

GEORGE MILNER BELL

1872-1947

CANON G. M. BELL, who died on March 9, 1947, at the age of 74, was elected a member of the Alpine Club in 1922, having been proposed by G. Winthrop Young and seconded by R. L. G. Irving. He had had fourteen seasons in the Alps, Norway and Tyrol before this. His first visit to Saas Fee was in 1897, and he made numerous expeditions from different centres. The list of his climbs included Matterhorn from N.E., Grand Cornier traverse, with descent of N.W. arête, Dent Blanche by S. ridge. The Petite Dent de Veisivi was a favourite climb and was first done in 1901, and his traverses over passes gave him a great knowledge of the Alps for which he had already an immense love. It is perhaps not to be regretted that he hardly ever felt himself justified either in incurring the expense involved in employing a guide or in making difficult guideless expeditions which were new to him, so as to add, as he otherwise might have done, to his list of ascents. He made in consequence some original experiments; during one holiday he bicycled over Alpine passes and ended one trip downhill by arriving in Venice. Between the two wars he went increasingly to Arolla, as chaplain to the English church there, to which he became very much attached. He was among the first of his countrymen to visit the Alps after each war. In 1919 he was in Arolla, and also in 1945 and 1946. The official reason for his latter journeys in appalling travelling conditions was the need to inspect the twenty-one English churches in Switzerland, but one suspects that another very real reason was his love of the Alps and everybody and everything connected with them. He wrote: 'Thus I visited Arolla (four days and a Victory Service which I constructed in French, including sermon—only two English from Montreux—sixty others); Zermatt—Victory Service for American soldiers; Saas Fee, Grindelwald, Interlaken, Adelboden, Berne. It was all very wonderful. The Matterhorn appeared out of the mist, glorious in fresh snow.' Amongst the 'sixty others' who attended the Victory Service held by him in the English church at Arolla were not only the landlord of the Mont Collon hotel, a practising Roman Catholic, but also the Franciscan friar who was taking the services at the little village church. Both these two were amongst Canon Bell's friends.

His tremendous courage enabled him to retain his humour and zest in the difficulties and sorrows of his later years. His son in the Royal Air Force was killed while flying over the coast of Norway; this was a sad blow to him and to his wife. In 1941, on one of his bicycling trips from his Shropshire parish of Worthen to the Welsh hills, he had an accident on a narrow road, and his head struck a tree, which caused

His sense of humour and fun was evident in his writings, in the postcards and letters, often in verse, which punctuated his travels, and in his more formal articles. He contributed to this JOURNAL 'An Adventure on the Dent Blanche' and a paper on 'Mountain Inns,'² and was engaged in writing a book of his mountain experiences when he died.

He was Vicar of Romford in Essex for a number of years, and was made a Canon of Chelmsford. Then he became Rector of Worthen in Shropshire, and it was due to his efforts that this fine parish church was restored. He took a great interest in educational work. He will be remembered, too, for his great knowledge and love of music.

F. L. JENKINS.