

PLATE XXXI



*Photograph by Bassens & Vandyk*

SIR HAROLD IDRIS BELL, C.B., O.B.E.

## SIR HAROLD IDRIS BELL

1879-1967

**H**AROLD IDRIS BELL was born on 2 October 1879 to Charles Christopher and Rachel (*née* Hughes) Bell at Epworth in Lincolnshire. His father's family came of north Midland yeoman stock; they can first be traced at Woolsthorpe near Beauvoir in the seventeenth century and farmed on the borders of Lincolnshire and south Nottinghamshire. They were, however, yeomen with a difference; many of them displayed strong literary interests, and money making was not their prime concern. Bell's grandfather, who had seen something of urban poverty in Nottingham, was the only farmer in south Nottinghamshire to vote for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and was ostracized for his pains. Anyone who knew H. I. Bell at all well will recognize a family trait. His maternal grandfather, John Hughes of Rhuddlan, was Welsh-speaking; his father's interest in literature combined with that of his mother's family to give Bell his passion for Wales, its language, its literature, and its landscape.

Bell's father, who was born at Hickling in 1845, was intended for the Civil Service but debarred by ill health. He impressed all who came across him as a man of unusual gifts, witty, something of a poet, a contributor to *Notes and Queries*. Had a scholarship ladder existed, his career would no doubt have been very different; as it was, he passed on to his son not only a knowledge of literature but also (as his son wrote) 'his own intense interest in history'.

Bell's mother died before he was one; he was brought up at Epworth with his uncle's family, who jointly with his father owned a chemist's shop there. They were anything but well-to-do, but no chances were taken with Bell's education. After attending a dame-school at Epworth and later a small school for boys, he at the age of eleven went to Nottingham High School, then under Dr. James Gow, the author of a companion to school classics and later headmaster of Westminster, who came of a well-known Cambridge scholarly family. Bell's bent was clear from the start; he was no mathematician and the agony he later endured in editing elaborate accounts in Byzantine papyri was a tribute to his conscientiousness. He was rapidly at home with

the Classics and won a scholarship to Oriel College, Oxford, in the summer of 1897. He went up in October of that year, young and (as he himself always felt) immature; this early entry may well have cost him a First in Greats. Throughout his boyhood his holidays were spent at Llanfairfechan, where his mother's family lived, a place which throughout his life meant much to him and confirmed his interest in everything Welsh.

Bell was not fortunate in his college tutors at Oxford, though he recalled them, especially G. C. Richards, with gratitude for their kindness. He enjoyed his work for Honour Classical Moderations, but the teaching did not broaden or deepen his knowledge of literature nor did he succeed in blending his existing taste for romantic poetry (that stayed with him all his life) with one for classical literature. Indeed his appreciation of the classical style in literature—Sophocles or Racine—came much later. There were compensations for indifferent college teaching in Greats; for one term he was sent to Cook Wilson at Magdalen for philosophy and for another to W. Warde Fowler for Roman history; of the latter he was to record, 'To have been one of his pupils would alone have made an Oxford career abundantly worthwhile.' It was characteristic of him that he did not specialize in Greats, although that was rarer then than it became later; he took his philosophy as seriously as his history, although, as he said, nature did not intend him to be a philosopher. After reading T. H. Green's *Philosophy of Ethics*, he found it impossible to reconcile its views which he then accepted with the Christian faith in which he had been brought up; and when his more philosophic contemporaries demolished Green's views he was left in a philosophical vacuum. For many years he remained an interested and sympathetic agnostic and it was only much later, as he recalls in *The Crisis of Our Time* (1954), that the experience of the best part of a lifetime compelled him to return to a religious faith.

