

Letter from Annie C. Pratt to Alexander Graham Bell, October 5, 1900

63 Washington Ave. Chelsea, Mass. Friday morning, Oct. 5, 1900 Dear Dr. Bell:—

As it is now Oct. 5, and 10 o'clock in the morning, and no message from you to the effect that I am to have the pleasure of seeing you in New York, either this evening or on Saturday morning, I will write you a "Steamer letter", unfortunately, I do not know by what line you are to travel, but will manage somehow to ascertain. Perhaps by writing to the clerk at the Gilsey House, or by telegraphing.

I am wondering if the death of Mr. Hudson, will make any change in your plans, such as bringing you to Boston for a few hours.

You must have been more than busy in Washington in the short time you had to arrange Census and other affairs, I can imagine how earnestly Bessie has endeavored to assist in every possible way, she is such a dear good faithful girl.

I have quite a number of interesting "finds" to tell you about; one thing I have found the printed minutes of the General Association of Connecticut for the years 1811 and 1812, the former was held at Farmington, Conn. in June 1811, the following is a copy of the item which interests us. From records of the session of Thursday, June 20, 18LL 1811. "A letter from Dr. Cogswell of Hartford, in his own name, and in the name of Sylvester Gilbert Esq. of Hebron, was read—whereupon, Voted:— That the several distinct Associations be requested to ascertain the number of persons, within their respective limits, who are deaf and dumb—of what age they are — of which sex— whether they were born so, or became deaf so by disease—and at what age they became so,— and of what disease,—; and to make report at the Genl. Association, at their next session, designating in their report the towns in which such persons live."

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From the records of the meeting held at Sharon, Conn. 1812; records of Thursday, June 18, 1812. "The Rev. John Clark reported a summary statement of the number of &c. of deaf and dumb persons, which report was accepted and ordered to be put on file. The number reported is 74." I am sure that it is not necessary for me to tell you that I am searching for the manuscript files of those two meetings (1811 and 1812) , also for the private papers of the "Rev. John Clark".

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I learn that there is a small collection of correspondence, once belonging to Dr. Cogswell, on file in Yale Coll. library, "largely professional", I shall examine it in a few days; and in New York, "a miscellaneous collection" of letters in the possession of Dr. Prof. H.A. Johnston, of the College of the city of N.Y. I am in correspondence with Prof. Johnston, and have arranged for an opportunity to examine the papers, by giving a few days notice. In one of Prof. Johnston's recent letters to me he says, "There are only scattered references to his "(Dr. Cogswell's)" interest in the deaf & dumb— not much real information, tho' the items might be of some value in supplementing other facts." again— "There are two or three references to Dr. Cogswell's daughter Alice, but I think none to the Hartford Asylum, unless references to a subscription fund touch that institution. There is no diary, nor do I know about his estate, nor again about John Hallam, the Medical student." and again— "Among his correspondents were Drs. Saml. Mitchill, Elihu Smith, W. (or Mr.) Post, Tully, also men in public life— Theo. Dwight, some Conn. members of Congress, Dr. Gallaudet, the Finleys, Prest. Fitch of Williams." and again— "Who were Messrs. Ellsworth & Le Clerc (the latter from France) who seem to have been especially interested with Dr. Gallaudet in the Asylum or subscription enterprise? In 1816 all three were once in New Jersey addressing meetings and raising money." Selah—

I have a copy of the letter which Braidwood wrote to Col. Bolling from Washington (the letter that brought the reply which we have published from Col. Bolling "March 17(1811" error) 1812.) It is dated "March 5, 1812" nd in which he says — "I am lately arrived from

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England with a view of establishing an Institution in this Country for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and the removal of Impediments in Speech &c.” This is the letter which was forwarded by Mr. Pleasants.

Extracts from other letters show that Braidwood was retained at Bolling Hall as tutor to all the children, as we inferred, and moreover they also show that either because of some written obligation or contract, or Braidwood's moral obligation and integrity of purpose, he remained a private tutor at Bolling Hall, while he still held to his first ambition, “the Institution” in America, and perhaps was somewhat restive under the (durance ?) exercised by Col. and Madame Bolling. Eh?

