

George Bell and Sons

(London: 1873-1910)

George Bell

(London: 1839-1856)

Bell and Daldy

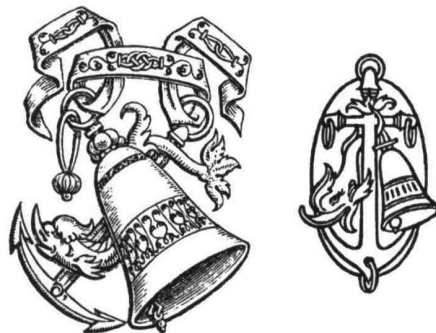
(London: 1856-1873)

George Bell and Sons Ltd.

(London: 1910-1977)

Bell and Hyman Ltd.

(London: 1977-1989)



In 1839 George Bell founded a publishing firm that endured, in its modest way, for a century and a half. In his memoir of his father, *George Bell Publisher* (1924), Edward Bell remarked that the family firm was of "moderate size, of no great antiquity, and with no pretensions to any phenomenal successes in the book-world." Yet, at George Bell's death in 1890, the *Athenaeum* referred to him as "one of the most successful publishers of the latter half of this century." Bell specialized in the educational book trade and his sons carried on the tradition. The firm was not glamorous or innovative, although on occasion it became entwined with some of the more sensational characters in the London publishing world. Bell's inclinations tended toward the more solid side of the literary marketplace: school and university textbooks, theological works, and reprints of European classics. By following his instincts Bell established the foundation that would ensure the firm's longevity.

Born in 1814, Bell was the eldest son of Matthew Bell, a bookseller, stationer, bookbinder, and printer who now and then published manuscripts that came his way in the Yorkshire town of Richmond. It was in his father's shop that George Bell gained his first professional experi-

ence. There he might have stayed had he not been exposed to wider horizons at the local grammar school. The Reverend James Tate, the headmaster, was a classics scholar of wide reputation who tutored Bell's literary tastes. When Bell left school at age sixteen, he cherished scholarly aspirations and an ambition to do more than run the local bookshop. After a couple of years assisting his father, Bell left Richmond to test his mettle in the London publishing world.

As an assistant at the wholesale booksellers Whittaker and Company of Ave Maria Lane, Bell made some of the connections that would determine the course of his own career as an independent bookseller/publisher. Whittaker specialized in the schoolbook trade; during the six years Bell spent with the firm he learned a great deal about the educational book market and decided to base his future on his contemporaries' passion for formal and informal education. Bell's first ventures into publishing took the form of writing shilling guides to subjects such as chess, cricket, angling, and architecture. They appeared under the imprint either of his employer's firm or that of Simpkin, another wholesale book dealer.

In 1839, having made a little profit on his handbooks and having some prosperous relatives

who were willing to finance his first enterprise, he set up shop at 1 Bouverie Street as an educational book supplier. Armed with a letter of recommendation from Tate, who by then was canon of St. Paul's, Bell canvassed the academic publishers of England's two major university towns. He persuaded the firms of Deighton, Grant, Hall, Stevenson, and Johnson of Cambridge and Parker, Vincent, and Slatter of Oxford to use him as their London agent. In his first catalogue in 1840 Bell announced that his premises would henceforth be the London depot for supplying university books to serious readers in the general public.

In establishing a secure source of income from the retail trade as he took his first steps into the more turbulent world of publishing, Bell followed a practice widespread among his peers. His first independent publications, which appeared in 1840, also displayed his cautious inclinations. An edition of Cicero's *De Senectute* with explanatory notes and translations and a gardening handbook were the first to carry the imprint "George Bell, 1 Bouverie Street." Classical texts and practical guidebooks were to dominate the Bell lists in years to come. Bell also had a keen eye for up-and-coming public enthusiasms: in 1840, for instance, he published a series of railway guides to take advantage of the first burst of railway tourism. His "Railway Companions" combined practical information about timetables and fares with descriptions of towns and historic sites along the route.

Within his first year as a bookseller and publisher Bell outgrew his original premises and rented more expansive quarters at 186 Fleet Street. He had a personal reason for moving as well: he wanted to secure suitable accommodations for his bride, Hannah Simpson Bell, a neighbor from his hometown whom he married in 1840. His son Edward, who was to lead the firm into the twentieth century, was born in 1844 and spent the first five years of his life in the Fleet Street house.

During the 1840s Bell's literary circle widened and his business connections became more complex. After a heartening success with Mrs. Jane Loudon's *The First Book of Botany* (1841), which sold nearly nine hundred copies, Bell went into partnership with Henry Wood, another neighbor from the Richmond days, in 1842. Wood had a talent for writing humorous handbooks on card games; he also had a penchant for playing those games, and frequently lost. The partnership lasted only a few months; Bell was left to face

Wood's creditors, who took all the capital Wood had brought in, plus a share of the profit and interest—£895 all told.

