

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, from August 14, 1878, to August 16, 1878, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Crystal Palace Hotel, Upper Norwood, August 14th. (1878.) My dear Mrs. Bell:

I think it is almost time you heard from us again and hope you agree with me. Alec is too absorbed just now in the affairs of his Company to have leisure for anything also so your letter must come from me.

Here we are, in this pleasant hotel while almost oppressively near the glass walls of the Crystal Palace loom up in front of us.

I think I wrote last on the Sunday before leaving Watford and must have said we intended returning finally to London while Mamma and my sisters travelled slowly about. Alas for our beautiful plans. Sister found that she was not yet strong enough for travelling and in four days of London she lost all the strength I had gained in a month at Stanmore and had to beat a speedy retreat or give up nursing my big baby. So we joined again at St. Albans, stayed there a week longer and then Berta and Alec found us rooms in this place where we arrived Monday afternoon. We stay here for a week, but what happens afterward none of us know. London was not so very warm, but very heavy and oppressive, it is strange to see the difference between this place and the city only a few miles off. Yesterday was rainy and almost cold enough for fires, today though bright is certainly not very warm.

The palace is only across the way, and we went there twice yesterday. I had been there once before years ago, but that made it all the more interesting to me. It seemed just the same as then, the shrubs just as fresh and green and the water lilies as big and lovely,

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the Moorish French, Egyptian Turkish etc. courts as wonderful. We only had time to see the pictures of Pompeii and the Aquarium yesterday but by and bye we shall explore the whole. Baby Elsie went yesterday looking bright and pretty in her long white Marvailies cloak and hat, and as such pleased and interested in her quiet way as anyone. Sister was wheeled in a batt chair and held 2 Elsie part of the time. Elsie grows so much brighter and more interesting every day, she is as good as she can possibly be, and only cries when she wants something and is kept waiting. Last night Mamma had her on her knees and was singing her to sleep, and what do you think, the baby looked up into Mamma's face and sang softly too. She sang and sang dropping off to sleep, and then making to begin again her soft "oooo's". She likes to hear herself make a noise and oos and laughs all day long. Last Wednesday Dr. Johnston came and vaccinated her in four places, poor —

I had written so far when the Doctor came in. He said that the one place that had taken would not do and the poor little thing had to be vaccinated over again. This time the marks are real deep ones and I dread the result. I do wish you could see and hear my little girl, she laughs cut loud now such merry hearty laughs, regular peals of laughter. Mamma says she never heard anything like it. She is so observant too, and likes nothing better than travelling about and seeing new things.

Alec is happy, he has got down from 214 pounds to just 200 and hopes to get down still lower. He has got himself appointed one of three Managing Directors of the Telephone Company. Has he told you about it? The Company was not going on as he thought it should so he wrote some letters to the Board. I think he sent Mr. Bell the copy of the first. He worked so hard over it and was so pleased with it, it must have been very pleasant to have it attributed to Mr. Scott, he being only credited with the signature! He declared Mr. Scott had not seen it, but hardly persuaded them of it. He desired to have Mr. Scott made Manager in McClure's place. McClure has offered his resignation which has been neither accepted nor refused. There the matter ends. Alec is going to send the Queen's Telephones to Mr. Watson in Boston as one of the Queen's own subjects are smart enough to make them work properly. He has also invented a "Swearing 3 Top" and

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Policeman's rattle which he has tried in vain to have made here so the ideas are on their way to America. Alec grows daily more anxious to be once more on the other side of the ocean and with you. I think we shall sail on the 26th. of October if we can secure rooms on the "Bothnia" Cunard Line, sailing on that day. In there anything you would like us to get for you? Have the Misses Symonds or Carrie no Commissions? I should be so glad to do anything for them I can.

With kindest regards from Mamma and love from Alec and from me, Affectionately, May Bell. August 16th., Alec starts tonight for Dublin via Liverpool, The Meeting of the British Association began yesterday. Alec felt that he could neither leave his Company nor afford the journey but has at last succumbed to our entreaties. He steps at Liverpool to see about our sailing and get a box of American Telephones which Papa sent for presentation to Helmholtz, Sir. M. Thomson and others as they are so far superior to the English. There will be a large *Conversazione* tonight at Kildare place which Alec says, was the home of his Uncle David. The papers say the whole suite of rooms will be thrown open "and every one of them will be filled with objects of attraction of the rarest kind"— Please excuse the looks of my paper, I did not notice it until now and I am too tired to rewrite.