

## Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, August 21, 1878, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. (1878). August 21, 1878 Monday Evening. My darling Alec:

I have been working all the evening on my Auto Macassar, and have had plenty of time for thought which I have used to work myself up into such a state of indignation over that horrid letter in the Times that I really must try and write some of it off. The more I think of it the more it seems like a deliberate attempt not only to rob you of all credit in your own discovery, but also to convey the impression that you are a thief and perloiner of other men's ideas. It distinctly states that Mr. Gray was the first to lodge in the Patent Office a description of a speaking telephone, his persuing his multipile telegraphing only having prevented his perfecting it. How therefore could you have got the idea except through seeing this description and before owning that you must have the credit of making the first practical telephone, notice how carefully it gives all your predecessors the idea of it. It owns Sir Charles Wheatstone didn't make an electrical telephone, but something very like it only not electrical so that his experiments might have given you the idea. You have only applied electricity to his idea thats all. You haven't originated any thing. It doesn't even seem to think much of the invention it is only a remarkable out come -notice out come- the phonograph is a wonderful and ingenious machine- Mr. Edison also has a telephone that it hints but does not say will supercede yours. Mr. Hughes' is a startling discovery. I have no doubt it is but yours is equally so at least. Notice too how they only admit your telephones are in present operation, still — carefully intimating that they may not be so for long — they own the Daily News had a time, but for a short time, with what success they do not say. In the beginning they remark it is strange the telephone has not been 2 applied like the telegraph — As if it has not in America and even so much sooner than the telegraph. Notice how it says Sir. W. Thomson is going to try to improve it for long distances, you are

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not held capable of doing such a thing. Altogether the article gives a most disagreeable impression of you and is a reflection on your honor which no man of any spirit could stand. For your own sake for that of your business and for all of our sakes please do something. Cannot you write just a short note to the Editor just pointing out how it claims that Gray first described the telephone in the P.O. or something and reminding him that he has a letter from you denying the truth of this statement and requesting him in common fairness at least to publish extracts giving your view of the case if the letter is too long for pub. If he will not do even this, write to the Telegraph or some paper that might be glad to take up anything against the Times. First enclose a stamped envelope to the times requesting to know why they did not publish the letter. Offer to shorten it, or if this is not well offer the letter to some weekly, if the other daily papers also refuse. But something must be done. Don't you see people like to give fair play if it is as convenient for them to do so, if at anytime Gray or Edison offer a telephone of the same quality etc. of yours and they have no especial preference, they will select the one made by the man they suppose the real inventor. Don't you see how the unanswered insinuations of all these papers must be injuring you in the eyes of all honest but imperfectly informed people how they must keep back many who would be only too glad to receive you most gladly as the real discoverer of a great thing, but who would scorn to associate with an imposter.

There I have scribbled myself tired. Forgive me if I have said anything to pain you. Somehow nothing has moved me for a long time as this has done. So think of the injustice people can do you my own darling I cannot stand it and you will not, will you? Think how any wrong to you is wrong to me and to little Elsie, how her father's honor or dishonor will overshadow her whole life. Make all the friends you can for her in Dublin. Show yourself the noble single-minded, generous man you are. Mix all you can with the men whose verdict is best worth having but don't forget that they form but a very small part of the great world, whose good opinion you want to gain. I don't know what more to say I am so afraid of hurting, paining you when you know nothing is further from my thoughts. If I have said anything that pains you to think that your wife should think, tell me and I will try not to any

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more, But oh I do so want you to have your own nothing but that, With a heartfelt of love for you my darling, Ever yours.

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Tuesday Morning, Mamma says I may be very sure Mr. Preece wrote that article and I have no doubt of it after reading his speech. You know what terrible power for good or bad Mr. Preece has over you. It was under his auspices that you were introduced to the British public, they accepted his word for it that you were the inventor, if he now goes back upon it they will think he knows best and has good reasons for it. So it is of the greatest importance you should bestir yourself. And firstly do your best to win as many personal friends as you can that when you go they may be at hand to defend you. Stay to the end and remember this is your last chance. Do not remain a moment alone do not waste a moment but see what you can do to win people's good opinion.

Mamma says shake the duet of England off your feet and go to America, declare an American since they won't have you as an Englishman well, but leave as sweet a memory behind as possible.

Bessie is waiting for my letter so good bye with ever and ever so much love from us all and from you wife especially.