

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Chichester Bell, March 25, 1903

Dear Mabel This is a copy of a letter sent to Chester today. Mr. Fiegler is ill & cannot drive here Friday — so that I need not return that day. Your loving husband, Alec. Confidential
1331 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D. C. COPY. March 25th, 1903. Dr.
Chichester A. Bell, 1523 35th Street, N. W., W. Washington, D. C. My Dear Chester:

I leave town tomorrow morning and may be away for two or three days. Where will you be I wonder, when I return? I am very much afraid — on your way to England. This, then, is probably the last time I can urge upon your attention the laboratory proposal made to you last year. I wish indeed I could prevail upon you to come over to this side of the Atlantic for a year or two and carry on experiments with me as in the old Volta Laboratory days. The Volta Laboratory had as its working capital, the Volta prize of ten thousand dollars. My expectations were fully realized, the graphophone was produced in the laboratory, and however much we may be disappointed with the extent of the business that has resulted, still the shares representing the Volta prize have produced many times the amount of the prize itself. The Volta Bureau has been built out of the proceeds and the Volta fund established, and I am sure that neither you nor Mr. Tainter have had any reason to regret your connection with the Volta laboratory.

Now — I say, let us start a new enterprise together, similar to the Volta Laboratory enterprise. If I can secure your co-operation I am willing to make any arrangements you may desire, provided the total expense to me shall not exceed the sum of ten thousand dollars.

What I want is, that you and I shall enter into an agreement to work together at experiments THAT WILL PAY. The nature of the experiments to be determined by mutual conference, then I would put aside the sum of ten thousand dollars as the working capital

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to be used in the prosecution of our researches. The results to be patented and the patents to be owned conjointly by us in such proportions as we may agree upon.

I have no doubt that my investment of ten thousand dollars in an enterprise like this will prove a profitable one, both to you and to me. I want the money that may result to establish a fund that will support my own private researches and experiments without burdening Mabel with the expenses. You could well use whatever profits might accrue to you in the support of your family — the education of your children etc. I understand from you that your whole income at the present time results from investments and not from any salary or remuneration for work. These investments whatever they are, will yield you just as much income on this side of the Atlantic as the other, and in addition you would receive from the ten thousand dollar working capital, whatever amount we should agree upon as salary. You cannot therefore, be any worse off than you are now, and you would have the prospect of materially increasing your 3 resources. Even though we made nothing at all by our venture, I cannot conceive that you would be any worse off than you are now.

I do not know what your resources are at the present time, I have no doubt however, that you have enough to live on in moderate comfort if you and Antoinette alone were concerned:— But you have six children — all young — and your expenses upon their account will necessarily increase. You cannot provide properly for your children unless your resources are increased. You might of course, go back to work at some University or Laboratory at a salary, but this would confine you, and occupy your time at an age when you should be free — to rest — or to work for pleasure only. My proposition would confine you for one year, or perhaps two — the graphophone cannot be considered as very successful from a business point of view — but, should we be only as successful in our new enterprise as in our old — you would be speedily placed in a position to give your children the very best education and provide for them as a father should. I urge this proposition upon you for your children's sake. Please give it careful consideration. I cannot

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find a copy of the letter I wrote to you when you were in England, but I may put here in a few words, the proposition in definite form.

1. I will place in Charlie's hands as Trustee, interest paying securities to the amount of ten thousand dollars, the 4 interest and capital to be used for the support of researches to be carried on conjointly by you and by me.
2. You to be paid out of this fund, such salary as we may agree upon.
3. You and I agree to devote ourselves conjointly to such researches as we may agree upon, for at least one year, or as much longer as the funds will allow.
4. The inventions resulting, to be owned by us conjointly in such proportions as may be agreed upon, and the disposal or sale of the inventions to be left to me.
5. If the funds do not permit paying the expenses of patenting as well as the expenses connected with the researches, I would propose to organize a company to hold the inventions, which company should pay the expenses of patents in this and other countries, giving us a certain number of fully paid up shares, for our rights as inventors, these shares to be divided between us in the proportion of our respective interests, the company to provide funds for patent ing.

The Company would then own the patents and deal with them as they think best — either exploiting them itself, or selling the patents or patent rights to others.

In regard to all the points above named that our are subject to mutual agreement — I am perfectly willing to agree to ANYTHING YOU WANT.

Yours sincerely, (Sgd.) Alexander Graham Bell.