

# Alexander Melville Bell

By

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*"Let there be truth between us."*

The number who attain the years vouchsafed our venerated friend are few, but the number who, like him, have filled the measure of their days so acceptably to their fellow men, not only of this age, but for all time to come, are, and ever will be, far fewer.

Alexander Melville Bell, born in Edinburg, Scotland, March 1st, 1819, had three distinct periods of professional life. The first twenty-four years, that of *Student*, the succeeding twenty-seven years, that of *Teacher*, and the last thirty-five years, that of *Master*. Owing to the fact at the time of birth, that his father, Alexander Bell, then already recognized as a leading instructor of elocution, had achieved notable success in the treatment of defective speech, the son from earliest infancy entered at home an environment of student life exceptionally calculated to fit him for the career in which he so signally distinguished himself. The father's inherent love of truth and frankness begat in his son like traits of character. This was so pronounced a feature that at the early age of twenty-four years upon independently entering the vocation of teacher, in contrast to certain widely heralded instructors of the period like the Braidwoods and others, who sought by every means either to throw an air of mystery, or exclusive secrecy, around their methods, Mr. Bell commenced giving publicity in print by "communicating unreservedly the principles" underlying his methods. In evidence thus of his strong aversion to every form of sham, then so largely prevailing in his profession, he lost no opportunity to emphasize the position he had taken of strict fairness towards his pupils and the public generally. We thus find him in the earliest edition of his well-known and deservedly standard Manual, "*Faults of Speech*," emphatically stating in regard to stammering:

"The Stammerer's difficulty is, where to turn for effective assistance. Certainly not to any pretender who veils his method in convenient secrecy, nor to any who profess to 'charm' away the impediment, or to effect a cure in a single lesson! Not to any whose 'system' involves drawling, singing, sniffling, whistling, stamping, beating time—all of which expedients have constituted the 'curative' means of various charlatans; nor to any who bridle the mouth with mechanical appliances, forks on the tongue, tubes between the lips, bands over the larynx, pebbles in the mouth, etc., etc. The habit of stammering can only be counteracted by the cultivation of a habit of correct speaking founded on the application of natural principles. Respecting these there is no mystery except what arises from the little attention that has been paid to the *Science of Speech*."

The perfect candor with which he habitually addressed alike his pupils and the public at large, nowhere appears more forcibly presented than in the introductory essay to his standard work entitled: "PRINCIPLES OF ELOCUTION," where, among other things, he says:

"Elocution may be defined as the *effective expression of thought and sentiment* by speech, intonation and gesture, \* \* \* \*. Elocution does not occupy the place it reasonably ought to fill in the curriculum of education. The causes of this neglect will be found to consist mainly of these two; the subject is undervalued, because it is misunderstood, and it is misunderstood, because it is unworthily represented, in the great majority of books, which take its name on their title page; and also by the practice of too many of its teachers, who make an idle display in recitation, the chief, if not the only end of their instruction. \* \* \* \* The study of oratory is hindered by another prejudice, founded—too justly—on the ordinary methods and results of elocutionary teaching; the methods being unphilosophical and trivial, and their result not an improved manner, but an induced mannerism. The principle of instruction to which Elocution owes its meanness of reputation may be expressed in one word,—Imitation.

"But adherents of the imitative methods urge, they teach by Rule. There has been far too much teaching by 'Rules,' \* \* \* \* which are but logical deductions from understood principles. \* \* \* \* The rules of nature are few and simple, at the same time extensive and obvious in their application. These are PRINCIPLES rather than rules, and it is the highest business of philosophy to find out such, \* \* \* \*. Elocutionary exercise is popularly supposed to consist of merely Recitation, and the fallacy is kept up both in schools and colleges. \* \* \* \* This is a miserable trifling with an art of importance, and art that embraces the whole SCIENCE OF SPEECH."

