

A biographical sketch of Alexander Melville Bell.

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Tracts A. 382.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

ALEXANDER MELVILLE BELL



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Alas! Melville Bell

BELL, Alexander Melville, educator, was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, March 1, 1819, son of Alexander Bell, a prominent instructor in elocution in London, and author of several well-known textbooks, plays and poems. The son was largely educated at home, attending school at Dundee for a time. In 1842 he announced the formulation of a new theory of articulation and vocal expression. Although his father did not endorse all his conclusions, he accorded them a general approval. Mr. Bell taught classes in connection with the university, and also with the new college at Edinburgh from 1843 to 1865, when the death of his father called him to London. In 1868 Prof. Bell gave his first course of lectures in the United States before the Lowell Institute, Boston, Mass. At that time he held the appointment of lecturer on elocution in University College, London. In 1870 he returned to the United States by invitation from the Lowell Institute and delivered a course of twelve lectures, and in the following year had the honor of supplementing this by a third course. Prof. Bell in 1870 took up his residence at Tutelo Heights, Brantford, Ontario, Canada, and held the professorship of elocution in Queen's College, Kingston, also giving courses of lectures in Montreal, Toronto, London and other Canadian cities. He officiated as a member of the board of instruction in the school of vocal physiology, established in Boston by his distinguished son, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. In 1881 Prof. Bell permanently located in Washington, D. C., and engaged in literary work. He has justly been designated the "Nestor of elocutionary science," and the profession have frequently sought from him personal advice. His numerous publications treating of elocution, vocal physiology, and defects in speech, dating from 1845 to 1898; also on phonetics and visible speech, 1866 to

1898, and also on phonetic shorthand writing, 1852 to 1857, are accepted authorities on these subjects. In 1885 Prof. Bell was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and is an active member of the Modern Language Association, and of various scientific and educational organizations in the United States. He also holds a fellowship in the Educational Institute in Scotland, and in the Royal Scottish Society of Arts.