9-20-1918

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1918-09-20, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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30 Seymour Road
Shanghai, China
20 September, 1918

37/
Dear Dada,

I have started writing so many times that if I had counted there
would have been many letters numbered 37/. Well yesterday my sister and her
family started off for Shansi. As luck would have it I am suffering from
paint poison. For the last two weeks every night I would have a new attack
of little blisters breaking and I simply could not imagine where or why I
should have paint poison for I stayed at home as soon as I first to break
out. Mother said it was because I refused to go to Revival meetings with
her that it was a case of Retribution. Well anyway I was and[sic] miserable for
it itches and swells. If you ever had a bad case of ivy poison you would
have an idea of one tenth of the agony I am now undergoing. I have not been
able to sleep for nights. For the longest time I could not imagine where I
had smelt Ningpo Varnish until one night I suddenly remembered that my broth-
er's room was painted three months ago. Just fancy, after three months the
smell still can affect me. Of course you bet I have not been anywhere near
his room the last couple of days, and if I am careful I shall be over this
attack in another week. The Kungs had to leave yesterday as Chauncey had to
be present at a Banker's meeting which is very important and he is the most
important one of the lot, and as I am so swollen and blisterly Mother would
not let me go. So here I am with my usual rotten luck, something happening
just as I am ready to start somewhere. In a way tho I am glad something did
prevent my going for Mother in her heart of hearts did not want me to leave
her and yet she did not want to stand in the way of my going. And Mother says
that she feels that something nice is coming to me. Perhaps she is planning
to give me that set of beautiful lynx we saw at La Maison Parisienne.

I am going to visit one of Mother's sisters at Yangtsepoo in a few
days. Mother planned the visit to offset my disappointment, I think. I shall
only make a short visit tho for the house is not yet settled. I have been
helping her to look over the things in her forty trunks. You know I wrote
you that we had decided to give up the carriage and keep only the motor. Well
Mother has decided to keep the carriage now and it is to be my special vehic[sic]
and exclusively mine alto its upkeep will not come out of my allowance. I am
of course very glad, and I think I am glad that I did not go to Shansi after
all for had I gone in all probability Mother would have sold the carriage.
My sister Mrs. Sun is in Shanghai. She has been coming every day since I have had the paint poison. I am enclosing a clipping from the Gazette as it may interest you. If you remember I wrote you about the last Autumn Festival. This year we also had a family reunion, but it was rather sad for we all missed Father and as the Kungs were leaving the next day we failed in trying to be jolly altho everyone made a desperate effort to be gay.

With love.
Daughter.
30 Seymour Road
Shanghai, China
20 September, 1914.

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With love,

Daughter.
The Mid-Autumn Festival

Today is the mid-Autumn Festival or Autumn Festival as it is called in the present Republic days. It is one of the three great traditional holidays of China, along with the other two being the Dragon boat Festival, which falls on the 5th of the 5th Moon according to the Chinese calendar, and the New Year, which begins on the first day of the first month.

It is also a religious and commercial as well as a religious day. Socially, because it is a feast day, it is a time for people to visit their relatives and commerce is also carried on to take advantage of the holiday. The whole country gives itself up to entertainment and general social gathering. Commercially, because it is one of the three “setting days” observed throughout the land. Ferr in China, according to the old custom, accounts are settled from the first day of the twelfth month instead of once a month, and the Mid Autumn Festival is one of these setting days.

It is a religious day because it is the day when people burn incense and offer cakes to the god and goddess of the Moon, as well as to the gods of the North and South polar stars, who are believed to control the life of all Ming. They worship them in the temple.

In the Yangtze provinces this particular day is also observed as a public sacrificial day, when people worship by pouring rice, beer and fruits into the river, in order to placate the spirits living in the river to make them favorable and help them live longer. In the case of this festival, the whole country, from the local village to the national capital, is observed.

The festival is closely connected with the Moon and it is believed that in the Moon there is a fragrant tree which a beautiful woman by the name of Wu Kang keeps on saving the trunk of the tree year after year, but he has not yet succeeded in cutting it down.

