

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, December 15, 1902, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Windsor Hotel, Montreal. December 15, 1902. Mrs. Graham Bell, Baddeck, Nova Scotia. My darling wee wifie:

I want to help you carry out your plane for Beinn Bhreagh — but thought it best to make no definite arrangements with Mr. McInnis until we have definitely settled what we want and have conferred together on the matter. We must do so here . The moment we reach Washington other interests will distract our attention — and our plans will not be carried out for another year — unless we decide now .

I have had a general talk with Mr. McInnis and I find him quite ready to fall in with our ideas. I have been trying to dictate ideas to you for your consideration before we meet — but have been interrupted by visitors and etc., to such an extent that I cannot hope to complete dictation in time for you to receive it before you start. I will only say that I think we must concentrate all our attention on one point at present. While the general plan of Departments should be considered fully — we cannot hope to establish more than one distinct Department at the present time — The gardening Department. Let us take this up first — and the others later on. Departments should be geographically arranged. Gardening Department to include all the property at the Point — Point Department?

Gardener to have charge of the grounds and buildings at the Point — including the care of Beinn Bhreagh Hall while we are away.

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There are two points to be considered here:

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Shall this be a distinct and separate Department under your direction (as the sheep Department is now under mine) with which the General Manager has nothing to do?

Shall it be a distinct Department under the Manager — the gardener bearing the same relation to the Manager that the Manager does to us?

I am inclined to think the latter arrangement would be better — and if so — the sheep Department should be put on the same basis.

In this case — as the Manager would be responsible to us for everything — he should know of all your instructions about gardening or Point matters — so as to see that they are carried out — and you should not write to the gardener without the knowledge of the Manager — otherwise we cannot justly hold him responsible for the due execution of your wishes — of which he knows nothing. All instructions relating to the Point should be transmitted through the Manager — and should be known to him. He should know everything that is going on. Such an arrangement would not necessarily preclude you from writing directly to the gardener — the only point would be that you should enclose your note to the Manager — ask him to read the instructions you have given and hand your letter over to the gardener.

In similar manner the gardener's replies to your letters should be transmitted through the Manager and be read by him for his information — as he should know everything about the estate. Much of the correspondence hitherto carried on by the gardener has been entirely inconsistent with his subordination to the Manager. It could not have been shown to the Manager and such correspondence should not be tolerated from a subordinate — it is only consistent with an independent position.

I am inclined to think that your direct correspondence with the gardener has had a good deal to do with the friction between the gardener and the Manager. He has practically

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been asked to serve two masters and receiving instructions directly from you has naturally resented interference from any one else.

His instructions should come from only one person . He should either be placed directly under your authority and be made independent of the Manager — or the Manager should be made the medium of communication. This is important and we should think carefully over it. There is a good deal to be said on behalf of either plan — but I believe that one or the other plan should be decided upon.

If the Independent plan is adopted — then as fast as Departments are created — the authority and importance of the Manager is diminished — and we would in effect have a number of Managers with whom we would have to deal separately. The heads of Departments being supreme in their several Departments the General Manager would ultimately have the leavings only — and his position be reduced to a very subordinate place — of little importance. We would have to do the work we want our Manager to assume.

If, on the other hand, the heads of Departments are under the General Manager — he should know all that goes on in the different Departments — and all orders or instructions should be given by him — or transmitted through him with his knowledge of the contents . He should either give the instruction himself, as your Representative — or know the instructions you transmit through him.

I think we should set only through the Manager — and hold him responsible for the due execution of our wishes.

The heads of Departments should recognize him as the Directing Head of the whole. He is our executive — They his cabinet officers.

Comparing our system to the Federal Government — We constitute the Congress. We appropriate the moneys and direct how they shall be expended.

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Our Manager represents the President — or Executive Head. The heads of Departments represent the Cabinet officers — through whose agency the President conducts the business of the country.

Similar relations, I think, should exist on our Estate.

If not — then we must have several Managers — each having a distinct property under his charge — independent of one another — and only responsible to us.

I wish you could arrange to spend a sufficient length of time here in Montreal to enable us to settle our policy before 5 going to Washington.

Mrs. Bell leaves tomorrow morning. My father is well and happy.

Your loving, Alec.

(Dictated notes)

I will try to get my thoughts into shape by dictating a few words to Mr. Zable which you may take into consideration before we meet on Saturday. I have telegraphed you to ask you to mail your manuscript concerning Beinn Bhreagh affairs to me here at once so that I may have time to study it before you arrive.

We have certain property in Cape Breton Island which by reason of prolonged absences in the United States we are unable to manage personally. It is therefore necessary to appoint some one to act for us and represent us.

To our manager we delegate all the authority we ourselves possess over our Cape Breton property. Our manager's orders must therefore be supreme on Beinn Bhreagh unless disapproved by us. Our approval — expressed or implied — is necessary for we are responsible for his acts. Our approval shall be implied unless we especially disapprove.

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It shall be the manager's duty to look after the grounds and buildings, carriages, wagons, boats, implements, crops, live-stock, and all other property intrusted to his care; and employ and discharge such help as in his judgment and discretion may be needed for the proper care for our property, but all employees shall be engaged or discharged in our name. They are our employees and the manager simply 2 acts as our representative. It must be clearly understood and recognized on Beinn Bhreagh that the manager's acts are our acts done through him as our representative in case of any dissatisfaction an appeal can always be made to us. We will not deal with our employees directly excepting through him. We engage or discharge the manager and the manager engages or discharges all other employees upon our estate. It is our duty to uphold and support the authority of our manager in every proper exercise of the power we have delegated to him. In the event of dissatisfaction with his actions our remedy is to discharge him and appoint a new manager — not to interfere with the exercise of his power by engaging or discharging persons subject to his authority.

The manager shall make estimates of the expenses to be incurred periodically and submit their estimates to us for our approval. These estimates shall be made quarterly at the end of March, June, September and December, and the amounts decided upon for the ensuing quarter shall be appropriated by us by sending to the manager a cheque for the sums decided upon. We shall open an account with a bank on behalf of the Beinn Bhreagh estate which shall be known as our Beinn Bhreagh account, and we shall give our manager authority to sign cheques upon this account to the extent of the deposits these cheques are to be signed in our name by him as “Manager.”

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All moneys disbursed by the manager shall be by cheque upon this account and all moneys received by the manager shall immediately be deposited by him to the credit of this account. The bank account and the manager's books shall at all times be open to

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our inspection or to the inspection of any person we may appoint to audit the manager's accounts.

It shall be the manager's duty to help us to make our Beinn Bhreagh estate self-supporting and to this end it will be necessary to make a change in the character of the accounts.

At the end of each year the manager shall make an inventory of the property of the estate and attach a value in dollars and cents. The grounds, buildings, wagons, carriages, boats, crops and live-stock shall all be valued at their market price. All produce not consumed by the live-stock on the place shall be sold at market price. All produce required for our needs shall be sold to us and paid for by cheque. These cheques to be deposited by the manager to the credit of the Beinn Bhreagh account.