The "teacher" period of Mr. Bell's professional life, as stated

by himself in the address he delivered June 29th, 1899, before the National Association of Elocutionists, "began in 1843, and finished in 1870," a period of strenuous activity and achievement, such as rarely falls to the lot of man. Apart from his regular engagements as instructor in the University of Edinburg, London, and other lesser institutions, the number of private pupils and continuous lectures and readings in public, would stagger any one to successfully accomplish, unless possessed of Prof. Bell's Scotch constitutional vigor, moral firmness, and simple mode of life. The fact is, were all that Alexander Melville Bell said and did written and fully told, it would constitute a goodly portion of a well-stocked private library. In 1842, already at the age of twenty-three years, he announced the formulation of a new theory of articulation and vocal expression. Although his father did not endorse all of his conclusions, he accorded them general approval. The event of the inception of this new theory, which permeated more or less all of his succeeding professional labors later on, is thus graphically described by his life-long and devoted friend, the genial and gifted Rev. David Macrea:

"I happened to be at his house on the memorable night when, busy in his den, there flashed upon him the idea of a physiological alphabet which would furnish to the eye a complete guide to the production of any oral sound by showing in the very forms of the letter the position and action of the organs of speech which its production required. It was the end toward which years of thought and study had been bringing him, but all the same, it came upon him like a sudden revelation, as a landscape might flash upon the vision of a man emerging from a forest. He took me into his den to tell me about it, and all that evening I could detect signs in his eye and voice of the exultation he was trying to suppress. At times it looked as if, like Archimedes, he might give vent to his emotions and shout 'Eureka.' "

After elaborating his system, he taught it to his younger sons, Alexander Graham and Charles Edward. His friend then had him give a public demonstration in the Glasgow Athenæum, preceded by a private exhibition at the residence of the Reverend gentleman's father. Of this exhibit, Mr. Macrea states:

"We had a few friends with us that afternoon, and when Bell's sons had been sent away to another part of the house out of earshot, we gave Bell the most peculiar and difficult sounds we could think of, including words from the French and Gaelic, following these with inarticulate

sounds, as of kissing, chuckling, etc. All these Bell wrote down in his Visible Speech alphabet, and his sons were then called in. I well remember our keen interest, and by and by, astonishment, as the lads—not yet thoroughly versed in the new alphabet—stood side by side looking earnestly at the paper their father had put in their hands, and slowly reproducing sound after sound just as we uttered them. Some of these sounds were quite incapable of phonetic representation with our alphabet. One friend in the company had given as his contribution, a long yawning sound, uttered as he stretched his arms and slowly twisted his body, like one in the last stage of weariness. Of course, visible speech could only represent the sound, not the physical movement, and I well remember the shouts of laughter that followed when the lads, after studying earnestly the symbols before them, reproduced the sound faithfully; but like the ghost of its former self in its detachment from the stretching and body twisting with which it had originally been combined."

This discovery, that the mechanism of speech operating on the organs of voice, acts in a *uniform* manner for the production of the *same Oral effect* in different individuals or persons of differing nationality, and his success in devising a scientifically correct, and physiological analogous system of graphic presentation which he termed "Visible Speech, the Science of Universal Alphabetics," indisputably ranks Professor A. M. Bell as foremost master of the "Science of Speech." No less an authority than Dr. Alexander John Ellis, the greatest phonetician, and most scholarly writer on phonetics of the last century, after having carefully studied and considered the achievement of Prof. Bell, unequivocally corroborates this by stating in concluding an elaborate description of the Bell system:

"As I write, I have full and distinct recollection of the labors of Animan, DuKempelen, Johannes Müller, K. M. Rapp, C. R. Lepsius E. Brücke, S. S. Haldeman, and Max Müller. To those I may add my own works of more or less pretension and value \* \* \*. I feel called upon to declare that until Mr. Melville Bell unfolded to me his careful, elaborate, yet simple and complete system, I had no knowledge of alphabetics as a science, \* \* \*. Alphabetics as a science, so far as I have been able to ascertain,—and I have looked for it far and wide,—did not exist, \* \* \*. I am afraid my language may seem exaggerated, and yet I have endeavored to moderate my tone, and have purposely abstained from giving full expression to the high satisfaction I have derived from my insight into the theory and practice of Mr. Melville Bell's "Visible Speech," as it is rightly named."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"The Reader," London, September 3rd, 1864.

In the generosity of his nature, Mr. Bell, without recompense, ineffectually offered to the British Government, *pro bono publico*, "all copyright in the system and its applications, in order that the use of the Universal Alphabet might be as free as that of common letters to all persons." Neither was his "request for an authorized investigation" given attention; eliciting from him in the preface of his Inaugural Edition, "Visible Speech, the Science of Universal Alphabetics," issued 1867, that if "the subject did not lie within the province of any existing department \* \* \* \* does not the fact that an offer of such a nature failed to obtain a hearing, indicate a national want, the want namely of some functionary whose *business* it should be to investigate new measures of any kind which may be presented for the benefit of society."

