

CHAPTER V

B. I. Bell and the Flood-Tide of Fame

"...he was the most contradictory, the most complex, the most colorful and the most gifted individual in the College's history; — at once the most widely famed and the most controversial, devout in spiritual exercises, arrogant in administration, a Catholic in theology, a high-Church Anglican in ritual, a radical in social action. He was at once the College's most admired and most infuriating member — and almost surely its greatest glory."

B. I. Bell arrived on the campus in July of 1919. He was 33 years old, with a wife, Betty, and a small son. He was only half the average age of most of his predecessors in the St. Stephen's presidency, and something of a socialist in his views. He had been a naval chaplain during the great war and was accustomed to dealing with young men. He was the author of two widely discussed books on the moral and ethical problems of the postwar world, *Right and Wrong After the War* (1918), and *Work of the Church for Men at War* (1919).

Of Portuguese descent, born in Ohio, a graduate of the University of Chicago and the Western Theological Seminary, he had served Chicago parishes before becoming Dean, in 1913, of the Episcopal Cathedral in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. From there he went in 1917 to the Chaplaincy at Great Lakes Naval Training Station. It was Haley Fiske, looking for more dynamic leadership of the College, who proposed B. I. Bell for the presidency of St. Stephen's.

And the College would never be the same again!

A student of Bell's Annandale years recalls his appearance;

"...slightly below middle height and inclined to corpulence, but very erect and always immaculately groomed. He wore a clerical collar on all occasions and out of doors appeared in a black clerical hat with a wide brim and low crown. What attracted one's notice, however, were his eyes, large, brown, slightly protuberant, unblinking, challenging. He dominated any group..."¹

He had a flair for the dramatic, including a tendency for self-dramatization. To some it seemed that he was not always truthful, as for example in 1936 when the Archbishop of York had to publicly disavow the description of his United States tour as given by Dr. Bell in his role of correspondent for the English *Church Times*.

He could be vindictive, as when he would give a poor reference to a student he didn't want to have transfer to another college. But on balance it must be admitted that he was a great man — great in his gifts and great in his faults.

Years later Bell was to recall the College as he found it that summer of 1919:

"...when I took the helm, St. Stephen's was about gone. It had 9 professors (6 incompetent), 29 students, a run-down set of buildings, no laboratories, a laughable library, no endowment, a big debt; and I was at once sent a message from Dr. John Finley, Head of the Education Dept. State of New York, to the effect that the State Dept. purposed at once to move for annulment of the Charter on grounds of utter incompetency. Nobody but a reckless young fool just out of the navy would have dared take it on..."²

And looking back over nearly 60 years, Mrs. Bell described the College as she first saw it in 1919:

"I remember the day of our arrival at St. Stephen's. I asked B.I.: 'How can we ever stand living here?' 'Why?' There wasn't a clean place anywhere. We threw out half the dishes and furniture. We couldn't even get into our own home. The floors were ruined... I lived in the matron's rooms in Aspinwall. I couldn't live in our house. I scrubbed floors on my hands and knees. We disinfected the place and moved in. Could you imagine such a place? I think Father Bell must have been insane to take the job..."³

The new president moved fast. That first August a letter went out to all students:

"You will find upon arrival that your rooms have been thoroughly scrubbed, the windows washed, minor repairs made, and the windowsills stained and varnished. During the summer, Orient Hall is being completely overhauled, painted inside and out, new floors laid, new windows put in, and the place made fit for gentlemen to work in..."

Enrollment was an immediate problem for a new president who took office only a few weeks before the opening of the fall term. Bell was able "to round up a handful of new students on short notice," and they, with returning war veterans, brought the September student count up to 49 "which was encouraging in comparison with the war-time low of eighteen."⁴

The new president was young, eloquent, energetic, decisive. All this meant that probably never before in its history had the College faced a new academic year with such enthusiasm and high expectations. With a smugness almost bordering on arrogance *The Messenger* proclaimed:

"A new epoch in the life of St. Stephen's is now at its birth. The ambiguous, hazy, ideal future that has been pictured for the past years is soon to spring forth into reality. The goal toward which our Alma Mater has been feebly striving is soon to be realized . . . Our new president, the Rev. Bernard Iddings Bell has, since he assumed his position, given to the institution an impetus unparalleled in her past history. He has aroused the latent energy existing in the Church. He is to lead the Church in the making of a greater St. Stephen's. Immediately he set upon his new task in putting the College in a receptive position for the new and big things she is to receive from the Church . . .

"We are now in a position to accept what the Church and her people can offer in men and money."¹⁵

The new president's master plan for the College began to unfold. A professor wrote that "Dr. Bell took all powers into his own hands at once."¹⁶

A new faculty member, Dr. Lyford Patterson Edwards, arrived from the University of Chicago as professor of economics and sociology. It was said that his was one of the first earned doctorates in sociology in America, and the department which he established in that field at St. Stephen's was one of the earliest in any American college.

And the *Messenger* announced:

" . . . In an address to the student body . . . President Bell said that a strong religious life for St. Stephen's is a vital part of his policy . . . Therefore the president has seen fit to make attendance at daily Evensong compulsory. Attendance at the late Eucharist on Sunday is compulsory also."

"In order to make athletics a matter of interest and benefit to all, the president has seen fit to require that every man in College, with the exception of those excused by the College physician, must participate in games at least three afternoons a week. It has been rather hard for the men to adjust themselves to this schedule, but no doubt it may be more easily done as time goes on."¹⁷

So began the most dazzling 14 years in the College's history. In the first seven of those 14 years four new major buildings went up, doubling the College's cubic footage; enrollment went from 18 in 1919 to 137; the budget increased fourfold; the president became one of the most widely known preachers and religious writers in America and England; and the College a prestigious part of Columbia University. And at the end of those 14 years, Bell was forced out of office, repudiated and embittered, and his college destined to be tossed about for a decade or more of wrenching change and uncertainty.

Dr. Bell devoted his first major attention at St. Stephen's to a building program. There were several reasons for this priority. He felt that with the plant he found there in 1919 the College could neither attract the students it should have nor carry on the program that was needed. Also he believed that the College must add to its curriculum strong programs in the natural sciences and in the social sciences. And this required both laboratories and a larger student body, on which to base the necessarily enlarged faculty.

