

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, August 20, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Baddeck, Aug. 20th, (1887) My dear Mrs. Bell:

I am very sorry that I have not been a more regular correspondent. It is too bad and I will try and amend my ways, still it is rather a difficult matter to find a quiet hour in which to sit and write. We breakfast at eight and from that time till late in the evening it is a constant struggle to keep up with time. There is the household work to be done and then the going into town to see Mamma and bring the children out and then nothing else can be done until they go home at the day's end. Mamma and Papa arrived Saturday evening sick, tired and utterly disgusted. Alec and I left Baddeck Friday night and met them at a small station, two hours from Port Wulgrave. Poor things, they were all so hot and tired and crowded. I think they were as glad to see us as we them. Dr. Radcliffe too was with them so we were quite a company. Mamma confessed that the night before she was so completely discouraged and disgusted that she and Papa discussed the advisability of turning right back. Fortunately they came on and today Mamma informed Alec that I did not appreciate the beauties of Cape Breton scenery! I had but told her half how beautiful the drives were. And she could not sleep last night for thinking how she could build a cottage here. Dr. Radcliffe too, likes it very much and Dr. Johnston of Washington who turned up day before yesterday, said he had no idea Baddeck was half so fine a place and that if possible he 2 meant to bring his family up here next summer. He was amazed at the amount of work Alec underwent walking, climbing and rowing and said that it was adding years to his life. He, as well as Mamma and Papa agreed that the site we have chosen for our house is a most glorious one. The sole drawback is its distance by land from Baddeck and the difficulty of finding a wharf among these red cliffs for the steam launch that will take us to and from Baddeck in less than ten minutes. However, "where there's a will

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there's a way" and once we get the MacAuley property we will go ahead. Meantime Alec has bought the house and place we occupy at present and we expect to remain here next summer also. After a terribly prolonged drought we have had a good deal of rain lately, so you see Mamma has not seen the place in its most favorable aspect. But the rain was the greatest possible blessing to the island for the forests were on fire in many places. One day standing at the top of Red Head I saw five different fires at the same time. The crops have suffered heavily and fish are not as plenty as usual so the farmers are dreading the winter. Our vegetable garden suffered? but little, we have beautiful peas, string-beans, beets fine lettuce. — What the ducks have left! Squash is coming in and rhubarb leaves are perfectly enormous. Our great anxiety the last few days has been our cow — "Centennial Maid" of the purest breed of Jersey cattle and valued at \$500.00. She fell sick and her death was hourly looked for, while bulletins of her condition were the most interesting bits of news. She is better now and as soon as she is well we are going to return her to her owner and content ourselves with some less expensive milk and butter. We don't make our own butter this year, however, as the people here have advanced considerably in civilization and now offer me fresh butter and killed and plucked fowls, and any quantity of home-made rugs. Should you like one? They are beautiful, thick and soft and only needing taste and judgement in the selection of their colors and designs to be as good rugs as Turkey ones, I think. I am going to clothe my children in Cape Breton homespun next winter and expect to feel very fine and patriotic. Oh how we wish you would come, it is not fair that I should have the great happiness of having my mother see our home and have her memory associated with it through all future years, and not Alec. Are you quite sure you can not come by sea. Surely if one so frail as Dr. Radcliffe can undergo that fatigue you could also. The air is so entirely different from that of the south. I know Colonial Beach must be a very godsend to those Washingtonians who can not go far from it and that you must enjoy it and be much benefited. But try if this air won't add the capstone to the good work done in the Beach. My chickens are very good eating and my cooking is my pride. Come and make very happy Alec and

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Your loving daughter Mabel. September is not too late for you to come, we want to stay through October.