

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, June 5, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. 10 Rue Nitot, June 5th 1895. My darling Alec:

A letter from you written on receipt of my note of welcome, came last night and made me very happy. Thank you very much for it. I am very happy that my letter was a comfort to you. I did feel so sorry for you coming home all alone, and hoped the unexpected letter from me would help you.

I am so glad to have you say that you enjoyed our Mexican trip, I couldn't have enjoyed it at all if you had not also. You mustn't reproach yourself for selfishness. I don't think it was at all selfish of you to let us go away alone. You wouldn't if I had asked you not to. But I should not have been happy had you come with us because I felt that it was unnecessary. I had been here before and had been across alone before when my children were much younger and less able to help me, so that the undertaking did not seem such a formidable one in anyway. Our idea was to put the children away from English-speaking people, hence your presence with them was not only not necessary but a positive detriment, as mine is to a certain extent. But there is only one of me, with you it would make two. This being the case I did not see why you should leave your work just to hang around doing nothing while the children were studying. If it is your duty to be with your children now, I might as well bring them home to you for they certainly would not learn much French while they were with you. If you want to come over and travel about with me and leave the children somewhere that would be very pleasant for me, if you wanted to come, but if you left your heart behind it would only be very hard for me. If Mamma is not coming over, of course I cannot go back to Baddeck, and I don't think you will want to stay there alone all summer. What I think would be the best way would be for you to come over

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sometime in July or early in August, and all come back together in September. In this way the children and I could stay quietly here or at Fontainebleau or somewhere near until you come. By that time the children may be so far advanced that they could do a little travelling with us. I think in this way the children would see far more of you than in a year at home, just as I saw more of you in Mexico.

By the same mail as brought your letter came one from Mamma and she is so pleased and relieved that I am here, in such safe shelter. She says she is so content to know me here that she wishes the other children had come too! So you see that Mamma thinks I am all right here, and indeed I am. It is absurd, but I have grown afraid already of wandering about town to strange restaurants already . We did that every day at the Vendome, but now our home here seems such a safe shelter that I can't bear to go out to lunch. This morning Elsie and I were belated at the Salon, and she wanted me to go to a restaurant, but I wouldn't.

We are beginning to patronize the omnibuses now, and find them very good fun especially when we are on the top and our company very select, such a lot of Legion of Honor men among them. This afternoon I am expecting Mures, Ostheimer and Richelot and Miss Duncan to afternoon tea, and my heart is creeping into my mouth for fear my tea things won't come before my company. We went on the 3 omnibus yesterday to the rue de Paradis and invested in some faience teacups and saucers especially for the occasion and they promised to send them up, but they haven't come yet, Charles, too, hasn't appeared and I want him to go and buy my cake and tea.

Elsie and I were in the Salon for two hours this morning, and I don't know now what I saw, except that there were some pictures which I should think would land their painters or owners in the madhouse, I feel as if I had been in the shambles first and in a house of ill fame next. Not a very pleasant sensation to carry away from an art gallery is it? I saw several beautiful fashion plates, and one or two portraits, I don't know though as I would want any of the exhibitors there to paint Elsie. I will go to the Salon at the Champs de Mars

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and see if there is anything there I like. I went to the ? Cort exhibition yesterday, and it is certainly a refreshing change from the gaudy or gloomy colorings of the Salon, and his naked women are at all events not so big as the others. Some of the houri at the Salon by the way were very beautiful and perhaps you would have enjoyed them, but I must confess that it gives me a sensation, of being myself disrobed to stand before these naked women and have a gentleman come up by me. "As she is so are you," only of course not so beautiful, I feel he must think, and though I have frequented picture galleries for as long as most people I don't get used to the sensation. I am glad to see that Elsie is getting out of her notion that she doesn't like pictures. I think this trip is going to educate her in more ways than one, soften her angularities. You would have been as much amused as I was yesterday, a gentleman spoke to her on the street offering to stop a cab for us. Daisy only saw that a stranger was speaking to her and hurried her forward very abruptly. A few minutes later we were in the omnibus and then the child began to pour forth her wrath. The gentleman had only offered to stop the passing cab seeing that the driver had not noticed our signals, had only wanted to help, not to be rude, and Daisy was so awfully rude, she couldn't bear to be rude to people. He would never try to help people again, he was a gentleman and polite, and Daisy was so rude. It took her a full half hour to get over it, and in fact she was only pacified when I told her that I had bowed and smiled to him. He was it appears a Legion of Honor man which made Daisy's offense so much the worse in her eyes. Elsie really ought to be small and delicate in body, she is so sensitive and dreads so pushing herself forward. The other day I sent her in the post-office to drop some letters in the box while Daisy and I waited outside in the cab, she was gone so long that I sent Daisy after her. Both children came back presently, and it seems that Elsie had been standing waiting her turn before a ticket window at the end of a line of people. She said she didn't like to reach forward and pass her letters in. Daisy did, and was promptly told that the box was outside, so that Elsie would have waited half an hour for nothing. I don't think there is any danger of her "striving with men in the arena" practically. Poor little girl, I hope she will find a good, kind husband who will help her and not hurt her.

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Daisy I think is in danger of getting too forward, she is so clear headed. She is a marvel to me sometimes, and a dear, loving child, but she is a little inclined to be what she calls "fresh," and I a "little impertinent," but they are both very good 5 and very childlike. Leave them here quietly for another month or two and then take them and show them the wonders of Switzerland and they will come closer to you than ever before and you will help them as you could in no other way.

Lovingly yours, May.