

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, December 16, 1889, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Volta Laboratory, Washington, D. C. Monday, Dec. 16th, 1889. My darling Mabel:

How unsatisfactory letters are in this age of telegraphs and etc., Here I have just received your note acknowledging receipt of my first letter to you — which was written — it seems — away back in the middle ages — so long ago — I have forgotten what I said. Then just before I left for New York (last Friday) we had letters which told us you were at Portland, Oregon on your way to Monee — and about the same time we had a telegram saying you were at Portland Oregon — on your way from Monee to San Francisco. The telegraph and the Post-office are at loggerheads — with one another — and put time into confusion. You don't know how we all miss you — but I do — I hope you will soon be on your homeward way.

I telegraphed you from New York — that I had gone on to attend the funeral of Mr. G. N. Dickerson — His work killed him. After a brilliant argument — he ruptured a blood-vessel in the base of the brain. The doctor told him that his end was near — and he never rallied. I never knew a man with a bigger or more generous heart — or a more excitable brain. I returned last night — and find laboratory in full swing. I am much pleased with the promising appearance of my method of handling statistics automatically. We have tried various methods of punching cards all based upon the principle of turning the cards around an axis by the motion of a rod in a slot punched out of the card at different angles. I think we have now settled on the most convenient form for punching by hand — and Mr. Ellis (my new man) is making final model. If as successful as we hope — I will have Joyce make a plate — from which we can print our 2 cards — and then we will have all the punching places marked exactly alike on each card. We haven't much time to finish

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— for it is all to be laid aside January 1st, and Graphophone taken up instead. I am to give a dinner to Mr. Porter, Supt. of Census, this week and I hope to direct his attention to the cards — although I believe they have made up their minds to use Hollerith's Electrical system — which seems to be an ingenious and practical method. I do not propose to push my own method. I will simply show Mr. Porter what I have devised for my own use — and say that if they desire to make any use of it — they are welcome to do so — but that I cannot undertake to push it. Mrs. Hubbard is very well — with Elsie and Daisy — and everybody. Love to Mr. Hubbard and yourself. I hear that letters must be sent to San Diego today to catch you. So I don't dare wait till night before writing — but scribble this off at laboratory — to show you I am thinking of you — at least — a little wee bit — and (as the Scotch say) a bittoch more. Will write again tonight as I have lots to say — but send this off now in case tonight's letter may not reach you. Come home soon — I want you very much.

Your loving husband, Alec. Mr. A. Graham Bell, San Diego, Calif.