

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, November 2, 1881, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. 21 Half Moon St., Piccadilly, London, Nov. 2nd 1881. My dear Mrs. Bell:

I presume you have heard before this of Charlie's illness, that is before you receive this, for I hope the physicians do not consider his case so serious that you have been cabled to. Poor Charlie and Berta, it is very hard for them that this should have happened, Charlie was getting on so well and some more months and he could have left with a good reputation as a successful business man made. Now I fear he will have to give it all up and what will become of him I know not. They were so happy and cosy in their little home, it will be hard to give it up. I was still staying with them when one evening after a long sisterly chat, before the fire, Berta got up and went into the town to meet Charlie. She looked so bright and happy and had taken such pains to make herself pretty and nice to her husband's eyes, it was hard she should have been met by him so far gone in severe pain and sickness, as to be conscious of nothing but the desire to get home and to bed as quickly as possible. A night of great anxiety followed, Berta never lying down once, and towards morning we thought him better so I came on to take charge of my children again. In the afternoon he was so much worse that Mamma was telegraphed for and she and Papa went on at nine, arriving at two in the morning. Since then Charlie has been alternating between better and worse. The mornings seem his good time, but I fear he has been growing rather worse. This morning the doctor called in another, for 2 consultation and Mamma telegraphs their verdict was "not discouraging" I don't think that is very encouraging at all events.

Of course this has put a stop to our plans for travelling at present. It is strange that this should have happened almost exactly the day, year since Charlie was sick and soon

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after our arrival. Two or three other coincidences helped the strangeness, and if one was inclined to be superstitious this would confirm it. Alec has been busy in Paris, until Monday when I telegraphed to him and he would leave everything and come on, very happy in the Electrical Exhibition where he found more and more to excite his admiration every day. He has been very kindly received by the scientific gentlemen dining out every day. The Prince of Wales visited his exhibition one day, and Alec was delighted with the interest he showed in all his work, and especially the Induction Balance. Did I tell you he received the Diploma d' Honneur. Edison was the only other American to get it. Alec says his was far the worst exhibition in the building and Edison's far the best!

Tell Mary I wrote to Capt. Bowen and he called to see me one day but I fear it is rather doubtful when he gets a chance at Alec, for he will be either at Leeds or Paris for some time. If Charlie's illness is likely to prove a very long affair we shall go back to Leeds and take apartments there. Ours here, though very swell in situation are not much any other way, and the children have bad colds which I fear they will never get rid of here. Sister is still at St. Petersburg, poor thing, and reports snow and sleighing, she will be glad to come to warmer weather. I must say goodbye now and go and see my Kinder, they are rather dull shut up in a 3 dark London parlor after having been used to the freedom and open air life of the country. Much love to you all.

Lovingly, Your daughter, May Bell.