After a long viva Bell was placed in the Second Class in Greats; to this a fair amount of ill health during his years at Oxford as well as his immaturity contributed. It was, of course, a disappointment at the time, but it is hard to believe that he would have spent a more useful or productive life if he had been elected into a fellowship. As it was, he was neither a classical prizeman nor a fellowship candidate for ancient history, and on Cook Wilson's advice he decided to spend a year in Germany rather than read a second School, history or English, at Oxford. This was made possible by his election

to the Fraser Scholarship at Oriel in 1901. Later in the year he went for some seven weeks to Hanover where he attended the famous coaching establishment of Fraulein Mathilde Abben-thern. (When he revisited Germany in 1947 as President of the Academy he was delighted to find his old teacher still alive and to learn from her that he had been her favourite pupil.) He then spent a semester at Berlin, followed by one at Halle, studying principally the history of the Hellenistic age. Among the scholars he heard were Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (whose learning and eloquence entranced him) and Lehmann (afterwards Lehmann-Haupt) at Berlin, and at Hanover Eduard Meyer and Friedrich Blass.

He returned to England in the summer of 1902, and after one or two unsuccessful applications for lectureships and for a post at the Victoria and Albert Museum sat for the British Museum examination. In the spring of 1903 he was appointed a second-class Assistant in the Department of Manuscripts, the runner-up being Henry (later Sir Henry) Thomas, who proved to be a lifelong friend and was later Keeper of Printed Books. Bell was set to work on charters, and it says something for the hierarchy of a small department that it was over a year before a chance meeting with F. G. Kenyon, then an Assistant Keeper, revealed that Bell had studied Hellenistic history in Germany; this led to his assisting Kenyon on volume iii of the Museum Catalogue. Before administrative duties in the Department took more and more of his time he was able to devote much of it to papyri and this, apart from some work on some Welsh and Spanish manuscripts, was his principal concern. The First World War inevitably altered his pattern of work. In 1915 he was proposing to enrol under the Derby scheme (although he would almost certainly have been rejected on the score of health) when Kenyon arranged for him to be seconded to the War Office Intelligence Department (M.I. 7D). Here he found himself working with a galaxy of talent that included J. T. Shepherd, Middleton Murry, A. D. Knox, and later the last named's brothers Ronald and Wilfred. Bell would spend his mornings at the Museum and then stay working at the War Office till 11 p.m. He acquired a gift that proved useful to him later of composing at great speed in a clear hand memoranda that rarely needed any correction, let alone re-drafting. He became a section head with a staff of twenty working to him, of whom eleven were directly under his control. It is on record that in the view of the staff he was the only one of

the heads 'who treated us like human beings'. He was particularly concerned with the analysis of the German Press, especially from the economic and social standpoints, and it may be surmised that it was his war work that brought him to realize the importance of economic factors in history, something which marks his later contributions to the *Cambridge Ancient History*.

He returned to the Museum at the end of 1918, becoming an Assistant Keeper, and in November 1927, Deputy Keeper. With J. P. Gilson's sudden death in May 1929 Bell found himself Keeper of Manuscripts. Until his appointment as Deputy Keeper two years earlier he had been a specialist in the Department to an unusual degree and this made the sudden access of responsibility as Keeper the more difficult. He was, however, on excellent terms with his colleagues, and a good organizer of work, and this more than compensated for lack of experience in some of the work of the Department. Bell always put the service of other scholars and the Department's interests before his own; work on papyri had to be relegated to the lunch hour and evenings and it is astonishing how much he achieved under these conditions. His fifteen years as Keeper brought increasing administrative responsibilities at a time when senior staff in the Museum enjoyed little in the way of mechanical or technical aids. The present writer cannot recall ever having received a letter from him that was not written in longhand and, if in reply to an inquiry, prompt and to the point. His Keepership was marked by the acquisition, after much public debate and disagreement, of the Codex Sinaiticus, as well as that of the Luttrell Psalter and some of the missing originals of the Paston letters. His width of interest, embracing languages, literature, and history in its widest sense, ensured his appreciation of branches of scholarship other than those to which he was personally committed, something that is a necessary constituent in the make-up of a papyrologist. This versatility combined with a precise mind, a lively imagination, and administrative gifts of a high order to make him a most successful Keeper in a difficult period.