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Mrs. Chamberlain's plan for Helen Keller and Miss Sullivan; please to consider this confidential, until Mrs. Chamberlain has had the opportunity to more perfectly complete all the details.

1st, To establish a School for Deaf and Blind children. Where? In America, but admit pupils from foreign countries. To be The children to be educated on the same basis which has been so successful with Helen, viz. each child to have its affectionate companion and friend, its “mother” in all things. Miss Sullivan and He Helen to direct, advise, manage in all things.; the joint superinten den ts of the School

It is not to be an Institution , but a Home and School. Helen says “do you know why my teacher has been more successful with me than others have with children similar ly unfortunate? it is because she loved me, because, my studies , my education has been our every day life, in all things and every where she has been teaching me, and in all our experience, there has never been anything tiresome, disagreeable and cramped, except when she tried to have me in the Perkins Institution classes, and subject to Institut-ion rules and restrictions. So this Home-school, is not to be a great, hard, prison-like brick or stone building, but little cosy wooden cottages, clustered about a principal or main cottage

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where Helen and Miss Sullivan are to live. The opening of the School is to be one cottage and one pupil with its "mother-teacher," in the Home with Helen and Annie, and increase by admitting pupils and building cottages as occasion demands. Each cottage to have its Matron, who is to manage all the details of the domestic under department, servants &c. under Miss Sullivan's direction.

Miss Sullivan and Helen and each of the teachers, matrons &c. with a regular yearly salary. Further details it is hardly worth while to endeavor to describe, suffice it, they are all in line, in Mrs. Chamberlain's fertile brain, and her ready tongue can give the reply to any inquiries. Funds for this —

Yes, Dr. Bell,— this to me is the grandest of all— the funds to be raised , and annually contributed, by the hearing school children of the world, in sums not to exceed five cents each or less than one cent — always voluntary contributions, to be, (in the United States), arranged for, by the State Superintendent of Schools or by the Governor in each state and territory. An appeal, announcement, prospectus, or whatever it may be termed , is to appear "right away" in all the newspapers on this subject.

There are many things which I should like to talk to you , and with you concerning 4 this "scheme", but it will not avail anything for me to write it to you now , but I should like to learn what you think of it . Helen is now in Cambridge, going on with the Radcliffe examinations, and , until this new idea has developed into actual working form , the girls will remain there and go on with the special courses , arranged for Helen in connection with College work. Helen is now twenty years of age, and is eager to be "doing something", for herself, instead of longer being provided for by others, that is, if it is in her power to do so, and she thinks it is. She is in perfect health, Miss Sullivan is also well, except the poor eyes, the terrible strain she has been obliged to give them this last year has rendered them almost useless the past summer, she has abstained from using them during the vacation, and must have assistance this winter with the College work.

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I should like to talk with you, in regard to the FUND, which was is being (or was being) raised for the future care of these girls, but cannot risk writing all I would say to you. One thing, while I have never conversed with you on the way in which you treated that subject, I have always known the course you took, and can say to you now, that I think , the history of all matters connected with that enterprise when fully understood, will show the correctness of your decision in abstaining from a more personal connection with it than you assumed. The exact sum collected I am told does not as yet exceed \$12.000, but that pledges are secured to the amount of \$18.000, making a total at the present time of \$30.000, with the interest on the \$12.000, since its collection, making the sum of (whatever that may be I do not know). Voluntary contributions, largely from Mr. Rogers, have in the fast few years met the yearly expenses of the school months , Mr. Goodhue of Canada, Mr. Rhodes of New York, banker, Mrs. Bradford, Boston Dr. and others have been yearly donors to these and vacation expenses.

I must stop writing and start my rather long letter on its way to New York, or it will not come to your notice on the Steamer , as I intend.

With many “good wishes” that all the arrangements for dear Elsie's wedding will be carried out to the entire satisfaction of all concerned, that you may find yourself well rested, after a comfortable journey, and find Mrs. Bell and the girls well and happy, I will say “bon voyage”. A hearty welcome will await you all on your return to America, from yours very sincerely,

A. G. Imatt