The legend is that Wu Kang was one of the aspirants for the heavenly gift of transformation. He did not succeed in getting what he sought because he proved himself to be unmindful of the order of the heavenly court. As a result, he was punished by being sent from the higher regions of heaven into the Moon, where he was told to save the tree. He has to cut down the tree, but it is impossible to do so. Wu Kang saw through part of the trunk and the other side he finds the first portion has grown into one piece. Thus diligently pushes the saw through the trunk again and again, until hope has some day the tree will fall, when he will then be allowed to return to heaven and resume the heavenly occupation of absorbing lasting life and supernatural power. Just when the day will come he no longer needs Wu Kang’s care and he is not allowed to save the trunk. Thus he was rewarded with the temples for the rites of the Moon, which are held on the 15th of the 8th Moon.

The Moon Palace

There is another legend connected with the festival. It says that the emperor of the Tang dynasty after swallowing certain supernatural pills, ascended into the heavens on the 15th of the 8th Moon and lived in the Moon Palace. At the gate he saw a short man preparing medicines for the whole city. He asked which year in and year out points the herbs to make everlasting-life pills.

Emperor Ming was taken in by the promises of the man in the palace and while there he saw a beautiful lady washing clothes by a river. The life was saved by the lady who actually turned out to be the girl that he actually forgot that he was in heaven and went back to the north. After a little while he was rescued by a boat from the club and the lady was using to pound the rice. Thus the emperor was rewarded in heaven the emperor was taken back to his earthly palace, to his surprise he could smell the fragrance left on his sleeve when he was struck by the lady’s club. The lady is development the Rabbit is required to pound medicine and the fox to wash clothes.

The Moon is a ball of jade and gold and the people in the western part of the country bring the cakes to worship the Moon, especially in the provinces of the Min and the Hwang and the eldest son of the family always led the way. In the East, cakes of jade are used for the cakes of jade are used in the west.

Religious Worship

These legends are known only to literary people. To the average Chinese its religious side is not equally important because the Polar Stars and the Moon. The polar stars or the Dipper is called in Chinese a small circular arrangement of temples of which is much smaller than that of the bottom. In ancient times this measure was probably round. So these are the two shapes adopted for the making of the incense burner used only on this occasion. Roughly it may be described as a round measure made of incense sticks stuck on a plate. The measure is fully loaded with chips of fragrant wood and its sawdust and in the centre is stuck a pillar like thing also of incense, with small ball of incense on it, the top of the pillar is a square measure upturned. This is the literary way with which the parallel or the god of literary attainments. In fact the god of literary attainments has never been known.

He is usually made of mud and decorated with paper and gold. The brush is held in the hand of the god of literary attainments is an ugly looking creature whose appearance resembles more that of a napkin. This is often called the Chinese Satan than any other thing.

The pillar is lit early in the day at the top and the incense burns down through the day. So these are the two shapes of temple. Without the former incense, the pillar will be left after the festival. It can be seen that the name of the festival must include a few boxes of moon cakes.

Origin of the Festival

The origin of this festival is not known. From the material of which it is a mixed up affair. Most probably it was observed on the first day of the 5th Moon, and it has entered Chinese culture and has been developed by farmers during the past several thousand years. The festival of lamps originated in the later eras of Chinese history when literature became a well developed science, the scholar must have added a good deal to the already ancient custom. The custom of setting the lights on this day is of course merely an ancient custom that has become established.

The Mid-Autumn Festival always falls on the 15th of the 8th Moon. On this day the people worship the north Pole Star or Dipper (peck means north Pole) by looking at the sky and timing the period which all the stars revolve. This star with the South Pole Star is called the North Pole Star and it plays a role in determining the length of a person’s life, and so the two Pole Stars are very important to people in hope of attaining long life.

This is called “worshiping the old father to attain long life.” The old woman is being regarded as the male and the South as the female.

The moon, which is known in England as the “harvest moon” is peculiar in that it rises for several days in succession. But in China, at least, not at the same rate, it is rising too high as the sun sets and setting as the sun rises. It is therefore not strange to find that.
THE SHANGHAI GAZETTE, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1918

he undertook in China, even if they were trying to help to the common end by undertaking actual manufacturing.

The trade of export from China is that of materials mostly vegetable in origin which are desirable, and of which America in various parts of the world is in actual want. The price of such materials can be reduced by competitive articles in America. China cannot help in men or munition but it can help in supplying such semi-rural materials that the world can consume, and for America to cut off the supplies of these goods appears rather like cutting a man's bread and spitting in his face.

