7-24-1919

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1919-07-24, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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24 July, 1919

Dear Dada,

You certainly have awakened in lots of matters as your last few letters have shown. The fact that you have such distinct and unbearable aversion for the She Dragon that patrols the halls ought to show you that any fear you might have had regarding your imaginary abnormality might now be dispelled. Any one who can hate so vigorously is in her proper frame of mind. And then also your craving for excitement is so perfectly natural a re-action that far from being alarmed at your condition, I am delighted. Army psychosis sounds most interesting and I fain would be with you now to watch the various stages of development.

I know you are wondering what in the name of common sense I am doing. Well, my little brother is coming to America to college next month, and so there is more or less bustle about that. Then too my oldest sister is expecting to be confined in August also, and therefore more bustle. Then there are the usual round of dinners and teas. But Shanghai has been devilishly uncomfortable, so darned sticky and hot, the heat is oppressive, so much so that at times I wonder whether I am in my right senses or not. The only comfort is taking long rides.

All the time that you are having experiments with your psychosis, I am also having some by-chance shots at my own psychological workings. The town of Shanghai is at present is [sic] full of rumors about my being engaged, each rumor roping in different men. All my friends are not sure which one it is but they are sure it is somebody. What makes the situation so funny is that none of the men are either denying or acknowledging the rumors. I am quite put out, for Mother of course thinks that I must have done something or another to have justified the rumors. The result is she has made me stop seeing any of my men friends for the last month, and because she told me not to let any one call, I believe that I am almost willing to be engaged out of revenge, a perfectly childish attitude, I quite realize. She is quite worried about me because for the last month as [sic] I seem to have taken a craze to be gadding about all over town. The truth is, I am dreadfully bored, outrageously so. I have even had teas unchaperoned a couple of times, just because like your Rainbow, I feel so wretchedly oppressed. And the funny part is I do not care a snap about any of the men. I have one very interesting experience, it certainly soothes my self love anyway. If you remember, there was one man in my college days who was crazy about me, but at that
time after being crazy about him Sophomore year, I stopped liking him, remember? Well after I came home I refused to have him call or allow him to write. Now at my birthday each year, he kept on sending me presents. This year, I felt particularly devilish and so altho I had not seen him for two years except when we happened to pass on the street which occurrences were not often, once when I happened to pass by him I told him he could call [sic].

Mother does not like him because he is divorced altho the reason of his divorce was perfectly above board and all that. I find him interesting who would not under such circumstances, and especially when he is more than ever in love with me? Naturally things are humming. I think if one does not love, the next best thing is to be loved, don't you? Mother does not know how to deal with me. I could tell her perfectly, but she would not believe me, so what's the use?

It is rather funny that after two years, I find him changed in many ways. For one thing he is not nearly so domineering, and then too because he is more experienced and mature he is far more gentle. He is different in that he is a man now instead of a headstrong jealous boy. And that of course makes a man attractive. There are innumerable other ways in which he is changed, but I have not had time to quite make them out.

By the way, our old friend H.K. has joined our church. We are not on speaking terms as he thinks I have behaved outrageously by not marrying him, altho whenever anyone speaks of my being engaged to him, he just smiles and says nothing. Some more of my old friends, among them whose love letters I used to giggle with you on your couch are coming back home, and so I am going to take pains to keep out of their ways.

All this of course is very exciting etc. but to tell you the truth I am bored, horribly and unspeakably so. I have begged Mother to let me leave home and do something. Volunteer work is not real work, it is too much of a makeshift, because I simply am not able to feel that I am accomplishing anything. I have not told the family anything about my plans for next year, but I am inclined to think that I am going to get a real size job and try to find some satisfaction out of living. I have a position offered to me on a newspaper, but I need not tell you that if I were to take it, the family would be so furious that I shall never be able to live thru the fuss, especially as the Celestials can not get into their nutty domes that a girl can be decent morally if she works with men, especially a young upstart. Damn it all, I think that if I had my way, I could amount to something, but hampered with a respectable family whom every one knows about, it is impossible for me to go out driving with a perfectly decent man without chaperons.

I know you are surprised at this out burst of mine when you have been thinking for the past few months that I am calmly settling down to respectability. Instead you find me crazy to attack the Gorgon's head and not his domestic hearth. Yours with love
Daughter.
Dear Dada,

You certainly have awakened in lots of matters as your last few letters have shown. The fact that you have such distinct and unbearable aversion for the ‘He Dragon’ that patrols the halls ought to show you that any fear that you might have regarding your imaginary abnormality might now be dispelled. Any one who can hate so vigorously is in her proper frame of mind. And then also your craving for excitement is so perfectly natural a re-action that far from being alarmed at your condition, I am delighted. Army psychosis sounds most interesting and I feel would be with you now to watch the various stages of development.

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