

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, June 12, 1887, with transcript

Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. Parker House, Boston, Sunday, June 12, 1887. My sweet darling wife:

How time flies! The past week has gone — I know not how — and you have subsisted only on telegrams! I have intended each day to write full accounts — but somehow — Jack Ballachey — Arthur McCurdy — and — Fate — have been in the way. For a whole week I have intended to write to you concerning your mysterious visit to Cape Breton Island! — in the spirit — and yet you know nothing about it even now. However your appearance made such an uncanny impression on my mind — that I will commence my story now. Last Sunday I rose at nine o'clock, took some lunch and a bottle of milk in my little satchel — and was driven to Red Head — determined to spend the whole day in the open air — wandering through the woods and on the shore. It was a glorious day — and the air cool and bracing. Col. Jack was at church — and I had a beautiful day of solitude and thought — all to myself. I wandered over the whole summit of Red Head and penetrated even to the shore on the other side where the fresh water ponds lie. You have been over a portion of the route so you know how much exertion that means. My clothes were so soaked with perspiration that I actually felt afraid to sit down and rest for fear of catching cold — and yet when I reached the shore I could go no further. I solved the problem by taking off my clothes and hanging them on the bushes to dry in the sun — while I retired in puris naturalibus to a secluded spot to eat my lunch in peace — and rest. The water looked so bright and clear that I felt greatly tempted to try a plunge — especially as I had a towel with me. However, Prudence conquered. 2 A cold plunge — while one is hot and weary — would be a dangerous experiment indeed. I determined to run no risks — and did not. Davie Dunlop agreed to meet me with a buggy about five o'clock — at the road above our harbor. Unfortunately I was on the wrong side of the mountain — so

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that it was just six o'clock before I was able to reach him — and a weary trudge it was — along the shore past the McRae ponds and over the mountain at the end of the bay. I was thoroughly exhausted by the time I found him and when we reached Baddeck it was as much as I could do to tumble into bed. And Oh! how nice it felt to lie there and take my supper — breakfast-life in bed. After supper I turned over in bed and read a book — but not for long — I was soon disturbed by a gentle knock at the door. “Come in” I said — and a girl entered and removed the supper things. I had hardly settled myself down to my book again — when I heard the door open softly — without a knock. I thought it was Jack Ballachey peeping in to see whether I was asleep or not. As I did not wish to be disturbed I kept as quiet as a mouse, pretending to be asleep hoping he would go away. Then I heard the rustling of a dress — some one entered the room very quietly and shut the door behind her. Now my curiosity was thoroughly aroused. The girl had taken the supper things away a short time before — what did she want now? I kept perfectly still pretending to be asleep — my back was towards the door so that I could not see what she was about — but I kept my ears pretty wide open I can tell you. The girl came close up to the bed and bent over me. Then I felt a hand placed lightly on my shoulder — and a soft cheek was laid on my cheek — and a voice said “How do you do little boy”!!! Fancy 3 my surprise — for the voice Mabel — was y our voice!! While I was wondering how in all the world you had managed to come — and why you had come without letting me know — I felt you kiss me on the cheek. I turned over at once and put out my arms to give you a good hug — and there was no one there! I declare I was never so startled and surprised in my life for I was not asleep! The whole thing was perfectly real to me at the time — and I feel sure I was not asleep! It was simply and purely a delusion — perfectly real while it lasted — occasioned I suppose by my weakness and exhaustion. I have scarcely recovered from the effects of the shock even yet! A sort of a creepy uncanny sort of feeling came over me — which it required all my philosophy to dispel. I won't try such a walk again — although the memory of it is delightful to recall.

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What do you say to your ladyships ghost!? Are you not ashamed to allow your double to travel round like that — to frighten your poor husband out of his wits.

Your loving, Alec.