Some Inevitable Conclusions
A survey of worldwide trade conditions since the outbreak of the war with special reference to the $80,000,000 unfavorable trade balance of America toward China and Japan points to the following conclusions:

One who has lived in China and watched the development of its American exports this sudden jump from a favorable balance of $41,684,244 in 1911 to a round $80,000,000 in 1917, but one answer can be given to the question "why?" Before the war the United States had a tremendous trade with Germany. Germany's manufactures from China were large and continually increasing. German labor is cheaper than American and Germany's immense export capacity, and it was, therefore, to the monetary advantage of the United States to buy in German-manufactured American raw products. The war cut this market off from the world. America as a result of requiring goods she had been importing from Germany. She was unable to go into the British and French markets on a large scale, as they were occupied in war munitions work. The only thing left was to import raw materials from wherever she could manufacture her own requirements, and this is what actually happened. He was.infoher industries being over the more notable examples. Over practically the whole range of China's output, the example holds. Wherever we have a sudden increase in American imports of China's products, it is proved that they are nearly in the likeness of products in which German firms in China have been specializing; for example, silkworms, burlap, etc., to name a few. In the present time America is importing Orientals' products in a vast array of raw state, manufacturing them with her own hands and increasing its own wealth, and diverting an alien market in certain surplus which in pre-war days went to the Japanese.

Will Paralyze American Industries
To cut off this supply of Eastern materials, in my opinion, is in the interest of American industries to an extent where they will become a serious and exacting problem for the first competitor on the field, the issue of which is over able to tell the Germans have been able to retain their interests and connections here, and they have even a finger in the political pie not only that China is nominally at war with Germany. The German merchant in China is literally supplied with funds which are utilized in German propaganda. The Germans have an eye on the Pacific beach trade in China.

The Germans are firm believers in the idea of "being shown," and it is of little use to tell them that Germany is being shown. The time was when we were trading with them, especially on such lines as received special attention at the hands of German banks, prior to the war, universally recognized that the Chinese in the trade of Chinese goods. Chinese goods, many of which, even now, are exported to Europe, are of inferior quality and they are used for the connection by mere inertia will carry itself along unless some special effort on our part. The Japanese are the same, although the conservative idea of leading. The Germans had a large and extensive trade with Japan, and do not operate during the war on the same footing as the Allies but are still trading with a trade where they were set of.

But conversely, if this period be

quoted Japanese Law on Marriage in London.

London, July, 27.

At Greenwich Police Court on Saturday, before Mr. Disney, Kitashi Matsutomo, of Longfongrove, SYDNEY, was summoned for altering his identity book without authority.

A police constable said that the defendant went to the Peckham police station with a young woman whom he said he had married. Finding that the register of aliens showed that she had no permit of stay, the defendant said he had a wife in Japan. The witness asked to see his identity book, and found that the answer to two of the questions in the book had not been answered. The word "wife" having been struck out and "so" inserted. The defendant had admitted that he had a wife and three children in Japan.

Mr. Scour, for the defendant, said he had been separated from his wife in Japan. Under Japanese law, while he could not go through a second form of marriage, he could register widows here.

Mr. Disney fined the defendant £25.
Another legend says that the Rabbit and the Lady in the Moon are a pair of runaway children from heaven. They fell in love with each other and finding the confines of heaven too holy for their worldly passion the two eloped from the Heavenly Palace and entered the moon where the boy was transformed into a rabbit and the girl a toad. As a further punishment for their

and that there are special observances at the middle of the 8th moon in connection with moon worship.

An offering of moon-cakes is placed before the Dipper of Incense mentioned above. These cakes are flat and round and are made by the confectioners of flower and sugar with dried fruits inside. Each member in every family partakes of these, hoping that the family will be like a globe, an unbroken circle, like the full moon.
utilized wisely to foster trade with China, we shall automatically take over the trade hitherto done by Germans, and establish normal lines of trading by which the Chinese merchants will tend more and more to gravitate toward allied merchants.

**Give U.S. Merchants in China a Chance**

It thus becomes a patriotic action to give those merchants in China who are really the outposts of the allied nations a chance to do their little against "The World Dominion Idea" by rooting out the Germa