

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, January 21, 1879, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Tremont House, Boston, January 21st, 1879. My darling little wife:

The change from Washington to Boston is in every sense a violent one — and I wish I was back again with you. It is too wintry here! Ice and snow everywhere, even in the Telephone office! Indeed telephonically a storm is brewing! Thermometer ever so far below zero — and Bradley, Sanders, Vail and etc., shivering over the ashes of the Bell Telephone Company.

I must say I do not understand the stormy look of things. One man talks of “bankruptcy” and another of “selling Chicago.” Bradley has one plan — Sanders another — Vail a third — and I — well I'm sure I don't know anything about the matter — but I suspect that the real core of the trouble is — the number of managers! “Too many cooks” you know “spoil the broth.” I fancy that any one of their plans consistently carried out would bring us out of our difficulties. Our great enemy I think is mutual suspicion and distrust. We have far more to fear from internal dissensions than from the opposition of the Western Union. I must say I don't like Mr. Sander's proposition. He bribes the Bell Telephone Company with the offer of thirty thousand dollars — the conditions appearing to be that the Company is to be bound hand and foot and delivered over to him — to be disposed of as he thinks fit. I am very much afraid that his solution of the difficulty would be — to roll the Company right into the rapacious jaws of the Western Union Telegraph Company.

I am so glad I decided to remain in Washington. Anything like equanimity of mind in the midst of this turmoil is impossible. Without being able to contribute one?ite to the solution of the problem I should only be disturbed and unfitted for investigation or research.

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I have spent the greater portion of the afternoon at Mr. Williams' workshop — and with Mr. Chauncey Smith. Mr. Renwick “the expert” (whatever that means) is to be here tomorrow, and I am wanted to help him try certain experiments to see whether the form of telephone shown in my first patent will work — and to be present at the opening scene of the contest with the Western Union Telegraph Company. I hope I may return on Thursday. And now darling goodnight. I have not seen Mr. Eustis Hubbard yet. I called at the house but he had not come and your Aunt Carrie was out. I have forgotten your instructions about the tin box I brought here — what am I to do with it? Kiss my little Elsie for me — and send telephonic greetings to all on Fourteenth Street.

Your loving husband, Alec.