More satisfactory was Bell's friendship with the brothers Alexander and Daniel Macmillan, who launched their bookselling business in London just as Bell began his. Bell published Alexander Macmillan's anonymous biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley, which included a selection of Shelley's poems; Macmillan bore part of the expense of publication. Through Macmillan, Bell made his first connections with the Scottish educational milieu, resulting in a series of six schoolbooks by Scottish schoolmasters. After the Macmillan brothers moved to Cambridge in 1843, the close relationship between the firms persisted. Bell became Macmillan's representative in London, and the firms jointly published a theological book by Hugh Miller in 1844. Alexander Macmillan signaled the depth of his regard when he invited Bell to accompany the family at Daniel Macmillan's funeral in 1857. In the next generation, Edward Bell and Daniel Macmillan's eldest son, Frederick, were friends.

Another early friend whose association widened Bell's list was Henry Cole. A man of diverse interests, Cole was the savior of Britain's official documents, which he organized in the first Public Record Office. He was also a founder of the South Kensington Museum and an adviser on cultural matters to Prince Albert. Cole's interest in the practical application of art led him to project a series of illustrated handbooks intended to direct attention to Britain's architectural heritage. He chose the pseudonym "Felix Summerly" for his works, the first of which was a guide to the art treasures and grounds of Hampton Court, published by Hugh Cunningham in 1841. It was a great success, and the second edition came out in 1843 under the George Bell imprint. Bell also published Cole's *A Handbook for Holidays* (1842) and *The National Gallery* (1843), illustrated handsomely by artists such as J. B. Pyne and David Cox and, for the more modest pictures, by Cole himself. Cole cultivated another of his pet projects, his interest in skilled trades for women, in these productions: the illustrations were engraved by a group of women he had encouraged to learn woodcutting. Through his friendship with Cole, Bell began to gain a reputation for books on art, architecture, and archaeology—particularly those he produced in collaboration with Joseph Cundall, another of Cole's protégés, who was among the first to use photography in

published books. *Examples of Ornament*, which Cundall produced for Bell in 1855, was illustrated by twenty-four plates depicting ornaments from the Crystal Palace and museums in London. (Later Cundall applied his interest in photographic reproduction to *The Great Works of Raphael Sanzio of Urbino*, which Bell and Daldy published in 1866.)

All the time he was expanding the publishing side of his business, Bell was still carrying on the retail side from his Fleet Street premises. He was a member of the Booksellers' Association, which aimed to limit the business to licensed booksellers who would agree to sell books at the published prices; the publishers would in turn protect the licensed booksellers by boycotting unlicensed ones. Their efforts to mitigate the precariousness of the publishing and bookselling business led to a collision with the champions of free trade in literature. At a time when liberalism was ascendant and laissez-faire the watchword of economic orthodoxy, any attempt to regulate the marketplace was bound to set up a public outcry. The question of free access to literature and knowledge became an emotional issue, and was inflamed by the well-publicized and spirited objections of authors and intellectuals such as Charles Dickens, John Stuart Mill, and Thomas Carlyle. The opposition overcame the ability of the Booksellers' Association to enforce its licensing regulations, and the society disbanded in 1852. Four decades later, Edward Bell was to lead a similar, and more successful, effort with the Net Book Agreement.

Although Bell was dabbling in many issues and a variety of publishing enterprises, educational books for schools or private self-improvement were his main interest. Beginning with his friendship with his old schoolmaster, Tate, and Tate's son James, who had succeeded his father as headmaster of Bell's old school in Richmond, Bell cultivated a wide network of headmasters and solicited their advice about gaps in the textbook supply. An early and ultimately profitable project was a series of school classics that would have sufficient English notes to explain references yet not do the pupil's translation work for him. Schoolmasters welcomed the idea, but the difficulty of finding well-established scholars who had sufficient leisure to do the work delayed the series. When the first volume, an edition of Xenophon's *Anabasis* by the Reverend J. F. MacMichael, came out in 1847, its eager reception in almost all the schools teaching Greek encouraged



George Bell, age thirty-seven

Bell to persist with his scheme. To advance the pace of publication he sought out his old employers, Whittaker and Company, to join him in the venture. The Grammar School Classics appeared in rapid succession throughout the 1850s. His ambition and confidence increasing, Bell expanded his project to include more sophisticated classics texts for university and upper-form students, the *Biblioteca Classica*. Both series were edited by A. J. Maclean and George Long. The sales from the most popular books in the series, F. A. Paley's edition of the works of Aeschylus (1855) and J. Conington's edition of the works of Virgil (1866), fully justified Bell's enthusiasm.

Two periodicals reinforced the educational character of the firm. Bell published the *Journal of Education* for professional teachers from 1847 until 1854, when it became independent. Intended for laymen, *Notes and Queries* was initially edited in 1850 by W. J. Thoms, librarian to the House of Lords. Its weekly issues sold well, and there was great demand for the half-yearly volumes as well. In 1863 it expanded into its own quarters.

Through his classics series and periodicals Bell formed lasting friendships with some of the most important scholars and educators of the time, and his reputation as a publisher of reputable educational works solidified. Bell's ideas for

textbook innovation endeared him to many of the generation of reforming headmasters, such as William Haig Brown of Charterhouse, B. H. Kennedy of Shrewsbury, and E. W. Benson, future archbishop of Canterbury. Through these men and their clerical colleagues Bell expanded his catalogue of published sermons, which he had begun to publish in the mid 1840s. Among the most successful of her theological books were those of the popular preacher W. Farquhar Hook, dean of Chichester. One of the most often reprinted of Hook's works, *The Christian Taught by the Church Services* (1847-1848), was actually written by his wife and edited by the clergyman.

