

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, October 23, 1875, with transcript

Letter from Miss Mabel G. Hubbard to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Cambridge, October 23rd 1875. Dear Mr. Bell:

I was much pleased with your letter received the other day and thank you for telling me all you think about Women's Rights. I am only afraid you give me credit for more earnestness in this subject than I feel. My interest is of very recent date, and all I know about it has been gathered from what Miss True's sister, and lately you have said about it.

So far as I am concerned the laws, both civil and of society may stay as they please. I am not at all envious of men. But I do not think it is just or right that women must depend as much as they do on men's sense of justice or love, which is all that restrains them from using the great power they possess. How may we be sure interest will not triumph over the one, or other feelings take the place of the latter. A man can put his wife in prison for keeping her own money from him and use that money in a lawsuit against her. Can a woman do so by her husband? "The idea of marriage as the union and complete identity of two beings, so perfect a union that what belongs to the one belongs to the other," is indeed beautiful but before the law does the man really do as he says in the episcopal marriage service, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow?" I only know the promise becomes null and void at his death when only one third of his property goes to his wife if she has no children. I do not sympathize with the "Extremity" any more than you do, and would not have the public sentiment that forbids a woman to appear in public life, or to assume 2 duties hitherto belonging exclusively to men, outraged if it could be helped, but there are so many more women than men that few can have home duties to occupy them and they are obliged to seek other work or live in a useless life. Not all can be dressmakers or governesses, they must go forth and be doctors and artists, professors or preachers

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as their talent inclines them. They do not interfere with you men for you have more than enough work, and in some respects they may be better fitted for the work than you. They are more tender and delicate of touch, and have greater sensibility and keener perceptions than you, and so perhaps may make up for lack of strength.

I am afraid I have repeated a great deal that I told you yesterday, but you asked me to write so you have only yourself to blame if this is not very fresh.

I think it entirely too bad you should always (rest of letter missing)