

Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society

Newsletter 1992-93

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SBGAS Newsletter, No 10.

Discoveries (Editorial)

Unrecorded SBG items are regularly coming to the surface to add spice to the pursuit of known but not yet collected titles. To sharpen the antennae, unheard of and obscure articles are asked for in bookselling journals. For instance, there was a request recently for 'A Hungarian Bather in Blood'. It was placed alongside the scarce title, "The Book of Werewolves", which suggests that it may be an extract from that book published separately. My own latest discovery is the 4-verse hymn, 'The Voice of the Lord' on p. 237 of Church Monthly for 1890 - my copy combining in one volume the years 1890-1892 and the issues of St. Laurence Church, Thanet parish magazine for the same period. The 1891 part contains the 5-verse hymn, 'St. Mark's Day', already noted in Roger-Bristow's bibliography. There are surely more of these pieces still to be found in such periodicals of the 1890s.

For the collector whose SBG library is nearly complete or for whom the remaining titles are too expensive or unobtainable, there is an endless field in the area of "Gouldiana", which includes biographical and photographic items, quotations, references, and even bibliographical mentions. The longish list on p. 3 of this issue has already been overtaken. In Newsletter No. 11, I hope to print an alphabetical list of all those items mentioned to date. Members are welcome to send in summaries of their own findings in this area.

In this issue we also reproduce one of SBG's last letters (thanks to a member of the Devonshire Association), a newspaper article of the 1920s, a summary of SBG's contributions to Hurst Echoes, and the first of a new series: 'SBG's Europe', for the layout and design of which thanks are due to Mrs. Heloise Collier,

An item on The Vicar of Morwenstow is promised for a future issue.

David Shacklock

Into his 90th Year

(Copy of original letter, written in very minute and extremely neat hand-writing)

Lew Trenchard, North Devon. 16th February 1923.

Dear Mr. Head,

Thank you so much for your letter. It was my 89th birthday on Jan. 28th, and my entry into my 90th year. I spent the day in bed to which I have been confined for 3 weeks. I am only now emancipated from it, and I got out yesterday and the day before for a short time. I have given up my house and household to my eldest son and his American wife, or rather they have been taken from me, as they supposed me to be too old and infirm to be able to manage them myself. The change is not altogether to my liking, but I have to submit to it. American ways of thought and habits are so foreign and distasteful to me.

I should dearly like to see you here, but I dare not ask leave for any friends to come to me, as all sorts of objections would be raised.

I do not suppose that my time here can be much prolonged, and I shall not be sorry to go to my great Master and Lord and to meet again the dear ones i have lost.

I remain,

Yours truly,

S. Baring-Gould.

Further References (Issue 10)

HOME WORDS 1903 - contains no. VII of the series 'Evening Hymns and their authors' by the Revd. S.C. Lowry: Now the Day is Over p. 282-3.

Richard M. Dorson - THE BRITISH FOLKLORISTS: a History RKP 1968. More than a page (295f) discussing SBG's contribution in 11 of his writings, and six other references in the book; introduced with the rather patronising if entertaining sentence: 'Antiquarian, romances, country squire, clergyman, hagiographer, song collector, Baring-Gould flirted with folklore in the course of his torrential output of over two hundred volumes'.

STRAND MAGAZINE vol LV Jan-June 1893, Newnes: p.392 portraits of SBG at 5, 16, 35, 46 and 59 with brief commentary.

THE OXFORD LITERARY GUIDE TO THE BRITISH ISLES (ed. Dorothy Eagle and Hilary Carnell) OUP 1977: p.352 summary, and references under East Mersea, Essex (p.94a), Lew Trenchard, Devon (p.156) and St. Enodoc, Cornwall (P.293a,b).

Victor Thompson - CHARACTERS AND CARICATURES OF NORTH DEVON - Badger Books 1985 £2.25: p.19 SBG and Dr. John Budd; p.56 bibliography (Devonshire Characters & Strange Events).

