4-9-1919

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1919-04-09, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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9 April, 1919

Dearest Dada:

Your letter written on the "Chic" nursing paper just came, and while my mother and sister are chattering with some friends at tea, I am taking this opportunity to write you, for really your letter needs an immediate answer. You old dear, I should so like to see you! Without a doubt your physical weakness was caused by the "flu," and I only wished you had taken time to recover before plunging into such strenuous work as the Army nursing course. Your mental state seemed at the time of your writing to border on the hysterical, and for one so well balanced and sane as you usually are, such a state indicates that there is a great deal more the matter with you than for instance a similar state in P. Burke. I hope you have had your furlough, and that you have enjoyed it. Incidentally as my younger brother is starting for America in June, I am sending you a little reminder by him, - that I always love you, and understand you in spite of the distance separating us.

I know how you must revolt against the drabness of uniform, and I too wished [page break] that you could go to a "Sophomore Play," although I fancy that such an event would not be so thrilling to us now. The same conventional "every dayness" of life, I know, seems at times almost too oppressive to be borne. And it's all very well for people to say that if one had an intense and vital "interest" in life, life becomes transfigured etc. I say, all this is pure sentimental bosh, simple and unassumed. What really counts in life, ah, Dada, what is it? Have you found it? This touchstone of life? Frankly I think I know what it is, but so far I have not yet attained it.
It is a pity in some ways that we lose the power to be thrilled at certain events in our lives, is it not? For instance, if I were to go back to college now, I would see things in different lights than I did, but still I would not be capable of the same emotions now. It is silly to talk about feeling old, but I fancy that most of us who have been out a couple of years do feel the lack of spontaneous feelings and thought.

You will not be angry if I say something to you? It is just this. I think women lose interest in life, at least they feel a distinct lack, as though they have been cheated out of life, if they do not marry. Now many would deny this roundly, but from my observations, I find my theory to be true. And then too, really what has one to look forward to if one does not have children? Life would then end with the death of that one person. She has no hopes, no ambition, no desires save those within her life time. Oh, I know, some people argue that being interested in the growth of one's work is of more importance than feeling that one's son or daughter will continue with it after one's death, but I simply cannot believe it. For instance, some of my friends feel that China may acquire the international feeling without first going through the stage of patriotic feeling, whereas I myself do not believe this is possible. In my club work too, I notice that when I talked of being upright and honest for the sake of honesty or for the good of the world at large, the girls all look blank; but that when I show them that to be honest means a China without corrupt officials, they are instantly all attention. But then of course this is only an example, & as such is of limited value.

But let me go back to my theory, I think what you ought to do is to get married. I know I sound brutal,
as though marriage were to be entered
into lightly or with such cold-bloodedness,
or as a panacea. Nor do I mean for you
to get married to anyone who happens to come
along. What I do mean is that if you
fall in love, marry the man, provided
there are no unsurpassable obstacles in
the way. You will then stop being discontented,
for there will be at least two individu-
alities in which you are interested. Oh, I
know what you are now thinking of "Better
to have single blessedness than double
cussedness." But are you feeling happy as [page break]
as[stet] you are now, and does marriage
mean necessarily a petty life of small
annoyances? I think not! Especially
for a person with as much power
for sympathy as you have.
You understand, what I am trying
to get you [stet] do now is to give your
men friends a chance to know the
real you, the you who loves good-looking
clothes, and has an appreciation of
real good fun. Push the self who
doted on Henry James a little more to one
side. You had enough of that in college.

You are wondering why since I
believe as I do, I do not marry? Well,
as I told you once before I was a damn
fool enough to have fallen in love with
a man I could not marry without giving
sorrow to many people concerned in this.
Sometimes, very often sometimes, I am
tempted to chuck over everything and marry
him. I have even thought of going into
the wilds and live a primitive life. But
I know these are but temptations and [page break]
while matters are as they stand, I can
only do what I am now doing -
do nothing. I noticed that my mother
looked at me very queerly last night when
I remarked to her that my idea of
happiness is to go off to the wilderness
to live a primitive life with the only
man I care about. Today I am regretting
my outburst.
Well, Dada, this is not helping you
to solve your problem. If the girls seem to
want to find out what is in your “brain
pan” (this is an Arthurian Romance term a
la Miss Scudder) let them try and see if
they succeed. You will get a great deal
of enjoyment out of leading them on by
the wrong tracks.

Goodnight, I do wish I wish I
could send you a gorgeous bunch of
golden heart roses!

Daughter
Dear Dada:
your letter written on the "clue" nursing paper just came, and while my luncheon and dinner are champing with some friends at tea, I am taking this opportunity to write you, for really your letter needs an immediate answer. You said dear, Sibprev needs an immediate answer. If you said dean, I thought so like to see you! Without a doubt your physical weakness was caused by the "flu," and I only wished you had rather been to recover before plunging into such strenuous work as the Army nursing course. Your mental state seemed at the time of course, your mental state seemed at the time of your writing to border on the hysterical, and for one thing, as you usually are, so well balanced and sane as you usually are, indicates that there is such a state means a great deal more. According to Dr. Burke I hope with you that for instance in the picture you have had your faith, and that you have you have had your difficulties, that you have had your difficulties, and that you have enjoyed it. Incidentally my younger brother enjoyed it. Incidentally my younger brother enjoyed it. I am sending you a note to start for America, I am sending you a note to start for America. I always love you, and I always love you, and I always love you.
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I fancy that such an event would not be so
thrilling to us now. The same conventional "every
dayness" of life, I know, seems at times al-
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Sorrow to many people concerned, I am
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Dear Papa, this is not helping your knee. The girls seem to want to find out what is in your brain (this is an Aristotelian Roman's term for 'pan'). Let them try and see if they succeed. You may get a great deal of enjoyment out of leading them on try of equipment out of leading them on try of equipment out of leading them on try.

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Daugheen.