Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-09-28, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang
Dearest Dada:

Your 8th letter just came this movement. Well, I am ashamed of my scrappy little notes compared to yours so gloriously long and scholarly! Well, after much deciding, some wrangling and what not, we have decided to stay in this home permanently! Hurrah! I am very very glad. But both my brother and I have changed our rooms. We have moved on up to the third floor which has four large rooms. We each have a bedroom, and together, a wonderful library, and a sitting room with a porch. It is quite wonderful here: we are all by ourselves and enjoy our freedom greatly. As he is away from home all day, you can imagine what a lovely time I have wandering in and out among the rooms fixing the flowers, picking up a book here and there. I have even my own teapot which is always kept filled. There is a servant up here whose only duty is to keep these rooms in order, and answer my bells. Often I have my luncheon sent up here on the porch. I have dismissed my maid: I have found that I simply did not need her, as Mother’s maid does all my mending and picks up my clothes for me, and it grated on me to have my maid around when I could execute my own orders in less time than it takes for me to explain to her what I want done. You see, all the years in democratic America have their effects on me. I am quite contented with this one servant who attends to Brother’s and my wants. He polishes our shoes, dusts, sweeps, and
make up the beds etc, and is of infinitely less trouble than my maid who used to grovel with him all the time.
Father has a good many books, and so has brother: but I am anxiously awaiting my own books. I am also waiting for the curtains and couch cover you gave me before you left school.
You remember how lazy I used to be at school - how I wanted to sleep all the time, don't you? Well, when I first came home, I enjoyed having my coffee in bed tremendously. Mirabile dictu, though, now I cannot bear staying in bed! I get up every morning at five-thirty to watch the sun rise. I wish you were here to enjoy with me the myriads of lights and colors, and to listen to the droning sing-song voices of the laborers working in their fields.
You know, in China, men to a great extent do the work of horses, and as you pass through the streets, you hear the coolies singing to lighten their loads. When two men carry a load, one says "Hai Ho," and his partner then answers "Hi Ho." First the one, then the other. Mother says that they sing because the rhythmic sounds help to stimulate them.
This afternoon I am going to a wedding of one of my men cousins who is about 27. As they are Christians, the wedding will be in the church; but the feast will be at his home. In China both the bride's and the groom's families have separate feasts. Of course it is far more fun at the groom's house, as the couple are there and all the excitements naturally are there too.
The men and women guests are in different rooms. I am real excited about going - especially as I am younger than my cousin, his wife will have to give me a present for being there. Isn't that jolly? His wife is 25, and I being their younger cousin, will receive a present from them both; - rather being related to the groom, the bride
will give me a present. Very often the present is in the form of money. Mother and Dad have given both the groom and the bride presents, and as the bride's family also sent us an invitation, Mother sent the bride's family a present of money. But the funny part is that Mother and Dad will give some more money to the Bride & groom tonight [page break] as "feast money." This is according to the Chinese customs here. I suppose I have told you that I am teaching a S.S. class of boys. I have quite fallen in love with a chubby little fellow of fourteen who is bright as a penny. He answers all the questions and calls me "Sir" when addressing me. I am greatly interested in my class, and I hope to have them here for a party soon. They like me too, and point me out proudly to the other boys as their teacher. You see, I am the only "female" in that S.S. school teaching boys. It is very funny here in church as the men and women sit in separate aisles! Fancy that, will you? And when one goes up to the Communion Service, it almost makes one feel em-barassed to walk past the men! I wish you and Ted were here to see Mother's antique furniture. We have enough in this house to furnish three houses - especially as last week we moved all our furniture from the Honken House too. Fancy having Four parlor sets besides innumerable "Red Wood" furniture. And oriental rugs and carpets! And beautiful fur bed rugs! I wish the duty in America were not so high: so that I could send you ones some things, - or that some of my friends would come on over so that I could ask them to take back some things for you kids! In another 4 months, one of my friends will come to America & I'll try to make her buy something
over. I need an invitation for Marion D. Locke's wedding.

With love

Mayling
Sincerely yours,

Shanghai, China
28 Sept. 1917

Dear Sir,

Your 8th letter just came this moment. I was amazed at how nicely your notes compared to yours as glorious long and splendid.

Well, after much deciding, some wavering and what not, we have decided to stay in this house permanently. Now, I am very very glad. But both my brother and I have changed our rooms, we have moved on up to the third floor which has four large rooms, we each have a bedroom, and together a wonderful library and a sitting room with a poet. It is quite wonderful here. We are by ourselves and enjoy our freedom greatly. As he is away from home all day, you can imagine what a lonely time I have wandering in and out among the rooms, fixing the flowers, picking up a book here and there. I have even my own tea pot which is always kept filled. There is a servant up here who's only duty is to keep these rooms in order, and answer...
my bells. Often I have my bureau sent up here on the porch. I have dismissed my maid; I have found that I simply do not need her, as mother's maid does all my mending and picks up my clothes for me, and it greatly eases me to have my maid around when I could execute my own orders in less time than it takes for my key plan to be what I want done. You see, all the years in democracy America have their effect on me. I am quite contented with this one servant who attends to brothers and my wants. She polishes our shoes, dusts, sweeps, and makes up the beds etc., and is of infinitely less trouble than my maid I used to quarrel with till she all the time.

Father has a good many books, and so has brother; but I am anxiously awaiting your books. I am also waiting for the curtains and couch covers you gave me before you left school.

You remember how lazy I used to be at school—how I wanted to sleep all the
time, don't you? Well, when I first came home, I enjoyed having my coffee in bed. Tremendously. Marvelous. And now I cannot bear staying in bed! I get up every morning at five-thirty to watch the sun rise. I wish you were here to enjoy with me the myriads of lights and colors, and to listen to the charming ring-song voices of the laborers working in their fields. You know, in China, men to a great extent do the work of horses, and as you pass through the streets, you hear the coolies singing to lighten their loads. When two men carry a load, one says "Hi Ho," and his partner then answers "Hi Ho." First the one, then the other. This rhythmic sound helps to stimulate them.

This afternoon I am going to a wedding of one of my new comrades who is about 27. As they are Chinese, the wedding will be in the church; but the feast will be at his home. In China both the bride's and
the groom’s families have separate feasts. Of course it is far more fun at the groom’s house, as the couple are there and all the excitement naturally are there too.

The men and women guests are in different rooms. I am not excited about going — especially as I am younger than my cousin! His wife and younger cousin will have to give me a present for being there. Isn’t that jolly? His wife is their younger cousin will be 25, and I being related to the groom, the bride will give me a present. Very often the present is in the form of money.

Mother and Dad having given both the groom and the bride presents, and as the bride’s family also sent us an invitation, Mother sent the bride’s family a present of money. But the funniest part is that Mother and Dad will give more money to the Bride & Groom tonight.
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They like me too, and point me out
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With love,

[Signature]