

Letter from Ellie Hemyss to Alexander Graham Bell, July 17, 1910

Stamford Street, Parkside, SOUTH AUSTRALIA. 17th July 1910. Dr Graham Bell. Dear Sir,

I venture to send you some verses about the great discovery of the TELEPHONE which I would greatly like to dedicate to you as the inventor of that wonderful boon to mankind. Will you please grant me permission? Australians, in common with the world, owe a great and lasting debt of gratitude to you, the inventor of the telephone, which has linked us all together by the transmission of that unrivalled and natural means of communication,—the human voice. As one of the many millions who benefit by and appreciate your mighty gift to humanity, and as an Australian, I am glad and proud to know that you are now in Australia—our young giant Continent-Commonwealth. I would be delighted to hear if there is any possibility of your visiting our State, South Australia. It is the “Central State” and its capital, Adelaide, has been well-named by Foster Fraser, the “City of Culture”. Our beautiful city which contains the broadest and best thoroughfare in Australia, and one of the best in the world, is surrounded by beautiful country which cannot be seen to advantage during a rapid transit and deserves and would repay a longer inspection. Our Adelaide University can boast among its lecturers Dr Douglas Mawson (D.Sc.) the man who first discovered and located scientifically the SOUTH MAGNETIC POLE during the Shackleton Expedition. Dr Mawson is giving a series of Extension lectures on the subject of Antarctica. I only wish you could give a series of lectures here,—our people would crowd to hear them, and would never forget the honour done them by the inventor of the telephone. I will always remember the thrill of awe and reverence and enthusiasm which ran through me when first I heard a human voice over the telephone and sent my own voice back in answer. It is one of the most marvellous gifts of God to man through the greatness of human genius and heroic work. I trust some day to write a longer poem

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on this gift, and one more worthy of the subject, of its wonder and its magnificent results, its blessing and its boundless possibilities, and the greatness of mind and strength of soul which gave it to the world. It brings us nearer, ever nearer, to the unity of man which God designed, the fulfilment of that divine ideal "PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TOWARDS-MEN."

Gratefully yours, Ellie Hemyss. P. S. I am sending a newspaper (registered packet) containing some verses of my own, as I would like you to have this Australian tribute to our sister nation America. (The article and poem are marked in blue.) It is an endeavour to express the great Australian-American feeling, E. W.

The TELEPHONE.

Dedicated to the Inventor of the Telephone, Dr Graham Bell.

He who had studied well the laws of sound
And that weird power electric, one day found
A mighty force to send the human voice
Through all the world, and closer draw mankind
In that great unity that God designed,
That all mankind might hear it and rejoice
To greet that message of the human voice.

This man alone of all his generation
Combined the twin-fold knowledge, he alone
Could hear and understand the tiny sound
The inarticulate cry of new-born speech
Destined to fly from nation unto nation.
This be the inventor's crown, this be his throne,—
He who alone could find, he sought and found.

'Mid changing din and clang of huge machines
The tiny infant telephone was born,
(True omen of its life 'mid busy scenes!)
The cry voice that had 'no language but a cry,
Started the ear that long had strained to hear,
The first faint sound for one brief instant stunned
The mind intent to grasp, then heart aflame
His eyes blazed with the joy he could not name.

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Thro, patient years of search and baffled hope
He still toiled on, undaunted, undeterred,
Dreaming and working, yet the larger scope
He never dreamed of,—that man's whispering
word Would fly over myriad miles by magic wire,
Then, with no medium save that force
and fire Invisible, and the blind mysterious air,
Circle the world, speaking to all mankind—
“Fulfil the unity that God designed!”

Ellie Hemyss.

Stamford Street, Parkside, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Poem founded on part of article quoted From “World's Work”. On the occasion of the inventor's visit to AUSTRALIA. 1910.

In 1875—... a tall young professor of elocution was desperately busy in a noisy machine shop. He was observed in the making of a machine...The young professor had been toiling over it for years, and it had constantly baffled him, until, on this hot afternoon in June, 1875, he heard an almost inaudible sound—a faint twang—come from the machine itself. For an instant he was stunned. He had been expecting just such a sound for several months, but it came so suddenly as to give him the sensation of surprise. His eyes blazed with delight... That twang of the clock-spring was the first faint cry of the new-born telephone, uttered amid the changing din of a machine shop, and happily heard by a man whose ear had been trained to recognise the strange voice. of the little newcomer. There amidst flying belts and jarring wheels, the baby telephone was born, as feeble and helpless as any other baby and “with no language but a cry”. The professor inventor was a teacher of acoustics and a student of electricity, possibly the only man in his generation who was able to focus a knowledge of both subjects upon the problem of the telephone. To other men that faint sound would have been inaudible, but to Belle it was a dream come true.”