7-6-1921

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1921-07-06, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

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Dearest Dada:

Yours of June 5, just received: and I am hastening to answer you, because moods like everything else are transient and cannot be captured by mere will. Since I returned home from Canton, I have written you once, but needless to say, I have actually started letters more than half a dozen times: but each time I became so disgusted, so disgusted that I tere[sic] up my efforts.

I agree with you that you and I are in the same boat as far as being self-satisfied is concerned. As to the emptiness of life, -- well, life is empty, there is no gain saying that. And yet looking around and about me, everyone I know, friends, relatives and acquaintances all envy me because they say I seem to have everything good in life, everything worth having! I have told you all this before, and so you know how I view the matter myself. And then also I am forced to admit that I do seem to have the richest life of any one of my friends or acquaintances. Then why in the name of common sense, am I such an ingrate, and feel so tired of life? And feel so keenly the futility of life?

You will probably laugh at what I am going to tell you. You know I have tried every mode of life possible to find happiness, or at least a panacea from the boredom of existence, within my environment. I have tried "Social Service", "self-improvement", "butterflying",...
in fact all the possible ways which seemed to promise a richer, fuller life. And I have failed!!

Now I am trying something new; new at least for me; and so far I have not tried it sufficiently to tell whether the outcome will be satisfactory, but such as it is, I shall tell you.

You know Dada, I am not a religious person. I am too darned independent and pert to be meek or humble or submissive. As you probably know too, my sister Mrs. Kung was even more independent than I. She is very much keener than I, a really brilliant woman, and very social,-- always has been the leading Social light. Up to two or three years ago, she even denied the existence of a god, and whenever religion was mentioned in her presence, she either shunned the topic or else plainly said that it was all old women's nonsense etc. But now she is very religious, and she told me that the reason why she is so changed is because she has seen the error of her former manner and attitude towards God. She told me she has gone through periods of agony far worse than any I have been through;-- and that because of her misery and sufferings she turned to God,-- and now she has found solace in life and faith in living. I wish you could know her, for she is undoubtedly the most brilliant mind in the family, and is unusually keen + quick witted, vivacious, quick, and energetic. She is not the sort I would consider at all fanatical; and yet she is deeply religious, and now prays to God to help the
solution of her problems. More than
this, she has found peace, such
peace as she has never known.
Before I used to think that she
intentionally drugged her mind,
psychologically speaking, but now
I think differently. She told me
that the only way for me to conquer
this lassitude of mind is to become
religious, and to really commune
with God. You know, she has
been telling me this for a long [page break]
time and up to the present. I
used to get furious just because
her words irritated me, and used
to tell her to keep still. But now
I am trying her advice, and so
far I cannot say how it will
work out. I will say this, though,
since I tried her advice, I feel
a great deal happier, -- as though
I no longer am carrying a
heavy bundle alone. When I pray
now, I am in a receptive
mood, so to speak. I cannot
explain this to you; but I wish
you were here for Mrs. Kung
to talk to you. You know
becoming more religious has not
changed her outward mode of
living, because she is just as
gay, and goes out to parties etc
just as much as before, but [page break]
somehow or another, there is
a difference in her. She is a
great deal less critical, more
thoughtful, and not so intoler-
ant of the short comings of others.

In having closer communion
with God, the essential feature
in faith that the Supreme
Being is close to you, and is
with you all the time. Such
external forms as church worship,
or the Bible, etc. are good only
in so far as they help you
in getting closer to God. The essential character though is this belief in the all-powerful love of God. I suppose this sounds almost heretical; but this is how I conceive of God. I wish you would try yourself. I have found that the best way to get into close communion with God is to select a hymn, the meaning of which is exactly what you desire; then read or sing the words till the idea permeates through your consciousness, and you really feel that your mind is ready for communion with God: then pray, as you would talk to your father or with a very close friend. Of course every one has a different way of praying; but to me, this is really the way how I can most strongly feel the presence of God.

You will likely think I have gone crazy; but really Dada, I have tried and tired of everything else. Probably you think I have "goody-goody"-- but no! I am even this very minute sitting on the verandah outside my room writing you, and smoking a good cigarette, and enjoying its flavor.

My sister, Mrs. Sun, in Canton is President of the War Relief Society of the Southern Government, and sent me a book to subscribe. I went for her. This morning I went out, and got five hundred dollars. But oh what beastly hot work! I have to go around asking for money, but this fund is for soldiers' families, and I felt I had to do my []. Fortunately I got hold of one of the well-known business-men of the city, the father of one of my friends and made him
take me around to his friends' offices for two hours. When his friends learned who I am, they bowed and scraped; but at first you might have seen the way they looked at me!! Men are such beasts sometimes! Fortunately I made his daughter accompany me too! But no more subscribing for me!

Yours with love-- Daughter [page break]

P.S. It is disgraceful the way I scrawl & use such huge paper. However I feel so cramped when I write on ordinary note paper. Do you mind such huge sheets, & such scrawls?

