

## Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, 1876, with transcript

Letter from Miss Mabel Hubbard to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Utah Territory, Below Echo, Monday. 1876? My dear Alec:

I must at least begin a letter to you, to tell you of all that we have seen this afternoon. We dined at Evanston, and were waited upon by little obinamen — O dear I never saw anything more ridiculous we all could hardly eat dinner for laughing over their antics. Such little things they were, dressed in clean loose white shirts, their tails bound tightly around their heads and their broad flat faces bearing with good humor. How they went on dancing and running and leaping about their work seeming to be made of springs, dancing around swinging from side to side and their arms going like so many windmills. If you had only been there to see them.

Papa took Miss Jenks and myself into the Postal car and we spent a very pleasant afternoon there peeping into the mail bags, and I stamped some letters and they opened one box and let us see the hat inside, evidently the pride of some fair Westerner's heart. Then we stood at the open door and took in the magnificent scenery of Echo Canon, the huge precipitous rocks towering for a hundred feet above us so near it seemed as if we could touch them and so awful in their terrible look of power as to be absolutely oppressive. After these gigantic forms Monument rock did not seem much though the loosely piled boulders did have a strange appearance and seemed as if it must have been hands that balanced the stones so carefully one above another. Salt Lake is reached tonight at ten, we spend the night there. I forgot to say, coming back from the postal car we passed through the whole train and I never realized before how comfortable 2 we were, both the other pullmans were crowded and seemed so dirty I should not care to make the

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journey if we had to go in such cars, they were not half as nice as the common Eastern cars.

Salt Lake City. Today's sun rose clear and bright, casting it's rosy glow on the mountains beautiful in new fallen snow. We have spent the morning driving over the city.

It certainly is different from any other town I have ever seen. Being I suppose older it has less of that unfinished, unsettled look so noticeable in the other Western towns we have seen. The Tabernacle is a little way from the station and looks like nothing so much as a huge bath tub turned upside down. The poles supporting the roof are hardly more than two feet high. The interior did not take my fancy at all. The huge white dome was decked with innumerable festoons and drooping bunches of immortelles and evergreens. In the center of the dome but nearer the platform, is an immense star of evergreens with festoons of immortelles from point to point and suspending from the centre an immense bunch of evergreens and immortelles as large as a large chandelier. Right underneath this was a table covered with faded blue linen with four plaster lions on each corner and a basin and fountain spout in the centre. On the platform several steps above the body of the church are the benches of the elders arranged in a semi-circle, some raised higher than the others, but all like the benches of the congregation, of hard uncushioned wood, a long sofa in the middle is covered with faded blue linen, very dirty. The President's seat I suppose. Behind is the organ, the second largest in America. We went inside and wondered at the complex arrangement of the numerous tubes 3 and reeds or whatever you call them. Then we went to the gallery on the opposite end of the church and then the organist played and the gentlemen blowed. It was rather funny the sounds would come out loud and suddenly the gentlemen would stop blowing and the sounds abruptly cease. Over our heads as we stood there was a big picture of a bee hive among flowers and beneath it — "Sunday School Union" on a gilt scroll. The whole place looked shabby and poor. Close by the Tabernacle laborers are at work in an immense grey granite!!! temple. It has been ten years building and is now only ten feet high. The head workman showed us a photograph of it finished. I thought the poor thing looked so pathetic there, emblem of ambitions,

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hopes and plans — never probably — destined to completion. Bishops John Sharpe was standing watching the men at their leisurely work, he reminded me of Prof. Monroe though not so handsome or gentlemanly. These two buildings together with the old Tabernacle — nothing much, — are surrounded by a high clay wall. A little further down the street we come upon Brigham Young's property — also surrounded by a high clay wall. It has out buildings, stables etc. and a large tract of cultivated land. There are two houses in this enclosure, one with a lion and the other surmounted with a bee hive, the President's own dwelling house. It is of wood painted white three stories and delapidated. Opposite is the fine unfinished residence of his eighteenth and favorite wife, Amelia, of grey granite, with lilac facings, three stories and tower, “All modern improvements”. Brigham Young is not at his residence on Lake George 300 miles south and has taken Amelia with him and has two wives living there. All 4 his wives seem to have houses of their own, but none of them half as fine or big as Amelia's. He has ninety four (94) children! We then drove through the town, some of the stores had “Holiness to the Lord”, “the bulls eye” and “Zion's Cooperative Institute”, as like a country city's general stores as could be. The town is flourishing and contains many extremely pretty residences, some very large ones. There are two Episcopal and a Catholic church there. Then we drove to the Hot Springs' baths. The water smells very strongly of sulphur and is really hot, not merely warm. The color is a pretty light green. Then we came back and went to a tiny little museum. I enclose the catalogue, but warn you we did not see all that is advertised. We did see a scalp of long soft brown hair, and a live rattle snake and prairie dog. Now we have come back to our car while the gentlemen have escorted Sister back from a sulphur bath. I am so glad, she was so pleased when she put her hand in the water, but we thought than we had not time.

Good bye, with love, Your May. I must not forget to say that fresh water streams run through the streets at their own sweet will, nominally in gutters, but really wherever they please. The people come out and fill their pitchers from this water or little wooden tubes

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drain a portion away to the houses. I wouldn't be a Mormon wife for the world or share you with any living woman — At least it would be horrible to have too