

Letter from Helen Keller to Alexander Graham Bell, March 9, 1900

Helen Keller copied 138 Brattle Street, Cambridge, March 9, 1900. My dear Dr. Bell;

I was perfectly delighted to receive your letter and to be able to read it myself. It seemed almost as if you clasped my hand in yours and spoke to me in the old, dear way. A letter always seems more truly my own when I can run my fingers over it, and quickly enter into the thoughts and feelings of my friends without an interpreter, even though the interpreter be the dearest and sweetest in the world. It was very kind of you to learn those queer little hieroglyphics and write to me yourself; and nothing but unusually hard work has prevented me from sending a more prompt reply. O yes, I could read every word you wrote; indeed, I did not find a single mistake in the braille, and I trust that, since your "first attempt" was such a wonderful success, I shall receive many such "attempts."

I often think most lovingly of you and dear Mrs. Bell, Daisy and Elsie, and wish, oh so earnestly, that I could see you all, if only for a moment; but alas, hundreds of miles seem always to separate us, and I must needs fall back upon the dear memories of the happy days we have spent together. But there is mingled with these sweet memories not a little sadness; for I cannot help feeling sometimes that the long, long years are separating us more effectually than a continent and an ocean thrown in could do.

I have had a very busy but pleasant winter. My little world is almost wholly a world of books, and my life is lived more in the past than in the present. My friends, many of them, like myself live in books; but I find them most companionable, witty, gay, sad, wise or foolish according to my mood.

My studies this year are languages, English history and literature. I have just finished "Macbeth." What a wonderful, terrible portrayal of the power of evil! How mysteriously

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and fearfully the chief characters in the drama develop after their natural bent! How graphic are the word-pictures of the worst passions of the human heart! How irresistibly Macbeth is borne on by the tide of evil to utter ruin! In French I have read "L'Avare" by Moliere, and "Horace" by Corneille, and am now reading "Andromaque" by Racine. I enjoy French plays so much, they are almost sure to be charming. But I enjoy nothing more than English history. I am also studying Horace's odes, Goethe's "Iphigenie" and "Prometheus Bound" in Greek. I think this is one of the most wonderful things I shall ever read; it is so mysterious and infinitely sad. Of course I admit Prometheus' crime; but I admire his high-spirited and generous soul, and feel deep gratitude to him for preserving our poor human race. You see, I am an optimist still, rejoicing in the good that comes out of evil.

I need not tell you that my dear teacher is ever at my side, ready to encourage and help me in my work. The only drawback to our complete happiness is her eyes. They trouble her constantly, and I cannot help worrying about them.

I have just written a paper on the South African question for Mrs. Hutton. I began by being strongly in favor of Great Britain; but after I had done all the reading required, I found myself in sympathy with the heroic Boers. Perhaps you do not take the same view of the subject as I do; but I feel very sorry for Great Britain. It seems to me, she has made a terrible mistake, and that from the seeds of discord and hatred which she is now sowing in her empire, she will some day reap a harvest of tares. However, I admit that it is possible that, if I could read more and make further investigations, I might arrive at a different conclusion.

Please give my love to Mrs. Bell, and Daisy and Elsie, and believe me, with kindest remembrances from my teacher,

Affectionately your friend, Helen Keller.