

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, February 12, 1903, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Hotel Ormond, Ormond, Florida. February 12, 1903. Dear Mabel:

Your note (undated) arrived this afternoon and when it was written I can't for the life of me imagine. Did you write it before I left? And did it start by the same train I came on?

I think Bert and Elsie have done pretty well to carry that house alone so far — and we must now help them to get it off their hands.

Their home should be in Elsie's Trust so as to be safe from any pecuniary misfortune that might befall either. It was with some such idea as this that the two houses on Connecticut Avenue were included in trusts — one for Elsie and the other for Daisy.

Bert and Elsie preferred to build their own home near us — in accordance with their own plans — and I encouraged them to build the house although it would cost more than they could afford to put into it of any money they had at their own control — because — in the first place — it was a pity that their plans could not be carried out as they wished and (2nd) because Elsie's Trust fund would be sufficiently large to stand the expense.

Let Bert give me full information on following points:

Total cost of house and ground; how much has been paid up — what obligation their may be outstanding and how secured and etc. A clear statement — without muddling me up 2 with unnecessary details.

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I propose to write to Charlie on the subject — suggesting that the house should be purchased out of Elsie's trust — so that whatever property of their own has gone into the house they may get it back again — or rather its equivalent.

The house to belong to the trust so that it will not be liable to their debts and etc., and the equivalent to be returned to them to invest as they choose.

I do not like speculative investments any more than you do — rather less I think! but if their home is secured with a Trust fund sufficient to support them moderately — then it is all right I think that they should have some property to invest as they think best. They must gain experience — and we will be guided very largely by what they do with their money — in the final disposition we make for our children. If we find them playing ducks and drakes with the money they have full control over — why we can tie up what we leave them — or give them — in the form of Trusts. If, on the other hand, they manage their own property well, and invest wisely — increasing what they have of their own instead of wasting it all — we may determine to place all we give them — over a moderate amount left in Trust — in their own control.

I have the feeling that they must have managed pretty well to have gone along as they have — and feel rather encouraged than otherwise. Can't tell how matters are until Bert gives me information. I would not advance them anything — but arrange 3 with Charlie to take the house off their hands for what they have paid for it. The Trust would then assume any further payments required — while they will get back from the Trust Investments of equal value to what they have paid — and with these investments they can do anything they like.

Had a delightful drive on the beach this afternoon — Have had dinner — and listened to concert here. My father and Mrs. Bell quite well and charmed with this place.

I have nearly got over my headache and intend turning in to bed now. With much love.

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Your loving husband, Alec. Mrs. A. Graham Bell, 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington,
D. C.