

A PUBLIC-SPIRITED ARTIST.

WITH THE OBJECT of helping our blinded soldiers and sailors, Mr Arthur G. Bell, R.I., R.O.I., is holding an exhibition of his drawings from Nov. 29 to Dec. 11 inclusive. The entire proceeds will be given to St. Dunstan's Hospital for our Blinded Soldiers and Sailors and to the South-Eastern Blind Aid Society. The exhibition will be held at Rastgarth, Southbourne-on-Sea, Hants, on admission on Wednesday being sixpence, and on other days one shilling. It will be open from 2.30 to 5.50, and it is greatly to be hoped that all who can possibly do so will visit an exhibition which is devoted to so good a cause. By the courtesy of the artist we are able to give a reproduction of one of Mr Bell's drawings which will be shown during the exhibition. It represents a waterway in Holland, and although it makes an effective picture as it stands, it loses much of its charm by the translation from colour to black and white. It is a scene which will be familiar to all who know Holland, for, although its actual position is not mentioned, it is typical of waterways such as may be seen all over the country on a grey day, with the rolling clouds which are so characteristic of Holland. It only remains to add that the exhibition will include several drawings of Bruges.

AN OLD-TIME MENAGERIE.

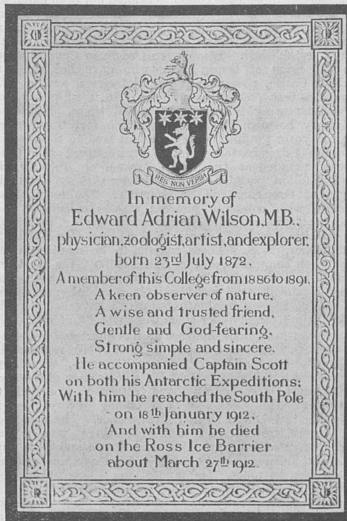
ON NOV. 16, 1850, there passed away the celebrated menagerie proprietor George Wombwell, who at one time was such a popular favourite at the London fairs, and achieved a name for himself which is still remembered. His immense industry and skill kept him at the head of the walk of life he chose for very many years. He is said to have started earning his living as a cobbler in what was then called Mommouth-street, Seven Dials. As a boy it is understood he first mixed a liking for the ordinary menagerie net animals as birds, rabbits, and dogs, but according to some accounts, while he was keeping a shoemaker's shop in Soho, he visited the London Docks one day, and came across some box constructors, part of a cargo which had just been brought into this country. At that time the real character of these reptiles was not so well known as it is now, and so it is not astonishing to hear that these particular snakes were sold for sums much below their value. Wombwell, seeing that there was money in the idea, bought a pair, and in a very short time realised considerably more than the purchase money by their exhibition. This purchase gave him a start, and he gradually became an importer of wild animals and a proprietor of one of the largest and finest circuses in the country, and acquired many admirers and acquirers there. His small yellow business card bore the device of a tiger and the inscription:

Wombwell,
Wild Beast Merchant,
Commercial-road,
London.

"All sorts of foreign animals, birds, &c., bought, sold, or exchanged at the Repository, or the travelling Menagerie." He was a regular vendor at Bartholomew Fair, but the story is told that on one occasion he nearly missed it, for a fortnight beforehand his menagerie was at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Hearing, however, that a rival was advertising that his collection would be the only wild beast show at the fair, Wombwell made a forced road march to London, and succeeded in arriving in time, but in so doing lost his elephant, who died from the exertions that it made. The news spread, of course, and the enterprising rival announced that his menagerie contained the only living elephant in the fair," whereupon Wombwell had painted on a long strip of canvas the words, "The only dead elephant in the fair," and the quaintness of the idea gained him the victory.

Thomas Frost when a boy always made a point of visiting Wombwell's show at Croydon, and tells us that he could never sufficiently admire the gorgeously uniformed bands-

men, whose brazen instruments brayed and blared from noon till night on the exterior platform, and the immense pictures suspended from lofty poles of elephants and giraffes, lions and tigers, zebras, boa constrictors, and whatever else was most wonderful in the brute creation or most susceptible of brilliant colouring. The difference in the scale to which the zoological rarities within were depicted on the canvas, as compared with the figures of men that were represented, was a very characteristic feature of these pictorial displays. The boa constrictor was given the girth of an ox, and the



TABLET ERECTED IN CHELTENHAM COLLEGE TO THE MEMORY OF DR WILSON.

white bear should have been as large as an elephant, judging by the size of the sailors who were attacking him among his native icebergs. Many of the animals used to perform, the elephant of Siam, for example, uncocking bottles, and deciding for the right hand, and the two famous lions Nero and Wallace were shown off by the keeper "Manchester Jack." These were the lions which Wombwell is said to have turned against several mastiff dogs, and Hone quotes an account of the incident, from the *Times* which does not make very edifying reading. According to Frost the lion Wallace was sometimes called Nero, and the newspapers reported two of these lion baitings, though the story appears to have been an exaggeration in some particulars, for it is not absolutely clear whether one or both lions were baited.

