

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, August 24, 1906, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh Hall, Friday, August 24, 1906. Mrs. A. Graham Bell, 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. Dear Mabel:

Just returned from Dr. Grosvenor's lecture (he doesn't like "Professor") — Interesting and instructive. Title "A World without a Woman" — an account of the Monasteries on Mount Athos. A good audience — about 200 I should think, attentive and appreciative.

Mr. and Mrs. Kennan were not present as Mr. Kennan's sister died yesterday.

Glad to find your note of August 21st, awaiting me giving first trustworthy news of Daidums and Alec. In telegraphing better avoid the use of the word "Daisy" as the telephone operators here invariable translate it into "Baby." I suspect errors in all our telegrams due to telephonic corruptions. For example — I doubt whether you telegraphed that Alec had "slick" black hair as received here — more probably "thick."

Kiss my little namesake for me and tell him I hope he won't be too "scientifically" brought up. A baby's cry is his only means of expressing pain and discomfort and should be looked into by a mother's love to discover and remedy the cause. I never had much sympathy with the apathetic treatment of leaving him to himself when unhappy- 2 "Coddling" is as natural to the true mother as the "scientific" plan proposed is unnatural and has the advantage of stimulating mutual love and affection between the parent and child. To leave a crying baby alone to grieve his little heart out seems to me cruel — both in principle and practice — and likely to breed apathy on both sides. The crying of a poor little uncoddled baby is about the most distressing thing I know. Better to be coddled and loved than neglected when nature cries for sympathy and help. I think those sadly err who consider the weeping of a little child as simply due to the cussedness of human nature. I think it nature's signal that something is wrong with the child and should be attended to with sympathy and love.

Just fancy a pin sticking into a baby somewhere and the fond mother — for the sake of discipline — steeling her heart against his yells and leaving him alone to teach him to go to sleep by himself without coddling! I believe that David's science would give way to a father's love. He has too big a heart to stand out against his baby's cries and he would beat Daisy hollow at the coddling act.

Have been busy all day with the Ugly Duckling and must now write up my notes. All here are well and happy. Will try to send you a more satisfactory Sunday letter.

I hope you are all careful about drinking-water. I don't like the newspaper accounts of Typhoid fever in Washington 3 Please drink distilled water or Poland water and avoid the facet. Don't forget the report of the Phillipine Medical Staff as to the agency of house flies in spreading the disease there. People in Washington are altogether too careless in their attitude towards flies especially when Typhoid is about. When I watch a fly crawling over food about to be consumed or running round the edge of a tumbler I cannot help remembering that flies are born in filth and visit filth wherever they can find it — carrying on their feet contaminating substances which may (or of course may not) contain germs of disease. During epidemics of typhoid fever, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and other of the well known filth diseases it would be the part of wisdom to consider the house fly as an insidious enemy to health and act accordingly.

Your loving husband, Alec.