Bell had been trained in Germany as a Hellenistic historian. It was perhaps both characteristic of the *fortuna* of papyrology as well as typical of the demands made on scholars in the Department of Manuscripts that he should find himself working on Roman and then principally on Byzantine texts. It was not till after his retirement that he found an opportunity to work at any length on what would have been his first choice, the Ptolemaic

period. He certainly did not repine, but threw himself with enthusiasm into assisting Kenyon on the third volume of the British Museum Catalogue. Here he was responsible for some of the Roman texts and all the early and late Byzantine documents (apart from two hymns) and for indexing the whole. (The number and detail of papyrological indexes is such that this must have constituted an excellent introduction to the field as a whole.) His first publications in the field of papyri were of a fragment of Aratus and a revision of a text of Isocrates, both in the British Museum; both appeared in 1907, the first in the *Classical Quarterly*, the second in the *Journal of Philology*. These early publications were not typical of Bell's interests; the editing of extant literary texts with the study of the manuscript tradition was not something that particularly appealed to him, and though he was perfectly competent and his skill as a reader was as marked here as in the case of other texts, this was the department of papyrology to which his contribution was least.

In the same year appeared the third volume of the Catalogue, and by this time Bell was already at work on its successor. In 1909 Kenyon became Director and Principal Librarian and Bell found himself in sole charge of the Museum's papyri. The fruits of his work and his full stature as a scholar were shown with the publication in 1917 of volume iv, for which he was solely responsible, apart from the contribution on the Coptic texts by W. E. Crum. This is a substantial folio of over 700 pages of documents of the seventh and eighth centuries from Aphrodito (Kôm Ishgau) and was immediately recognized by the few competent to judge it as '*Epochemachendes*' (to quote Ulrich Wilcken's review in the *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*, V). Byzantine papyri in general and those of the early Arab period in particular had hitherto been something of a cinderella; very few annotated transcripts had been published and there were few *Hilfsmittel*. Bell and a colleague and friend in France, Jean Maspero (killed in the First World War), who was engaged in a similar task, had to build a subject up from its foundations. With the publication of this volume, for the first time a mass of first-hand evidence for the financial and administrative history of Egypt under the Umayyad Caliphs was not only made public but made intelligible by an introduction of a scope and penetration without parallel among papyrological publications, and it was clear that in many important respects the picture given in Arabic histories was misleading. Bell himself

thought that this volume, together with the later *Jews and Christians in Egypt*, constituted his major contribution to papyrology. If he had been entirely a free agent he would have equipped his texts with translations as well as with notes, on the model set by Grenfell and Hunt; but it was only later that he felt free to break away from the tradition set by the early volumes of the Catalogue. But with Bell there was no risk that a text would be transcribed without the editor either fully understanding it, or drawing attention to any passage he could not understand; he never forgot that papyrologists edit texts to be used by those who are not papyrologists. Bell's approach to the subject was made clear when, in the year of publication of this volume, he published simultaneously an important article on the Byzantine servile state in Egypt in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* for 1917; stimulated by Hilaire Belloc's controversial essay on the modern servile state, he displayed an ability for looking the wider issues posed by his material without making false analogies or misrepresenting his texts.

The fourth volume of the Catalogue was followed in seven years by its successor, entirely Bell's work and almost as large. Here Bell was dealing very largely with documents of the sixth century A.D., of great variety and often difficulty, most of which again came from Aphrodito. This extended his knowledge of Byzantine Egypt in a way that left him the acknowledged master of the subject. A Hellenist studying Byzantine Egypt is almost bound to be given a somewhat jaundiced view of the Byzantine achievement and Bell's many papers on aspects of the subject, notably that entitled 'The Decay of a Civilisation' (in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 10), may well give this impression, but he recognized the positive achievements of the country in religion and in its contribution to Arabic culture both in his chapter in *The Legacy of Egypt* (1942) and in his *Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (1948).