Meanwhile, in addition to his absorbing numerous engagements, he labored indefatigably with his pen, issuing during his career as a teacher in England, no less than seventeen works relating to speech, vocal physiology, stenography, etc., including the existing standard Manuals: "Principles of Elocution," "Principles of Speech and Dictionary of Sounds," and jointly with his brother, David Charles Bell, the "Standard Elocutionist," of which upwards of two hundred editions have appeared, and the demand for which continues unabated.

He commenced his career as teacher in Edinburg by giving instruction to classes in connection with the university, and also with the New College, up to the time of the death of his father, (1865), who had followed his profession in London, whilst his eldest son, David Charles, was tutor at the university in Dublin; the father and his two sons thus being the leading elocutionists of the Capitals of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Prof. A. Melville Bell then removed to London, leaving his eldest son, Melville James Bell, to succeed him in Edinburg. In London, he received the appointment of lecturer on Elocution in University College. There he remained until 1870, when, having already lost both his eldest and youngest sons, he determined, on account of the threatening condition of the health of his only remaining son, Alexander Graham, a third time, and on this occasion permanently, to cross the Atlantic. He located at "Tutelo Heights,"

near Brantford, Ontario, where, for a number of years he held the professorship of elocution in Queen's College, Kingston, and in addition delivered courses of lectures in Boston, Mass., and in Montreal, Toronto, London, and other Canadian cities, besides, jointly with his brother, Prof. David C. Bell, giving numerous public readings.

Mr. Bell's career as "Master" of the Science of Speech took indisputable form soon after his father's death. In 1868 already he was called from London to give a course of lectures before the Lowell Institute, Boston, Mass. Two years later, 1870, on his permanent settlement in Canada, he was a second time invited to give a course of twelve lectures before the Lowell Institute, which he had the honor to supplement the following year, 1871, by a third similar course. His residence at Brantford proved beneficial both to himself, and to his son, Alexander Graham, who was engrossed there in solving the problem of the telephone, and, upon fully recovering his health, accepted a position in the Faculty of the Boston University School of Oratory, and in 1872, opened in Boston an "Establishment for the study of Vocal Physiology," on the Board of Instruction of which, later on, Prof. A. Melville Bell's name appears first. During this latter period, Mr. Bell's earlier publications in England were re-issued and supplemented, notably so by a treatise on "Teaching Reading in Public Schools," and "The Faults of Speech," which latter has attained its fifth edition, and constitutes the only generally recognized Standard Manual upon the subject of correcting defects of speech.

Dr. Alexander Graham Bell had meanwhile married, perfected and patented the telephone, and permanently located in Washington City. The father and the latter's brother, however, being loath to leave their enjoyable home in Ontario, only decided finally to do so early in the year 1881, which gave occasion to a farewell banquet being tendered Prof. A. M. Bell by the city authorities of Brantford and his numerous friends, who desired to convey to him their sincere regret that circumstances rendered it desirable he should leave Brantford where he had resided during the past eleven years, loved and respected by an ever widening circle of friends. The occasion was heightened by the presence

of Prof. D. C. Bell and Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. In response to the toast, "The guest of the evening," and the unstinted encomiums paid both to him and to his brother by the Mayor and other prominent citizens, Prof. Bell responded giving in part the following interesting account of his coming to, and sojourn in, Canada, and touchingly referred to the cause of his departure:

