

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, July 25, 1895, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreng, C. B.
Thursday, July 25, 1895. My darling Mabel:

Your cablegram asking me not to leave till about the 12th of August was received yesterday (perhaps the day before).

I telegraphed to find out whether I could secure accommodations on next steamer but on further consideration have decided to carry out original plan and sail on the 3rd of August.

All my arrangements have been made and I have to be in Boston on August 2nd to make a public address to the New Parents Association.

Passage has been taken on board the Burgogne and paid for. If you don't want me to put in an appearance till the end of the month — I might just as well loaf about on the other side of the Atlantic till you want me as go down to Washington in this hot weather. I would not have time to return here after my Boston address.

If you don't want me I would like to run over to the Island of Guernsey and see my old Elgin friend, Dr. White, from whom I have received a letter that has distressed me greatly. Do you remember when we went to Elgin soon after our marriage — that I stopped a buggy half way between Elgin and Cove-sea (Cowsie) — and shook hands with my old friend Dr. White? I remember him as a young man — and how he rose in 2 his profession until he became quite an eminent man. He married into one of the best families in Morayshire — and became a thriving and even well-to-do man.

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Today I have received a letter from him in pencil — in such a strange handwriting — that I thought at first the letter was from a blind man. It seems that he is paralyzed — and has lost all his practice and income — and is now in a destitute condition.

The letter has touched me deeply — and if I can do anything for him I want to do so.

I will keep the original but send you this copy:

(Copy) Beancamp de Bas, Catel Guernsey, Channel Islands, July 9, 1895. My dear Alick:

I suppose you now seldom hear your first name, but old associations make it very natural to me and I don't think you will mind it, for the last time we met in Elgin you were just the same as in the old Weston House days, notwithstanding the great name you had made for yourself but everything is changed with me. Then I was healthy, happy and prosperous, now I am miserable and almost destitute from illness, and I appeal to you to see if you would stretch out a helping hand to save an old friend from sinking lover. Four years ago my health broke down and though a sea voyage somewhat restored me, I had a severe stroke of apoplexy shortly after and ever since I have been paralyzed and helpless. Of course my practice and income went and my wife and I have been living here in a very poor way on the small savings I had but they are now nearly exhausted and I am as yet helpless and it will be a year or more before I can do anything but as my mind is so clear and active as ever I have no fear of rising again if I only get some help. I know you pity me but I hope you will also have compassion. I know you are charitably disposed for I have heard of the noble use you made of your wealth. Think over old days and I think your heart will respond. I have written this with great difficulty for it is the first letter I have attempted for years. I might have my wife to write but I did not want her to know I had written at all and she does not know at all. She has been a noble wife to me and it is to her love and her brave untiring devotion that I am now alive and she (bore?) this reverse of fortune as few would have. I am almost ashamed of this letter but I have done my best and hope it.

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With every good wish, believe me, Yours faithfully, George Whyte.

You told me you kept secretaries so I have marked this private as I did not wish it opened by any one but yourself.

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To receive such a letter from such a man has touched me to the heart. I don't know what to do — nor how to do it. Wouldn't you like to run over to Guernsey with me for a day or two? Or if the “special reason” for wishing me to delay my departure holds good when I arrive you can send me to Guernsey by myself until you are ready to have me come. How is that?

I can't quite make out where you are — and what you have done with Elsie and Daisy — but will soon know by personal inspection. Cablegram received asking Bell and Company to telegraph one hundred pounds. I have telegraphed them — and will cable you as soon as I hear from them. The American Bell has paid an extra dividend of 1½ per cent. Have you received the \$1000 interest on U. S. Bonds? It has not been received here. I have written to Bell and Company to know where it is.

Western Union for April and Atlantic Cotton Will for July received and deposited. Have directed Western Union for July to be sent to Bell and Company.

Everything for July is in excepting U. S. Bonds. The check requires your personal signature — so it cannot be deposited here. If you have it — you can probably deposit it at Munro and Company's — but unless necessary it would be better to send it to Bell and Company.

Upon arrival at Havre I will go on at once to Paris. Please send word to Steamer Burgogne where I can find you. If I don't have your address I will call at once at Munro and Co. Don't forget to leave your address there.

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Mr. Lyon and George Mackeen are here. Had music earlier in the evening till the mail came. No letter from you. Mr. Lyon read to me proof he has received from Westervelt — of my Chatauqua Address. I have not yet found time to correct that address — and never will. Indeed in view of Gallaudet's Address at Flint — I have come to the conclusion that it would be a good plan for me not to see my own address until after it is printed.

I therefore asked Mr. Westervelt to go ahead and print it from the stenographer's notes — trusting Mr. Westervolt to see that it read straight.

Mr. Lyon read it to me tonight — and I am very much gratified that it has come out so well.

This unrevised address — delivered in the presence of Dr. G. M. Gallaudet at Chatauqua — long before his abusive harangue was thought of — is the best commentary upon his Flint Address.

His abuse of me will cause everybody to read my Address carefully and it will at once be seen how unjust — and untrue were the statements in Gallaudet's paper regarding my attitude.

It will constitute a reply to his charges — written long before the charges themselves were made — and hence in no sense intended as a reply. My neglect to revise was almost providential as the event proves.

Your loving husband, Alec.