First came the gymnasium, needed both for a proper athletic program and as an auditorium and hall for lectures, plays, and the gracious and rather formal dances which were such an important part of college life in those days. (Much was made of the proper coat rooms and "retirement rooms" which the new building provided). About \$20,000 had been raised for this structure before the war had forced postponement of the project. The first fall after Bell's arrival Hoppin and Koen were engaged as architects, and in January 1920 the *Messenger* announced that "the new gymnasium will be two stories high, Georgian style, of brick inside and out, faced with white stone." In May the *Messenger* printed a picture of the proposed building; the cornerstone was laid at Commencement, and construction began. That fall a member of the Board of Trustees resigned, "expressing the opinion that he is out of sympathy with the rest of the Board . . . He deemed it unwise to build the gymnasium at this time, thus incurring an additional financial burden." (At that point about \$31,000 had been raised toward the cost of the building, \$26,000 of it by the chairman of the finance committee, Haley Fiske.) Construction continued according to the original design, but with less expensive materials, — wood and stucco replacing the brick and hoped-for "white stone facing." Even so, the cost eventually ran to \$78,000. Except for one residence it was the first new building to go up on the campus in nearly 25 years.

Next followed Warden's Hall (named for Seymour, Fairbairn, and Hopper). It was first occupied in April, 1923 and provided room for 36 students. The College was very proud of the fact that this structure was completely fireproof, "without a piece of wood being used in its framework," — especially cut stone for the dormers replacing the originally planned wood framing.

The great building of the Bell period was the massive sweep of collegiate Gothic running from the top of the hill nearly down to the gymnasium, and comprising the Hegeman science building, Albee dormitory, and "Albee Annex" faculty apartments. These buildings at the time were seen as one arm of what was eventually planned to be the College's central quadrangle, with Wardens the end of the other arm, and a great central building with clock-tower extending across the front of the gymnasium and joining the two arms of the quadrangle. (Blank spaces in the end walls of Albee Annex and Wardens mark the projected joining points of this planned complex.)

Money for these structures came from two members of the College's Board of Trustees. It was the energetic Haley Fiske who procured the Hegeman gift. Mr. Fiske was Hegeman's successor as president of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Hegeman's will provided for a certain

amount in gifts to philanthropy, and Fiske persuaded the trustees of the estate to include in that category a \$125,000 gift to St. Stephen's for a new science building.

The donor of the Albee building, Edward E. F. Albee, was the co-owner and director of the Keith Vaudeville Circuit. An ex-stage-hand for P. T. Barnum, Albee had arranged the United States tours of Sarah Bernhardt, Isadora Duncan, and Pavlova, among others. His Palace Theatre in New York was said to be the most conspicuously successful theatrical property in the world. A devoted Episcopalian, Mr. Albee had become interested in St. Stephen's and had been elected to the Board of Trustees in 1922. He promptly presented to the College "a moving picture machine just like the one in his Palace Theatre," and a complete set of spot and footlights for dramatic productions.

In November, 1923, Mr. Albee offered the College \$65,000 with which to erect a new dormitory. At about the same time, Mr. Fiske produced the \$125,000 from the Hegeman estate for the new science building.

Ground for both the Hegeman and the Albee structures was broken the same day, March 9, 1924. Almost immediately the projects ran into difficulty. Beneath the pleasant hilltop stretch of lawn which John Bard had smoothed out as a site for his college, was layer upon layer of hard solid rock. The projected costs skyrocketed. Eventually the Hegeman trustees came through with an additional \$42,000, raising their gift from \$125,000 to \$167,000. Estimates for the Albee building rose from the \$65,000 total of the original gift, to \$90,000. Plans for a less ambitious structure were promptly drawn up. Mr. Albee asked to see both the original and revised plans before any decision was made, and upon reviewing them, advised the president that he would increase his gift so that the structures could be completed as originally planned.

By the fall of 1925 the two buildings were completed. Students and faculty could hardly believe their eyes. Mr. Albee had included new furniture for every room as part of his gift. The rooms on every floor were furnished with steel furniture painted in matching colors, — green for the first floor, brown for the second, and blue for the third. Beds and desks were completely outfitted, from spreads and bedding to inkwells and blotters, floors (including halls) were carpeted, and the windows hung with imported curtains. For each six bedrooms there was a parlor, and each contained a pair of luxurious chairs, an elegant divan and handsome mahogany table with reading lamp. The student social room was hung with pictures of the presidents of the United States and the faculty lounge with pictures of presidents of the College.

The new Hegeman science building was no less a wonder for the heretofore rather spartan little college. From the first announcement of the plans in the student newspaper of November, 1923, there had been nothing but admiration for its great steel and glass windows, making the south wall "practically one continuous window," which together with the skylights in the roof, guaranteed the best possible natural light for the laboratories. Impressive too was the "fireproof character" of the structure, built of stone with metal stairways and concrete halls, and "no wood whatsoever" in its construction.

The basic Hegeman floor plan was essentially as it is today, with the physics laboratory on the first floor, chemistry on the second, and biology on the third. However, space pressures and changing needs over the years have crowded out some of the building's original amenities, such as a two-story lecture room banked to seat 70 men, a panelled faculty lounge with fireplace, a greenhouse for the biology department, a machine shop, and departmental libraries.⁸

The Hegeman and Albee gifts and the construction they made possible, transformed the College's campus from a 19th century facility to a 20th century one, and with periodic refurbishment over the next 50 years provided facilities without which Bard could not have become the institution we know.

Also in 1925 the new athletic field below the Library was constructed, the gift of Abraham Hatfield of the board of trustees. And in the years 1926-28, three faculty houses were erected, the gifts of Mr. Albee, John Hance of the board of trustees, Dr. William A. Rives of Washington, D.C., and John Nicholas Brown, then a graduate student at Harvard. All told, the gifts of Mr. Albee to the College over the eight years of his trusteeship, 1923 to 1931, totalled \$312,000.⁹

Bell's experience prior to his coming to Annandale had been that of naval chaplain, parish minister, and lecturer and writer on social issues. He had had comparatively little experience in education, in spite of the fact that in 1950 he wrote to Elliott Lindsley, a young alumnus of the College, that at the time of going to Annandale, "I had a fairly well-worked-out theory of education which I wanted very much to implement."¹⁰

In the main he seems to have developed his educational philosophy "on the ground" at the College, and promulgated it in the steady succession of speeches, articles and pamphlets which marked his Annandale years.

Two books constitute the main systematic exposition of Bell's educational philosophy: *Common Sense in Education*, published in 1928 when he was in

the midst of his work at St. Stephen's, and *Crisis in Education* published in 1949, 16 years after he had left St. Stephen's and after many years of writing and lecturing, and association with the University of Chicago.

