

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, May 11, 1901, with transcript, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. ANGLO-AMERICAN HOTEL, FLORENCE. May 11th, 1901. My darling Alec:

We are here in Florence in pleasant rooms with a large roof top balcony.

A letter from Elsie says that you are lonely and missing me. I hate to be away from you, on the other hand I hope that we have many more years in which to be together when I can help you, while I feel that this is probably my last chance to serve my dear Mother. Surely you do not grudge me this overmuch. It is pathetic to hear her talk of what she is to do when we leave her. Of course Grace loves her as much as I do and is herself quite as capable of taking care of her, but Grace has a wild lot of kids with her and these Mamma dreads with a dread that seems hourly to grow, and yet she thinks she has to stay with them and let Grace and Charlie go off alone this summer. I don't believe Grace will consent, but even to be in the house with them all is too much for her now. Yet it would be very hard on both her and Gipsey to be left alone together. At home Mamma always has her friends and her household affairs and Gip her own friends, over here they have none. It breaks my heart to see Mamma so troubled about what is to become of her when I leave, we get along so nicely, for our ages are graduated, so that I am one of us is always in sympathy with the other. Here Gip is the youngest, there she will be the eldest and that will make a very great difference.

We expect to stay here until Thursday at least, perhaps 2 longer. It is our last quiet time together, and I would like Mamma to get thoroughly rested, she is tired now.

Who do you think we have just learned is in the hotel with us? Mr. Kipling, Rudyard Kipling's father. I hope we shall meet him, he is a gray haired, quiet looking gentleman.

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Gertrude and Daisy have gone to the opera with Miss Clarke, they have tender recollections of Tosca from Palermo.

Your father has written Daisy that he has made over to her her share of his property, amounting to fifteen hundred dollars a year. She does not know exactly how to answer his letter and wanted to cable you, but my experience of cabling has not been very encouraging lately. He put the gift in such a way that she does not like to refuse it, and yet both she and I feel distressed that your father should rob himself of so much income. He said he wanted the satisfaction of having the property settled so that you should have as little trouble as may be for succession taxes etc. I can understand his way of looking at it, and I see no reason why the property should not stand in Daisy's and Elsie's names if he desires, but why need they take the income? Couldn't they arrange so that the income should be paid to your father so long as he lives? As your father said, he will not leave us any the sooner for giving away his property, but I do hate to have him rob himself of his income. It distresses me greatly, and Daisy also. Couldn't she write to him to this effect, I like to think of your father having plenty of money and feeling rich and able to give a hundred or a thousand dollars here and there as he is inclined, and rather than have my children take money from him I wish we could give him more.

I am so sorry my expenses are so great, but I do not see how they could have been less without making Mamma uncomfortable. With the exception of our dresses which we bought from London my most expensive purchase has been the Palermo wagon and harness that was three hundred lira about fifty dollars. I want to get a few more things, but I never bought so few things on a journey before.

I will get your Berlin library if I go there. I am waiting to hear from you to know whether I shall sail on the 22nd, or 5th, June. I thought just the two weeks of sea voyage and enforced rest would have been everything to you, that is why I proposed it. I still think it would.

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I think your Geographic address was fine. What did they say to it, will you carry your fifteen lecture program?

I have written Mr. Hornblower today about the plans, although his have not come yet.

Mamma wrote Grace and Charlie about the photograph before we left Paris, they must have forgotten to tell you or Mr. Hornblower. The trouble was that the building was Mr. Totten's ideal, and to have given Mr. Hornblower a photograph of it was almost tantamount to showing him Mr. Totten's plans and we were afraid it would not have been honorable to do this, beside giving Mr. Totten ground perhaps for legal complaint. It was he who directed our attention to the building.

I did not at all understand that Mr. Hornblower proposed to wait for the photograph anyway, not I am sure did Mamma, still she both wrote and cabled.

Much love to you, Lovingly always, Yours.