1893

My dear Mrs. Bell,

My teacher suggested to me that you might like to read the little account of my visit to the World's Fair which I wrote for my mother; so I very gladly made a copy of it for you. Please accept it with my love and sincere thanks for your many kindnesses to my teacher and to me while we were in Chicago. We feel that we are indebted to you and dear Mr. Bell for a most delightful visit. My mind is constantly recurring to it, and to the many delightful days we spent at the Fair. Sometimes people express surprise that I was able to see and enjoy so much; but that is because they do not realize how much of God's beautiful world the eyes of the mind and soul reveal to us. I am like the people my dear friend Dr. Holmes tells about, who have eyes in their fingers, so that they spy out everything interesting, and get hold of it, as a magnet picks out iron filings.

We were very glad to hear through Miss True that you were safely started upon your homeward journey. I hope that you are quite well again, and that you are resting, and enjoying the beautiful country as much as we are. We are staying ina lovely place with tall forest-trees all around it; and today the wind is rushing through the trees with a noise something like the noise which you feel when the waves are running high. Then it dies away into a gentle murmur, just as the sea does at low tide. The summer is getting to feel very rich, for his golden fruits are ripening fast, and the roadsides gleam with golden-rod.

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Please give Daisy, Elsie and dear Mr. Bell my teacher's and my love, and remember us very kindly to Miss True and Mr. M'Curdy if they are with you, and believe me,

Your affectionate little friend,

Helen Keller.

Hulton, Penn., August twentieth, eighteen hundred and ninety-three.

MANUSCRIPT ROOM

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I have been I have seen I have enjoyed the Fair and now I will try to tell you all about it while everything is still fresh in my memory How beautiful it is that when we have enjoyed anything very much we can always treasure it in our memories; and when the thing itself is gone we have only to turn the flash-light of thought in upon our souls, and the memory-picture starts forth, a bright, beautiful reality. So nothing that we have known or loved is ever lost. In the years that are to come I shall derive more and more enjoyment from my pleasant recollections of the Fair. The Fair seems a most appropriate name for the great Exposition, for surely it is the fairest thing in all the world. Language, wonderful as it is, can not express the beauty of the Fair City. Time, the stern old Critic of the ages has never seen anything half as beautiful as the Dream City of the New World. It is a noble, beautiful temple, in which man has enshrined treasures of skill and patient labor, marvels of invention, rare and beautiful works of art,-- his achievements in every country and in all ages.

We approached the White City the first time from the Lake side, and got our first impression of it from the peristyle. It was a bright, clear day; the sky and water were a perfect blue, making a most beautiful setting for the Dream City, crowned with the golden dome of the Administration building. We walked slowly up the Court of Honor, pausing every few steps while my teacher described the beautiful scene to me; the groups of noble buildings; the lagoons dotted with

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swiftly-moving boats; the majestic statue of the Republic, the fluted columns of the peristyle; and beyond the deep, deep blue lake. Oh, how grand and beautiful it all was

We did not attempt to visit any of the exhibits the first day. We gave ourselves up to the full enjoyment of the Fair as a whole. Late in the afternoon we stepped into a gondola, and made the trip through the lagoons. The day was almost done. The burning sun, as he journeyed westward in his golden car, threw a soft rosy light over the White City, making it look more than ever like Dreamland. As we glided through the lagoons, and darted under the numerous bridges in the lovely evening light I was reminded of Venice, the beautiful, mysterious Venice which I so long to visit. When it was quite dark the city was illuminated. My teacher described everything to me so clearly and vividly that it seemed as if I could really see the wonderful showers of light, blue, gold, red, green and silvery white, shoot up into the sky, tremble there for an instant, then sink like myriad stars into the cool depths of the lake.

But the brightest, happiest day must end, for little girls will get tired and sleepy even in Fairyland. While the White City was yet thronged with eager sightseers we returned to our hotel through the Midway Plaisance, the Home of the Nations, a most bewildering and fascinating place. It was such a pleasant thing to see all those strange, foreign people we had read about in history gathered together in one place, at peace with each other, and apparently happy in their new homes. I was especially interested in the Egyptians, Arab-

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ians and Japanese. At the entrance to the Arabian house we saw a beautiful little baby boy in his mother's arms, and we stopped a moment to speak to him. He greeted us with a bright smile, and looked up into the strange faces with pleased surprise. "Where was the baby born?" we asked the mother. "In Damascus," was the answer. Somehow those words made me start. That far-away city, with its strange, Oriental life seemed very near indeed. I felt like sitting down beside the beautiful mother, for there were many questions which I wished to ask her; but it was late, and we were weary, and to-, orrow, with new opportunities and delights, was hastening toward us. So I kissed the little Oriental goodnight, and went away feeling as if I had really been to Damascus.

