12-28-1917

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-12-28, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-12-28, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

Transcription
491 Avenue Joffre
Shanghai, China
28 December, 1917

Dearest Dada:

Such a bunch of letters from America. And
two from you & one from Ted. One from Grandma Mills, Grand-
pa Mills and some others from the South. I wish I had
you here with me, for there are so many things to
tell. First of all - what a Christmas!

My uncle, the father of that cousin of mine in
Radcliffe has been dangerously ill. They thought he
was going to die, and Mother has been over at
Auntie's helping Auntie. He has two girls and two
boys - and yet he lies dying with all of
them either in America or Europe. And both the
boys are doctors too! Oh, the irony of his
fate seems too much to bear! His wife re-
fuses to have him moved to the Hospital
where the doctors think he may have a
fighting chance. The Chinese doctors too have
given up hope. My aunt refuses to have a
trained nurse: instead she has a dozen
Chinese women around him! The poor
man is so ill - too ill to hear their
silly, silly chatter. Auntie has seemed
to have lost her head, and we can do
nothing with her at all. Mother does
what she can, - but Auntie is a very [ page break]
domineering sort. Last night they expected him
to die, and were not the situation so
pathetic, it could be actually ludicrous
to see the mourning arrangements that are
being made. They even have bought the
lining of his coffin! We have all protest-
ed strongly against Auntie's policy: but
have been told to get out of the
home for our pains. The poor lady really
is in a nervous state.

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Of course with Mother away all the time, the household cares naturally fall on me. And worst of all, one of the cooks has left as his wife is expecting a baby. This leaves an awful lot for the other cook to do, especially as the market's quite far away. Then on top of everything, our motor is still in the garage having the winter top put on, and as Mother takes the carriage off to Auntie's every morning, I have had to resort to the cold cold rickshaws to get all the Xmas tree fixings and presents for the children and servants.

You have no idea how cold a rickshaw is in the winter time. The bottom where your feet rest is made of wooden slots with large openings across, and when the wind whistles through your legs - oh my!

Well, you know, I do not know Shanghai at all except to order the chauffeur or the groom where I want to go. Now a rickshaw coolie has to have more explicit directions, and as most of them are from the country, and speak a "Cockney" Shanghai dialect, I had great difficulty in making them understand. The shops were so crowded and there were so many things to buy.

[N.B. Dad has just come in, and he said that evidently your letters must be an inspiration to me for scribbling, as immediately after your letters come, he always finds me writing.]

Well to resume, usually the chauffeur goes through the stores carrying my packages. But these past two weeks I had to do that myself, and I was so jostled that I almost became angry.

Christmas in our family is a great
event for the servants: so as Mother could not buy the things, I had to. I bought handkerchiefs, socks, stockings and candy, oranges, tangerines, candy, cokes etc. until I thought I would go crazy, for each servant had to have a different size stocking. After buying the things, the stockings had to be filled, and the other things tied into pretty little packages. I almost went dizzy tying and tying things. I surely did wish for Ted then, for she loves to tie things up.

After the servants' things, and getting the tree decoration, there were my little brother and cousins' presents to think of. They all seemed to have every plaything imaginable: therefore it was difficult to find novel toys. I went out every day to shop for two weeks, and sometimes twice a day!

The Chinese exchange is a very queer thing. For instance we have "little money" and "big money." A dollar in "little money" is 11 dimes and 2 coppers, whereas in "big money", it is ten dimes. Again in "big money" a dime is ten coppers, whereas in "little money" it is 12 coppers and five cash. Some stores deal in big money only and some in little money. It all is very confusing. For instance if you buy an article in one store and it costs 90 cents, nine dimes would suffice, while in another store you would have to give them a dollar and only get a dime in change. And then another funny thing, if the article is only 30 cents, you can just give them 3 dimes, and that would suffice, whereas if you were to buy 50 cents more of something, eight dimes would not be enough.

The Oriental mind you see is complicated. When I first came home, I got cheated right and left, and I do
not doubt that even now I am often at a disadvantage.

