

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, December 25, 1891, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B., Dec. 25th, 1891. Mrs. A. G. Bell, % Macquay & Hooker & Co., Florence, Italy. My darling Mabel:

Christmas day without you and dear Elsie and Daisy — is not Christmas day at all to me. The house is desolute without you all.

I wonder what you are all doing. No letters have come as yet — and but for your cablegram today — I felt as if you had all gone out of my life. I am still somewhat headachy and down in the depths — when — oh — when will a letter come. I wish I could write as easily as you do — but I cannot.

I only hope that my journal notes — are better than nothing — as they will have shown you that my thoughts were on the other side of the water.

I am anxious to hear about Elsie and Daisy — when will a letter come. How has Elsie stood the change from a helpless child waited upon by a nurse — to a young lady traveling alone with her mother and sister in a foreign land. Has she been a comfort to you — or the reverse — that question is ever in my mind.

I am sure her heart is in the right place — and yet her long absence from you has changed her strangely — and I am full of anxiety on her account. It would be the happiest day of my life — if I knew — that she loved and respected you — as you love and respect your own dear mother in Washington — and that she behaves towards you as she would like her own daughter to behave to her — if she had one. She is older than Daisy — and should therefore be nearer to you in every way. I don't know 2 this either. Daisy has grown in mind as such as Elsie has in body and is no longer a little child.

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Both should now be able to take their place at your side — and be a help to you and not a burden.

When Elsie and Daisy came to us — I felt so glad — for your sake that they were girls — for then I knew they would be nearer to you — than any son could be. “A son is a son till he takes him a wife — but a daughter is a daughter all her life.”

I want to hear that Elsie has been to you — in your loneliness in a foreign land — all that a daughter should be. I know that she loves you very dearly — but I want also to know that she has been obedient to you — and respectful as a daughter should be. I want to know that she has opened her heart to you — and told you all her troubles — and all her thoughts. That she comes to you for sympathy and help. There never was a kinder or better — or more loving mother than you have been my dear — and never a nobler-hearted truer wife. Brave and courageous too — to go off-alone — to the other side of the world. I love you very dearly — and I love my dear little girls — and wish indeed I could be with you now. It is a comfort to me to know that we have been blessed with good children . Their instincts are good — and they are brave enough to speak the truth — which is sometimes a difficult thing to do. My only fear is for Elsie. She startles me sometimes by a morbidness of mind — that leads me to think of her — still as a sick child — in mind . This I think seems strange in her — and we should be careful of her. She betrays a tendency to an unhealthy dreaminess of mind — that troubles me. But what troubles me most is the tendency I note to attribute bad motives to the actions of other 3 people — she thinks that people do this or that because of some motive that is not creditable of them. This betrays a morbid mind — unhealthy condition — that needs all a mothers tact to overcome.

The reason it troubles me is this. People generally attribute to other people the same kind of motives they experience themselves. We are all of us inclined to believe that other people are actuated by the same motives that actuate us. The people who think the whole

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world is bad — are generally bad at heart themselves. The pure — good — honest — heart — is ever ready to believe that other people are actuated by right motives.

Even, though we may not understand the motives of others — it is always best to attribute right motives — and think no evil — for the evil thought harms us — as well as those of whom we think it. But enough of moralizing. I won't re-read this scribble for fear I should be tempted to destroy it — or worse still — re-write it.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of you. Also to Charles. Kind regards.

Your loving husband, Alec. P. S. I hope our translation of your cablegrams is correct — and that Prof. Brown Goode is in Genoa — for then I know you will have a friend who will help you in any way in his power. Alec.