In 1949 Dr. Bell wrote to his young friend at the College, Elliott Lindsley: "The epistemology (theory of knowledge) of my book *Crisis in Education* was the epistemology on which the St. Stephen's life and work were avowedly built." "Religion was on a par with science and the arts as a coequal discipline. The course of instruction, required of all Freshmen which I have described in Chapter 9 of *Crisis in Education* was taught at Annandale."¹¹

On his theory of knowledge in *Crisis*, Bell had written: "Knowledge consists of experience digested by reason . . . There are five varieties of human experience, and none of them can be neglected in education . . . direct apprehension; scientific experience . . . creative or artistic experience; . . . mystical experience of a contingent person; . . . and of an ultimate Person."¹²

Holding this philosophy of knowledge, Dr. Bell described the ideal college as follows:

" . . . an institution of learning wherein instructors and students, before the latter take up professional training or the actual business of life, live together for four years, during which time the students receive from those who direct them training in how to approach truth, some knowledge of what the past has discovered and the present is discovering of truth, an acquaintance with good manners and an ability to estimate moral standards, and a participation in the rational mystical experience of the race."¹³

The ideal college would have these marks:

1. Students would be seen as responsible persons rather than as boys and girls.
2. Curricula would be adapted to the student rather than undergraduates forced into conformity with fixed curricula.
3. A departure from "semester hour bookkeeping;" students would be facing knowledge in more comprehensive ways.
4. Searching examinations, tests ascertaining not only mastery of facts but also digestion of facts.

Requirements for the degree would include no course requirements. The student would be retained as long as he is earnestly working. At the end of the second year he would pass a series of "first examinations" before going on to the junior year. At the end of the senior year he shall be "finally examined" in one of a series of groups chosen at the end of the sophomore year and not changed thereafter. He shall work after the first two years in class or otherwise. From the end of the sophomore year he shall work under the direction of a tutor.¹⁴

But unfortunately, it is not usually done this way!

" . . . in the United States . . . we measure higher education in terms of courses taken, for a semester or a year at a time, in little segments of knowledge. For these we pile up 'semester-hour credits.' When 120 or so of these have been recorded, in more or

less prescribed combinations, we give the student a degree. Dr. Learned is right in calling this method 'fantastic.' The student mind is by it diverted from perception of knowledge as a whole, from discrimination in the value of material and from coordination of unrelated subjects. The undergraduate manages to pick up a little, possibly useful, information, but he is taught to think almost not at all.

"The adoption of something like a European concept of higher education, of comprehensive examinations, of large freedom in preparing for those examinations, seems increasingly to be the tendency in our American development. Among the colleges which have gone furthest in experiments with this end in view, are the University of Toronto, Harvard, Princeton, St. Stephen's . . . Wells and Swarthmore . . . Rollins College in Florida and Reed College in Oregon have also been working definitely along these lines . . ."¹⁵

And the "course of instruction, required for all freshmen . . . taught at Annandale" referred to in the letter to Mr. Lindsley, is thus outlined in *Crisis*:

"The following topics were dealt with seriatim:

"(1) The concept of supernatural reality . . . (2) The basic concepts back of religious practice . . . sin, salvation; (3) The development of Judaism . . . (4) The Christian religion; (5) . . . the Church as the mystical body of Incarnate God; (6) The story of Catholic Christianity to the Reformation . . . (7) Protestant Christianity . . . (8) The Christian Moral life; (9) Christian worship . . ."¹⁶

"Former students write me even yet" Dr. Bell wrote in 1949 "to express thanks for the help which this course gave them."

"The time will arrive once more" Bell wrote in 1927 "when a university will be, not a place where a universe of facts is taught, but a place where men ponder universals . . . It is the chief glory of St. Stephen's College that it is attending to this, the chief business of education. It is not in the least afraid completely and honestly to teach modern science, but it is not content to stop there. The correlation in each student's mind and life of the scientific method and the facts it discovers for us on the one hand, and the age-long spiritual aspirations and interpretations which constitute religion, on the other hand, is its determining purpose . . . No facts taught here are worth anything until students have assimilated them, correlated them, interpreted them. It is the men that we are teaching, not these bits of knowledge. There is an ultimate of which all this is only a reflection. Unless what we are teaching makes undergraduates more understand the Ultimate, it is almost wholly a waste of time to teach it. This surely is humanistic education in its only valid sense . . . this is the task of St. Stephen's College."¹⁷

Bell saw St. Stephen's College, as he had shaped it, as an "honors college." At the end of the sophomore year students who have not shown real ability are assisted with *kindness and no undue publicity*, into productive labor or into specialized schools or into other less exacting colleges . . . The more competent students are allowed to *read for honors* in the last two years. They are exempted from all class work and taught individually, on the Oxford tutorial system."¹⁸

"Under the honors plan," Professor Davidson writes, "of the five courses normally required for each of the last two years, a highly qualified student might, with the instructor's consent, take two in each year on a tutorial basis, freed from the ordinary

classroom requirements. Four semester courses taken in this way in any one department and satisfactorily completed, gave the student the privilege of a comprehensive examination on all four. If this test resulted satisfactorily, the candidate's diploma stated that he graduated with honors in the department giving the test. In the fall of 1925, the required work for students reading for honors was reduced to a total of 20 hours for the junior and senior years, thus freeing a much larger portion of the candidate's time for independent work in his field of specialization. In this as in previous honors schemes, there was a preliminary requirement of a moderately satisfactory standing for the freshman and sophomore years. An additional new feature was the bringing in of an outside examiner for the comprehensive examination. Encouragement and even pressure was brought to bear on satisfactorily equipped students to take up honors work. The idea was strongly pushed that we must become known as a distinctive honors school for brilliant students. In spite of much pressure, the proportion of honors candidates was decidedly small, and some of them proved not to be honors material.¹⁹

While Professor Davidson was reaching this rather negative judgement about the honors program, President Bell was giving the trustees a highly favorable appraisal:

"I wish to report," President Bell told the trustees, "that the honors system of instruction for specially equipped upperclassmen is working admirably. By this system students are exempted from classroom work and are taught individually and tutorially in the subject of their desired specialization, in exactly the same manner that they would be taught at Oxford. We have kept track now for three years of the men who have taken this sort of work with us, and have observed what they have done in graduate and professional schools. For instance two years ago, one of our graduates, Mr. George Libaire, went to Columbia University and found that all of the work necessary for his Master's degree, except the writing of his thesis, had been completed in St. Stephen's College while he was still an undergraduate. . . . We are considering the possibility of asking authorization from the State Board of Education ourselves to give the Master's degree to men who have done our honors work. . . ."

Apart from and beyond this educational program, a great impact upon the student body was that of Bell himself, a dynamic and colorful personality with a vast cultural background. No student could be indifferent to him. He and his family made an impression upon the student body that in many cases endured for the rest of life. For example, a student of the twenties recalls the Bell family presence in the dining commons:

" . . . they were almost always there for lunch and dinner, Mrs. B. and Bernard, even when B.I. was away, and usually George Libaire (a member of the English faculty 1926-33) sat with them. B.I. and George always dressed for dinner (boiled shirt, dinner jacket for George L., and dinner jacket and silk vest and clerical collar for B.I.). George usually joined them at the house, and walked down with them. Whether they had a 'sherry hour' first I don't know. With or without B.I., George and Mrs. B. were always at the table, and young Bernard when he was not away at school. Of course the students romanticized about this perpetual presence of George, but I think Betty just enjoyed a little relief from the Padre. George as well as B.I. were always spiffy dressers. B.I. had some nifty clerical suits, blue and light grey, for semi-formal occasions, with matching vests, usually in the Spring. His annual appearance on campus in necktie — blue with white shirt — was after the Commencement exercises. He

often walked about on holy days with cassock and biretta.