By the way, has Ling Ling sent you any money to pay for my magazines. If no, how much? [page break]
Well, to go back to Xmas, the house was full of company, and the servants were busy every minute washing up dishes or preparing food for company. I never have seen such gourmands. You see Dad likes to keep "Open House."

By the way, you said something about my vociferous "damns" - Well, it is damn, damn cold in this house! In spite of all the fireplaces and stoves going red-hot, - it is damn cold! You see I have been used to steam heat, - and in Shanghai no one has steam heat. In spite of all the ice, we have not had a bit of snow.

Last week the house had to be decorated, and the gardener certainly did his best. It looks perfectly lovely and artistic: not a bit overdone, and very fragrant. The living rooms at least are warm, for we have two grates going and a large open-stove (very goodlooking) and all [page break] the doors shut: but the halls are the limit.

Xmas day - or rather evening we had a party for the children, and the servants. Of course the servants did not liven up at all until they went to the servants' quarters: but they did seem to enjoy getting presents and seeing the tree. We had about 20 little cousins yelling at the top of their lungs and pulling fire-crackers. We had them here for dinner that night, and I was so afraid that they would all die of "bursting." By the way, Dada, we had the most
wonderful American turkey!

H.K. sent me a telegram, for he said he had not heard from me for ages and was worrying to death. For Xmas he sent a carload of flowers. I haven't written him yet. The war is killing so many people that one more or less dead doesn't make much difference, does it?

My face is almost well now, and I am enjoying myself. You know Mr. Yang came to call several times, and each time Mother informed him I was ill. He then wrote me a very sarcastic letter hoping that my "very temporary" illness would soon be over. He meant that I did not want to see him: hence told him I was ill. Of course I became furious, and refused to answer his letters or telephone calls, - and this is the card he sent me! He told another man, who is one of our common friends that I had treated him not only without consideration: but with actual contempt. Of course you understand, I never did that, and I really was ill: only his letter made me furious.

What a long letter.
Goodby, Dada
Daughter

P.S. I got some beautiful brocades, silks and very very old paintings for Xmas.
Let each man do his level best that every wrong may be redressed.
WITH KINDEST GREETINGS AND
SINCERE WISHES FOR A
CHRISTMAS OF PEACE AND GOOD-WILL

From

Shih-fung Yang

Dec. 23rd, 1917
Dear Dada:

Such a parcel of letters from America, and two from you, one from Ted, one from Grandma, Wells, Grandma for well, and some others from the Ernsts. I wish I had you here with me, for there are so many things to tell. First of all—what a Christmas!

My uncle, the father of that cousin of mine in Pasadena, has been dangerously ill. They thought he was going to die, and mother has been away at Auntie's helping Auntie. It has two girls and two boys—and yet he lies dying with all of them either in America or Europe. And lest they seem too much together! His wife seems too much for her! His wife refuses to have him moved to the hospital, whose doctors think he may have a fighting chance. The Chinese doctors too have a sick up hope. My aunt refused to have a Chinese woman around him! The poor Chinese women around him!—too ill to hear their misery, sickly mother. Auntie has seemed to have lost her head, and one can do nothing with her at all. Auntie does what she can, but Auntie is a very
denouncing sort. Last night they expected him
to die, and even now the situation is
particularly critical. It would be actually ludicrous
to see the mourning arrangements that are
being made. They have been told to get out of
the house for our pains. The poor lady really
is in a nervous state.

Of course with two men away all the
time, the house had to be run by one of the cooks
on me. And worst of all, one of the cooks
has left as his wife is expecting a baby.
This leaves an awful lot for two other
cook to do, especially at the market.

Next for away, then on top of everything,
takes the carriage to town every
take the carriage to town every
morning. Have had to resort to the
mentice. cord cord "rickshaws together for Xmas
tree fittings and presents for the children
and servants.

You have no idea how cold a
"rickshaw is in the winter time. The
3.

toilet when your feet rest is made of
wooden step into large opening, across,
and when the wind whistles through your
legs — oh boy!

Worse, you know. I do not know Shanghai
worse, you know. I do not know Shanghai
worse, you know. I do not know Shanghai
worse, you know. I do not know Shanghai

at all except to order the hansom or the
groom when I want to go. Now, a rickshaw

cootie box to have more explicit directions,
and as most of them are from the country,

and speak a “cockney” Shanghai dialect,

I had great difficulty in making them

understand. The shops were so crowded
and there were so many things to

buy.