"When I was a very young man, and somewhat delicate after a severe illness, I crossed the Atlantic to take up my abode for a time with a friend of my family in the island of Newfoundland. I was there long enough to see a succession of all its seasons, and I found the bracing climate so beneficial, that my visit undoubtedly laid the foundation of a robust manhood. People talk of the fogs of Newfoundland, but these hung over the banks, and not—or but little—over the land. I have seen more fog in any one year in London, than I did during all the thirty months I spent in the land of 'Cod.' It was there that I commenced the exercise of my profession, and it is curious now to think that my desire to visit the United States before returning home was defeated by the impossibility of getting directly from one country to the other. It was then necessary to go to England on the way to America. History we are told repeats itself. I am reminded of the saying by the circumstance, that when I left Newfoundland, 1842, I had the honor of being the recipient of a similar public leave-taking to that which you are favoring me with tonight. In 1867 and 1870, I suffered the grievous loss of two fine young men, first my youngest, and next my eldest son,<sup>1</sup> and the recollection of my early experience, determined me to try the effect of change of climate for the benefit of my only remaining son. I had received an invitation to deliver a course of lectures in the Lowell Institute, Boston, in the Autumn of 1870, and in July of that year, I broke up my London home and brought my family to Canada. Our plan was to give the climate a a two years' trial. This was eleven years ago, and my slim and delicate looking son of those days developed into the sturdy specimen of humanity with which you are all familiar. The facts are worth recording, because they show the invigorating influence of the Canadian climate, and may help other families in similar circumstances to profit by our experience.

"I was happily led to Brantford by the accidental proximity of an old friend, and I have seen no place within the bounds of Ontario that I would prefer for a pleasant, quiet and healthful residence \* \* \* \*. How is it then that, notwithstanding this declaration, I am about to bid adieu to the land that I love so well? You all know my son; the world knows

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Edward, died in 1867, age 19 years, to whose memory the Inaugural Edition of "Visible Speech, the Science of Universal Alphabetics," was dedicated. Melville J. Bell, the eldest son, died 1870, leaving a widow who accompanied the family to Canada, and there married Mr. George Ballachy.

his name, but only his friends know his heart is as good as his name is great. I can safely say that no other consideration that could be named, than to enjoy the society of our only son would have induced us to forsake our lovely 'Tutelo Heights,' and our kind good friends of Brantford. He could not come to us, so we resolved to go to him. \* \* \* I now confidently feel that my sojourn in Brantford will outlive my existence, because under yon roof of mine the telephone was born. A ray of fame, reflected from the son, will linger on the parental abode, \* \* \*.

Dr. Alexander Graham Bell being called upon to respond to the toast, "The Telephone and the Photophone," is reported to have said in the course of his remarks relative to the removal of his father, that the ties of flesh and blood were stronger than any other, and therefore, he should be pardoned for causing the removal of his parents from Canada. He spoke of the many works and inventions of Prof. Melville Bell in Stenography, Visible Speech, Elocution, etc. His stating that the "Telephone is due in a great measure to him," is reported to have been a generous admission that somewhat surprised those who heard it. It is furthermore reported that he gave some reminiscences of the early efforts that resulted in the discovery of the telephone, and added that many steps in its utilization were perfected at "Tutelo Heights."

Prof. A. M. Bell and his brother, with their families, upon arrival in Washington, soon located in two adjoining spacious old residences, Nos. 1517 and 1525 Thirty-fifth Street, N. W. There, with the exception of a brief period before his demise, when he removed to his son's residence, 1331 Connecticut Ave., Prof. Bell lived dispensing his wonted hospitality, and, amidst his books, enjoying the intellectual atmosphere that pervaded his literary "den."

But these Masters of Elocution by no means remained idle spectators: the elder brother being called upon repeatedly for his inimitable renditions of noted authors, to which he added in 1895, "The Reader's Shakespeare, in three volumes, for the use of schools and colleges, private and family reading, and for public and platform delivery," whilst his junior brother, designated the "Nestor of Elocutionary Science," constantly was called upon either by letter or personally on the part of the more eminent elocutionists, philologists, and pedagogues of the age, to advise on matters relating to the one science of which he was the un-



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disputed head and master. Not only this, during his twenty-five years of residence at the Nation's Capital, of which, in the year 1898, he became a duly incorporated citizen, he personally, upon invitation, delivered lectures before the "American Association for the Advancement of Science," "Johns Hopkins University," "Columbia University," "Modern Language Association," "National Association of Elocutionists," "New York Teachers of Oratory," and the "American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf," etc., etc.

During the same period he issued a revised version of the "Inaugural edition of Visible Speech"; "Sounds and their Relations." now a standard Manual in Normal Training Schools for teachers of the Deaf; also other Manuals on "Speech Reading and Articulation Teaching," "English Visible Speech in Twelve Lessons," "Popular Manual of Visible Speech and Vocal Physiology," "World English the Universal Language," and "Handbook of World English," "English Line Writing on the basis of Visible Speech," and, finally, "Science of Speech," together with a fifth edition of "Principles of Elocution."