His next publication, if more slender, excited much wider notice. It is only very rarely that a papyrologist has in his hand a document of direct historical importance and it is still more rare for it to be edited with a combination of great palaeographic skill and an unobtrusive mastery of the literature, both ancient and modern. That was the case with his edition of the famous letter of Claudius to the Alexandrians, published in *Jews and Christians in Egypt* in 1924. The detailed and complex problems that the letter evoked in a central field of ancient history tested Bell's qualities both as a textual editor and as an

historian; subsequent discussion and re-editions of the text have emphasized his judgement as well as his learning and powers of interpretation, and his edition remains indispensable today. His gifts as an ancient historian were no less displayed in his contribution to the *Cambridge Ancient History*, volumes x and xi, particularly in his treatment of Roman Egypt in volume x. The standard of the final volumes of the history was unsurpassed and Bell's contributions, judicious, thorough, and avoiding no difficulties, are definitive and the equal of those of any of his colleagues.

*Jews and Christians* contained some important religious texts on the Melitian schism and Bell's interests in religious problems, particularly in their political significance, clearly deepened during this period. Two years later he published as the ninth *Beiheft zum Alten Orient, Juden und Griechen im römischen Alexandria*, still perhaps the best introduction to the subject. It was a stroke of well-deserved fortune that placed in his hands a few years later perhaps the most remarkable of the many discoveries of Christian manuscripts in the last thirty years. In 1936 with his colleague T. C. Skeat he published a magisterial edition of two leaves of a manuscript, written about the middle of the second century, of an unknown gospel. This text, clearly akin to, though apparently independent of, the canonical gospels has given rise to problems which have not yet been settled and may never be; it is to the editors' credit to have defined them clearly and, in their text (which they slightly revised in 1938) and their notes and introduction, to have laid a firm foundation for future work that has survived the concentrated attention of experts throughout the world.

During his years at the Museum, Bell's services to papyrology were not confined to editing and publishing texts. He initiated the critical bibliographies of 'Greco-Roman Egypt (Papyri)' in the first volume of the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* in 1914, and until 1925 compiled them single-handed. After that, he had the assistance of other scholars, among them Norman Baynes and A. D. Nock who, as was usual with anyone who worked with Bell, became personal friends. After 1933, when his work as Keeper was making greater demands on him, he passed the bibliographies on to others. The bibliographies were divided into sections according to subject, and each new publication, whether volume or article, was noted often with an illuminating comment or emendation of a difficult reading, together with a brief summary of contents. As such, they were far more useful



than many reviews and remain an invaluable guide to the work done throughout the world during these years. He was also responsible, with F. W. Kelsey of the University of Michigan, for organizing in 1921 the Papyrus Syndicate, the object of which was to buy and redistribute among its members papyri that came on the market, particularly large collections in danger of being broken up; the Syndicate included, as well as one or two private collectors, the Universities of Oslo and Geneva, and a number of American universities. Bell examined, reported on, and arranged for the distribution of the texts; this gave him an oversight of new texts coming on the market and it need hardly be said he carried out this somewhat delicate task to the complete satisfaction of all his partners. He was also the principal contributor, where papyri were concerned, to the new edition of Liddell and Scott's *Greek Lexicon*, and his contributions drew not only on new British and foreign publications, but on unpublished texts as well.

The Department of Manuscripts was thus in Bell's time a focal point for world papyrology. This was a function of the department, inherited from Kenyon, which he enlarged and encouraged. The *Amicitia Papyrologorum* became a byword in humane studies—not only because, as cynics might suggest, it is as well to remain on good terms with scholars, any of whom may possess the other half of the text you yourself are editing. The good relations of the older generation—U. Wilcken, P. Jouguet, and Kenyon—survived the First World War; and Bell, who had already established himself in the world of international scholarship before 1914, carried the tradition on to a generation younger than his own and brought in the new world in the persons of Kelsey, Campbell Bonner, and W. L. Westerman.