In 13. Dad has just come in, and he said

that evidently your letter must be an

operation to me for rephrasing, as immedi-
ately after your letter came, he always

find me writing.

have to receive, usually the hansom goes through the stores carrying my pack-

ages. But this past two weeks had to
do that myself, and I was so jostled
that I almost became angry.

Christmas, in one family is a great
event for the servants; so as locust, could
not buy the things I needed, I thought,
handkerchiefs, socks, stockings and candy,
oranges, languirines, candy, cakes etc.
and I thought I would go crazy, for each
servant had to have a different size stock-
ing. After buying the things, the stockings
had to be filled, and little things tied into pretty little packages. I almost
went dizzy trying and trying things. I
surely did wish for ted then, for she
loves to tickle things up.

After the servants' things, and getting
the tree decoration, there were my little
brother and cousin's presents to think of.
They all seemed to have every play thing
imaginable; therefore it was difficult to
find novel toys. I went out every day
to shop for two weeks, and sometimes
twice a day!

The changes of exchange is a very queer
thing. For instance, we have "little
money" and "big money." A dollar in
"little money" is 11 dimes and 2 coppers, whereas
in "big money" it is ten dimes. Again, in "big money" a dime is ten coppers, whereas in "little money" it is 12 coppers each. Some stores deal in big money only, and some in little money.

A stall is very confusing. For instance, if you buy an article in one store and it costs 90 cents, nine dimes would suffice, whereas, if you were to buy 5-0 cents, nine dimes, and that would suffice, whereas, if you were to buy 5-0 cents, nine dimes, would not be enough.

The oriental mind you see is complicated. When I first came home, I got cheated right and left, and I do not know that even now I am not often at a disadvantage.

By the way, have you been selling any money to pay for any magazines? If so, how much?
wee, back to Kansas. The house was full of company, and the servants were busy every minute washing up dishes, or preparing food for company. I never have been under your words. You see Dad likes to keep 'open house'.

By the way, you said something about my woeferous 'dawn'—well, it is dawn. dawn, dawn! cold in the house! In spite of the fire places and the stone, going red hot, it is dawn, cold! You see I have been used to steam heat, and in Shanghai we steam heat. In spite of our ice, we have not had a bit of snow.

Last week the house had to be decorated, and the garden, especially did his best. It looks perfectly lovely and aristotic, not a bit over-done, and very fragrant. The living rooms at least are warm, for we have two great, going and a large open stone (very good-looking) and all
the doors shut; but the boxes are too small.

It was a day - or rather evening - we had a party for the children, and also for the servants. Of course the servants did not look up at all until they went to the servants' quarters; but they did seem to enjoy getting presents and seem to enjoy getting present and seeing the two. We had about 20 live cousins yelling at the top of their lungs and pulling fire-crackers. Their lungs were swelling and their faces were red, and they were so afraid that they would all die of "smelling" that they would all die of "smelling." By the way, Dad, we had the most wonderful American turkey!

I had written a telegram for he had not heard from us for ages and was worrying him. He had not heard from me for ages and was worrying him. He was killing so many people that one was or less dead doesn't make much difference, does it?

I am enjoying myself, you know. I am enjoying myself. You know.
came for all serious times, and each time he had been informed that some ill health had been reported. He then wrote me a very reassuring letter, hoping that my "very temporary illness" would soon be over. He meant illness would soon be over. He meant illness would soon be over. I did not want to see him; hence I did not want to see him; hence I did not want to see him; hence I did not want to see him. Of course I knew him. I was ill. Of course I knew him. I was ill. Of course I knew him. I was ill. Of course I knew him. I was ill. Of course I knew him. I was ill. Of course I knew him. I was ill. Of course I knew him. I was ill. I was ill. Of course I knew him.

another man, who is one of our common friends who I had treated him not only with consideration, but even actual contempt. Of course you would understand, and I really was ill; only his letter sends me furious.


P.S. I got some beautiful brocades, silks, and very very old paintings for you.