I am still keeping on with my Chinese classes;-- three hours every morning with a tutor (except this morning.) I am planning of a time when I shall have sufficient grasp of the language to translate beautiful, quaint, or colorful Chinese pieces into English fiction for you to work on. Won't it be fun for you & me to have a lovely house in the country in the interior of China all to ourselves, and to collaborate in turning out versions of all the beautiful in our Chinese literature? I could translate the essence and spirit of the masterpieces, and you could shape them into form! How would works of [sic] "Wills & Soong" strike you? So cheer up, -- old dear,-- you and I will have enough [], color, transparency, and seething, bubbling, effervescent shifts and changes after all!

Daughter
30 Seymour Road
6 July, 1921

Dear Dad:

Your of June 5, just received. And
Dad, last line: I trust you, because wood-
like everything else as transitory and cannot
be explained by mere will. Since I returned
here from Canton, I have written you one
or two letters. Have actually signed letters
more than half a dozen times; but each
time I became so disinterested, so disenchanted
that I tore up the letters.

I agree with you that you and I were
in the same boat as far as being self-
satisfied is concerned. As to the emptiness
and life, well, life is empty, there is no
life, and about me, everyone I knew, friends,
relatives or acquaintances all went me
because they say I seem to have
given up the good in life, every thing
worth having. Then how are you and I now?

And do you know how I seem to have
wasted myself. And then also I am
forced to admit that I do seem to have
the nearest life of any one I can
frieads or acquaintances. Then why in the
name of common sense, now I seek an
improved, and feel so tired of life?
and feel so keenly the futility of life?
you will doubtly laugh at what
now I am to tell you, you know I
have tried every mode of life possible
to find happiness, or at least a pause
from the hard work of existence, within
my environment. There true "social
improvement"" "bettering" "improvement" "self - improvement" "butterflies"
in fact are the possible ways which
seemed to promise a richer fuller life.
And I have failed!!

Now I am trying something
new: new at least for me; and so
for them and tried it sufficient.
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humble or submissive. As you probably know too, my sister, I was never very independent than I. She is much keener than I, a really brilliant woman, and very social, always has been the leading social light up to two or three years ago, she even denied the existence of a God, and whenever religion was mentioned in her presence, she either shunned the topic or else plainly said that it was all old women’s nonsense etc. But now she is very religious, and she tells me that the reason why she is so changed is because she has seen the error of her former manner and attitude towards God. She tells me she has gone through periods of agony far worse than any I have been through, and that because of her misery and suffering she turned to God, and
now she has found solace in life and faith in living. I wish you knew her, for she is undeniably by the most brilliant mind in the family, and is unusually keen to quick witted, vivacious, quick, and energetic. She is not the sort I would consider at all fanatical; and yet she is deeply religious, and does pray to God to help her solve her problems. More than this, she has found peace, such peace as she has never known. Before I used to think that she intentionally dragged her mind, psychologically speaking; but now I think differently. She told me that the only way for me to conquer this turbulence of mine is to become religious, and to really commune with God. You know, she has been telling me this for a long
time, and up to the present, I used to get furious just because her words irritated me, and used to tell her to keep still. But now I am trying her advice, and so far I cannot say how it will work out. I will go through this, though, since I tried her advice, I feel a great deal happier, as though I no longer am carrying a heavy burden alone. When I pray, I am in a receptive mood, so to speak. I cannot explain this to you; but I wish you were here for this thing. I do talk to you. You know becoming more religious has not changed her outward mode of living; because she is just as sociable, just as much as before; but...
Someone or another, there is a difference in her. She is a great deal less evil, was more thoughtful and not so intense but of the shortcoming I see, I'm having closer communion with God, the essential feature is faith, that this Supreme Being is close to me, and is with you all the time. Such as church worship, eternal forms as Church & worship of the Bible, etc. are good only so far as they keep one in getting closer to God. They in essential characters though it this belief in the all-powerful love of God I suppose this sounds like almost heretical but this is how I think you I mean of God. I have found turned to yourself that the best way to get into closer communion with God is &
select a hymn, the meaning of which is exactly what you desire; then read or sing the words till the idea permeates through your consciousness, and you really feel that you are in the presence of your Father or with a very close friend. Of course, everyone has a different way of praying; but to me, this is really the way how I can most truly feel the presence of God. You most likely think I have gone crazy; but really, Dada, I have tried and tried over and over again else. Probably you think I have been "good and soke" but not! I am even this very minute sitting on the verandah outside my room writing you, and smoking a good
cigarette, and enjoying its flavor.

This morning I went out and

got five hundred dollars. But or

what heart that work? I hate

to go around asking for money, but

his few is for soldiers’ families,

this sum is for soldiers’ families,

I felt I had to do my bit. Fortunately

I had heard one of the well-known

business men of the city, the father

of one of my friends, make him

take me around to his friends’

offices for two hours. When his

friends learned who I am, they

showed and sheltered. But at first

you might have seen the way

they looked at me! Men are

such heartless sometimes! Fortunately

made his daughter accompany me

too! But no need, subscribing for us!

yours with love, daughter.
of "twill & Song" strike you. So
cheer up—old dean.

I will have enough
gas and I will have enough
motion, color, transparency,
and reeling, bubbling, appearance
and changes after all.

"Daughter"