"On Sunday nights Mrs. B. would often take a student (often with young B.) to dinner at the Beekman Arms in Rhinebeck — when B.I. was away. Most favored seemed to be a then beautiful young Greek, named Fusscas. Young B. would come down the campus and yell up to the favoured student's room and say: 'My mother wants you to have dinner with her in Rhinebeck.' Once in awhile I was favoured!

"I think George L. liked being mothered, for he eventually married Beatrice Bergen, the librarian (we always gave her first name the Italian pronunciation — behind her back) and she was considerably older than he.

"The Bells had a Buick, the only car on campus, which Betty drove at great speed. B.I. did not drive.

"A special treat at tea at the President's House was to be given a cigarette, on which B.I. would drop a little perfume from a bottle.

"As sacristan, for which I was given \$200 a year off my bill, I would bring all the chapel silver up to the President's house on Saturday morning, to be polished for the Sunday service.

"B.I. was the most temperamental man I ever met. Sometimes he was giddy with gayety, making us all miserably uncomfortable, and at other times he would cloud up and rain all over the place, and you just kept out of his way.

"I have never known a man who was able to do so much with so little and so few, and I have always felt I was truly 'educated.' You had to be, with classes of four or five in the junior and senior years. There was no way you could fail to do assignments. I was the only member of the 'Anglo-Saxon' language and literature 'class' with Ed. Voorhees, and one of the four in Dr. Harry's advanced courses. I did abominably in all the sciences and mathematics (except calculus) in the first two years, but got an A average in my last year in Greek and philosophy. I think we learned a great deal by osmosis and absorption."^{19A}

Bell's energy was unlimited. He was a one-man cultural ambassador to the college community. He coached plays, for example, Shaw's *Candida* in May, 1930. He enriched the campus cultural atmosphere with his poetry readings. "Close and genuine attention" greeted his reading from Masters, Masefield, Tagore in November, 1927. And the following March, in the students' recreation room, Dr. Bell read Tennyson's "Maude and Ulysses," Chester-ton's "Lepanto" and his "I Think I Shall Not Hang Myself Today."

In October 1929 in Albee recreation room, Bell read from Noyes, De La Mere, Hausman, Hodgson, and Masefield. And on a Sunday evening in November 1929, "seated beside the piano under the mellow light of a single bridge lamp, with all the rest of the Albee recreation room in darkness, Father Bell interpreted in his inimitable manner choice bits of Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg, Edwin A. Robinson, Robert Frost, Vachel Lindsay, and other modern American poets. . . All these were read with such sympathy and feeling that every picture, every character, seemed intensely real and natural."²⁰

Word of the St. Stephen's educational program and its theological base was carried to the outside world in one of the most phenomenal one-man PR campaigns in the history of American religion and higher education. This

ambassadorship consisted of President Bell's continually enlarging schedule of lectures and preaching engagements, before audiences and congregations of steadily increasing importance.

He preached repeatedly in the college chapels of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton; at Amherst, Williams, and Wesleyan, at Columbia, Wellesley, Smith, and Holyoke; Chicago, Lafayette, Union, Vermont, and Middlebury; at Trinity Church at the head of Wall Street and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine; in Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, London; at St. Martins-in-the-Fields and Temple Church, London; — and at the Washington Cathedral before 16,000 people at the nation-wide radio service following the interment of the body of President Wilson in Bethlehem Chapel.

Every so often he would leave campus for a week and be preaching or speaking every day before an important audience. Sometimes it would be at a preparatory school (where students were beginning to think about college); sometimes before a group of student parents or a convention of academic administrators; sometimes a sermon in an important city or suburban parish. But almost always it would be on some aspect of his great and recurring theme: the Ultimate Reality of God which underlies and illumines all other realities and experiences and upon which the St. Stephen's educational program was ultimately based.

The cumulative effect of Bell's speaking program is incalculable. His name became a household word to thousands of people who had never themselves set eyes upon him. He was almost certainly the most widely known, most listened-to and most influential American clergyman of his generation and very possibly of the present century.

Because of his eloquence, his perceptivity, and his pungency of phrase, he speedily became one of the best known academic spokesmen of his age as well.

Increasingly during his St. Stephen's years, President Bell's lectures and sermons were reprinted as magazine articles (in such publications as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Life*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *American Church Monthly*, the *Church Times* of London, and similar journals) — or as books (seven books during his St. Stephen's years; 21 during his lifetime).

And still today, fifty years later, both in America and England, one encounters people who know of St. Stephen's College only that it is "the college where B. I. Bell was."

The correspondence files of the President's office give us this little vignette of the crossing of the paths of the College's past and future on the B. I. Bell speaking circuit. This particular incident was after Bell had left

St. Stephen's and settled in Providence where he was Canon of St. John's Cathedral. He was preaching to a summer congregation at Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard. After the service a young man came up and introduced himself and asked for a copy of the sermon. "You replied" the young man wrote years later, that you "had only your delivery copy, but you were kind enough to lend that to me. I made a complete copy in longhand, which I still have by the way; its title was 'Behold the Man!' — and I returned the manuscript to you."

The young man who heard the sermon, copied it by hand and wrote Dr. Bell about it, was James H. Case, Jr. Some years later he was President of Bard College. Upon assuming that position he wrote to Dr. Bell, who replied: "I remember you from Martha's Vineyard."²¹

Faculty During the Bell Years

Probably the most outstanding and colorful faculty member of B. I. Bell's years at St. Stephen's was Dr. Lyford Paterson Edwards, who taught at the College from 1920 to 1947. A Canadian native and graduate of McGill, he had earned a Ph.D. in 1919 at the University of Chicago, where he and B. I. Bell had been fraternity brothers. Bell brought him in 1920 to St. Stephen's, where he remained until he retired. He was still attending the College's commencements in the latter 1970's at age 95. His stature, mien, and brilliant-hued clerical cassock and cape and Chicago doctoral hood made him the most striking and colorful figure in the College's academic processions. An ordained priest of the Episcopal Church, Edwards was what we would today call an "Anglo-Catholic radical." He was proud of the fact that having taught at Rice Institute and Western Seminary, he was "run out of both" — at Rice "just ahead of the mob," and "taken by the dean and secretly put on the Chicago train to escape the posse coming to lynch me."²²

Describing the incident to Harvey Fite, Edwards said: "I have eaten blubber with the Eskimos and raw snake with the Australian aborigines and I now realize that I have probably missed the only opportunity I will ever have to experience a good coat of tar and feathers."²³

Edwards was said to be one of the first professors of sociology in any American college or university. Around him at St. Stephen's a whole social science curriculum grew up, including courses in economics, labor relations, contemporary radicalism, the evolution of industrial society, social pathology, the Church and society, and urban sociology — all of them unusual areas

for small college study in the early 1920's. Some of these subjects reflected B. I. Bell's interest and writings of the immediate post-war years (e.g., *Right and Wrong After the War*, 1919). Others were expressions of Dr. Edwards' own interest.

