1-1-1918

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1918-03-06, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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491 Avenue Joffre  
Shanghai, China  
6 March, 1918

My dear Dada:

Time does fly so swiftly that before we know it, it will be "the good old summer time" again with the cool famine existing only in our imagination. From the papers, and your letters, I can well sympathize with you people. It is a lucky thing that I left before I had to put on flannels, for you know how I detest those "itchy" things. This sounds selfish, I know!

A Mr. [Luik], the bookkeeper in my Brother's office is leaving for the states in another month or so. I shall send you something by him - I'll write you when he is leaving later on.

Well, you will be glad to know that my face is smooth as glass now - not a ripple on it. And my complexion is really quite good now after all the trouble I had. The skin is much fairer in texture than before. Heavens alive, after all these months of outbreak, I think it ought to have some sort of compensation, don't you think?

My little brother is now going to school: so I have much more leisure time now, altho I am still busy. I am studying Chinese, taking music, and giving a great deal of time to the Y.W.C.A. here, being on Committees, and starting a conversational club in English for the girls. The duties of the social committee are quite arduous. We have to plan programs for the monthly social gathering for all the members in Shanghai. I rather like the work, though, for it makes me more interested in
all sorts of people, and in a way forces me out of my natural tendency of indifference towards people in general. I am trying so hard to make others interested that more or less the contagion of enthusiasm affects me also. Then of course there is the Censorship Committee, and my Sunday School class, and all the various branches of my mother's social work. By the [page break] have I ever told you that my mother started a school for the poor children several years ago. It is a sort of "Neighborhood School," only it is a day school and only for girls. I am interested in that and wish that we did not live so far away from that district, for I should like to be connected with it. Mother goes there once a week in the afternoon, and looks over matters.

The "Wellesley News" came a few days ago. You cannot know how great I did enjoy them! I can well believe now the Alumnae's feeling of affection for that paper. As I am going to give a talk to a girls' school on "Class Organization" next week, the paper just came in time for me to get more intimately in touch with the "old college spirit."

There is a college club (American) here in Shanghai. There are 75 members, and the last time I went there, I met a Wellesley '09. [page break] Of course we became intimate immediately. It turned out that she is one of the Y. W.C.A. secretaries. When I got through with the "News," I shall hand them over to her to enjoy. By the way, do you want me to return the News to you - provided they are not worn out?

I am doing four or five hours of practicing a day, and find that the improvement is really quite rapid. I wish I had taken piano all along in college instead of switching on to violin as I did, for the weather here in Shanghai is most unfavorable to an instrument so sensitive as the violin.
The political situation in China is quite distressing. With the North & South at such odds, unity of action as expression of the people is [ ] and of the question. I wish I knew political history well enough to write what I so strongly feel. China at present is making no preparation in aiding [page break] the Allies. What our government really ought to do (in my humble opinion) is to work wholeheartedly for democracy, since we have already cast our lot in with those nation who are avowedly anti-autocratic. And the best way for China to work wholeheartedly is to have well-trained armies. Of course we have no good military specialists but since U.S. has undertaken to make a loan to us for defraying military expenses, doubtless if China were to approach the U.S. in repaid to lending us a few generals to start training camps over here using as a model those established all over America, the American government would consent to the plan.

A second point which has troubled me lately is this: granting that for various reasons, the above suggestions would not be practicable and would be inconsistent with China's policy hitherto, [page break] to, granting all this, what preparation is China making for the after-math of the war. Whichever side wins, China will still be facing this question, for she is between Scylla & Charybdis; i.e. between Japan on one side and Germany on the other. While other nations will have a say in the Peace Conference owing to their actions on the "War Board," China because of her indecisive and ineffectual position will be a negligible factor only - unless of course she has a large army and navy to enforce her own demands as an independent
nation. Japan and Germany, then, and only then will respect her. You know, while I disagree with Carlyle that "Might is Right," I cannot fail to appreciate that "Might" inspires wholesome fear in nations whose ambitions are greater than their conscience.

I wish I knew political history well enough to write for papers which influence public opinion, for I know only too well that without actual technical knowledge of such matters, any attempt to set forth my ideas would result only in a miserable failure. And that probably should any paper consider what I have to say worth printing, the editor would in all probability put it in print for such reason as "Doesn't she write English well for a Chinese girl" - a consideration which knowing me as you do, you would know to be an insult to my pride.

Love
Daughter
My dear Pade,

Time does fly so surely that before we knew it, it will be "the good old summer time again" with the coal famine hijacking only in our imaginations. From the papers, and your letters, I can see a marked sympathy into your people. It is a lucky thing that I left before I had to put on flannels, you know how icky "itchy" things are for you. I know, I know! A Mrs. Hicks, the bookkeeper in my basement office is leaving for the States in another month or so. I shall send you something by her. I'll write you when she is leaving.

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Love - [Signature]