

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, October 23, 1892

Beinn Bhreagh Oct. 23d 1892. My dear Mrs Bell

I think that you will be glad to hear that we arrived home comfortably, and without any accident last night and found Aileen and the children very glad to see us. I am wonderfully pleased with the very great improvement we find in Elsie, and attribute it in a great measure to Aileen's beautiful influence over her. Elsie herself admits this. Of course the child was getting better anyway, but it was due to Aileen's quiet way with her that the improvement is so great and marked. I do not know how to thank her enough for her faithful devotion to both my children.. Alec and I have all our lives long been very fortunate in finding friends to rise up in the time of our need and help us. It is perfectly astonishing—the interest these children are taking in their work. They could hardly wait until I was fairly in the house before telling us about their studies, and showing us their composition-books. They stopped a moment to look at their presents, and then returned to the all absorbing theme — how Daisy had practised two hours one day and Elsie had done something else another.

We find a very great change in the weather between this and Washington, but I am rather surprised to find that I dont mind it nearly as much as I expected. In fact I like it. I think it much more bracing and invigorating. Alec is perfectly happy to be back once more among his sheep and water-works, and flying-machines. He has been out among all three this morning, and has gone again, a big burly figure in his familiar knicker-bockers, which make him look like a big school-boy among the Lilliputians. Our dear place looks very home-like, and is still in all the glory of its autumn splendor. Few bare branches yet tell that this is indeed but the Thetic hue which is but “the spoiler's treacherous kiss, The mocking smile of Death”. I think these lines will ever remain in my memory when thinking of the Autumn

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foliage, they express so well my own sad feelings, which all their beauty cannot brighten. My garden is still gay with many a lingering flower, but all have a cold, pale look which tells of the coming winter. At all events the winter comes quickly upon us, there is no long slow waiting for death which is characteristic of more southern climes. Give me a Washington spring, I cant imagine anything more beautiful, — but not the fall.

Alec has just bought Mr Glave's book "In Savage Africa", and I should think you and Mr Bell might like to read it. I have learned to like the man although at first I did not. But I think that he is a really kind-hearted man, as well as a determined one.

I suppose Mr and Mrs David Bell arrived just as we were leaving Truro to come here yesterday. They must be glad to get home again, and you must be still more glad to have tem near you again. I feel very guilty to keep Aileen away, but you can imagine that we are still lesswilling to part with her than ever. Of course, however, whenever her mother needs her we will let her go. She is spending the day in town today having a well earned holiday.

Please give my love to Mr Bell and my cousins, I was forgetting to tell you about our boiler. Our bathroom, though at all times the warmest room upstairs, is not as warm as we would like it on cold days, so we decided to adopt Mr Ellis' dodge, and have the boiler moved upstairs into the bathroom. For some reason the plumber did not come until a day or two before we were expected, and Mr McCurdy was so put out about it that the man said that he would do it that day if it took all night. And he did. With the help of one of our men he went to work at 3 in the afternoon, and worked straight through until nine next morning, working so quietly that the children, who slept in the next room knew nothing about it. I think this pretty good of the man, because he had us pretty well at his mercy being the only plumber at hand.

Affectionately your daughter Mabel