Bell's range as a papyrologist was wide. It covered documents of all kinds and periods and if he published few literary texts, leaving this, superficially at any rate, more attractive work to others, nothing that was published escaped him. As a decipherer of papyri he had few equals; he kept the difficult balance between what his knowledge of the background—legal, administrative, social, or literary—told him ought to be on the papyrus in front of him and what his eyes and knowledge of palaeography told him the strokes probably represented. His excitement at a new reading in a text, however unimportant it might seem, was the same whether the suggestion was his own or came from a colleague. Except where palaeography was concerned, the

papyrologist in Bell's view should not pose as an expert; he should know enough to know what questions to ask and what kind of assistance would be of most help with a difficult text; he must always be aware of the limits as well as the potentialities of his subject. His own approach as an editor of texts was determined by his firm belief that papyrology was not a separate field of study but a *Hilfsdisziplin*, a general handmaid to studies of the ancient world. He never stretched the evidence, while never content in a reading that defied sense or probability. He could be firm where principles, whether scholarly or other, were at stake; his review of von Premerstein's edition of one of the *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, which appeared in the *Classical Quarterly* for 1939, is a rebuke, impersonal (Bell was always the most courteous of controversialists) but unmistakable, administered to a distinguished scholar who imposed his preconceived view on a text in ignorance of the technique and the possibilities of the material.

The death of A. S. Hunt in 1934 had left Oxford with no one to teach papyrology or to work on documentary papyri. Hunt himself had had no inclination for teaching and indeed, given his vast output, little time. Prompted by H. M. Last, the University appointed Bell Honorary Reader in Documentary Papyrology, a position he held until 1950. His Inaugural Lecture on *Recent Discoveries of Biblical Papyri* was delivered on 18 November 1936 and subsequently published. Bell took his honorary duties seriously and enjoyed them; his visits were frequent and informal and both helped and encouraged the younger scholars working in Oxford. He had also a general oversight of the publications of the Greco-Roman branch of the Egypt Exploration Society on which work in Oxford was going on. He was always available for consultation, never forced his own views, and treated his younger colleagues, however wide the gap in their knowledge and abilities might be, as equals; in this there was no policy, still less pose; it was the natural way for him to behave. In these years his own publications were limited to articles, including an important one in the *Harvard Theological Review* on 'Evidences of Christianity in Egypt during the Roman Period' and another on the 'Constitutio Antoniniana and the Egyptian Poll Tax' in the *Journal of Roman Studies*.

When at the outbreak of war in 1939 the Museum's collections were evacuated from London with many of the staff, Bell remained behind and spent the entire war in London engaged

in administrative duties until his retirement in July 1944. This gave him the leisure he had long wanted. The first volume of the Merton papyri, a private collection of texts selected for their palaeographic interest which he had helped the owner to acquire, appeared, edited jointly by him and C. H. Roberts, in 1948; a second volume, edited by Professor B. R. Rees, but again with Bell's assistance, came out ten years later. These volumes showed, if proof were needed, that Bell had lost none of his skill and authority as an editor. In 1962 a group of English and Swiss scholars including Bell, published *The Abinnaeus Archive*, thus realizing an ambition he had conceived in 1916. A preface from Bell's hand sets out clearly the handicaps as an editor under which he laboured in the Museum, once he reached the rank of Deputy Keeper. His colleagues were apt to conclude that for him at any rate limitation provided a stimulus; certainly none of that hard-won time was wasted. In the post-war years he also published *Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, a lucid and authoritative survey of the historical and administrative background to the documentary papyri. His Forwood lectures on *Cults and Creeds in Greco-Roman Egypt* were less successful; though he had things of interest to say, the subject was not easily treated on an Egyptian basis and at times the reader has the feeling that Bell was somewhat out of his depth.

Welsh studies were Bell's principal intellectual avocation.<sup>1</sup> He never claimed to be a Welsh scholar and in the strict sense of the word he was right; his approach was that of the scholarly amateur whose knowledge of the language was, though very thorough, solely a reading knowledge. He himself had not begun to learn Welsh until he was twenty-six. He saw his task as that of mediating a knowledge and appreciation of Welsh poetry from the professional scholars to English readers. To enlighten those who found it hard to believe that Welsh was a national language with a long and still lively literary tradition, he translated and wrote various essays and studies of the literature. In 1913 there appeared *Poems from the Welsh*, a work of collaboration between Bell and his father. In 1925 a second volume appeared from father and son, *Welsh Poems of the Twentieth Century in English Verse*; it was characteristic of him that his interest in the work of his contemporaries was as keen as it was in that of the classics of the past. The poems translated in these

<sup>1</sup> For the substance of the following three paragraphs and very often for the wording I am indebted to Dr. Thomas Parry.

