

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell, March 10, 1876, with transcript

COPY Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to his Father, Alexander Melville Bell, Boston, March 10, 1876 Boston University, 18 Beacon Street, Boston, March 10, 1876

Dear Papa:

I write to announce a great failure and a great success. George Brown has thrown up telegraphy as it cannot be made a commercial success in England — Telegraphy being there a Government concern. The success is this. Articulate speech was transmitted intelligibly this afternoon. I have constructed a new apparatus operated by the human voice. It is not of course complete yet — but some sentences were understood this afternoon.

I was in one room at the Transmitting Instrument and Mr. Watson at the Receiving Instrument in another room — out of ear-shot.

I called out into the Transmitting Instrument, “Mr. Watson — come here — I want to see you” — and he came!

He said he had heard each word perfectly distinctly come from the electromagnet at the other end. We then exchanged places. Mr. Watson sang an air. Every note was audible. He then read from a book and the voice came from the electro-magnet in a curious half muffled sort of way.

The sense was not intelligible but I caught a word here and there such as “to” — “out” — “further.”

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The last sentence however I heard very plainly and distinctly. It was “Mr. Bell, do you understand what I say?” We tried other sentences, “How do you do” and etc., with satisfactory results.

This is a great day with me. I feel that I have at last struck the solution of a great problem — and the day is coming when telegraph wires will be laid on to houses just like water or gas — and friends converse with each other without leaving home.

I have settled upon the last of April to give the diplomas as that is the anniversary of the Introduction of Visible Speech into America. Please try to come down a few days before that.

The Examination will be held the last Saturday in March.

Your loving son, ALEC Prof. A. Melville Bell Brantford Ontario