In the days that followed we spent many happy hours in the Plaisance. I visited the streets of Cairo, and rode on the camel. That was fine fun, but the ride was altogether too short. Old Vienna, the Javanese and Irish villages were very interesting and instructive. I did not like the Turks very wehh, but the Japanese were gay and amusing. Of course I rode in the Ferris-wheel. Just think of being swung two hundred and fifty feet in the air I also rode on the ice-railway, and had a sail in the great Whaleback, and enjoyed the different sensations very much. But I must not stop now to tell you about such things while there is so much of greater importance which I wish to write.

I saw a great many of the most wonderful and interesting things at the Fair. Every one was very kind to me. The president of the Exposi-

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tion, Mr. Higginbotham, gave me a letter to the chiefs of all the departments, telling them that I could not see, and asking them to let me touch the exhibits when it was possible to do so. The people in charge of the departments were exceedingly kind. They seemed perfectly willing to let me touch the most delicate articles, and were very nice about explaining everything to me.

A French gentleman whose name I have forgotten, showed me the wonderful French bronzes. I think they gave me more pleasure than anything else at the Fair: they were so lifelike and beautiful to my touch. I could not help feeling that the artist's soul was in his hand when he created them.

A German named Herr Keller seemed pleased to meet an American cousin, and showed us several exquisite pieces of carved ivory.

Dear Mr. Bell went with us himself to the electrical building, and showed us some of the historic telephones. I was greatly interested in the one through which Emperor Dom Pedro listened to the words, "To be, or not to be," at the Centennial.

I had the pleasure of visiting the Japanese department with Prof. Morse of Salem. He has spent much time in Japan, and is very kind and wise. He invited me to visit his beautiful museum in Salem when I am in Boston again. I never realized what a wonderful people the Japanese were until I saw their most interesting exhibit. Japan must indeed be a paradise for children, to judge from the great number of curious playthings which are manufactured there. Their pottery was very beautiful.

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Dr. Gillett of Illinois took us to the Liberal Arts and Woman's buildings. In the former I visited Tiffany's exhibit, and held the beautiful Tiffany diamond which is valued at one hundred thousand dollars, and touched many other rare and costly things. They took me into their beautiful chapel, and let me examine the marble altar studded with precious stones, and the beautiful baptismal fount. But I can not imagine why any one should like to worship in the midst of such Asiatic splendor. I sat in King Ludwig's luxurious arm-chair, and felt like a queen when Dr. Gillett remarked that I had many faithful subjects. At the Woman's building we met the Princess Maria Schaovskoy of Russia, and a lovely dark-eyed Syrian lady.

Dr. Bell and Prof. Putnam explained the curious and interesting things in the anthropological department to me, and I learned a great deal about the early history of my country. The Peruvian relics were interesting. At the time of the discovery of America Peru, like Mexico, was inhabited by Indians who were considerably advanced in civilization, and who were governed by a race of princes called Incas whose country extended along the Andes from the United States to the southern part of Chili. The life and achievements of this strange and almost forgotten people, as they are revealed to us by their pottery, implements and sacred altars, are very interesting, and I should like to know more about them.

We spent one delightful afternoon in the Monastery of La Rabida, where weary and hungry Columbus sought and received shelter for himself and

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his little son centuries ago. The kind monks detained him for several months, and, becoming interested in his dreams of discovery, gave him letters to persons high in authority. A few years later, when, finding that his sovereign was indifferent to his plans, he again visited La Rabida before going to seek aid from other countries, and the good monks received him kindly, and through their influence he was invited to return to the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella, and present his plans anew. Then he returned to La Rabida, bearing a royal order that the people of Palos should furnish him with vessels and supplies for his voyage of discovery. He remained a guest at the monastery while making preparations for the great expedition. When he again visited La Rabida he came in triumph, bearing the news and trophies from the New World, and the good monks welcomed him , and sang a joyful Te Deum in the chapel. Again he remained a guest at the Monastery until summoned to the Court of his king. To me La Rabida was one of the most interesting places at the Fair because of these historic associations.

The Santa Maria, too, was very interesting. The captain received us kindly, although he could not speak a word of English. He showed us the little room which Columbus occupied. The hour-glass on the table made me think how many weary, expectant hours he spent in his little room on the real Santa Maria; how long the days and weeks must have seemed to him; and how vast and awful the ocean must have looked from the deck of that brave little boat. I wonder what Columbus would say if he could stand on the deck of the Santa Maria today, and see the

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beautiful White City which has sprung up as if by magic in honor of his great discovery. **********

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