The Reverend Alfred Gatty, vicar of Ecclesfield, also offered his sermons for publication by Bell in 1847. What recommended Bell's firm to the vicar was, once again, the Richmond connection: Gatty's wife, Margaret, had been a childhood friend of Bell. Her father, the Reverend Dr. Alexander John Scott, was famous as the chaplain who was present when Nelson died at Trafalgar. Dr. Scott was also a bibliophile who had haunted William Bell's bookshop when George Bell was growing up. The association between the Bell and Gatty families, which was to extend over two more generations, brought Bell into the expanding realm of children's literature. Margaret Gatty proved to be a writer whose delicate fancies enchanted children from the time Bell published her first book, *The Fairy Godmother*, in 1851. She was Bell's most prominent children's author until her daughter, Juliana Horatia Ewing, outshone her in this department.

The series that established Gatty's reputation was *Parables from Nature*, which began in 1855. In these little stories she adorned her impressive knowledge of botany with imaginative embroidery and infused the whole with the Christian spirit that was never absent from her work. Mrs. Gatty illustrated the first few volumes, but for subsequent volumes and later editions Bell commissioned illustrations from Holman Hunt, Edward Burne-Jones, and John Millais. *Parables from Nature* was a perennially popular series into the 1920s. It was translated into French, Italian, German, Russian, Danish, and Swedish. Fittingly, since Mrs. Gatty took her first inspiration from Hans Christian Andersen, the Danes were particularly enthusiastic about her "parables."

With children's literature, art, and architecture added to his basic interest in educational and theological publishing, Bell's business was diversifying. By the mid 1850s it was expanding geo-

graphically as well. In 1850 he had opened a bookshop for Brighton College, chiefly to provide an occupation for his brother, John; but it was not profitable, and he had soon given it up. In 1854 the publishing firm of J. and J. Deighton of Cambridge came on the market. Bell had acted as the London agent for Deighton since his earliest days as an independent businessman. Acquiring this old, established concern made Bell one of the major educational publishers in Britain. He made W. Wright Smith resident partner in the Cambridge firm, which was renamed Deighton, Bell and Company. Even so, Bell was obliged to make frequent journeys to Cambridge. He was becoming personally overextended and therefore entered into partnership with Frederick R. Daldy in 1856. Bell and Daldy cemented their union with a new title-page symbol, the bell and anchor. The anchor derived from the anchor symbol used by the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius, whom Daldy fancied as an ancestor. Bell's acquisition in 1854 of the Aldine Edition of British Poets series from the firm of William Pickering, which also used Aldus's symbol, further justified the logic of Bell and Daldy's logo. As it began to republish the Aldine editions, poetry became another of Bell and Daldy's subspecialties. One of the most noteworthy volumes in the series was William Morris's early epic, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858).

In addition to the Aldine Poets series, Bell and Daldy published the scholarly and humorous verses of the academics C. S. Calverley and George Otto Trevelyan. In the late 1850s Bell and Daldy began to publish the popular didactic lyrics of Adelaide Anne Procter, a protégée of Dickens. Her first two volumes of poetry sold very well: *Legends and Lyrics* (1858-1861) was still being republished by the firm in 1913. Even so, because of his professional and personal connections to theologians and his own fervent commitment to the Church of England, Bell refused to publish the verses that reflected Procter's conversion to Roman Catholicism just before her death in 1864. An even more popular poet of the domestic virtues, Coventry Patmore, entrusted his work to Bell and Daldy, though by his own choice he published it at his own expense. Two other popular Victorian poets whose work Bell and Daldy published from time to time were Andrew Lang and the future poet laureate Robert Bridges. Gift-book anthologies usually brought sure sales: Bell and Daldy reaped large profits from its poetry

books for children, which soon saturated the elementary school market.

Bell and David Bogue had formed an agreement in their early days to act as each other's executors, and when Bogue died in 1860 Bell was able to acquire the British rights to *Webster's Dictionary* from Bogue's estate. Henceforth, English and foreign-language dictionaries would become prominent features of Bell and Daldy's catalogues.

Bell and his partner Daldy were casting about for further investment opportunities when the extensive properties of Henry Bohn came on the market in 1864. Bohn's "Libraries" of more than six hundred works, including copyrights, plates, and stock, represented a more ambitious expansion than the partners had originally envisaged. Daldy was apparently more sanguine about investing than was the cautious Bell. In this case, Daldy's flair for financial juggling proved itself as he persuaded the Clowes printing company and the stationers Spalding and Hodge to lend part of the thirty-five thousand pounds the acquisitions entailed. Soon Bell and Daldy presided over a much larger company with an expanded staff, which included Spalding's son, Howard, as an apprentice. To accommodate their expanding business Bell and Daldy took over Bohn's two houses in York Street, Covent Garden, plus a third house in the neighborhood. Bohn, however, was reluctant to accept the fact of his retirement: although he had sold his business, he still occupied the main office in York Street until, exasperated, Bell broke into the office one morning in 1867 and took possession of the desk. Bohn then retired with reasonably good grace. With sales of the Bohn Libraries standing at over one hundred thousand volumes a year, Bell and Daldy no longer needed the retail side of the business. In 1867 they abandoned the Fleet Street address and henceforth concentrated on publishing from York Street.