"Trotsky" as Edwards' students often called him, was a master of the shock technique of teaching. Incidents involving whorehouses, picket lines, and life in state prisons spiced his teaching and had students of his small country college sitting on the edge of their seats, and still recalling some of his more vivid illustrations 50 years later. His *History of Revolution* (1927) is still recognized as a classic, and was reprinted in 1970.

A student of the 1920's recalls that "when John Gardner Murray — the then presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church — made a visitation and all were hoping for his interest in getting the Church to come across with financial help, Dr. Edwards (then Provost) addressed us in the dining commons in this fashion: 'The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church is about to visit us. I want you all to go to Chapel on Sunday, pray like hell, and behave yourselves.'"

In 1923 Edwards married a wealthy woman whose father was president of the Erie Railroad. How did he reconcile his socialism with his wife's money? "With a million dollars" he explained, "you can tell the world to go to hell and get away with it."²⁴

Although Bell brought Edwards to St. Stephen's and they were very close during their early years here, toward the end of their time together they became estranged and tended to speak disparagingly of each other, and Bell was taking steps to end Edward's appointment when Bell's own departure intervened.

Despite his vintage radicalism, Edwards never wavered on the subject of the proper function of the College. "...the College with the future before it," he said in his address on his reception of a Bard honorary doctorate in 1947, "is the college that can train men to guide their wills and emotions for the common welfare."²⁵

Two of the most notable Bell appointees were Dr. Vasil Obreshkove in 1925 and Dr. Theodore Sottery in 1929, in biology and chemistry respectively. Obreshkove continued at the College until 1950 and Sottery until 1963. Together these two built up an unusually strong science department. For a long period half or more of the department's student majors subsequently earned doctoral degrees in science or medicine, and many went on to distinguished careers in their fields.

Dr. Obreshkove — Obie, as he was called — was a person of vast emotional

capacity, unlimited physical and mental energy, and rock-bound convictions. For him "an issue was either black or white, — shades of gray did not matter." In politics he was a staunch Republican and never wavered from this allegiance. Dr. Obreshkove's love and respect of science was a vital part of his character and influenced generations of Bard students. Through the years his philosophy changed from the mechanistic to the vitalistic viewpoint. The biology department again and again echoed to the familiar phrases: "Let it lead you! What is the meaning and the implication? — mentally, morally, and spiritually?"²⁶ The campus at large knew Obie as an indefatigable gardener, spending endless late afternoon and evening hours in his little patch outside Ludlow where the Obreshkovs lived.

"Ted" Sottery was a native of Smyrna, Turkey, came with his family to Wakefield, Massachusetts, when he was 15, graduated from Clark University, and took his doctorate at Columbia. He was the first person appointed to the St. Stephen's faculty after the merger with Columbia and continued at the College through all the transitions of the following 35 years. He and Dr. Obreshkove were the anchor men of a science division of unique quality among small colleges. In addition to teaching and research in his own field, Dr. Sottery played a major role in the academic governance of the College through his leadership among the faculty and his work on the major committees. In many ways he was the College's most outstanding faculty member of the mid-century years.

Dr. Davidson had been holding the college together in the interim between Rodgers and Bell, and he continued until 1940. Dr. John C. Robertson, professor of Greek since 1892 and the only still active Fairbairn appointee, continued throughout all the Bell years. Dr. Edwin C. Upton, professor of English since 1903, taught until 1939. The Rev. John W. S. McDonald, on the faculty since 1915, served until 1925. Dr. Lucious Shero came in 1921 as professor of Greek, remaining until 1929 when he went to Swarthmore. He was succeeded by Dr. Joseph E. Harry, a learned Greek scholar and editor of classical texts, who continued until his retirement in 1939. Another prolific faculty writer was James Wilson, professor of Romance languages and literature from 1923 to 1933.

Dr. Bell was an elitist. He wanted faculty for his college who were not only good teachers and men of learning, but who were also men of note and standing. Since the College's salaries were necessarily modest, the faculty included a number who were mildly eccentric or transfers from other professions, or perhaps men of some private means, for thus could the College get distinction or elegance at a price within its reach.

Other faculty of Bell's years included the Rev. Kenneth Bray, physical director, assistant chaplain, and instructor in Greek. He had a prominent role in the 1926 student strike. Edward N. Voorhees taught English for 20 years beginning in 1921. Louis F. Corti, a member of a wealthy Italian family in Milan, who maintained a palatial home in Princeton, taught modern languages from 1925 to 1942. Dr. Kenneth Crosby came in 1925 as the first occupant of the just completed Rives cottage in Faculty Circle. He was variously chaplain, instructor in religion, and bursar. Dr. Francis R. Flournoy taught history and political science from 1928 to 1936. Dr. Carl A. Garabedian taught mathematics and was organist from 1930 to 1937. Archie Willoughby Henzell taught physics and chemistry for five years beginning in 1920. The Rev. James Arthur Muller came in 1921 and taught for four years before continuing on to the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge where he had a distinguished career as professor of church history.

John Torok, assistant professor of modern languages and literature (1922-1925) was a wealthy ex-Catholic Monsignor, an Austrian, and a "militant pacifist." To many students of his time he was "the most dramatic figure in our college life."

Another glamorous figure of European background was Dr. William W. Whitelock, professor of German and Italian (1924-27). He was said to be a "blue-blooded German aristocrat and his wife a baroness."

A unique figure in the College's history was the eccentric and in certain quarters much admired intellectual, Albert Jay Nock. Nock had been a student at St. Stephen's in the years 1887 to 1892 (five years, since his first year was spent as a member of the preparatory, or pre-college class). Nock graduated with good grades and subsequently returned to the College to teach Latin and German from 1895 to 1898. And then, 30 years later, in Bell's last two years at St. Stephen's, Nock held appointment as visiting professor of politics and American history (1931-33) but was absent on sick leave the latter part of the second year. Nock became something of a cult figure among certain segments of the American intelligentsia. The author of numerous works on Rabelais, Henry George, and Jefferson, and on education and social philosophy, he also produced an autobiography, *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man*, which his admirers rank with the *Education of Henry Adams*. He was awarded a St. Stephen's honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in 1927.