R. Gradwell - ST CLEATHER WELL CHAPEL (pamphlet): mentions SBG'S oversight of the chapel's restoration, and A Book of the West.

CORNISH NOTES AND QUERIES (ed. Peter Penn) 1 st series, reprinted from the Cornish Telegraph, Eliot Stock & the C.T. office 1906: 7 references, though only one mentioned in the index -with regard to SBG's assertion that clotted cream was 'made nowhere in the world except in Devon, Cornwall and Phoenicia'.

DARTMOOR - a new study (ed. Crispin Gill) - David & Charles 1974 - 5 references.

Vian Smith - PORTRAIT OF DARTMOOR - Hale March 1966 (2nd ed. Apr. 1969; rev./rpt. Feb. 1972; ditto Sep. 1976) - 7 references/quotations/book titles.

THE EVANGELICAL LIBRARY BULLETIN no. 86 (Spring 1991) - contains article 'Yorkshire & Hymns' by John S. Andrews, which includes a section on SBG.

THE HOMELAND GUIDE TO DARTMOOR by Beatrix F. Cresswell & P.H.W. Almy, published by The Homeland Association Ltd. (n.d.) has SBG references on pages, 22, 28, 46, 53, 64, 67 & 79.

THE STORY OF ST. PETROX CHURCH - 6-page pamphlet on a church in Dartmouth by Percy Russell) - the opening sentence of the main text is a quotation from Lives of the British Saints.

Doris M. Hodges - THE STORY OF HYMNS - Kingsmead Press 1979 - includes a 3-page chapter on SBG.

Also members may not be aware of SBG's article Smugglers' Tricks which can be found in CHAMBERS JOURNAL 6th series, vol. VIII Dec. 1904-Nov. 1905, p. 221-4.

COURT ROYAL was first published in serial form in the CORNHILL MAGAZINE new series Vol. IV, V, VI, 1885-6, splendidly illustrated by George du Maurier.

Prodigious Literary Output

(Subheading of an article in a local newspaper published evidently within a year or so of SBG's death)

Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould and his wife, who predeceased him by eight years, are buried side by side in the new part of the churchyard. Their graves are surmounted by a plain monument bearing the simple inscription: "Paravi lucernam Christo meo" (I have prepared a lantern for my Christ); died January 2, 1924." No truer description could be found of Mr. Baring-Gould's productive life.

After a long and active life, Mr. Baring-Gould left the world the richer by varied contributions to literature and by the example of his kindly character. His views of life have been described as fresh and vigorous, his characters lifelike, and his descriptions of scenery were painted with the loving eyes and the skilful hand of a master of his art.

Born at Exeter on January 28th, 1834, he was the eldest son of Edward Baring-Gould, of Lew Trenchard. After a curacy and a vicariate in Yorkshire, he became Rector of East Mersea. While there, his father died, and he inherited the family estates (of about 2,000 acres) at Lew Trenchard.

When his uncle died in 1881, he presented himself to the family rectory of Lew Trenchard, which he held to the end of his life. While curate of Horbury, Yorkshire, he fell in love with a millhand's daughter, and it is said that when he asked her mother for consent to their marriage, she said, "Surely you won't think of such a thing when there are so many wealthy girls about." He replied, "I want someone to save me £100 a year, not to spend it." They were married in 1868, and had 15 children.

He wrote 20 novels in 23 years, among his best known being "John Herring", 1882 (a romantic story of Dartmoor); "Court Royal", 1886 (the scene of which was laid in Plymouth district); "Red Spider", 1887; "Urith", 1890; and "The Gaverocks", "Eve", "Richard Cable", and "Mehalah".

Among his theological writings is "Lives of the Saints", which monumental work he began in the '70s, and was engaged upon for five years. Fifteen volumes saw the light, but the publisher failed before the work was completed. The Vatican placed it on the "Index Expurgatorius". In 1861 he visited Iceland, and the following year published "Iceland Scenes and Sagas".