two volumes were mostly in free metres as distinct from the strict and complex metrical systems peculiar to Welsh prosody. Bell now turned his attention to the task of translating poetry written in the native metres, especially bardic poetry and the later poetry of the Middle Ages. His most ambitious project was the translation of fifty poems of the supreme poet of the period, Dafydd ap Gwilym. This volume was published by the Cymmrodorion Society in 1942, Bell collaborating this time with his son David, an artist and poet who shared his father's passion for all things Welsh and whose death some years before his own was a heavy blow. The volume includes essays on the poet's life and art and one by David Bell on the 'problem of translation' in which there is an interesting discussion of the influence of Welsh metrics on the work of G. M. Hopkins.

Bell's knowledge of the language throughout its history was such that he rarely made a mistake about the sense of the Welsh. He was convinced that poetry should be translated into a metrical form, not into prose. The majority of his originals are in the *cywydd* metre—couplets of seven-syllable lines—and he was much exercised about how best to convey the effect of such a metre in English. Taking a hint from some of the poems of G. M. Hopkins (to quote his own words):

I decided therefore to use a four-beat line (scanned by beats rather than by either feet or syllables) of somewhat irregular rhythm, in order to recall the slightly unmetrical effect of the Welsh. To replace the *cynghanedd* it seemed best to introduce, not regularly but sporadically, a little alliteration of the English type and now and again an internal rhyme or semi-rhyme. . . . Unfortunately, like the man who resolved to be a philosopher but found that cheerfulness would keep breaking in, I could not prevent the regular movement of the basic four-foot iambic line from taking control all too often.

In the last sentence he put his finger on what some commentators have taken to be a weakness in his work. Bell's object in his translating, and in his view what should be the object of anyone translating poetry, was to write in his own language a parallel poem, 'a poem which provides an impression corresponding to that made on him by the original'. Consequently he employed a recognizably poetic diction, not avoiding archaisms; these he would justify on the ground that the poetry he translated made use of words and expressions which were archaic in their own day. His standards and style were those of the Georgians, not those of a later generation, and there can be little doubt that many of his renderings, at once scholarly and sensitive, succeeded

in conveying to his own generation something of the nature and spirit of Welsh poetry.

Of his other attempts to interpret Welsh poetry to English readers, his *Development of Welsh Poetry*, published by the Clarendon Press in 1936, was the most important. After more than thirty years it remains a very useful introduction to the subject. His most laborious task, undertaken as a labour of love, was his translation of Dr. Parry's *Hanes Llenyddiaeth Cymraeg hyd 1900*. To this he added an appendix of his own on the twentieth century, an appendix that amounted to a third of the main work. This substantial volume appeared in 1955. To his work on Welsh literature Bell brought the same qualities and talents that marked his work elsewhere. He was very well informed; he read all his texts with the greatest care, and not only the texts but earlier discussions of them in books and articles. His wide reading in English and continental as well as in classical literatures often enabled him to adduce illuminating and apt parallels.

Bell retired from the Keepership of Manuscripts on 8 July 1944. His plan had been to live in Oxford, but Oxford had become a city of refuge during the war and houses were all but impossible to find. In 1946 he bought a house in Aberystwyth, as it turned out a happy choice; not only was it the centre of Welsh studies, but he found there some pupils in papyrology, and it was to the National Library that he gave his own papyrological library. He was anything but inactive in his last two years in London, as his list of publications shows. Shortly before he moved he was elected, 'to his incredulity and dismay' (as he later wrote), President of the British Academy. His modesty, approachability, and the genuine interest he displayed in almost all the fields of study represented in the Academy made him an admirable President. He was invariably nervous before a lecture or any public appearance but this did not make him an indifferent speaker, rather the reverse; he never took either his own gifts or his audience for granted.

His retirement was productive; how productive, the bibliography that appeared in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* in 1954 and was completed by a supplement in 1967 indicates, though this confines itself to his work in the field of classical scholarship. It includes one or two works on papyrology in Welsh—he was always anxious to interest his Welsh friends in the classics and his classical friends in Welsh—and one article on the custody of records in Roman Egypt that appeared in *The*

*Indian Archives* serves to recall that he was a Vice-President of the British Records Association from its foundation till his retirement in 1944.

