

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

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Cambridge, August 23rd., 1880 My dear Mrs. Bell:

Your kind letter has just reached me and though Alec has promised to write for me, he is so busy I doubt if he will keep his promise. I ought to have told you before but wanted Alec to tell you that he does not want to leave Cambridge for another month. Elsie and I are all ready to come the first of September, but Alec has been put to such expense, fitting up his workshop that it would be good hardly spared money thrown away for him to give it up now he is fairly started. If he and Mr. Caburn can invent something valuable the Company will bear all expenses amounting to several hundreds of dollars otherwise Alec must do so. He has been to great expense fitting up his shop with a four horse power steam engine, and several instruments worked by steam and Mr. Caburn and he are getting along so nicely that it would be the greatest misfortune for him to leave it now, especially as he seems to think it will be quite as convenient to you to receive us in October and now Elsie is so much older I do not dread a long journey to Washington in November for her. I am very very sorry to disappoint you as I know we are doing and if it were any less important for Alec we would not think of delaying our visit. He has already invented a new method of signalling for Central Offices and is now hard at work on some experiments for a paper for the Saratoga meeting to which he is going in a few days.

I am rather glad apart from my wish to see you all, that we must stay a while longer for Mamma intends remaining here until Papa's return and and it would of course be lonely for her without a gentleman in this big house. Mary Home will not come with us unless she comes to stay with you permanently but of course Alec likes to keep her unless you need her.

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We have been a big housefull all summer with my two cousin? and for the past two weeks my grandfather. He is very feeble and those who 2 know him best say that though he may live years longer, yet he may drop away quite suddenly. Alec is so very kind and good to him and is a great comfort to poor Mamma who feels the responsibility of his care very heavily. I shall be thankful for her sake when my Aunt comes to relieve her.

Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Norton have been in town for two days, dined and lunched with us making our table number including another gentleman eleven. Alec, Berta and my Cousins showed them the sights of Boston and Cambridge and I hope they were favorably impressed.

Please tell Mr. Bell he must have lost a letter of Alec's, he wrote telling him all about Prof. Munroe and asking for papers about the Brantford Bank shares as he wanted to show them to Mr. Storrow before deciding to invest any money in them.

I fear it is now too late to do anything about getting Prof. Munroe's position for Alec's Uncle. Alec called at the office two or three times and telephoned but could see and hear nothing and though he sent in him Uncle's name it is now announced that the School of Oratory is closed for want of a competent professor. Alec has however not yet given up hope.

I am so glad to hear Chester is better, my Sister wrote she thought him looking better than when she saw him last year. The damp weather does not seem to have troubled my sister , from all accounts she has gained health and strength with every day. She is having a very good time going to dinner parties at fine houses and riding on a four in hand coach. She is now on the Continent in Switzerland I believe.

Papa finds the Englishmen very ready to be polite and to promise to do all he wants but very very slow to perform their promises.

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Little Elsie continue well and happy and grows more fascinating 3 each day. I have drawn a charcoal sketch of her lying asleep which Mamma thinks quite a pretty and strong likeness considering how long I have been without practice. I send if not by this mail very soon, two photographs of our picture. Alec thought them the best of the dozen we had, but they do not do justice to the picture, showing all it's faults and none of its beauties. One is for Alec's Sister.

We are in great trouble just now, my cook objected to slicing some potatoes as I bade her and as she had several times before been impertinent Alec took the matter in his hands and gave her a weeks notice. That was last Sunday, today we are as far as ever from finding her successor. Poor Berta has gone this sultry breathless day to the intelligence offices, and this morning the Chambermaid received a telegram summoning her to Prince Edward Island to the deathbed of her brother. We feel very sorry for her for her father died just before she came to us and she is a nice pleasant obliging girl. She went in town this morning to see the steamship agents and whether we are to hunt for another girl or keep her place open for her we know not. She is not as trained a servant as I could wish but Mamma hardly thinks I can do better for the short time we will need servants here.

What a long letter, I did not intend spinning out so. Please give my love to all and keep very much for yourself.

You can't be much more sorry than I that we can't come when we expected.

Lovingly, Mabel.