Rev. S. Baring-Gould was prominently connected with the Devonshire Association and with the exploration of Druidical and Roman remains in Devon, and was a member of folklore and barrow committees, and other antiquarian associations. He earned the Henwood Gold Medal for his contributions to the literature of Cornwall architecture.

A work that continues to be held in high esteem is his collection of the old songs of the West. When quite a lad, if ever he heard a woman singing an unfamiliar ditty at her work

he made a note of the song. In 1888 he resumed this work, and collected songs and ballads from the mouths of Westcountry people.

Mr. Charles Dustan, who was Mr. Baring-Gould's coachman for over 50 years, still works in the gardens of the old manor, which has for him many bitter-sweet memories. I found him hoeing a grass border near the sunken rose garden, and he told me how he drove his late master hundred of miles in the Westcountry in a carriage and pair in search of old songs of the West. Mr. Dustan recalled with pride that he taught nine of Mr. Gould's daughters and five sons to ride horseback and drive carriages.

As a hymn writer, the author will long be remembered. He originally wrote "Onward, Christian Soldiers" as a marching "song" for the pupils of a Yorkshire Sunday School, composing the hymn the evening before it was required. His beautiful translation of the verses of the Icelandic poet Ingeman, "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow", is hardly less known, and he wrote two other hymns, and collected a volume of 44 Church songs.

Much has been written of this wonderful man. In "A Book of Devonshire Parsons" other works are said to have flooded from his pen. Books the author must have enjoyed writing, for he was the living embodiment of the remark, "None so happy as the versatile, provided they have not to earn their bread by it."

His best work treated of Devon, the Devon he loved so well that he could give no better description of the glories of Paradise than to say -

"There the gardens ever blossom Like our orchards here in May
But the flowers never wither They eternally are gay."

The World Of SBG (1) SBG's Europe

By Heloise Collier

Baring-Gould's expeditions to mainland Europe fall into three categories:

A. His Itinerant Childhood (with his parents)

1 Bordeaux (July 1837) - Bayonne - Pau (winter) - Bagnieres (May 1838) - Foix - Ax - Carcassonne - Montpellier (winter)-home (Oct. 1839).

2 Rotterdam (Oct.1840) - Cologne (winter) - Darmstadt - Karlsruhe - Stuttgart - Munich - Heidelberg (May 1841) - Berne - Lucerne - Thun (Oct.) - Vevey (winter) - Brigue (May 1842) - Baveno - Milan - Varenna - Meran - Klausen - Botzen - Brixen - Salzburg - Linz - Vienna - Prague - Dresden (winter) - Schardau (summer) - Homberg - Mannheim - Bamberg (spring 1844) - Muggendorf - home (Aug.1844)

3 St.Malo (Sep.1847) with friends, Mrs.Snow & daughters, - Rennes - Nantes - Pau (winter) Perigord - Rochefort - Chateaubriant - home.

4 Meilleraye (Oct.1849) - La Rochelle - Caprieux - Bordeaux - Pau (first 'dig') - Bayonne (autumn 1850) - home (May 1851).

B. The Family Forays (with Grace & children)

1 Honeymoon in Interlaken (May 1868)

2 Rotterdam - Cologne - Wurzburg - Kitzingen - Munich - Pertisan (1872-3).

3 Freiburg (Oct. 1877, for the winter, with Grace, Mary & Margaret - who later attended the convent school -Edward & Veronica; this time included a walking tour of the Black Forest - while Mersea was 'covered' by Gatrill).

