1-1-1918

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1918-02-08, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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491 Avenue Joffre
Shanghai, China
8 February, 1918

My dear Dada:

The Chinese New Year is next Monday, the 11th, and of course the whole country is preparing for the festival. For five days all the shops and offices will be closed - And everyone who has the least pretense of a family will spend the holidays at home. There will be much calling - The younger generation will bow to the elders, and in turn will receive presents of money wrapped in red paper. All the servants too will receive presents mostly of money. I will describe more fully after the festival is past, as since I have been away from home, I am forgetting a great many facts.

But one thing I know - all debts and bills have to be paid before the New Year, - and in some stores, as the shopkeepers have bills to meet, they are reducing the price of their merchandise in order to attract the crowd.

Tomorrow is Saturday, and as Mother does not allow us to buy things on Sunday, [page break] I am going to take my little brother downtown to buy fire-crackers and fire-works - the two playthings dear to the heart of every child in China rich or poor.

Mother has been shopping days and days preparing for the festival. I believe that it will be a far greater occasion than Xmas.

Have I told you that we have a large
mahogany victrola, brand new one? We sold our oak one, as it did not match the reception room furniture.

Miss Kendall was in Shanghai for a few days from Peking. She wrote me after she arrived here, and I took her & Jack for a drive, and then back to the house for tea. It was a very warm day: so we sat on the porch in large wicker chairs at first. Later we sat in front of a gleaming fireplace.

My face is well now, although it still has scars. They will disappear in time, I know.

I met a missionary the other day, - a typical one, I swear! She asked me first of all what I was doing for China. I replied that up to the present, the climate here had done me up. Later we happened to speak of moving pictures. She said that she once went to a movie and when she got up from there, she felt all spiritually grimed in dirt, as some men near her smoked. She then added that no one could make her go again. I innocently said that to my humble mind, I thought movies are all right. She then asked, "Would you like to be found there if Jesus Christ were to come to then world then?".

As I did not wish to scandalize her, as my Mother is considered one of the most upright and prominent Christians in Shanghai, I kept my silence. I certainly did feel like saying "Sure, Mike! Provided that it was a screamingly funny one!

It would amuse you, though, to see the wry face I made after her back was turned! But since coming home to China, I have learned to keep opinions and pert remarks to my humble self and to you in letters. I suppose though everyone feels like a...
boiler waiting or rather swelling to burst at times. When things get too thick, I go to the piano and practice arpeggios: they are really quite effective to relieve "over-timed" self-expressions!

By the way, Miss Kendall was delighted to see so many magazines in this house. She said that this is the first house that she has visited in all China both of foreigners and Chinese where the occupants seem to wish "to keep up" with questions going on in the world. She was particularly struck with "The New Republic" and borrowed several of them. She says that she expects to settle permanently in Peking after she resigns from Wellesley.

Higgins writes that Frances Kallam is secretary to Charlie Chaplin, the movie actor. Did you ever? No, I never.

Love,
Daughter
My dear Dad:

There is a Chinese New Year next Monday, the 11th, and by course the whole country is preparing for the festival. For five days all the shops and offices will be closed. And everyone who has the least pretence of belonging will spend the holidays at home. There will be much eating - the younger generation will bow down to the elders, and in turn will receive presents of money wrapped in red paper. All the servants too will receive presents mostly of money. Dresses will be given after the festival is past, as since there been away from home, I am forgetting a great many facts.

But one thing I know - all debts and bills have to be paid before the New Year, and in some stores, as the shop keepers have bills to meet, they are reducing the price of their merchandise in order to attract the crowd.

Tomorrow is Saturday, and as Mother does not allow us to buy things on Sunday,
I am going to take my little brother down town to buy fire crackers and fire works — the two play things dear to the heart of every child in China rich or poor.

Mother has been shopping day and day preparing for the festival. I believe that it will be a far greater occasion than Xmas.

Have told you that we have a large mahogany violin, have we not? She sold ours and oak me, as it did not match the reception room furniture.

Miss Kendall was in Shanghai for a few days from Peking. She wrote me after she arrived here, and took her to Jack for a drive, and then back to the house for tea. It was a very warm day; so we sat on the jacch in large wicker chairs at first. Later we sat in front of a glowing fire place.

My face is well now, although it still has scars. They will disappear in time, however.

I met a missionary the other day.
a typical one, I mean! She asks us first of all what I was doing for China. I replied that up to the present, I had done nothing. Later we happened to speak of moving pictures. She said that she once went to a movie and when she got up from there, she felt as spiritually grime in dirt, as some men near her smoked. She then added that no one could make her go again. I innocently said that to my humble mind, thought movies are all right. She then asked, "Would you like to be found there if Jesus Christ were to come to this world again?" with as I did not to scandalize her, as a writer, is considered one of the most upright and prominent Christians in Shanghai! I kept my silence. I certainly did feel like saying "Sure, Mike! Provided that it was a screamingly funny one! It would amuse you, though, too, the way face I made after her back was turned! But since coming home, I have..."
learned to keep opinions and petty remarks to my humble self and you in letters. I suppose that all men feel like a boiler waiting or rather swelling to burst at times. When things get too thick, try to find a friend and practice expresions, they are really quite effecting to relieve "over-timed" self-expressions.

By the way, Miss Kendall was delighted to see so many magazines in their home. She said that this is the first time that she has visited in all China both foreign and Chinese where the occupants seem to wish to keep up with questions going on in the world. She was particularly struck with "The New Republic" and borrowed several of them. She says that she expects to settle permanently in Peking after she resigns from Berkeley.

Higgins that Draper Kendall in secretory to Charlie Chaplin, the Movie Actor. Did you ever? No, Quenea.