

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, May 9, 1899, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B.
Tuesday, May 9, 1899. At B.B. Hall. My sweet darling wife:

Three letters from you — and I have not written since notifying you of my arrival here! I love you very much — and that is all I can say. If I can't write to you it is hardly worth while my attempting to write my Presidential Address for the National Geographic, Magazine Simply can't do it!!! No stenographer here — a typewriter it is true — but no one to work it . I began work in the Laboratory today — and the National Geographic Magazine may go —(!) may go on in the best way it can without my Address. I will not give up my work again excepting for matters of life and death. I have given up too much of my time already. I am no longer young — and the experiments on which I have been engaged for years should be completed sufficiently for publication — so that younger men can take up the thread of research. I have been looking over my laboratory note-books to recover the thread — and go on where I was last interrupted. What date do you think the last experiments bear? November 20, 1897!!

The work on the Vacuum wing — was interrupted by a sad call to Washington — and I have not had the opportunity for consecutive work since then.

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1898 has been so full of interruptions that only scattering experiments could be made on various subjects not connected — or, only remotely connected with Aerodromics. The N. E. A. meeting in Washington — Sable Island — and Japan — allowed me only short intervals here — so that I could not settle down to my big research — and made only scattering experiments on kites and etc.

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I am sick at heart when I think of the waste of my life and ideas during the last year — and I cannot contemplate it for the coming year. I suppose I must go to Northampton for the Summer meeting — but after that — don't take me any more away from my work until it is finished — or I am!

Is there any way of getting out of Northampton?

The Laboratory Annex was so filled by the big kite — that there was no room for experiment. Just fancy a kite 14 feet, 7 inches long — by 10½ feet wide — and 5 feet 2 inches high! A monster — a jumbo — a “full-fledged white elephant.”

We had to take down the side of the house to get the thing out. The kite frame is now soaking in a rain storm — on the grass near the Lodge — as we cannot get it under cover. A furious storm is howling now and I only hope the kite has not taken French leave — and disappeared in the Lake by this time.

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The side of the Annex building has been repaired and I was able to get my dynamo at work for a couple of hours. Oh! dear me — experimental work is so slow — a few weeks only — and then Northampton — and then you will be wanting me to go to Europe and all over creation again.

My sheep records have been brought up to date — and verified. The lambs not wanted have been killed to get them out of the way — and the lambless mothers have been formed into a milking flock for Mr. Kennedy. My kite-house on the top of the mountain has been converted into a cheese factory for the nonce and Mr. Kennedy of Parth Ontario is trying to make Roquefort cheese from ewes milk there. Whether he will succeed or not — I do not know. He does not impress me as a man of ability at all. Something lacking in his mental make up. No initiative — no go ! I expected to find a boy of 17 or 18. Instead — I find a man of 35 or thereabouts. Surely too old to begin — beginning life. A fellow who

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has lived to be as old as that without doing anything — won't set the Thames on fire over. Disappointed in the man — and think my father should have warned me about him.

But to return to pleasanter subjects — I want to hear all about Daisy's lecture on Wireless Telegraphy. Your telegram was telephoned to me this morning — and you speak of her "Paper" as a splendid one. If she wrote it 4 out won't you have her send it to me here. Elsie's telegram came too — and I am glad she is pleased with the ring — and with the party. Want to hear all about my little girl's 21st birthday. Did she receive her grandfather's poetical telegram.

I am delighted with the house-boat. It has been moved to the new location. The pond has been cleaned — dead? stumps and etc., have been removed — and a path made giving access to the beautiful valley beyond with its rippling streamlet. A beautiful restful place. A quiet walk will mean something now — with a thing of beauty like that at the end — and a resting place so near — to prepare for the return.

A theatrical company is in Baddeck playing every night to crowded houses — in the Masonic Hall. Even the church-going people attend. I sent for the Manager today — and arranged with him for an entertainment in the Warehouse for my father's special benefit — and for the people of Beinn Bhreagh. They are to play "The Honeymoon" — winding up with a screaming farce — warranted not to be vulgar. (Saturday night. How is Grace? Mrs. Kennan was able to speak to me by telephone today — so she is out of bed — but she reports her right arm as still practically useless. The storm howls outside. Goodnight my darling — and pleasant dreams attend you.

Your loving, Alec.