4 Como - Milan - Genoa - Rome - Florence – Bologna 5 Rome (Jan. 1890)

6 Teck (Dec.27,1891) & Langedoc (winter).

C. The Jaunts with J.M.Gatrill (a freelance cleric)

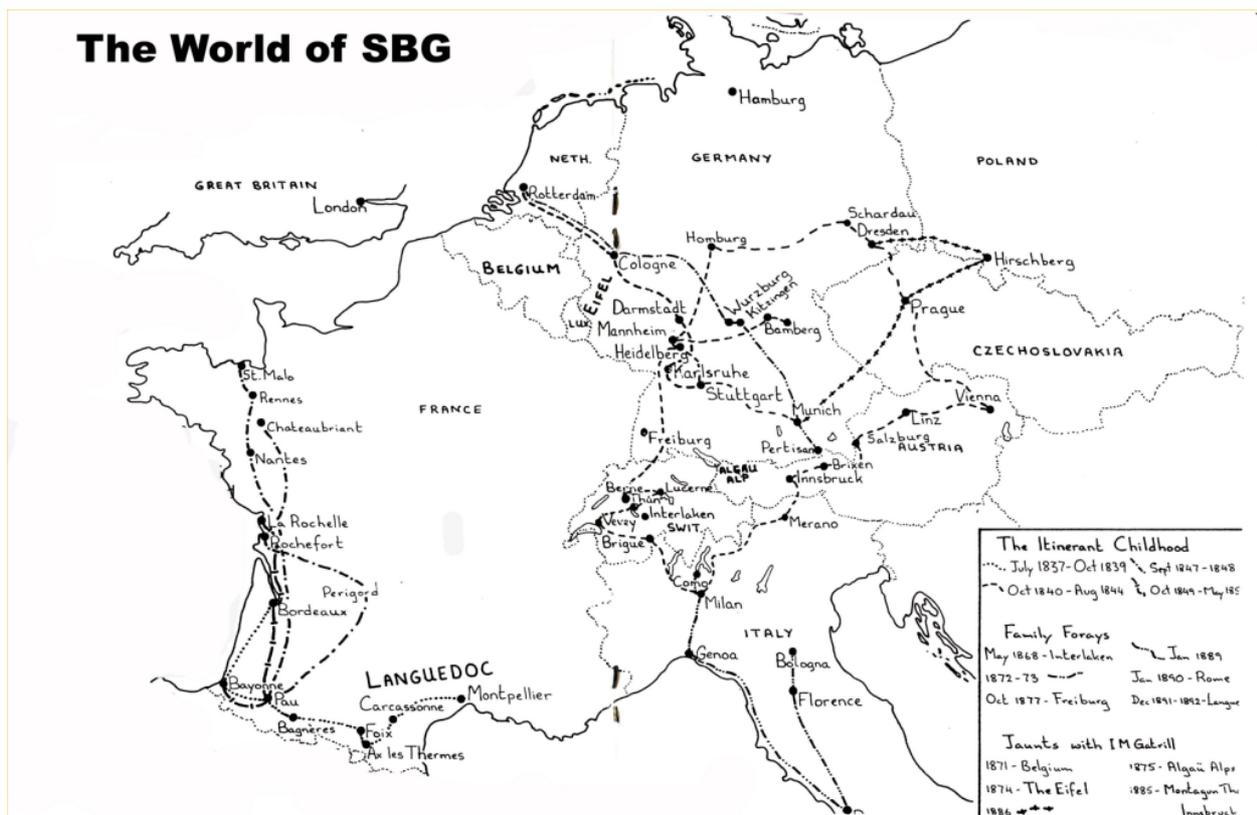
1 Belgium (1871)

2 The Eiffel (1874)

3 The Algau Alps (1875)

4 Montagun Thal & Innsbruck (1885)

5 Munich - Prague - Hirbg - Dres, '86



Books Associated with These Travels

Germany Past and Present 1879 Germany 1883, 1886
 In Troubadour Land 1891
 The Deserts of Southern France 1894 Noemi 1895
 A Book of Brittany 1901
 Brittany (little Guide) 1902
 A Book of the Riviera 1905
 A Book of the Rhine 1906
 A Book of the Pyrenees – Cevennes 1907 Cliff Castles and Cave Dwellings
 The Land of Teck and its Neighbours 1911

