

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, May 31, 1880, with transcript

Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. L 904 — 14th St., Washington, May 31st, 1880. Mrs. A. G. Bell The Brighton, Atlantic, N. J. My darling May:

It is just about post-time but I feel sure you will feel jealous of the Photophone if I don't send you proof in black and white that my thoughts turn further than light can be heard in the direction of Atlantic City. I am afraid that I have nothing to tell you except "Photophone — Photophone — Photophone."

The new Selenium Cell is a grand success. We attached it to-day to the interior of one of the parabolic reflectors and reflected an interrupted beam of sunlight on to it from the corner of the alley — way on Mass. Avenue. Result — a musical tone much louder and more distinct than any Photophonic effect yet observed. Mr. Tainter has to-day completed my huge diaphragm-mirror and we have grown so ambitious that tomorrow morning early we are going to cart our photophonic apparatus to the hilly ground beyond the boundary and try to photophone from there to the top of the Franklin School! I feel sure we will succeed with an interrupted light — but am not so certain of the operation of the diaphragm mirror as the surface of the mirror is anything but a plane surface (that is plain!) — and the glass has unfortunately been cracked.

However "Nil desperandum perseverando vinces."

All our chickens were carried off by rats — so when a new chicken was hatched out a few days ago Mr. Tainter adopted it 2 himself. He has an artificial mother for it in the work-room — consisting of a bottle of warm water and an old wooden jacket in which the little thing cuddles down when it feels cold. It has become quite tame and follows him about the work-room within a few inches of his feet so that he has to be careful how he steps. In

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fact it looks upon him as its mother. A flat box full of earth is paradise to the chick — and it feeds voraciously upon oatmeal porridge — earth and worms. It was the funniest thing today to see the little thing run all over the work-room with a worm in her mouth — fearful that we would take it from her.

Elsie's dress is here and all the things will be forwarded by express tomorrow. Miss Blatchford telegraphed to know when we were going to Cambridge and I replied not till July. You better write to her. Don't forget to give Adelaide her money. You better ask the Proprietor to cash a cheque for you. You poor little darling — what are you doing I wonder. It seems so empty and deserted here that I have asked Mr. Tainter to come over and see me. He was quite surprised to find you had gone and was sorry he did not know in time as he hoped to have been of some assistance to you and Lina. Love to Lina and kisses for Elsie and Marion and my whole heart for you my dear.

Your loving, Alec.