

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell and Alexander Graham Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, August 14, 1877, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Steamship Anchoria August 14th., 1877. My dear Mrs. Bell:

We shall not reach Glasgow for some days yet, but we may be so hurried at the end that I want to begin a letter to you now.

We have had lovely weather until yesterday when we reached the junction of the Gulf Stream with the cold water from the north. Before it was warm and bright, since then it has been cold and misty, though still the sea is so smooth that not one cabin passenger has been seasick. There are very few cabin passengers and almost all of them Scotch. Alec. says they all talk broad Scotch, and that he cannot help falling into it himself. I only know I can hardly understand him most of the time. They are all very pleasant but both Alec. and I think the nicest and most gentlemanly of all the gentlemen, is a young American from my own dear Cambridge.

It is so nice to see how much better and stronger Alec. seems already after a few days of sea air and water. After leaving you, Alec. began to complain of numbness in his side and that increased so as to be very painful, but it has almost gone now and Alec. is brimful of new ideas on many various scientific problems that quite pass my comprehension, and which he means to lay before the Association.

We have come all this way and have not yet decided whether we stop at Londonderry and go to Cork by rail and thence over to Holy Head and Plymouth, or whether we shall go all the way to Glasgow and directly to England. The sailors here have told Alec. a great deal

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about Sir. W. Thomson he comes on board when the Steamer stops at Glasgow, to see his compass and sounders which they have here, of course Alec. went all over the ship the first thing and examined every corner he could find. We have thirty horses on board. The sailors say they are all Canadians, bought from farmers who do not care to keep them through the winter and are being carried to Glasgow to serve as tramway horses. If Mr. Bell has any affection for his horse he had better not dispose of him in this way, the poor things are confined in narrow stalls 2 on deck, where they can neither walk or lie down. Some have given out and broad cloth supports hanging from the roof of the stalls have been placed under their bodies.

Sunday. I wonder how the poor things are faring today. The sea is quite high, and we are encountering head winds which will delay our arrival in Londonderry by a day. Yesterday we had a concert in aid of a lifeboat institution which was rather a failure as most of the performers were seasick and scarcely able to keep on their feet for the tossing of the vessel. Alec. played the accompaniment and also gave a short lecture on the telephone. I could understand most of what he said and thought he did very well, he certainly did look handsome. Today he with most of the passengers is quite seasick. I have escaped as yet and quite enjoy the motion and the excitement of not knowing whether I shall be on my head or feet next moment, or whether the ink bottle will finally decide to upset on my shawl or not. It went a great length in its effort to do so once. One gets dreadfully in need of excitement of some kind on board an Ocean Steamer. My ink bottle has not gone yet, but the cork has, so I must go and look for it.

Monday, The worst of the high winds are over and we have come out safe and sound though there have been several narrow escapes from severe bruises and tumbles caused by the motion of the vessel. One gentleman fell halfway overboard just escaping almost certain death.

We hope to reach Londonderry tomorrow noon and right glad we shall all be to have the long ocean voyage over.

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Please give my love to Mr. Bell, Mary Louise and Lizzie and with much love for yourself.

Affectionately your daughter, Mabel

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Atlantic Ocean August 14th, 1877 Dear Papa and Mama:

Here we are at the other side just within sight of Old Erin—whose green hills are just emerging from the misty horizon. A very pleasant voyage we have had in spite of two days of storm. Mabel and I however are both good sailors, and have enjoyed ourselves immensely, with no casualties to report excepting a momentary attack of seasickness on my part. I only wish I could have you both with me. I cannot tell you what a longing I have to see again the places I remember so well, London, Bath, Edinburgh and Elgin. I don't know how it is but Elgin bears the palm with me. I suppose I am destined to disappointment, still I have a heartfelt craving all the same, to be there.

We have had the telephone in successful operation on board ship, and the Captain wants me to see Henderson Brothers in Glasgow about placing Telephones in operation upon the vessels of the Anchor Line.

I am anxious to get to Plymouth as soon as possible, so as to be there during the meeting of the Association, but it may be well for me to go to Glasgow first, and interest Handerson Brothers in Steamship Telephony.

Your loving Son, Alec.