SBG in ICELAND - 1861



writings -
 Iceland - its
 Scenes & Sagas
 1863
 Grettir the Out-
 law 1890
 Oraefa-dal/The
 Iclander's
 Sword 1893/4

SBG left London
 by train on June 7th.
 He travelled via Edinburgh
 to Grangemouth. Thence he
 sailed, on the Arcturus, via the
 Faroes to Reykjavik. After exploring
 N. & E. Iceland he sailed from Reykjavik to
 Liverpool, arriving August 10th.

HC

Total expenses of the
 two month trip, including
 voyage, 4 riding horses & 1
 pack horse - just over £100

Hurst Echoes

A new member, Old Hurst Johnian Mr. Peter Luff, has very kindly donated to the Society his copy of Hurst Echoes, published by Alabaster, Passmore, and Sons in 1890, containing articles reprinted from the "Hurst Johnian", the magazine of St. John's College, Hurstpierpoint 1858-1890. A resume of SBG's contributions follows:

The Dead Trumpeter of Hurst Castle (p.1-17)

At Hurst Castle in the Isle of Wight a room is being prepared for Charles I's captivity in December 1648. Treasure is said to be concealed there, guarded by a ghostly trumpeter. Workmen trying to break open a cupboard are confronted by the apparition, but when the King arrives he is given a reverential greeting by the trumpeter. The workmen try again more successfully, but in making their getaway are rude to the King, and rouse the trumpeter's wrath. Charles is reassured by his 'spectral guard' and taken to Windsor still under 'protection'. On the fateful 30th January 1649 there is a final appearance at Hurst, the royal cortege is 'accompanied' from Whitehall back to Windsor, and the last notes of the trumpet are heard from the royal tomb.

Master Sacristan Eberhart (p. 34-44)

Subtitled 'Not Quite a Ghost Story', the tale concerns the elderly watchman living 365 steps up the bell tower of St. Sevaldus Church. He treated one of the gargoyles, a monk's head, as a friend, 'Father Simon'. After the gargoyle had been damaged in a storm, the distraught sacristan summoned a mason to effect repairs. The mason tried to steal the old man's moneybox; he was strangled by 'Father Simon' - and in the morning both were found at the bottom of the tower.

The Fireman (p. 76-90)

A poverty stricken iron worker is visited by a mysterious elderly gentleman whom he tries to rob. The visitor offers wealth in exchange for the recovery of crystals from the furnace. The iron worker was successful at first, until his boy wanted to be part of the affair; the man returned and egged the worker on to obtain a prime specimen, but the son raked it out of reach of his father, who fell into the furnace.

Thieves seem to have a prime place in SBG's hell! After these somewhat macabre offerings, it is a relief to turn to the fourteen stanza poem Easter Eve (p. 95-98), although the pre-Raphaelite imagery and its 'calm thou sleep'st' refrain scarcely matches the robustness of the New Testament.

There is an interesting little footnote on P. 111 referring to a production of Macbeth in which SBG had been the 'daring mortal' squatting 'beneath the brazier to feed the weirdly flame'!

Peter Luff

SBGAS Newsletter, No 11.

Initiatives (Editorial)

One of the characteristics of our often maligned Victorian forbears that must surely be an inspiration to us who follow is that so many of them were inventors, pioneers, initiators. Some would cynically say that SBG was an 'inventor' of facts that were often found to be without substance. Perhaps it can fairly be said that he did not always make the distinction between fact and imagination sufficiently clear - but his pioneering spirit we can admire without reserve.

A society that exists to foster his memory, enjoy his 'inventions', and research his life also depends in its turn on the initiatives of its members. Thankfully that spirit is in plentiful supply - and this issue bears witness to that.