The year 1867 also brought Edward Bell's graduation from Cambridge and entry into the family firm. During his first few years in the publishing business Edward indulged his literary pendants, spending most of his time developing the Bohn Libraries and the Aldine Poets series and reading in the British Museum. These congenial pursuits ended abruptly when the death of the cashier obliged Edward to take a more practical involvement in the firm's affairs. His initiation into the financial side of the business coincided with one of the most perilous episodes of its history.

Though prospering, Bell and Daldy were indebted to their stationers Spalding and Hodge. Indebted to the same firm, but on a much greater scale, was the flamboyant impresario of publishing, Alexander Strahan. Perhaps because Spalding had a stake in the prosperity of both firms, he persuaded Bell and Daldy to make Strahan their retail distributor after they gave up the Fleet Street outlet. The result was to add Bell and Daldy to Strahan's string of nervous creditors. In addition to what he owed Spalding and Hodge, Strahan began to accrue debts to Bell and Daldy as he sold their books but failed to pass on the profits. Because they relied on Strahan to sell their books, Bell and Daldy had to keep on supplying him with them; their chances of recovering the money he already owed them hinged on Strahan's future success. This predicament came to a head in 1869, at a time when George Bell was ill and frequently absent from the office. Without the cautious Bell to act as a brake on his impetuosity, Daldy bound the firm's financial future even more tightly to that of Strahan: anxious to disentangle themselves from Strahan's financial snare, Spalding and Hodge persuaded Daldy to take over the management of much of Strahan's empire and to underwrite ten thousand pounds of Strahan's debt to themselves. Bell and Daldy purchased eight thousand pounds worth of Strahan stock and copyrights and took over some of Strahan's most popular productions, including the *Contemporary Review* and the *Sunday Magazine*. For another six thousand pounds they were to have rights to the much vaunted "pocket" Tennyson series that Strahan had scheduled to come out in 1870. When Alfred Tennyson objected to a change of publisher the Strahan imprint remained, but Bell and Daldy published the series and was supposed to profit from the sale. The whole gambit was designed to simplify the network of debts connecting the three firms and to steady Strahan's course by reducing his responsibility within his firm. In reality Strahan's debts continued to outdistance the profits his creditors were able to glean from his publications. When Edward Bell reflected on this episode in *George Bell Publisher*, he described Strahan's ideals of publishing in charitable terms as "laudable, even grand, but not tempered with prudence"; but, he ruefully admitted, Bell and Daldy's connection with Strahan was "a rash adventure."

The Strahan affair overshadowed all other concerns at Bell and Daldy for the three years

the two firms' fates were entwined. It was during this period, 1869 to 1872, that George Bell decided to end his partnership with Daldy. The presence of his sons, Edward and Arthur, in the family business was his ostensible reason for not renewing the partnership, but the Strahan affair undoubtedly strained the relationship. In the spring of 1872 Strahan was obliged to withdraw from his company; an ally of Spalding's, James Virtue, managed the firm so as to retrieve some eleven thousand pounds to put toward the Bell and Daldy / Spalding and Hodge debt. But the final resolution derived from a high-minded gesture by Thomas Spalding, who took back the Strahan copyrights and stocks and relieved Bell and Daldy of the debt. Spalding then endowed his son Howard with the Strahan line and engaged him to work with Virtue. It was to this firm that Daldy retreated with his share of the Bell and Daldy assets and goodwill. In 1873 the new firm Virtue, Spalding and Daldy took up headquarters in Ivy Lane; Bell's firm was re-named George Bell and Sons.

It was ironic that while Bell was grappling with the Strahan labyrinth he was being pressured by his friends, the Gatty family, to wage a more vigorous war against the Strahan competition. The Gattys' concern centered on their interest in children's periodicals. In 1866 Bell and Daldy had introduced a high-quality children's magazine which Margaret Gatty edited and named *Aunt Judy's Magazine* after her most popular book, *Aunt Judy's Tales*. A year later Strahan launched *Good Words for the Young*, a junior version of his popular *Good Words*. With Norman McLeod and then the fairy-tale writer George MacDonald as editors and a string of well-known writers, Strahan aimed to capture the juvenile market. He advertised his magazine flamboyantly. Both *Good Words for the Young* and *Aunt Judy's Magazine* were aiming at the same comparatively small readership of well-to-do and well-educated boys and girls. Competition between them was keen, and the Gatty family was eager to expand the market share of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*. The Reverend Alfred Gatty repeatedly goaded George and Edward Bell to "cram a little powder and shot" into their promotion of *Aunt Judy's Magazine* and edge out Strahan's magazine. His nagging was in vain: George Bell was not in the frame of mind to light fireworks, especially given his intimate and sobering knowledge of how Strahan's pyrotechnics really worked. Moreover, although Bell had published two religious periodicals, *Mission*

