chaperone. And the curious fact is that I am not resentful in the least. I am just passively acquiescing. You cannot believe how I suffer. Is it true?

And what is worse, I dislike seeing people—men especially. I hate to go down to the table. I prefer staying upstairs reading, I just feel my mental powers getting more and more dulled every day. I must make an effort to be intelligent and keep up interest, and not be worried because I see a speck of dust on the wanton piece. Heaven! What I would give to have you here now!

By the way, I can secure two good positions for you and me at 160 dollars per month.
plus board & lodging at a school up north. Where you won't have to teach anything but English. If you come, I'll find you a place to live, and I'll see if there's a job you'd be interested in. At present the family wants me home. Have you heard from my mother recently? Perhaps now we won't move after all. They're not sure, but I wrote to one of them last week to see if she could write to you more often than to anyone else. Although I don't write you much—I shall begin saying "The China Press" to send you, for I cannot discuss political matters in my letters.

Love

[Signature]