

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell, May 23, 1873, with transcript

Copy of a letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to his father. Wednesday, May 23 (1873 ?) Dear Papa:

I have been obliged to decline no less than three private pupils, this last week, and to-day a lady called at the school sent by Lady Jones of England to request me to give her an outline of our plan of teaching articulation. The three pupils are — two deaf and dumb young ladies — daughters of rich people in Boston, and a stammerer — the one you referred to.

I am making arrangements to return to Boston about the end of Boston (?) to take these pupils and any others that may turn up. I propose boarding at some farm house and having rooms in the town. I also think (in regard to these two deaf-mute girls) of undertaking their general education as well as their articulation. Now please per return advise me as to terms — for articulation — and for articulation and education. The parents of at least two of our pupils would send their children to me so there would be four to commence with. And there is no doubt that the school committee would be willing to employ me in the school. Mr. King and Prof. Monroe can send me pupils in stammering and Hon. Mr. Washburn and Emerson and Pres. Hill would be referees. I want to make all arrangements with my first pupils before I leave Boston. My adult class have advanced by a stride. They all formed 8 new sounds from the symbols alone last time. I have no doubt I shall be able to make an adult deaf-mute class pay. One gentleman has now all the English Elements except 3 () and these I 2 believe I could have obtained if I had tried. Mr. Russell, having obtained my address from you wrote inquiring terms etc. I declined taking the pupil just now — for I am really anxious to get strong and well and I won't sell my walks in the country as they are doing me good. As regards terms I said \$5 per lesson

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or \$50 per course of 12. If advisable to have a long course of instruction terms matter of special arrangement.

Should invitations come from Hartford or Northampton — I could go to either place for a few weeks without materially affecting my private work, but I should prefer that they should send their teachers to Boston for private lessons.

I look to the establishment of a good profession here — perhaps ultimately to the foundation of a Normal School for Deaf-Mute Teachers ! I find myself making headway every day. New ideas are being constantly suggested by the defects arising in the school. I am at a loss how to improve the voices. The timbres of some are peculiar. Husky tones I have already corrected by commencing vowels with “ X ”. I am studying Madame Seller's work on the cultivation of the voice. She worked with Helmholtz and her labours are said to throw a new light on the mysteries of “timbre” in voices. Mrs. Monroe has lent me the translation of the work.

Aleck. P. S. Letter with enclosure received on Saturday. Many thanks. AGB.