Nock zealously guarded his private life from public scrutiny, avoided biographical listings, and allowed his whereabouts to be known only to a few intimates. He died in 1945. Following his death, a society of his devotees

came into being, committed to interpreting and spreading his ideas and distributing his books. Today he may well enjoy among his admirers an even more passionate devotion than was his during his lifetime.

Probably the most readily available and concise treatment of Nock's career and significance is the article by Peter Witonski, Bard alumnus of 1965, in the College's *Alumni Magazine*, issue of Winter 1966.

Campus Life in the 1920's

The main shaping force on St. Stephen's in the 1920's was the president's determination to have the kind of college he envisioned, with its clearly defined theological base.

But there were other forces and motivations too. There was the drive among students as well as among faculty and officers, to be a proper college — that is to have the atmosphere and appearance of the famous and successful institutions — to be (and to look like!) Williams, Harvard, the colleges some of the students had tried to get into and hadn't. Dr. Bell, in building his great sweep of collegiate Gothic (Hegeman, Albee and Albee Annex), was not immune to this feeling.

The reach for status, to be and to look like other colleges, showed itself in several ways, for example the appearance in the student newspaper of a regular column entitled "In Other Colleges," — implying that "we're one of the club" of those important institutions whose activities were cited — Rochester, Yale, Hamilton, Pennsylvania, Amherst. But this status drive showed itself especially in the campus social life and in the College's athletic program.

St. Stephen's social life was largely in the hands of the fraternities, often termed the "societies". There were weekly fraternity meetings and a table for each group in the dining hall. But the great events of fraternity life were the annual dance, usually held in the trustees' room in Ludlow or the gym, and the annual banquet, the latter at Commencement time, and attended by many returning alumni brothers. The Beekman Arms in Rhinebeck and the Nelson House in Poughkeepsie were favored sites for the banquet, although sometimes it was held on campus.

For either event preparations were carefully planned and substantial. Students labored long and hard to decorate the premises; often there were printed programs; faculty and their wives were invited as patrons and patronesses, and the name of guests were listed in the student paper (including each

attending student and his "date," — usually a girl from an out-of-town college.

"... Shortly after nine o'clock the orchestra swung into the lively strains of "Oriental Stars," and the dance was on. As the merry couples flocked to the call of the music, they could not but hesitate to gaze upon the unique decorations. . . . In the Trustees Room the decorations were exclusively those of the hosts. Over the large fireplace hung the seal of the Order with a vase of red carnations on either side. At the opposite end of the hall a large Eulexian banner in a glow of reflected light was in prominence. Suspended in the center of the hall was a huge Japanese sunshade with many little Japanese lanterns hanging from its rim. Numerous clusters of Japanese wistaria blossoms hung from the ceiling and gave the effect of a beautiful garden. In keeping with this the Japanese lanterns cast a soft warm light over the room, making a beautiful contrast between the bright wistaria blossoms and the dull potted fur [sic!] trees which were arranged about the hall. No less beautiful was the comfortable recess of the patronesses. Resting in cozy wicker chairs behind a trellis of blossoms, they gazed at the joyful couples with apparently as much enjoyment as those tripping the light fantastic toe."²⁹

"The dance given by the non-society men on Friday evening, May 4th, was attended by thirty-three couples. . . . The gymnasium was decorated after a novel manner, the object being not to conceal the fact that it was a gymnasium, but to hide the few objectionable features of the building. . . . The apparatus was covered with evergreens, strips of orange crepe paper were hung over the window gratings and the lights were colored amber in order both to deaden the glare and to throw over all a color-tone in harmony with the interior finish of the gymnasium. Ample refreshments, including coffee, were served during the intermission. Arrangements had been made for fifty couples, but even at that, the total expenditure for the dance did not quite use up all the money on hand. It had been adequately demonstrated that it is possible to give a sufficiently and in every respect satisfactory dance on the campus for less than two hundred dollars, and yet keep the admissions fee down to three dollars per couple. This lesson, if remembered, should do much to eliminate the embarrassment and fatigue which so often have followed the dances of other days."³⁰

Athletics

The other vehicle for the enhancement of the self-image of the St. Stephen's community in the twenties was the College's athletic program. Athletics also contributed powerfully to the College's outside image, especially in the years 1920 to 1926, when an amazingly successful St. Stephen's football team, playing much larger institutions, turned in some impressive performances.

For its venture into "big-time athletics," — especially "big-time" football — the College engaged as coach first Major Percy S. Prince, and then, in 1924, the Rev. Kenneth A. Bray. Bray came from Hobart and the rumor was that "he brought ten football players with him." Some of the athletes were said to have paid their college bills with promissory notes endorsed by

Father Bray. Intercollegiate schedules were maintained in football, basketball, and tennis, with lacrosse displacing football in 1927.

Starting with games with neighboring high schools in 1919, St. Stephen's worked up to such football opponents in 1922 as St. Lawrence, CCNY, and Providence College; by 1923, Bowdoin, NYU, Fordham, and Manhattan were on the schedule; and for 1925, Trinity, Williams, St. John's of Brooklyn, Middlebury, Colby, and Norwich. The fall of 1925 was the last year of intercollegiate football, as the sport was terminated following the strike in 1926. St. Stephen's great athletic hero was "Pete" Deloria, a full-blooded Sioux Indian, the star and captain of the 1925 team.

St. Stephen's also played regular intercollegiate schedules in basketball, tennis, baseball, and, beginning in 1925, in lacrosse.

The College achieved its peak in intercollegiate athletics in the mid-twenties. In the fall of 1925 the College decisively defeated the University of Rochester in football, and in the 1925-26 basketball season there were major victories over Hamilton and Colgate (on consecutive evenings), and over Yale. In the spring of 1926, St. Stephen's defeated Oxford-Cambridge in lacrosse. As the captain of two of those St. Stephen's teams says: "quite a record for a college with an enrollment of a little over 100 students!"³¹

Bell as an Administrator and Fund-Raiser

Large sections of Dr. Bell's correspondence files still exist, relatively untouched from the way he left them. They reveal, above all else, the tremendous amount of work he did. The detail which he handled day-in and day-out is almost unbelievable. To all intents and purposes he was the College's whole administrative staff.

He personally received each item of income and transmitted it to the College treasurer in New York City, with a covering letter.

He made the financial arrangements for each student, and monitored and transmitted student payments.

He did most of the fund-raising personally, and organized and motivated the rest.

Inevitably the most urgent reality in the life of the College during B. I. Bell's fourteen years was the need for money. He had found a rather weak and stodgy little college when he came in 1919. It fell far short of his standards. He would be satisfied only with a college that was of high quality, with adequate buildings, a strong educational program, and a wide and fine reputation,

both in the Church and in the larger society. Plainly this was going to take money.