Field and Gospel, for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, *Aunt Judy's Magazine* represented his only venture into secular children's magazine publishing. He did not have as much experience as Strahan did with magazine advertising, and he was reluctant to employ the huckstering techniques necessary to secure popularity. He was also less generous than Strahan in his terms with his editors and authors. Mrs. Gatty received ten pounds per month for every ten thousand readers, which was approximately the average circulation of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*. In contrast, Strahan paid MacDonald six hundred pounds per year. Bell's rather low rates of pay for authors also limited Gatty's ability to attract popular names. Ten shillings a page was too little for the rising young humorist W. S. Gilbert, who demanded two guineas for his contribution. Gatty did manage to lure submissions from Lewis Carroll and Ascott R. Hope; she also offered translations of Hans Christian Andersen stories to her young subscribers. But the mainstay of the magazine came from the pen of her daughter, Juliana Horatia Ewing. Ewing's enduringly popular stories, such as "A Flat Iron for a Farthing" and "Six to Sixteen," were first published in *Aunt Judy's Magazine* for the meager return of seven shillings, sixpence a page. It was galling to the Gatty family when a critic suggested that Ewing would reach a larger audience if she contributed to *Good Words for the Young*. Even John Ruskin, a loyal patron of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, urged Ewing to seek a wider public and to join him in a revolt against publishers. Out of loyalty to Bell, she declined.

Moreover, Ewing paid a tribute to Bell's generosity in other spheres when she modeled a character in the serialized novel "The Miller's Thumb," which appeared in *Aunt Judy's Magazine* in 1873, after Bell and his philanthropic efforts on behalf of homeless boys. In Ewing's novel, the hapless Jan is rescued from life in the street by a robustly Christian businessman who takes him to a cheerful home where boys learn practical trades. She describes in some detail the workings of an institution very much like the Regent's Park Boys' Home which Bell and other Broad Churchmen such as F. D. Maurice, Thomas Hughes, and William and George Spottiswoode founded in 1858.

"The Miller's Thumb" was published in book form by George Bell and Sons as *Jan of the Windmill* in 1876. Although Ewing's last books were published by the Society for the Promotion

of Christian Knowledge, she left most of her popular books in the hands of Bell. She might well have found more fame and fortune with a more adventurous publisher, but she preferred to stay with the family friend. Her books remained on the lists of George Bell and Sons well into the twentieth century.

The Gatty family's loyalty to and admiration for the Bells were reciprocated. George Bell continued to publish *Aunt Judy's Magazine* even though it turned a profit in only one year of its twenty-year run. In 1881 Bell reluctantly decided that the *Aunt Judy's* connection had to end, despite the pleas of Ewing's sister, Horatia Gatty, that she would continue to edit the magazine for only three pounds per issue if only it could survive. The magazine went through three more publishers and a one-hundred-pound subsidy from Ruskin before it finally ended in 1885, the year of Ewing's death.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century were years of consolidation and modest expansion for the Bell firm. Unencumbered by partners, Bell followed his own shrewd and cautious instincts and prospered. Among fellow publishers he acquired a reputation as an assessor of publication stock and copyright and was frequently called on to evaluate assets. For instance, George Smith, during a financial dispute with Ruskin, cited Bell's expertise on the value of copyright. The Bohn Libraries continued to sell so well that Bell was encouraged to expand the series with new editions of well-known classics of English, American, and European authors. American readers were especially enthusiastic about the series: in New York the firm of Scribner and Welford acted as Bell's agents until Edward Bell shifted the business to Macmillan in 1871.

Bell's extension into art and architectural publications because of his early friendship with Henry Cole had led him into a close association with the Chiswick Press. The press had a reputation for meticulous work and old-style type. It was at the Chiswick Press that William Morris conducted his first experiments in reviving the old typography, experiments he later elaborated at his own Kelmscott Press. When the Chiswick Press came on the market in 1880 Bell bought it to provide a berth for his brother John, who managed the press until his death in 1885. The Chiswick Press continued to be associated with the Bell firm until 1919 and enhanced the company's prestige in art and architectural publications.

Another temporary expansion of George Bell and Sons derived from George Bell's continued association with the employer of his youth, Whittaker and Company. Whittaker had cooperated with him in the early classics series, and Bell's part in these two series had remained separate from the Bell and Daldy lists. The series continued to sell well, but by the 1880s Whittaker and Company was not as prosperous as it had been. In April 1884 Bell eventually acquired the firm that had taught him his first lessons in publishing. He was motivated in part by benevolence and paid an annuity to its last owner, William Hood, who died a few years later. Hoping to sell most of the business to a young German, Bell nursed the firm along until the new owner was ready to assume responsibility. But just as the transfer was completed, the German drowned. Edward Bell was then diverted for several years to straightening out the financial and editorial commitments that Whittaker and Company had incurred. Ultimately, Henry Rayment, who had been helping Edward Bell with the work, purchased the firm. That Rayment was the son of the first master and matron of the Regent's Park Boys' Home made the resolution of this affair doubly satisfying to George Bell.