To show how popular Wombwell's menagerie was, it may be mentioned that the takings amounted to £1700 at Bartholomew's Fair in the year 1826; and about that time the old showman advertised "that most wonderful animal, the bonassus, being the first of the kind which had ever been brought to Europe," and great crowds flocked to see this very fine specimen of an American bull buffalo, which was afterwards sold to the Zoological Society. It was while performing in Wombwell's menagerie that poor

Helen Blight, a so-called "lion queen," met her death. She had very imprudently struck a sulky tiger with her whip, and the enraged animal killed her before help could arrive, this causing a stop to be put to such performances by women for many years. Wombwell at one time had a fine collection, for he mustered twelve lions, besides lionesses and cubs, eight tigers, a tigress and cubs, a black tiger, several leopards, a jaguar, a puma, several kinds of bears, three elephants, a fine one-horned rhinoceros, and several deer and antelopes. On one occasion a good deal of damage was caused by an elephant in the early hours of the morning walking through Croydon and forcing his way into a confectioner's shop, after which he helped himself liberally to whatever he found there. No other harm was done, and the delinquent was speedily recaptured, but Wombwell, though his excellent advertisement was, of course, compelled to compensate the injured tradesman.

Wombwell died at Richmond in his living carriage at the age of seventy-three, and was buried in Highgate Cemetery, his coffin being made of oak from the timbers of the Royal George, and the menagerie was, according to his will, divided into three parts, which were bequeathed to his widow and relations. Mrs Wombwell retired sixteen years later, and Fairbairn's successful collection was sold at auction at Edinburgh in 1872, and it is said that the proceeds were a little under £3000. Wombwell is reputed to have had to pay £35 a day to keep his three large menageries going, and, of course, he lost heavily through mortality. He was, however, a very successful man, and paid great attention to the care of his animals, and to the day of his death took an active interest in all matters connected with the menagerie, often giving his servants a practical lesson how things should be done. The name lingered long after the old showman had passed away.

TABLET TO DR WILSON AT CHELTENHAM COLLEGE.

SOME twelve months since there was erected in Cheltenham a statue, designed by Lady Scott, of Dr Edward A. Wilson, who accompanied Capt. Scott on his last journey to the South Pole, and, like his chief, met his life's end in home. Cheltenham College has likewise done honour to the memory of Dr Wilson, one of its old boys, by placing a tablet, of which we give a reproduction, in the college chapel. This memorial, the work of Messrs R. E. and C. Marshall, Cheltenham, forms one of a series of memorials to distinguished members of the college.

Corriemellie Estate, Ross-shire.—The deer forest of Corriemellie in the county of Ross, the property of Colonel Mackenzie of Orkney, has just been sold to Messrs Lyall and Co. Ltd., of 21, Pall Mall, London. The purchaser is Capt. E. G. Hay. Corriemellie is a capital sporting and residential estate situated close to Garve. It extends to about 6,000 acres, and gives a bag of twenty-two stags in addition to a fair head of grouse and other game. There is fishing in Loch Luichart, and other Lochs, and in the river Blackwater. The house which is very nicely situated, was only erected in 1913, and contains accommodation for a large party.

Christmas Mails for the British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders.—The War Office notifies that in military interests it is necessary to limit the amount of parcel traffic for the troops during the Christmas season. The use of the Parcel Post should be strictly limited to articles of real utility. Fruit, perishable articles of all descriptions, bottles, padding, and other material, is prohibited, and will not be accepted for transmission. The maximum weight for a single parcel will be reduced to 7lb. as from Dec. 1. All parcels must be strongly and securely packed in covers of canvas, linen, or other suitable material. The name and address of the sender must be written on the outside, and parcels which do not comply with this condition will be refused. If it is desired to secure delivery on or before Christmas Day, letters should be posted not later than Dec. 17, and parcels not later than Dec. 15. All parcels for the troops must be fully and completely addressed.