When Bell first arrived at St. Stephen's in the summer of 1919, it appeared that his fund-raising job, at least in part, might be done for him. The national organization of the Episcopal Church had been planning a great post-war "nationwide campaign" for its educational, missionary, and world-wide programs. And in that fall of 1919, the Church's national General Convention, meeting in Detroit, had resolved:

"...that we do heartily commend to the Church...Kenyon College, the University of the South, and St. Stephen's College — and also Trinity College and Hobart College — and that we press the desire that they may be adequately supported by the prayers of our people and the enrollment of their sons, and by their material gifts, and...we urge the earnest and sympathetic consideration by the authorities of the Nation-Wide Campaign of the requests made by these colleges, i.e., for new projects the sum of \$1,050,000; for remodelling \$275,000; and for maintenance \$195,000; a total of \$1,520,000."³²

"Our share of the funds realized from the Nation-Wide Campaign," Dr. Bell told the campus in 1920, "is fixed at approximately \$431,000... to be expended in the following manner: for new classroom and laboratory building, \$225,000; for a new section of the dormitory building, \$50,000; for remodelling the refectory and for building servants' quarters, \$20,000; for remodelling present buildings \$5,000; for paying one half the cost of the new gymnasium, \$25,000; for support for three years at the rate of \$36,000 per year, \$108,000."³³

The College, especially President Bell, worked hard to help ensure the success of the Nation-Wide Campaign, even going so far as to urge those who were planning to make gifts to the College, to do so through the Nation-Wide Campaign since this would both ensure the College's getting its needed money, and be a credit toward the Nation-Wide quota of the donor's parish and diocese.³⁴

Only a month after Dr. Bell's announcement, the blow fell. Meeting with the Presiding Bishop, the 84-year old Bishop Tuttle, the presidents of Hobart and St. Stephen's were told that the Nation-Wide Campaign had raised only \$4 million of the \$9 million sought for extra-diocesan work. This amount, the Presiding Bishop told them, "will pay the debt of the Board of Missions, take care of the running missionary work of the Church, pay for the national Church offices, and will give only nominal sums to other needs."³⁵ In place of the sums promised to the Church colleges, only a few thousand dollars would be available.

The College was in immediate trouble. Having counted on the Nation-Wide Campaign, it was running that year at a deficit of \$30,000 and furthermore had in hand only \$23,000 of the \$60,000 needed for the new gym then under construction. As had been the case so often before and was to be so

many times in the future, the College's needs and commitments were running ahead of the funds in sight, — but this time hardly through the College's fault!

The 3-3-3 Campaign

As it became evident that the Nation-Wide Campaign would not supply the necessary funds for St. Stephen's needs, the College set about organizing a fund-raising appeal of its own. Originally this was for a goal of \$250,000, but on further consideration of the institution's need the total was increased to \$500,000.

The objectives were:

For general endowment	\$350,000
Construction of new dormitory	50,000
Construction of new science bldg.	50,000
Rehabilitation of present plant	50,000
	<hr/>
total	\$500,000 ³⁶

The most attractive and effective fund-raising literature ever seen on the campus was produced for this campaign. Done on rough uncoated book paper with heavy black type and red headings, the mailing pieces emphasized the College's contribution to the Church, its academic excellence, and the sterling leadership of its president:

"St. Stephen's has given more men to the ministry of the Church than any other college in America...and has this year in the Episcopal theological seminaries...more men than any other three colleges combined.

"Among the men who are backing with their endorsement your old college as an educational institution are President Meiklejohn of Amherst, President Sills of Bowdoin, Professor Baldwin of Columbia, Dr. Graves, Superintendent of Education of New York and a lot of others like them.

"The old college is making good. But it is working under difficulties... crowded... Men packed in... And endowment? Practically non est...

"St. Stephen's...under the guidance of that splendid leader of youth, Bernard Iddings Bell, is forging ahead to take its rightful place in the front rank of small American colleges.

Prexy has had to be away from the campus over half the time with his hand out. No way to treat Prexy!..."³⁷

A "quota" of \$333 was assigned to every alumnus and friend of the College, — payable if need be at the rate of \$67 a year over a five-year period.

"3-3-3 is a part of your debt to St. Stephen's."

Speaking in 1934 at the meeting of the Rhinebeck chapter of the D.A.R., the Rev. Charles S. Champlin, an alumnus and trustee of the College, gave this interesting personal account of the working out of that campaign, "the carrying out of which was entrusted to Tamlyn and Brown, an advertising agency in New York."

"The eastern section of the country was divided up into zones each of which had as nearly the same amount of alumni in it as did the other, an alumnus being placed in charge of each zone. It happened that I was placed in charge of the central part of this state, with assistants at Watertown and Rochester. Each alumnus was asked to give or raise the sum of \$333.33, making the amount payable in two payments a year, covering a period of five years.

"I was able to raise in my little parish of 150 communicants the sum of \$2,000, the largest amount in proportion to the size of the parish, raised by any alumnus. Sending my report in to headquarters, I received from Dr. Bell and Mr. Hutchinson, Tamlyn and Brown's representative, a request to arrange for a dinner in Syracuse, and to get as many of the alumni in my and the neighboring zones as possible, to be present which I did, Dr. Bell and Mr. Hutchinson both being present, each stressing and showing proof of what I had done, as an inspiration to the other alumni present to rush matters to accomplish the same or a similar result. The aftermath of this dinner was that my entire zone went over the top with a rush.

"The dinner being over, Drs. Hutchinson and Bell asked me if I would leave Syracuse that night and go to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and arrange for a dinner there, getting as many alumni in and around that city to attend, and do what I could to raise, then and there the Pittsburgh quota. It was very short notice, but I organized myself and left for Pittsburgh that night at midnight, and after no little difficulty, I got all of the alumni to attend, and then and there I began to get first-hand knowledge of several things Dr. Bell had said and done, but a short time previous, that had all but completely alienated the sympathies and cooperation of the alumni then present from having anything to do either with the College or endowment, so long as Dr. Bell was associated with it.

"I did manage, however, at that meeting to secure pledges of sufficient amount to meet the quota allotted to that district, and wired the result in a night letter to Tamlyn and Brown, intending to spend the next day in and around the city, and leave at night for home. But no sooner was my night letter received in New York than they wired me to leave that night for New York and appear at their office as soon as possible the following morning, which I did, only to be sent off, post haste, to Boston for a week, to do what I could in raising the quota there.

"Without going into further detail, the president of the College wrote my vestry, asking them to grant me a leave of absence from then (which was early in March) until the first of July, the request being granted, and I was kept on the road all that time, covering the territory between Pittsburgh and Portland, Maine, during which I was in constant communication with Dr. Bell, trying to iron out difficulties created by him. And I am happy to be able to state that while I was unable to raise the entire amount of the endowment asked for, I have letters written by both Dr. Bell and Tamlyn and Brown, stating that had it not been for the hard work that I had done, not one-half the money that was raised would have been forthcoming . . ."³⁸

Largely with the help of the Hegeman and Albee gifts that were obtained (about \$160,000 and \$90,000 respectively), this \$500,000 campaign essentially achieved its goal.

