

## Jacob Bell, Chemist and Artist

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JACOB BELL (1810-1859) was the son of John and Elizabeth Bell, of Westminster. He was sent to school at Darlington at twelve years of age, presumably the seminary, conducted by Henry Frederick Smith (see xix. xx. xxii.). Then he entered his father's business as a chemist in Oxford Street. His faculty for art was considerable, especially upon the grotesque and humorous side. Evidence of this may be found in **D**, in which there is a volume of tracts, the authors of which are represented by his pencil caricatures. In 1841 he established *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, with the assistance of Thomas Southall (1794-1861), of Birmingham (xi. 15), and others. As editor of this periodical Bell is described as "Jacob Bell, F.L.S., M.R.I." In 1850 he contested St. Albans as a Liberal and was returned to Parliament, but the borough was disfranchised.

The following is taken from *My Autobiography and Reminiscences*, by W. P. Frith, 1890, under the heading "The School of Art" (pp. 27-29) :

Whilst I was in the school there were two expulsions : one in the person of a youth from Jersey, who, in spite of a notice in large letters always visible to him, that " Silence is indispensable in a place devoted to study," persisted in singing French songs in a piercingly shrill voice and in laughing at Mr. Sass, and singing louder than ever when the professor disappeared. The other discharged student was my old friend Jacob Bell, so well known afterwards as the intimate and valued friend of Sir Edwin Landseer, the purchaser of so many of that great artist's works, and, I may add, of my " Derby Day," all eventually bequeathed by him to the National Gallery. Bell went through the drawing from the flat with much tribulation, and at last began the fearful plaster ball, in the representation of which he had advanced considerably ; but he also had arrived at the limit of his patience, and on one fatal Monday morning, after witnessing an early execution at Newgate, he drew the scaffold and the criminal hanging on it, in the centre of the ball. We were grouped round the artist listening to an animated account of the murderer's last moments when Sass appeared. The crowd of listeners ran to their seats and waited for the storm. Mr. Sass looked at the drawing, and went out of the studio—a pin might have been heard to drop. Bell looked round and winked at me. Sass returned and walked slowly up to Mr. Jacob Bell, and addressed him as follows :

“ Sir, Mr. Bell ; sir, your father placed you under my care for the purpose of making an artist of you. I can't do it ; I can make nothing of you. I should be robbing your father *if I did it*. You had better go, sir ; such a career as this [pointing to the man hanging] is a bad example to your fellow-pupils. You must *leave, Sir !* ”

“ All right,” said Bell, and away he went, returning to the druggist's shop established by his father in Oxford Street, where he made a large fortune, devoting it mainly to the encouragement of art and artists, and dying prematurely, beloved and regretted by all who knew him.

It is reported of his father, a rigid Quaker, who watched with disapproval his son's purchases of pictures, that he said to him one day : “ What business hast thou to buy those things, wasting thy substance ? ” “ I can sell any of *those things* for more than I gave for them, some for twice as much.” “ Is that verily so ? ” said the old man. “ Then I see no sin in thy buying more.”

When Bell first appeared at Sass's, he wore the Quaker coat ; but finding that the students showed their disapproval in a marked and unpleasant manner—such, for instance, as writing “ Quaker ” in white chalk across his back—he discarded that vestment, and very soon afterwards was himself discarded by the Quakers. His dismissal happened in this wise. At “ Meeting ” the men sit on one side of the chapel, and the women on the other. Bell disliked this arrangement, and finding remonstrance of no avail, he disguised himself in female attire, and took his place in the forbidden seats. For a time all went well, but a guilty conscience came into play on seeing two of the congregation speaking together and eyeing him suspiciously the while ; he took fright, and catching up his petticoats, he went out from “ meeting ” with a stride that proclaimed his sex. For this he was, as I have heard him tell many a time, expelled from the community.

There is an article on Bell in *D.N.B.* and also in the *Biographical Catalogue of the Friends' Institute, London, 1888.*

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## Meetinghouses Licensed under the Toleration Act

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Yorkshire, Oct. 8, 1689 :

“ One meeting place in the hamlet of Wooldale [xix. 102].

“ One at the houses of Henry Jackson of Totty's [xix. 102], John Bradford of Ossett, John Attack of the same.

“ One at Joseph Naylor's of Ardsley [was he a descendant of James Naylor, who was an Ardsley man ?], Richard Lawtons of Midgley, John Whaleys of Langfeld.”

Oliver Heywood's *Nonconformist Register*, printed 1881, p. 145.