

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, June 3, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Paris, France. 10 rue Nitot. June 3, 1895. My dear Alec:

Not a word of any description from you since the few lines from Boston, and no cable since that announcing your safe arrival at home. Surely even the laboratory and census are not so engrossing that you have quite forgotten your wife. I think it's hard lines not to hear from you or of you.

Three days holiday has you see reduced me to sorap paper. Paris is so funny with it's blinds drawn down as they were today.

The children enjoyed their ride on the tally-ho very much, but I think they would really have been quite as happy journeying by rail at as many france as the coach fare was dollars. It has been a lovely day except for its constant threat of rain, cool, and fresh and the dust laid after our frequent rains.

Miss Rockwood and Miss Williams were the children's guests on the coach top and Mrs. Esuro and her children and Charles went with me in the cars. He left half an hour after the others and arrived as much earlier. We lunched in the open air in front of a cafe and then went into the Palace. Have you ever been there? I have only been once, when I was Daisy's age and remembered little of my visit. The Palace is indeed wonderful, the gardens too are magnificent and the pictures we saw very fine, but the most wonderful thing of all to me is that the Palace and grounds should be kept up in such state simply and entirely for the benefit of the people. Once a month Louis XIV's 2 beautiful fountains are set to play for the benefit of any street gamin of Paris who can pay or steal a fare or walk the distance, and at a cost of from 8000 to 10,000 francs. And the wonder grows

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when one remembers that Versailles is but the largest of a very large number of churches and palaces and even whole towns which are maintained by the French Government simply as "Historical Monuments". From the Palace of Versailles for many acres stretch the wonderful gardens and beyond are long Boulevards shaded by four rows of elm trees. These elm trees like large numbers of the palace trees are each one most carefully cut and trimmed into geometrically exact shapes. In the palace gardens the trees take all forms, but chiefly that of the pineapple, on the Boulevards the elms are trimmed so as to form long green arcades flat roofed so. Just think of the amount of labor and money required to keep these trees in order, and remember that there are thousands of places like this scattered all over France, and all this care taken simply for the people, for no sovereign or great noble, no fair woman in silk and satin, but just plain Jacques Bonhomme and his femme from some tiny little fifth floor back. Did you know what Carcassonne is? I didn't until the other day. I knew of course that it was the place Violet Le Duc had written about, but I did not know that it is a whole fortified town that Violet Le Duc has rebuilt and restored to it's middle ages condition simply and entirely that it may serve as an Historical Monument and preserved for this and future generations, a medieval fortified town as it was when it was deemed impregnable. I think all this is stupendous and gives me a far higher opinion of the French people than I ever had before. For of course the Govt. of the republic could not go on spending the enormous sums necessary to keep up all these buildings and appurtenances if the people did not wish it to and was willing to pay the necessary taxes. Why aren't we doing things of this kind? When I think of the few poor little Historical Monuments we have and the pitiful poverty stricken way they are maintained I am out of all patience with my country people. Think what a hard struggle it is to keep up Mt. Vernon in anything like decent order, of the house where Lincoln died, of the monument to Washington's Mother, falling into ruins until a few charitable ladies took hold of it. We are richer than France. We haven't an enormous standing army, yet we can't guard places hallowed for all time by far nobler lives and more important events from destruction. Do you suppose the French would allow a convenient train to run through the beautiful Versailles garden? No indeed. Yet they were erected by one who did not scruple

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to tax his people almost to their last farthing and are hallowed by no memory of heroic lives, polluted rather by memories of shameless women, certainly by no memory of men to whom the country owes debts of gratitude. Of all that Versailles lacks, Gettysburg battle ground is full and yet they have dared to run a cable railway through ground declared to be sacred forever to their memory, and the people, sovereign people don't care enough to do more than protest querulously.

Bother, I've got a good idea and a true, but I can't express it as I would. I guess I'm sleepy and tired and at best I am as you so truly remark, decidedly apt to be involved in my writing. Please know what I mean and never mind the language I use.

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I have been reading a lot of books about France and the French and have got some new ideas, and had old ones cut and pared so that they are distinct and not hazy nebulea. I wish I could write because I know so much better what I mean when I have written it out, but what's the use of writing over what other people have said before much better. What's the use of writing nowadays anyway. Just to help swell the incoming breaker that shall dash down upon the sands of the seashore and with resistless undertow drag them back into the sea of oblivion from whence they came. Heigho!

I never was so sorry for poor Marie Antoinette as today when we went through her rooms and saw her pretty things at Petit Trianon. The rooms there are small enough to have an air of home about them and the furniture and it's covering although exquisite is yet not so fearfully magnificent that it is impossible to associate flesh and blood with them. On the contrary they are just what a queen who is also a woman should have, and it was easy to imagine the Queen sitting or lying there loving, enjoying and suffering as any other woman. Poor child. All the buildings and the grounds were thronged with people, quiet respectable folks enjoying themselves and interfering with nobody, no pushing or rudeness, no vulgar boisterousness. No I won't take the trouble to look up the proper spelling of my word. The children use me as spelling dictionary all day long and now that

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they have gone to bed and left me in peace I won't be careful of my p's and q's. Really I am quite proud of myself, I think I have stood pretty searching demands on my knowledge of most everything under the sun pretty well. I don't know whether the children did it on purpose this evening, but they asked me if they were 5 right on all sorts of questions. They doubted my judgement once or twice but each time it proved correct and I breathed a sigh of great relief.

Goodnight now my dear. I am ever Yours.