10-11-1920

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1920-10-11, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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Dearest Dada,

Your letter came a few days ago. I am truly, really, wishing that either I were with you, or you with me. In either case, we could talk. But even as matter stands, I think I see your situation clearly.

I hope you are enjoying housekeeping with Hig and Maudy. Are you? But, I want to tell you one thing,—a thing which I have learned since I have been home. That is this: friends are very nice, but remember when you actually really get to a hard fix, the family is the one that will stand by you. Coming from me, who has spent a greater part of my life thousands of miles away from my family, this may sound green. But honestly, you will find that I am right. At the same time, I am glad you are having a little experience living in N.Y. City away from 324 [ ] 89th St, for the change will be good for you and the family too.

I have been desperately and most miserably ill these past two weeks as I had my tonsils removed. The doctors found the tonsils terribly infected, and [page break] they have come to the conclusion that bad tonsils have been the cause of the break-outs on my face. Did you know that I am of an exceedingly nervous liver-[]? Well, it seems that I am; although I never knew it. The operation went hard with me, as I was on the verge of a nervous break-down. I am still resting, and not taking an
active part in anything socially
or in any social-services works. I am
well on the road to being pampered
to death by the family.

My mornings I spend digging in
the garden. I have already planted my
sweet peas. The gardener does the hard
work, while I do the easy planting etc.
By November, I ought to be setting out
my rose cuttings.

I understand that there is a Miss
Margaret Worton coming to Shanghai,
and that she is a Wellesley graduate.
I wonder whether she could be Frances
Worton's sister? The president of the American College Club is away in America, and
I am the Acting President now. With
such a large club as ours, -- over a
hundred members-- I am having
my hands full planning for the
year. I am also a Board Member
of the N.W.C.A. and I have accepted
an invitation to be on the Board of
Directors of the Margaret Williamson
Hospital in Shanghai, -- which
means more work. Besides I am
sec. of two child organization, and
chairman of several committees. This
just means that I have to be on the
jump all day long, -- even supposing
I am not studying and keeping house too.

But until November, I am
doing nothing as the Doctor has
ordered complete rest. He said that
with all these duties, it is a wonder
I am alive at all. I do think
myself that I really did not know
how tired I am until now when
I am just begun to be rested. But you
know, I like to be active, and I love
to see things hum. I have no patience
with a merely-passably sort of
existence. Ergo, -- I am not married
yet! And then too there are other
compensations. My cousin who was at
Radcliffe (you met her) married two years
ago (although she is only a little over a
year older than I), and now she
has a baby. She looks fully five
years older than I, and looks and
feels tired most of the time. I
am much thinner than I was and
getting wiry. After I am rested,
I shall be just awfully fresh
and full of [vein] and life again.

My cousin from Radcliffe has
returned home. She says she hates
China, and finds life here with
her family unbearable. Her family
on the other hand says that she
is most indiscreet and undiscerning. [page break]
From this you may imagine
what a time they are having.
But don’t mention this to anyone.
I think the whole trouble lies
in this: the family and she
expect too much of each other,
and too little of what each one
really should do.

What a very different home-
coming this is compared to mine.
My family took me for granted,
good and bad. And although
we did not always agree, we
respected each other and com-
promised. But then not every
one is so fortunate in having
such a good Mother as I
have. Really my mother is so
considerate of me that every day
I am ashamed of myself, and of
my behavior. Am very tired
now. Well, Dada, write me again
soon. With love--

Daughter.
30 Seymour Road,
11 October 1920

Dear Dad:

Your letter came a few days ago. I am truly pleased, wishing that either I knew where you are, or you knew me. In either case, we could talk. But even as matters stand, I think I see your situation clearly.

I hope you are enjoying housekeeping with Hig and Mandy. Are you? But, I want to help you always, — a thing which I have learned since I have been home. That is this: friends are very nice, but remember when you actually really get to a hard spot, the family is the one that can stand by you. Coming from me, who have spent a greater part of my life thousands of miles away from my family, this man knows green. But honestly, you can find that I am right. At the same time, I am glad you are having a time of sadness, living in N. Y. City away from 524 1659th St. for the change will be good for you and the family too.

I have been dejected and most miserable of these past two weeks as I had my tonsils removed. The doctor found the tonsils terribly infected, and
they have come to the conclusion that
head troubles have been the cause of the
break-outs on my face. Did you know
that I am of an exceedingly nervous ten-
perame!, it seems that I am,
although I never knew it. The pecu-
liar went ahead with me, as I was on
the verge of a nervous break-down.
I am still resting, and not taking an
active part in anything social
or in my social service work. I am
well on the road to being pampered
to death by the family.

By morning I spend digging in
the garden. I have already planted my
sweet peas. The gardener does the hard
work, while I do the easy planting etc.

By November, I expect to be selling out
my rose cuttings.

I understand that there is a Miss
Margaret Boston coming to stay here,
and that she is a lecture graduate.
I wonder whether she was the Frances
Boston's sister? The President of the Quincy
College Club is away in America, and 
Jane is Acting President now. With 
such a large club as ours, over a 
hundred members I am having 
my hands free planning for the 
next year. I am also a Board member 
of the Y.W.C.A., and I have accepted 
an invitation to be on the Board of 
Directors of the Margaret Williamson 
Hospital in Charleston, which 
means more work. Besides being 
chairman of several committees, this 
just means that I have to be on the 
ground all day long, even sacrificing 
Jane's studying and keeping them too.

But until November, Jane, 
doing nothing as the doctor has 
ordered complete rest. He said that 
with all these duties, it is a wonder 
Jane is alive at all. I do think 
myself that I really did not know 
how true Jane said, until now when.
I am just beginning to be rested. But you know, I like to be active, and I love to see things done. I have no patience with a merely physical sort of existence. Yes, I am not married yet. And then too there are other engagements. My cousin who was an acquaintance, my cousin who was an acquaintance, is coming (you met her) named Louisa Radcliffe (you met her) named two years ago (although she is only a little over two), and was three years older than I, and has a baby. She looks fully five years older than I, and looks and feels twice most of the time. I was and am much thinner than I was and am much thinner. P Seite after I was rested, I shall be just as busy here and full of work and life again. My cousin from Radcliffe has returned home. She says the baby is with Eliza, and friends live here with her family. Unbearable. Her family on the home board says that she is most indiscreet and unconscionable.
from this you may imagine that a time they are leaving.

But don't mention this to anyone.

Think the whole trouble lies in this: The families and the effect too much of each other, and too little of what each one really thinks do.

What a very different home coming this is compared to mine. By family took me for granted, good and bad. And although we didn't always agree, we respected each other and compromised. But there's not every one is so fortunate in having such a good mother as I have. Really my mother is so considerate of me that every day I am ashamed of myself, judging my own behaviour. Am very tired now, dear, papa, and me again soon. With love - Dorothea.