The other major financial campaign, carried on by the College itself (instead of being managed by professional consultants like Tamlyn and Brown) was the "Two Million Dollar Appeal," running from 1926 to approximately 1930. But before we come to that, there occurred two events, the first profoundly disturbing the life and work of the campus, and the second affecting the whole life and character of the College for the next fifty years.

The first of these was the student strike of 1926, and the second the College's becoming a unit of Columbia University.

On a Monday morning in March, 1926, the students went on strike against the administration of the College. The overt cause was student resentment of the stern reproof of conduct in Chapel delivered by Dr. Bell a few evenings before in the student dining room.³⁹ The students promptly submitted a petition for a transfer of student disciplinary power from the president to a new joint committee of students and faculty. Dr. Bell paid no attention to the petition, and when he returned from a Sunday speaking engagement at Union College he found himself faced with a student strike, with 89 of the 125 students participating.

Dissatisfaction with Dr. Bell had been brewing for some time on campus. There was resentment of his authoritarian and seemingly high-handed administration of the institution, and of his assuming that the College had no history worth considering before he came: "since its refounding four years ago" was one of his favorite phrases.

And the preceding December, the president had undergone a very serious thyroid operation, which some felt had left him still fatigued and more irritable than usual.

"The strikers behaved very well and were effectively organized" Dr. Davidson wrote; "their protest was largely confined to absence from classes and Chapel. The president at first demanded that the faculty expel certain students whom he designated as leaders. The faculty avoided doing this, as a decisive majority held that this in no way got at the causes of the strike . . . For about ten days the situation was very tense, strained and disagreeable for all concerned. There were faculty gatherings, formal and informal, and of course numerous student meetings, along with gossip, publicity and newspaper articles. At first there had been no voiced request for the president's resignation, but as he remained impervious to requests for concessions and announced that he would receive no petitions, the feeling grew that his departure was about the only satisfactory solution. I am convinced that without Mr. Fiske's staunch backing, we should have seen the end of President Bell. After about ten most unpleasant days, the spring recess fortunately came, and during the recess a sort of truce was patched up by meetings of students, faculty and trustees in New York. The result was a temporary partial victory for the student cause, as disciplinary authority was removed from the hands of the president and placed with a faculty committee of three, appointed by the board of trustees; student participation in this committee was not granted . . ."

Some students did not return after the spring recess, and more dropped out that summer. Student population, at an all-time high of 137 at the time of the strike, fell to 110 the following September, and never again reached the 137 level during the remainder of the Bell administration.³⁹

The following fall, the trustees declared that control of the students in regard to academic matters is the responsibility of the faculty; in regard to financial matters the responsibility of the bursar; and in regard to Chapel requirements the responsibility of the chaplain. Student discipline was placed in the hands of a faculty committee of three to be appointed by the trustees.⁴⁰

Dr. Bell felt that the trouble had centered in Father Bray, the athletic director, and a small group of athletes, chiefly in the S A E fraternity. It was known, as noted earlier, that Bray had been endorsing the notes with which some athletes paid their College bills. The College had continual trouble with the collection of student notes when due, and there is no evidence that Bray or other faculty endorsers ever had to make good on the notes which they had endorsed and which were defaulted.

The following September, Dr. Bell wrote to a member of the board of trustees:

"We have done rather well, all things considered, in settling our late disturbances. We have gotten rid of Father Bray and done it in a way which has not brought disgrace upon the Church in the person of one of her ordained ministers . . . We have managed to bring back most of the students. The S A E fraternity comprises most of those who have quit. As far as I can see, there will be five S A E men back. The entire Bray block, consisting of athletes whom we now know were paid, men whose sole interest in the College and in the fraternity, was as they were appendages to their athletic activities, is gone . . . Those who are left are good men . . ."⁴¹

In a letter to a Bard student 25 years later, Dr. Bell had this to say about the strike:

"The famous 'strike' was an interesting phenomenon. It was hard to deal with, because as with most such student performances, the undergraduates were manipulated by a few unscrupulous members of the faculty. The poor boys thought that they were fighting for democracy, whereas in reality they were fighting to get rid of the president who had become dangerous to some members of the staff, and who was about to recommend the dismissal, for cause, of two of them. The president, myself, had to be away from the campus for several weeks for a serious operation. When he returned, still weak and not aware of exactly what had been going on in his absence, the strike was sprung on him. The board of trustees let it ride, and finally was able to dissolve it and to show the students responsible for leading it, that they had been 'used' by the two professors. Both these men were dismissed. The College suffered, but soon it began to recover again. The president did not leave."

"Long observation of student disturbances leads me always to suspect that back of each one of them is some kind of unscrupulous action on the part of faculty members. The poor undergraduates are much too gullible. I am led to wonder whether your present disturbances may not have a similar origin . . ."⁴²

With the strike settled, the College went back to work and the trustees returned to their perennial task of raising money. In "A Public Statement" issued January 3, 1927, they set forth, among other pronouncements, the College's determination:

1. "to select its students hereafter with no denominational or racial preferences, but primarily on the ground of intellectual ability and character;
2. "to enlarge its housing facilities and endowment so that it may accept two hundred and fifty students, the best number, it is believed, for an undergraduate residence college unit. The amount of money needed to finance this development is \$2,000,000."

It was planned to raise this money by securing gifts of \$100,000 from each of 25 men. Albee promptly contributed his share, but he was the only one. The president worked vigorously on the campaign, but it was hard going. "This semester" he told the trustees,

"I have resigned all my proper duties of teaching and administration, and my own scholarly productiveness in order to do this sort of work. I do not feel that I am particularly successful at it. I know that I am doing myself a grave injustice intellectually and spiritually by confining myself to this sort of work and ignoring the work for which I was prepared, and for doing which I think I have some ability. I am quite certain that I am unwilling to make myself a financial and publicity agent for the next five years. Rather than do that, I should find myself under the necessity of securing some other academic connection. I am willing to continue away from my real tasks until February 1st of next year. By that time we shall possibly have secured a group of trustees who can take this burden off my shoulders and permit me to return to my real educational work."⁴³

With fund-raising thus at a near standstill, it began to appear that St. Stephen's and its warden who had navigated so brilliantly for eight years seemed now to be sailing into heavy weather, and there were grounds for concern.

Then on May 1, 1928, a startling piece of news flashed across the American academic landscape:

"An agreement has been reached," it was announced, "between Columbia University and St. Stephen's College . . . whereby the College . . . is affiliated with the University and incorporated into its educational system."⁴⁴

This was the most important single announcement in the College's history. It was something to make the whole academic world sit up and take notice, for Columbia and its president were probably at that time the best known university and president in the world.