

Bell's career was a unique one. He had early severed his connection with the great medical schools of Edinburgh, where his brother taught. He lectured and practised privately in London, where he gained a considerable reputation; but in his case also it was on the Continent that his greatness was more generally recognised. As in Dalton's case, his countrymen were slow to do him justice.¹ In France he had so great a name that a celebrated

auf Joh. Müller' (Berlin Acad., 1859) showed how the merit of enunciating it is due to Descartes, whose tract on 'Les Passions de l'Âme' was published in 1649. Both Du Bois-Reymond and Huxley give full extracts from the writings of Descartes. There seems, however, to be some doubt to what extent Descartes substantiated his mechanical view of the action of the nervous system by actual experiments. Richet in his 'Physiologie des Muscles et des Nerfs' (Paris, 1882, p. 505, &c.) refers to this, and while giving Descartes his due, also says that practically from the time of Galen to Charles Bell no marked progress had been made in the knowledge of the nervous system, and that this belongs almost entirely to the nineteenth century (pp. 502, 507, 514). Huxley, who takes a much higher view of the merits of Descartes, says he was not only a speculator, but also an observer and dissector (*loc. cit.*, p. 201), and actually places him at the head of modern physiology (p. 334, &c.)

¹ Charles Bell (1774-1842) was born at Edinburgh. His elder brother, John Bell (1763-1820), who was a lecturer of great repute in the extra-mural School of Surgery at Edinburgh, first drew his attention to the medical profession. It was only late in life, and after he

had gained his European renown, that he was appointed to the Chair of Surgery at the University of Edinburgh, which had been created in 1831, and it does not appear that he was at all sufficiently appreciated in this position: he used to say, "I seem to walk in a city of tombs," being unknown in the city of his birth (see Sir A. Grant, 'University of Edinburgh,' vol. ii. p. 453). Whilst Charles Bell established the difference of sensory and motor nerves, and dispelled "the confusion which prevailed up to that time in the minds of anatomists and physiologists regarding the functions of the various nerves," the merit of proving by strict experiment the correctness of Bell's theorem belongs to Johannes Müller (1831), who showed it in the frog, and to Magendie and Longet, who succeeded in exhibiting it in warm-blooded animals. Up to the date of Müller's experimental proof nobody regarded "Bell's doctrine as more than an ingenious and indeed plausible, but nevertheless not sufficiently demonstrated, idea" (see Du Bois-Reymond, 'Reden,' vol. ii. p. 176, &c.; also Henle's description of the demonstration given by Müller in Paris on the 13th September 1831 to Humboldt, Dutrochet, Valenciennes, and Laurillart, in 'Jacob Henle,' by Merkel, 1891, p. 83).