By this time Edward was at the helm of George Bell and Sons. In 1888 Bell settled the firm on his sons Edward and Ernest, and charged them with compensating the other four surviving children. Arthur had left the firm and established himself as an artist. But George Bell never retired, continuing to come into the York Street office until he died of bronchitis in November 1890.

Edward Bell shared his father's academic aspirations and, as a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, had had a greater opportunity to develop his aptitude for scholarship than his father, who had left school at sixteen. The publishing business gave Edward further chance to pursue his interests, which were impressively broad. His list of publications includes editions of works by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Miguel de Cervantes, and Thomas Chatterton and other English poets. He wrote biographical essays about Edmund Burke, Demosthenes, and Goethe, and works on classical and English historical architecture.

For all his scholarly pursuits, Edward Bell did not neglect the firm's business affairs. George Bell and Sons continued to expand under his leadership. One of its more lucrative ac-

Full Catalogues sent, post free, to all parts of the World, on application.

SEVEN HUNDRED VOLUMES.
BOHN'S LIBRARIES.
 CONTAINING
 Standard Works of European Literature in the
 English Language.
 (3s. 6d. or 5s. per volume with exceptions.)

"I may say in regard to all manner of books, Bohn's Publication Series is the usefulest thing I know."—Thomas Carlyle.
 "The respectable and sometimes excellent translations of Bohn's Library have done for literature what railroads have done for internal intercourse."
 —R. W. Emerson.
 "An important body of cheap literature, for which every living worker in this country who draws strength from the past has reason to be grateful."
 —Professor Henry Morley.
 "Bohn's invaluable series."—Rev. J. M. Wilson, H. M. of Clifton College, in "Essays and Addresses."
 "Messrs. Bell and Sons are making constant additions, of an eminently acceptable character, to 'Bohn's Libraries.'"—*Athenæum*.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL & SONS, York Street, Covent Garden.

Advertisement in the 1884 North British Railway Tourist Guide. Twenty years earlier Bell and Daldy had purchased the stock of Bohn's Libraries, a venture that allowed the firm to abandon retail bookselling.

quisitions was the English rights to the works of the American author Ralph Waldo Trine, whose *In Tune with the Infinite* (1900) was a best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic. George Bell and Sons further indulged the contemporary interest in philosophical and spiritual speculation when it published the work of Henry Salt, whose humanitarian socialism gained him many prominent converts. Salt's book *Animals' Rights* (1892) was a far more penetrating critique of the treatment of animals than anything else undertaken to that date.

During this period George Bell and Sons' overseas connections expanded through its Colonial Libraries. The firm bought unbound editions of British novels whose publishers did not want to be bothered with distribution to the dominions. George Bell and Sons would then have them bound plainly and sell them overseas. Ironically, because George Bell and Sons was able to acquire the originals for a low price, these Colonial Libraries editions made popular British novels cheaper in the colonies than they were for British readers. The profit margin was slight, but the sales volume was sufficiently vast that George Bell and Sons and its rival in this field, Thomas Fisher Unwin, engaged in spirited competition for new titles.

Even though the publishing industry was relatively buoyant in this period, both publishers and booksellers felt themselves to be continuously plagued by the unscrupulous "undersellers." In the 1890s Frederick Macmillan led other publishers resolved to set limits on the damage undersellers could do to the stability and prosperity of the trade. The Publishers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1896. In 1899 the publishers put into practice a plan Macmillan had first proposed in 1890: the Net Book Agreement, which would secure the publishers' price of some books, called "net books," and leave the free trade system open for others. But just as the publishers were beginning to feel secure about their achievement, the *Times*, anxious to boost circulation, launched a book club in 1905. The club ostensibly offered subscribers privileges in an elaborate lending library organized by the newspaper. But since the Times Book Club also promised members attractive prices for books that had only to be borrowed once or twice to render them "second hand," the *Times* was to all intents and purposes entering the bookselling business. The operators of the book club, however, refused to cooperate with the Net Book Agreement or to recognize any limitations on how they might dispose of the books in their

possession. Thus, the Times Book Club undermined the net book system and set off the "book war" which ravaged the trade from 1906 to 1908. As president of the Publishers' Association in this period, Edward Bell was responsible for upholding the Net Book Agreement, which he prized as much as his friend Macmillan.

In his account of the opening shots of the book war, Edward Bell charged Moberly Bell, business manager of the *Times*, and Horace E. Hooper, the American speculator who initiated the Times Book Club, with deviousness and ungentlemanly behavior which he attributed obliquely to their un-English origins (Moberly Bell seems to have been born in Egypt). The way they presented their case to the public showed, according to Bell, an unscrupulous disregard for the civilized discussions which had taken place between the Publishers' Association and the *Times*. In his opinion, the behavior of Moberly Bell and Hooper made inevitable a war that might otherwise have easily been averted. The *Times* was a formidable foe, with far easier access to the public ear than the Publishers' Association could muster. In sensational advertisements for its book club, the newspaper tried to prove that publishers were making exorbitant profits on books that cost them a pittance to produce and were attempting to establish a monopoly. The Publishers' Association responded by resolving not to supply any net books at wholesale prices to the Times Book Club until the *Times* signed the Net Book Agreement. The *Times* found its access to books for its subscribers substantially reduced and resorted to bribery of booksellers' employees to get around the boycott. The Times Book Club also organized its own proscription campaign: *Times Literary Supplement* reviews in this period commonly ended with a plea to readers not to purchase the books reviewed until the dispute with the publishers was resolved. Arthur Walters, the chief proprietor of the *Times*, sent out a missive to subscribers urging them to avoid all the publications of five firms; his list included George Bell and Sons.