The time had arrived, when, despite pleadings of numerous applicants, the venerated master must resolutely decline to give verbal instruction, much as he mentally enjoyed teaching. One of the last privileged personal pupils, now teaching in a prominent institution for the deaf, thus speaks of her master's method:

"Prof. Bell was a wonderful teacher, I never had his equal. His explanations were so clear and full that at the end of a lesson it was quite impossible to think of asking any further question. Every possible uncertainty had been anticipated."

The autographic testimonial of ability this pupil received was equally unequivocal:

"Miss \_\_\_\_\_ was a pupil of mine in 'Visible Speech,' and distinguished herself by aptitude in the study, and by rapid and solid progress in the practice. Miss \_\_\_\_\_ has fine abilities, and she will, I have no doubt, do honor to any position, the duties of which she may undertake.

"1525 35th Street, N. W.,

"Washington, D. C., July 16th, 1896.

"(Signed.)

*Alex<sup>r</sup> Melville Bell*

The following tribute was paid the deceased in the Boston "School Document No. 9, 1905":

"We can perhaps make no greater acknowledgment of indebtedness to the late Prof. Alexander Melville Bell, the distinguished philologist, who, in 1870, upon invitation, told the teachers how his system of phonetic writing, named by him Visible Speech, could be made useful in the development of the speech of deaf children, than to say that it continues to be the basis of all instruction in speech in this school.<sup>1</sup> The result of his visit was the employment of the son, Alexander Graham Bell, as a special instructor in the school for a period of three months."

The scene at Chautauqua, June 29th, 1899, on the occasion of the last meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists which he attended, was impressive beyond ability adequately to be described in words. In the commencement of the ever memorable address on "Fundamentals of Elocution," delivered by Prof. Bell, he tersely stated:

"Elocution is an art: hence its practice is more important than its theory, \* \* \* \*. The requirements of Elocution are: first, that the speaker should be heard without effort on the hearers' part; second, that the utterance of words and syllables should be distinct and unambiguous; and third, that vocal expression should be in sympathy with the subject. In common practice we find that these requirements are conspicuously wanting."

At the close of the address, no less than a dozen members successively arose to pay tribute to the speaker.

"It seems to me," said the first, "not only fitting, but a very natural thing for this audience to desire to express its feeling, and I rise to move a vote of thanks to our distinguished benefactor of past years, who has so honored us today, for the magnificent exemplification which he presents in his own person of the benefits to be derived from our work. When a man so glorious in years, and in work, can stand so magnificently before this assembly, he presents a most inspiring example for emulation. And it is with a feeling of deepest gratitude in my heart for what he has done today in thus honoring us, and what he has done for elocution in the past, that I move, on behalf of this audience, a vote of thanks to Prof. Bell for having come before us and given us this treat."

The vote was taken by an enthusiastic rising of the entire assembly. Another speaker said:

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<sup>1</sup>"The Horace Mann School."

"In the presence of the true, the beautiful, and the good, there seems to be an atmosphere in which all personal differences sink out of sight. Standing as we do before one whose life has been a benediction to our cause, the desire for victory in any lower sense of that term, seems to pass entirely away. Since each one of the preceding speakers has drawn some moral from this present occasion, I should like to offer my contribution. We regard the speaker of today so highly because he has stood against clamor, against so-called public demand, against the exigencies of varying occasions, and has upheld the TRUTH, simplicity, and integrity of purpose, \* \* \* \*. Let us then take from this inspiring hour today, the lesson from the life of the speaker, who, against almost insuperable obstacles, has stood firmly for the right, and in the end, like Dr. Russeil, and Mr. Murdoch, is crowned a Victor."

