

## Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, June 28, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. 10 rue Nitot, Paris. June 28th 1895 My dear Alec:

This being the last day on which I can send a letter until Tuesday I might as well begin one now. No I may not because it is nearly lunch time and after lunch we are going out to the artists studios to see about our picture. It's rather an undertaking to go around with two children and Mademoiselle, but I don't see how otherwise to accomplish my object. I cannot understand Mademoiselle, so I can't go alone with her, nor can I go alone with the children, inexperienced as they are, when about such delicate business as getting out of studies without committing myself right and left. Mr. and Mrs. Pollok are away and inaccessible. Mrs. Mauro already worked enough in other directions, Miss Duncan too busy. And I don't think you would be much help either husband mine, if you were here, for you wouldn't like going around and standing about and being politely civil and intensely bored! Papa would enjoy it, and so might Mr. Pollok, and so I am sure would Mr. McCurdy but not you! — or Charlie.

Later. The children are much excited. They have heard that a Russian Prince tremendously wealthy called on the Mother superior the other day, stated his name and fortune, and asked her assistance in selecting a wife! He wanted some of her young girls, one beautiful and accomplished, American preferred. One only condition he imposed, he didn't want a mother-in-law! This is fact, no romance. Did you ever know anything so absurd. The mother 2 was so surprised she did not know what to say. The children want me to pass myself off as their sister-in-law and chaperone, and let them have a try at the Prince! How would you like a Russian Prince for a son-in-law?

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Evening. We hired a four-seated carriage and have spent the whole afternoon scouring Paris for Artists with indifferent success. First we stopped at the Salon, using some tickets Madame la Generalé lent us, a considerable saving for it was five franc day. We took a last look at all the portraits, and they all looked more unsatisfactory than ever, especially the one that I had selected as my chief hope. However we made for this particular artist and went way across Paris to a region where I had never been, to find after considerable searching that he was not at home. We tried another near by, he was not accessible, a third in a grand house was engaged with a sitter, but would see us Sunday morning. He is one of the fashionable beauty painters and I have little hope in him. Then Mademoiselle persuaded me to go to Murkascy's studio and house. It is a fine looking one in the fashionable quarter, not far from here. Our quarter is quite ultra fashionable,—and a swell footman in livery showed us up a fine square hall hung with the artists pictures, bits of armor and beautiful carved furniture to the door of the studio on the third story. Presently Murcasky himself came out in his shirt, palette in hand and welcomed us in. We all of us fell desperately in love with him at once, he is simply perfectly fascinating, such a lovely, gentle almost depreciating quite unworldly manner. He is a Hungarian, and his face shows it at once, it is 3 a strong fine one and beautiful almost snow-white hair stands straight up from his broad forehead and is all around his head like a glory. His grey beard is quite long and falls in two points the way I want yours to. He is quite tall and well proportioned, and his manner I must say it again was just charming, so simple, gentle and friendly, one would think him some young artist with his way to make instead of a world famous painter with wreaths hanging up in his studio. I wanted awfully to ask him to paint Elsie, but apart from my respect for the huge sum he would ask I was deterred by the fact that his pictures were not as satisfactory as himself. One large picture of Mrs Pulitzen stood on an easel, this I thought fine but this Miss Duncan had said 44 was very bad likeness, and the other pictures I did not fancy. I could not imagine how I was to get out of the studio, I felt so uncomfortable and that we were taking up valuable time, and I had no excuse to offer for coming in. Apparently the artist was as helpless as I, but he had a resource that must have stood him in good stead on many other such occasions, he sent for his wife.

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She I regret to say is as horrid as he is lovely, large and coarse and horribly powdered. She talked to us for a while taking the conversation while her husband sat by her, as if he loved her in such a pretty way, perfectly quiet and undemonstrative, but in a sort of way that made you feel he saw something in that coarse vulgar woman we did not. Presently she asked the children if their mother was in Paris and declared herself overwhelmed when assured of my identity and presently swept us out of the rooms, her husband taking our hands in both his own with a gentle little squeeze as if he liked us as much as we did himself, and then the wife escorted 4 us part way downstairs and we retired, I full of a devout thankfulness to Madame Munkcasky for getting me out so easily. I was so glad to have met the great artist and loveable gentleman, but was not satisfied that the meeting was exactly correct. However we did not take much of his time, and he gave us the one bit of pleasure in the whole afternoon. For though we found one more artist in and I liked his pictures they were not the kind I wanted. We went after yet another bird right across the city to the Latin Quartier, and found her, it was a her, that time out of town, so we have accomplished nothing but the spending of our money and spoiling of nice clean gloves, and temporary loss of our tempers. Tomorrow I look in the Champs de Mars Salon, and if there is nothing I like I don't know what I shall do. It's so discouraging to think there are hundreds of painters wanting to paint and I wanting a picture and we can't reach each other. I thought I would select my own artist and did not see why I could not discover a new talent as well as any one else and thus lend a helping hand to struggling genius', but so far I haven't found anything I really like either struggling or dangling on the ladder top. Charles is waiting for my letter in a fever of impatience for it's near time when visitors are barred out, so goodnight husband mine.

Ever yours,