

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell and Eliza Symonds Bell, October 14, 1876, with transcript

Cambridge, Mass. Oct. 14th, 1876. Dear Papa,

Your letter of the 12th inst. just received — for which many thanks.

The loss of Mabel's Patent abroad renders me very anxious to hear from Uncle about the Herdmans. I think I wrote to you what a grand success the meeting at the Academy was. — A little squib has just appeared about it in the papers — I enclose cutting. Butler has recently been making use of telegrams which he had bought from a paper-maker. The Telegraph companies retain copies of all telegrams passing through their offices for a certain length of time and then sell them for waste paper. In this case the telegrams had not been torn up — and Butler has obtained copies — which he is now using as political capital.

I have just returned from Farmingham, Mass. — a town about thirty miles from Boston. Have been delivering a lecture on V.S. before the Normal School there with great success.

Opened at the University yesterday. I think it was the best lecture I ever gave.

Mrs. Monroe has a baby — another little girl! — That makes the fifth girl I believe — No boys in the family. I am afraid I cannot answer your queries sent 2 in another letter as I have left your note in Boston.

I forgot about the wire. I was to have returned the coil and only pay for what I had used. A gentleman called on me yesterday — to say that he had seen my instruments in the Atheneum building — and had ascertained that I had no patents abroad. He had a friend who is willing to pay the expenses of patents if I will give him a half interest.

Did not like the looks of the man. Lean and dirty. He was a hungry looking specimen of a patent solicitor. Told him I was making arrangements with friends abroad. Did not yet know how matters would come out. Should be glad to see his friend. Would give a one-third interest to some competent reliable man who could manage the matter properly abroad. Had offered this to friends in England. You are right the Herdmans can do nothing until they write to me.

I shall find out from some competent Solicitor here what will be his full charge for taking out my patent in England, France, Germany, Austria, Russia, and Canada.

I shall get an estimate & then consult you & others here in the matter. If the terms seem reasonable I can borrow money for the purpose.

I shall then sell my foreign patent rights for what I can get — unless advised to hold on.

Your loving son Alec.

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I hope to try instruments between Boston & New York next week — & then between Boston & Philad. If these are successful I shall have an experiment tried on the cable with Sir William Thompson's Instrument at one end — & mine at the other. I enclose the records of the first conversation held telephonically between Mr. Watson & myself. The two instruments were in Exeter Place. The experiment between Boston & Cambridgeport on the same evening will be published here. — I shall send you a copy. A.G.B.