In retirement he had time for some activities which had necessarily been a little stunted during his official career. As a scholar, though not afraid to draw general conclusions, he was austere objective in his treatment of evidence; the romantic and Celtic side of his nature was disciplined, though not repressed, by a strong sense of duty. This found an outlet in his passion for romantic poetry, something he always kept for pleasure (though his *editio princeps* in 1910 of Traherne's *Poems of Felicity*, discovered by him among the Burney Manuscripts in the Museum and correctly identified, should not be overlooked). It found full scope, for example, in a story he wrote in Welsh about an imaginary adventure in Egypt, or in a libretto he wrote in Welsh for an opera performed by the Welsh National Opera Company. His interests, as his friends, were many and varied. He was a lifelong socialist and in 1945 spent many hours addressing envelopes on behalf of the local Labour Party, but a socialist because he wanted a social system that would allow everyone to realize their individuality. In him there blended unusually and happily the conscientiousness and strong sense of duty of the north countryman with the mercurial and lively temperament of the Welsh, and a gentleness and courtesy that were all his own. He enjoyed foreign travel and was an excellent and undemanding companion; his younger colleagues were always struck by his capacity for enjoyment even in the rigours of an international congress; in the thirties, in spite of moments of depression, he not infrequently seemed younger than they, and the advantage was all with him. A certain shyness never entirely left him, but it rapidly evaporated when he found himself among friends, and the self-consciousness that plagued him as a young man disappeared in later life. An occasional naivety and a welcome absence of academic sophistication matched his simple tastes in living.

He was awarded the C.B. in 1936 and was knighted in 1946. Many honours came his way; from learned societies which he served and fostered; from foreign academies; from universities at home and abroad. By these tributes and successes he was genuinely surprised and quite unspoilt and, in spite of the nervousness they occasioned, he fully enjoyed them. It may be surmised that two that gave him particular pleasure were the award of the Gold Medal of the Honourable Society of

Cymmrodorion, followed by his election to its presidency, and the honorary Fellowship at Oriel, to which he was elected in 1936.

After a period of experiment and hesitation he returned to the Church; this time to the Church of Wales, and in his last years was a convinced Christian. It was no discouragement that the church near his home in which he worshipped, Llanbadarn Fawr, had known Dafydd ap Gwilym. He had always been an internationalist and a good European; it was the experiences of the thirties that left him dissatisfied with agnostic humanism and made him search for what he felt to be a firmer basis for the principles and beliefs by which he lived. His detestation of Nazis and fascists never weakened his affection for his German and Italian friends; with one at least of them, Wilhelm Schubart, he kept in touch throughout the First World War. Refugees from Nazi persecution were sure of a welcome; to one of them, the widow of a German jurist, he gave asylum in his small house in north London in the early part of the war until her continual gloating over German successes, prevailing over the wrongs she had suffered and the fate in store for her should they be unbroken, proved too much even for Bell's patience.

Bell had married Winifred Ayling in 1911 and the marriage was long and happy. Lady Bell followed all his activities with protective devotion and brought to the partnership among much else a practicality and a touch of realism in ordinary affairs that her husband sometimes lacked. His achievement was only possible in the context of a deeply rooted domestic happiness. There were three sons, two of whom survive him, in whose interests in work and recreation he fully shared. He was always at ease with children; grand-children and the children of his friends would be entertained with fairy stories in which Egypt or Wales would almost always feature. Though his health had been precarious as a young man and he was never robust, in his later years and in his retirement he remained remarkably fit. A stroke in 1965 and failing eyesight hampered but did not inhibit his usual activities; he remained active and mentally alert to the end. He died on 22 January 1967, just a week after his wife.

C. H. ROBERTS

*Note.* I am principally indebted to Mr. I. C. Bell for allowing me to read the autobiography his father wrote for the family, and to Dr. Thomas Parry; also for information about Bell's Keepership to Professor Francis Wormald.