These, and other like remarks, were forcibly and touchingly supplemented by the able editor of the official organ, who wrote in regard to the occasion:

"'Consecration' and 'benediction' were words frequently heard at the Chautauqua convention of Elocutionists. These words were used in connection with the presence of Alexander Melville Bell, who, at the age of eighty, stood upon the platform and delivered an address with a grace of manner, pureness of enunciation, and distinctness of articulation, surpassed by no other speaker at the convention. Bell's presence permeated and dominated everything, \* \* \* \*. Alexander Melville Bell is the greatest living elocutionist. To attend the convention, he made a special journey of two thousand miles, foregoing the coolness and quiet of his distinguished son's summer Canadian home. Well might the members of the National Association of Elocutionists rise to their feet when he entered the hall, and well might they congratulate themselves on being privileged to attend a session that is a historical event in American elocution. Words can only very inadequately describe the scenes at the Bell session. On the platform stood an elocutionary patriarch, whose discoveries, inventions, and writings have vitalized, purified, and glorified the English language: uttering words of counsel, and pronouncing a benediction. There he stood, erect, reposeful, vigorous, graceful: his bearing, gesture, voice, articulation—all models worthy the study of those that aspire to oratorical excellence. Before him sat many of the leading elocutionists of America, hushed, attentive, impressed—so impressed that men shed tears, and when a resolution of thanks was moved, voices were choked, and the pauses of silence were more eloquent than were the words. The sentiments of the entire assembly were voiced by a speaker who said that he CONSECRATED himself anew to his profession, and that hereafter he never could, or would apologize for being an elocutionist, \* \* \* \*. The presence of Alexander Melville Bell at the Chautauqua convention

has leavened the whole elocutionary lump, and has put a HEART into the National Association of Elocutionists."

Here was a spontaneous recognition of the professional life work of a Master truly great. Among many other tributes rendered, I will here add only that of two of his pupils, one of whom, now a leading elocutionist, thus sums up Mr. Bell's elocutionary labors:

"*'An Uncrowned King,'* the phrase sprang to my mind as Prof. Alexander Melville Bell entered his reception room one summer day. It was my first interview. I had cordially been invited to come to Washington to review '*Principles of Elocution,*' and '*Visible Speech,*' with the author. Many years before I had studied the '*Principles of Elocution,*' and had used it with my pupils. The assent of the mind to truth is one of the keenest of intellectual pleasures, and I find myself constantly, in teaching from his book, feeling that enthusiastic thrill. There have been many elocution books written since first his appeared, *but where they depart from him, they are wrong, and where they follow, they are not original.* He cut the way through the forest, by giving clear principles, not mere rules, and the keen ear that could detect the faintest departure from right speech, which made him the great inventor of the Visible Speech Alphabet, served him also in his analysis, and interpretation of dramatic emotion. His own voice was rich, melodious, and beautiful, even at eighty, while his enunciation of course was that of a past master of speech. In Prof. Bell's books the serious student finds the explanation of all his difficulties, and the sure guide to the eradication of his defects. The lawyer, the lecturer, the politician, the preacher need just the aid that he gives—for with him, the art of elocution is worthy of the best effort of all voice uses. And all such need to study its principles. \* \* \* \* A great and noble life has passed onward. But in his books, his spirit speaks to us, and many generations still."

The other, one of Prof. Bell's most ardent and efficient disciples of his system of "*Visible Speech,*" which constitutes the scientific basis of his success as a master of speech:

"The invention of *Visible Speech* is one of the world's greatest benefactions, and has given mankind the only possible Universal Alphabet. It has a physiological basis. Each symbol means a definite position of the organs of speech, which, if correctly assumed, produces a definite result. Every sound possible for the human voice can be represented by these symbols. There is, therefore, no language nor variation of language in dialect, or even individual idiosyncracy, which cannot be represented by *Visible Speech* and reproduced vocally by any one knowing the system.

"In consequence of this fact, through *Visible Speech* one may learn

to speak every language as it is spoken by the Nations of all classes. Missionaries learn through Visible Speech to speak accurately the language of high caste, as well as that of the lower classes, thereby greatly increasing the scope of their influence. Through its perfect mastery impediments of speech can be successfully treated, and the hopeless handicap of stammering, stuttering, and like blemishes disappear as if by magic. A knowledge of it furnishes the very best vocal training, because its symbols compel perfect precision of muscular adjustment for their accurate reproduction in tone, and so presents a system of vocal gymnastics whereby the greatest skill and flexibility of the vocal organs is attained. The effect produced upon the voice and speech is analogous to that obtained for the body by the varied exercises in use for physical training. It is in fact invaluable to both speakers and singers."