The *Evening News* willingly voiced the Publishers' Association side of the dispute, and, indeed, almost the whole press world allied itself with the publishers against the mighty *Times*. Moreover, in contrast to the earlier attempt by George Bell and other publisher/booksellers to regulate their trade in 1852, this time writers, represented by the Society of Authors, sided with the Publishers' Association; a few renegades, in-

cluding George Bernard Shaw, came out against the Society of Authors and the Publishers' Association. The book war wound down in 1908 when the original proprietors of the *Times* parted company, mainly as a result of dwindling dividends which the expenses of waging the book war only exacerbated. Ownership of the *Times* passed to Lord Northcliffe, whose views on the book war were rather different from those of Moberly Bell. Northcliffe decided that the book club should continue but that it must come to an agreement with the Publishers' Association. The press baron was anxious that no side pronounce itself the winner; thus, to allow the Times Book Club to save face, the publishers agreed to modify the Net Book agreement slightly. Privately, Edward Bell and his allies judged that the publishers had won the day. Edward Bell and his adversary, Moberly Bell, signed the concord on 18 September 1908.

A concrete manifestation of the permanent stature of the company George Bell had founded more than half a century before came with the erection of its own building, York House in Portugal Street, in 1910. George Bell and Sons became a limited liability company that same year.

Bell's participation in the book war was the last sensational episode in the firm's history. Quiet prosperity was in keeping with Edward Bell's scholarly and literary tastes. More adventurous was the career of his only son, Arthur, who fought in the Boer War and World War I and served in India and Ireland before he retired in 1928 as Colonel Bell, D.S.O., O.B.E. Edward Bell had died in 1926; his son was the last Bell to serve in the family firm. Arthur Bell was chairman of George Bell and Sons Ltd. until his own death in 1968. But management of the company had long since fallen to men more experienced in publishing—such as Guy Bickers, who took an active part in the Publishers' Association. During World War II Bickers, acting under the auspices of the Publishers' Association, negotiated an agreement with the government to enable publishers to produce the greatest number of books possible given the stringencies of paper rationing. His achievement was considered a triumph for the industry though some felt that the poor quality of the books produced in such circumstances handicapped British products in overseas markets. After the war George Bell and Sons Ltd. specialized in educational books. The firm became Bell and Hyman Limited when R. P. Hyman became chairman and managing director in 1977. It

moved out of the Portugal Street headquarters to Denmark House, Queen Elizabeth Street, where it remained until the firm went out of business in 1989.

References:

James J. Barnes, *Free Trade in Books: A Study of the London Book Trade since 1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964);

Edward Bell, *George Bell Publisher: A Brief Memoir* (London: Privately printed at the Chiswick Press, 1924);

Sir Frederick Macmillan, *The Net Book Agreement 1899 and The Book War 1906-1908: Two Chapters in the History of the Book Trade, including a Narrative of the Dispute between The Times Book Club and The Publishers' Association by Edward Bell, M.A., President of the Association 1906-1908* (Glasgow: Privately printed by Robert Maclehose and Co. University Press, 1924);

Patricia Srebrnik, *Alexander Strahan, Victorian Publisher* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986).

—Marjory Lang

William Bemrose

(Wirksworth; Derby; Derby and London: 1826-1858)

Bemrose and Sons

(Derby: 1858-1978)

Bemrose UK Limited

(Derby: 1978-)

