

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, September 23, 1877, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Hotel Douglas. Aberdeen Sunday Sept. 23, (1877) My dear Mrs. Bell:

I am more sorry than I can say that you have had no letter for so long. I really thought Alec had written and when I found he had not, I wrote at once but my letter was several times interrupted. Alec wanted very much to write to you on your birthday, but it happened that we arrived in Edinburgh the night before and he waited until the evening to tell you of all we saw, but people came until too late.

We left London Saturday, September 15th., to pass a few days with Sir Willoughby and Lady Jones at Fakenham, Norfolk. We had a very pleasant time there, Lady Jones has a deaf daughter, very bright and smart, we became acquainted with the family years ago through her. They have a splendid place and live in great style with three footmen at table. Alec thinks he would like to live in that way. Monday several ladies and gentlemen came to see the telephone, among them Lord Spencer, Lieutenant Governor of Ireland and his wife. We had a very nice time there, but I was glad to get away for Alec was not well and besides the gentlemen were expected to help themselves at breakfast and lunch and as Alec was too bashful to help himself, we nearly starved. Alec was invited to New Castle on Tyne to lecture on the Telephone before the meeting of the Iron and Steel Institute. His expenses to and from New Castle to London were paid and Alec lectured on Wednesday evening. It was at a conversazione in the town hall and the lecture was little more than an introductory address. There were nearly two thousand people there and everything went off very well. Next day Alec made some experiments in a mine, the Telephone works splendidly in mines and every one was so pleased that they want telephones at once. We reached Edinburgh Tuesday night at ten and Alec went out at once to look at your

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old home. Next morning he took me there and we went in the house and all over your apartments into Mr. Bells little study, the school room, upstairs into the nursery and into your bedroom. The roomware new owned by a Mr. James Wilson who however we 2 did not see. Alec says the whole house was much changed for the worse. After going through the house we drove down Georges St— and then down Princes St— to the High School. It was vacation time, but an educational meeting was going on and Alec thought he recognized some of the faces. Up Calten Hill when it rained, shone and rained again so we hurried down again and to the Old Town and Holywood Palace, and all through Queen Mary's Apartments. I think then uncomfortably small and few for a Queen. We drove to the Castle saw some more tight rooms of the Queens the Regalia and Moma Meg — and after that were very willing to drive home to dinner. After dinner came Miss Sumeck vast, Ronssy Mr and Mrs. Rose and about eleven Mr. Archibald Bell. Alec think Mr. Rose quite unchanged and his wife quite stout. Mr. Archibald Bell and Alec have arranged to go to St. Andrews together to hunt up old family histories. Saturday morning your old friend Mr. Bass called. He was struck by parali on our Wedding day. He is much better now and is able to walk about without the help of a stick though his whole left side was affected. Mr. Base said even his speech suffered but Alec did not notice anything. We left Edinburgh at one Saturday, Mr Mac coming to the depot with us. We stayed over one train at Stirling and had a look at the Castle and wonderful panarama spreading out around it. We reached this place at half after ten last night. Alec lectures on the 25th before the Social Science Congress here under the same terms as at Castle. After the 25th. our plan is to go up to?anff and to “rough it” for a time in some little sea count village. We have made all sorts of wild plans as to how we shall live. We propose laying in a store of preserved meat — but — have they any here? and intend to catch and cook our fish ourselves — but — here comes the great difficulty — neither one of us ever did any cooking ourselves or saw it done, Alec appears to think it a very simple operation, “Why can't you fry it?” well I have a misty idea that fish have to be opened and carefully cleaned first and I am sure we don't know exactly what cleaning means. Then bed making and dish

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washing, would Alec do that? I am not very strong 3 now and can't. Can you tell us what to do?

I am sorry to say that Alec does not seem very well or strong you know that after leaving Brantford he began to suffer from a numbness in his right leg, I thought it was getting better but it became worse in London. He went to Doctor Erasmus Wilson the best Doctor of skin diseases. They gave him something that has in a great measure stopped the irritation, but the day afterwards we went rowing on the Thames at Hampton Court and on our return Alec complained of violent pain in his leg. We had to leave the next day for Fakenham and on the journey the pain was dreadful again. Since then the pain comes and goes, but is I hope on the whole not quite so bad as those first two days. The Doctor in London said this was a very changeful trouble, coming and going, but it was not dangerous and Alec himself expects to get quite over it, among the Highlanders. He is perfectly happy with his Edinburgh rolls, Scotch catmeal porridge and red herring. Last night, he swallowed a whole dish of Finan Haddock which was intended for us both, in fact Alec is growing tremendously stout, and can hardly get his Wedding trousers on now. I remember your warning long ago and scold just as hard as ever I can, but it is no use. Alec proposes buying a book, teaching fat men to grow thin! He went out for a long walk this morning and saw some sea gulls flying and since then has been full of flying machines. He was so tired and sleepy this evening that I sent him to bed at half past eight while I am trying how it feels sitting up late at night all alone, not that it is late but it feels so. We expect to return to Edinburgh in a fortnight and then return to London. I will try and remind Alec about the cups for you. Was it not funny your letter speaking of them should reach us in Edinburgh? Alec's stay in London has been very successful. Offers and requests for telephones poured in on him from all sides and not a day passed without at least half a dozen callers. The government is inclined to take it up and has offered Alec the use of all their lines and offices for experiments on condition that he will give them the first chance in any arrangement he may make for the sale or lease of his patents or instruments.

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Mr. Reynolds, Alec's partner is a pleasant kindly gentleman, but I am not certain that Alec is satisfied with him he seems vacillating.

I am so glad Mr. Bell had a satisfactory tour to Montreal and hope he is getting quite rested now. That shall I do to make Alec rest it seems as though he did not know the meaning of the word. I hope you have got through making preserves. I have a lively recollection of the good times we children used to have helping (?) Mamma make preserves and how hard it was for her to keep us from eating them all up at once. It is quite as cold here as it can be with you, there are double windows in our bed room and a bright fire has been burning all day long. I wonder if we shall be frozen up in Elgin?

Please give my love to Mr. Bell and Mary Louise and Lizzie, I hope they are quite well. Did Mary enjoy her visit with Aileen? With love for yourself,

Your affectionate daughter, Mabel G. Bell.