The following tribute paid Prof. Bell by one of his most eminent professional colleagues, constitutes a recognition of his exceptional mastership of the Science underlying his methods of acquiring perfection in the art of speech, such as has come to very few, if any elocutionists, from well recognized authority:

"I retain a vivid remembrance of meeting Mr. Alexander Melville Bell before leaving England. I was much struck with the purity and charm of his speech. It was a revelation to me. His utterance seemed to combine the easy, graceful intonation of the talk of a cultured actress, with the strength and resonance that should characterize the speech of a man, and though finely modulated, it was without a suggestion of affectation, either as to matter or manner. I had never before, and I do not know that I have since, heard English spoken with the ease and delicate precision that so distinctly marked the speech of Mr. Bell. His clean-cut articulation, his flexibility of voice, and finely modulated utterance of English, was an exemplification of what efficient and long continued training of the vocal organs will do for human speech, and how charming the result."<sup>1</sup>

The scope of Prof. Bell's thoughts, however, were not wholly absorbed by his profession, as the list of publications here appended, and the honors bestowed upon him, show. He was also thoroughly versed in the Science of Phonetics and Stenography; likewise an ardent advocate of amended Orthography, deeply interested in various forms of Social Science, and possessed of considerable poetic gift. Whilst not an electrician, he may no doubt, however, have contributed somewhat towards

<sup>1</sup>See "Life and Labors of Sir Isaac Pitman, as told by Benn Pitman," p. 184.

stimulating his surviving son in the incipient conception of the Telephone by having offered a premium to whichever of his sons should construct the most effective articulating apparatus: one of which of these earlier speaking devices was recently yet in possession of the family.

The amelioration of the condition of discharged convicts, and provisions for the care of neglected and dependent children, deeply interested him, and to the latter trend of his sympathies is due the establishment, at Colonial Beach, Virginia, of the "Bell Home," which has proven to be one of the most efficient benefactions for poor children in the District of Columbia.

Among the objects Mr. Bell seemed to take special interest in promoting, was the work of the Volta Bureau for the increase and diffusion of knowledge relating to the deaf, founded by his son, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Not only did he contribute generously towards the architectural attractiveness of the building, but donated to the Bureau his entire stock of publications, including stereotype plates, and also his valuable copyrights, increasing thus its efficiency: this, and the service which his Visible Speech device rendered in acquiring speech and the art of speech or lip-reading, endeared him to many deaf, notably among them, Helen A. Keller, whose love and regard for him he always spoke of most appreciatingly.

Although Mr. Bell had permanently left Ontario nearly a quarter of a century ago, true to his nature, he retained up to the last a strong affection for his many Canadian friends. And the citizens of Brantford showed their appreciation of this devotion at each recurring visit Mr. Bell paid to his former home. On the occasion of his presence there during the Dominion tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, October 14th, 1901, when the Royal couple stopped enroute in Brantford, Mr. Bell was accorded the honor of presenting, on behalf of the City, to His Royal Highness, the Duke, a handsomely mounted long distance Telephone outfit, furnished by the Bell Telephone Co. On being presented to His Royal Highness, the latter cordially shook hands with Mr. Bell, who then impressively said:

"On behalf of the City of Brantford, I have the honor of presenting to your Royal Highness, this Telephone as a Souvenir of your brief, but

highly prized visit to the 'Telephone City.' May all our telephones and telegraphs continue to bring us only glad tidings of your happy progress throughout the British Dominion, where each province vies with the others in the warmth of its welcome to his Majesty's representatives, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. Health and long life to King Edward the Seventh, and to his Queen. God save the King and Queen."

Both the Duke and the Duchess expressed themselves as highly gratified on receiving so singularly appropriate and useful a present.

Nor were friends and relatives on the distant Pacific Coast, and in remoter Australia, forgotten. Nothing seemed to gratify Mr. Bell more than the repeated evidence by letter of their continued remembrance.