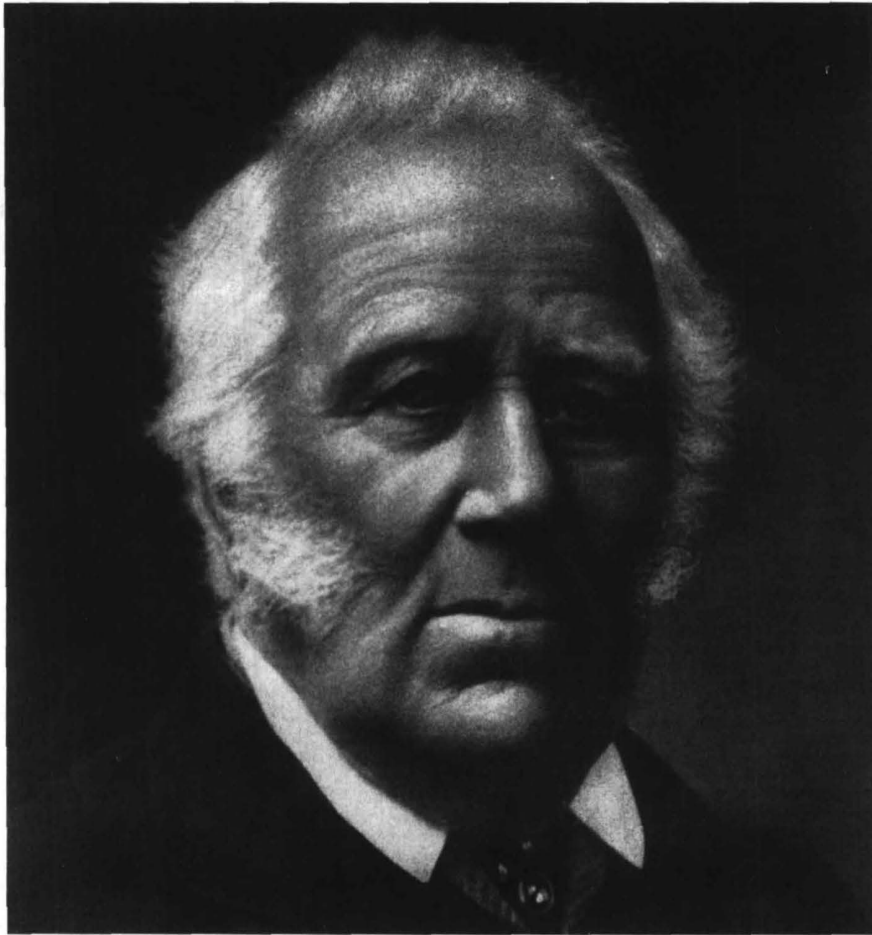
William Bemrose began in business in October 1826 as a bookseller, printer, and bookbinder when he bought the bookshop in which he was employed as manager. This was the foundation of a company which still exists as the Bemrose Corporation and which was important as a provincial publisher in the second half of the nineteenth century and as a publisher of bibliographies and scholarly facsimiles in the twentieth century.

Bemrose's shop was in the small town of Wirksworth; the following year he moved about thirteen miles to the southeast to Derby, a more prosperous town with much greater business potential. He formed two short-lived partnerships in the early years, but from 1830 he was on his own. The business seems to have been quite typical for a British provincial town at that time in that printing was the mainstay with only secondary support from bookselling and bookbinding. Publishing was of even less importance. If the opportunity arose, Bemrose would issue a publication of local interest, but he could not be de-

scribed as a publisher with a regular, planned program. Throughout the firm's history printing has been the most important aspect of the business, although there have been periods when publishing has made a significant contribution.

The fortunes of the firm were indirectly secured in 1839 when the railway arrived in Derby. The town soon became an important railway junction, and in 1841 Bemrose began to print train timetables and railway stationery. Printing for British Rail and the London Underground remains a profitable part of the business today. The railways also influenced Bemrose publications; in July 1847 the first issue of *Bemrose's Traveller's Guide* appeared, followed by several similar items, such as *Midland Railway: Scenery, Industries, History* (1902).

Bemrose's sons, Henry and William Junior, entered the business in the 1840s, and in 1858 their father allowed them to take control. From this time publishing was organized on much clearer lines. Although the publications were at first still strongly influenced by local considera-



William Bemrose

tions, other patterns of interest began to emerge. An important early success was *The Derbyshire Red Book* (1862-1915), an annual almanac of local information.

The brothers themselves became authors. Henry, who was something of a musician, edited *The Chorale Book* (1862), which contained about two hundred psalm and hymn tunes, many of which he composed himself. William Junior was more prolific. He wrote *A Manual of Wood-Carving* (1862; twenty-third edition, 1906), *Fret-Cutting and Perforated Carving* (1868; fourteenth edition, 1891), *Manual of Buhlwork and Marquetry* (1872; third edition, 1891), *Paper Rosette Work* (1873), *Mosaicon; or Paper Mosaic and How to Make It* (1875), *Bow, Chelsea and Derby Porcelain* (1898), *The Life and Works of Joseph Wright, ARA, Commonly Called "Wright of Derby"* (1885), and *Longton Hall Porcelain* (1906). In addition to the applied art books represented by William Junior's works, archaeology and theology became the firm's principal subject areas. In archaeology there was

Thomas Bateman's *Ten Years' Diggings in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills in the Counties of Derby, Stafford and York* (1861); in theology, Arthur E. B. Lawrence's *The Holy Communion: Its Institution, Purpose and Privilege* (1905). The most common theological publications were sermons and collections of hymns.

William Senior was not always in agreement with his sons about the publications; in particular he objected to a satirical political periodical, the *Derby Ram*, which ran from 1865 to 1868. Letters to his sons survive in which he claims that the publications are not making a profit. This divergence of views within the firm about the advisability of engaging in publishing was often lurking under the surface.

Despite William Senior's misgivings, publishing was successful under his sons. In 1865 an office was opened in London at 21 Paternoster Row, in the heart of the publishing district. In 1875 the office moved to Paternoster Buildings. William Senior died in 1880. In 1881 the firm

"George Bell and Sons." *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1820-1880*. Ed. Patricia Anderson and Jonathan Rose. Vol. 106. Detroit: Gale, 1991. 22-31. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* Vol. 106. *Dictionary of Literary Biography Complete Online*. Web. 3 June 2018.

URL

<http://0-link.galegroup.com.dewey2.library.denison.edu/apps/doc/HADQWW096473378/DLBC?u=owu&sid=DLBC&xid=3d74bdf1>