The greatest charm, however, of Prof. Bell, was the social sphere of his home. To all, rich or poor, high or lowly, Mr. Bell was always courteous and kind. He proved himself a devoted father, a model husband, and exemplary grandfather, great grandfather, uncle, and cousin. Making available provision during his lifetime for relatives nearest and dearest to him was characteristic of his constant thoughtfulness. Mr. Bell twice married most happily; first, 1844, Eliza Grace, the refined and accomplished daughter of Surgeon Samuel Symonds, mother of his surviving son, and beside whose remains now lie those of her distinguished husband. His second marriage, 1898, to Mrs. Harriet G. Shibley, who survives him, proved a source of rare connubial felicity. The filial devotion accorded Professor Bell by his immediate family, was simply ideal, of a nature so perfectly exemplary and beautiful, that any attempt to speak of his family relations truthfully would be invading the sanctity of a model home. All who have been privileged to be near him, could not otherwise than become deeply sensible of the ennobling and refining influence of his wholesome personality. To sit at his board, and occasionally enjoy the elocutionary "bouts" between him and his accomplished brother, in which, at times, they were joined by his equally gifted son, as they bantered each other with recitations from Shakespeare, or other favorite dramatists and authors, not infrequently dialectic and in Gaelic, was an intellectual treat few mortals can ever have enjoyed with such

recognized elocutionary masters as principals. The humor, prompt retorts, and fire that at such times would fly from one to another was something akin to an array of batteries emitting electric sparks, and would baffle accurate portrayal. It can truthfully be said of Prof. Bell, that a kindlier face than his has seldom been seen, especially among so-called more thoughtful scientists. His optimism constantly made itself manifest by the evident delight he showed in embracing every possible opportunity in giving delight to others. The rare faculty of "making the best of everything," seemed spontaneous with him. While positive in his conceptions of the beautiful and true, uncharitable criticism seemed foreign to him. His mind seemed utterly free from malice and bent on doing all the good he could. His sphere was one of marked content and radiant good will. Although often earnest in mien, no one has ever been heard to say that they saw Mr. Bell really angered. Rage was foreign to his nature. He could calmly look upon a furious storm, admire the force of wind and wave, and it seemed to harbor no terror to him. Scenes of unruffled wave, where steamer and sailing craft silently passed along on their errands of service to fellowmen, such as greeted him from his seat on the embankment in front of his residence at Colonial Beach, were equally if not more to his liking than the commotion of antagonising elements. By nature he was averse to the boisterous, and courted rather scenes of silence and gentleness. To see him ensconced in his chair on the well shaded vineclad veranda of his riverside home, at times reading and smoking, or watching the brooding, ever chattering sparrows he had encouraged to build their nests along the inner eaves, was to see incarnated content upon his countenance. Always fond of domestic animals, in later years he more especially liked to keep pets, and loved to feed his dogs, birds, and fishes himself. In his city den or studio, he could while away hours patiently analyzing the speech of his parrot, and determining the notes of his canaries and mocking birds, or marvelling at the ceaseless and graceful evolutions of the fishes in his aquarium. These pets, together with flowers of all kinds, not only afforded him congenial companionship and diversion, but also a constant, delightfully interesting study.

Prof. Bell was honored with the fellowship of the Educational Institute of Scotland, and with that of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts, the latter of which, in special recognition of the system of phonetic shorthand he devised, awarded him in addition its Silver Medal. In 1885 he was likewise elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; he was an active member of the Modern Language Association of America, Anthropological Society of Washington, and the National Geographic Society, a life member of the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf, an honorary member of the National Association of Elocutionists, etc., etc.

Despite his advanced years, Prof. Bell retained his mental vigor and general good health to a remarkable degree. In order to enjoy each other's society as much as possible, the father, towards the last, assented to take up his abode with the son, 1331 Connecticut Avenue, N. W., where, surrounded by every possible comfort, Mr. Bell received the tireless attention of a devoted wife, loving son, daughter-in-law, and faithful attendants. As the last summer approached, Mr. Bell longed to go to his favorite riverside homestead, but it could only be for a brief period when his enfeebled condition made it desirable he should return to his son's residence in Washington, where, August 7th, 1905, surrounded by his immediate family and a few close friends, he gently passed away. Truly, like Gladstone will Alexander Melville Bell also long be remembered as "The Grand Old Man."

The interment took place at Rock Creek cemetery, the Rev. Dr. Teunis S. Hamlin officiating, and the following distinguished associates serving as honorary pallbearers: Hon. James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture; Dr. William T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education; Hon. H. B. F. MacFarland, Commissioner of the District of Columbia; Prof. William H. Dall, of the Smithsonian Institution; Mr. Ainsworth R. Spofford, first Assistant Librarian of Congress; and Dr. A. L. E. Crouter, President of the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf.

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