Roger Bristow's bibliographical efforts fall well into this category - see page 2 for a sample of his latest update, now available to members. Sybil Tope and Rebecca Smith are to be congratulated on the re-issue of Red Spider, excellently produced in its distinctive red glossy cover - with the declared intention of more SBG titles to come. Jim Sunnucks and the community in East Mersea continue to arrange SBG related events (see p. 9f), as does Image Briggs in the Westcountry (see. p.16).

At the time of writing, the Two Bridges event looks to be the front runner for this year's major gathering, with the possibility of a short AGM at the start of the day's proceedings. Hurstpierpoint and Horbury are in contention - their turn will come - but watch STOP PRESS for the latest news. In any case, please respond to Image's letter - see the latest members' list (for which we thank the Hon. Secretary) to find her address.

Finally, membership analysis now shows:

West - 19; South - 12; East - 5; North - 4; USA - 8; Total - 48, of which 19 are 'family'.

David Shacklock

The Reissuing of Red Spider

Rebecca Smith

As with many good ideas, this one arose out of a casual conversation. It seemed obvious, once it had been put into words, and the whole process has taken little over six months. My mother, Sybil Tope, has been interested in Sabine Baring-Gould for thirty years, and I have grown up with him almost as an "honorary uncle". Lew House was close by, and we visited it often. My sister was married in Lewtrenchard church, and, to crown it all, we lived for fourteen years on Chimsworthy Farm, much mentioned in Red Spider.

I first read the novel at the age of fifteen or sixteen, and was very deeply impressed and excited by having my own home appear in a novel. The detail of Broadbury, Bratton Clovelly and the surrounding area is quite accurate enough for the story to be vividly relived by anyone familiar with the region. The three houses involved in the story are still standing, and very little altered with the passage of 105 years since the book was published. 'Red Spider Cottage', named for the novel, has been modernised, and space created for a car, but essentially it is the same proud little house, standing high on a bank with a flight of stone steps still leading to it. A vital scene in the story takes place on those very steps.

Chimsworthy in the 1960s, when we lived there, was scarcely changed at all from Baring-Gould's time. The yard was still muddy, the barn still just as it was for young Hillary's Haysel, the land still of the same extent. Subsequently, it has been divided into two farms, and a number of superficial changes made. It is, however, a listed building, and the house itself retains all the features mentioned in the book.

Langworthy (called Langford in the novel) is tucked away, invisible from the road, and I confess not to have visited it since I went there to play with the daughters of the house in 1961 or thereabouts. By all accounts it is just as recognisable as the other two.

Bratton Clovelly is a very typical tiny village, off the beaten track, waxing and waning through the decades, but somehow clinging to its own special character. When I lived there, the 'Ring o'Bells' pub had been transformed into the busy village shop, and since then, the shop has closed and it is a private house, taking bed and breakfast visitors. Few visitors venture down the winding lanes which still provide the approach on all sides. Probably Bratton's salvation has been the fact that it is not on a route from anywhere to anywhere. It simply exists as part of a network of even tinier villages and hamlets, connected by the most minor of roads.

I remember barn dances, harvest festivals, carol services and garden fetes which all helped to keep the life of the village rich and varied. Okehampton was the nearest town of any size, with the school and shops, but entertainment could still be found closer to home. To a surprising extent, daily life was not so tremendously different from that described in the book.

Baring-Gould's motive in writing Red Spider was chiefly to record the details of social life in a small Devon village, and he set it in the 1830s, fifty-five years prior to the date of writing. He was worried that new roads and modern inventions would destroy this way of life forever. He was undoubtedly right, but I think it took rather longer to disappear than he expected. Even today, there is an age-old village spirit alive and well amongst families who have lived in Bratton for generations and will doubtless continue to do so.

Red Spider is one of the shorter novels, and is immensely readable. The characters are fully believable, and Baring-Gould's understanding of behaviour and relationships is impressive. The character of Mrs Veale deserves to have a place in the canon of Great

British Fictional Characters. It is, in fact, one of literature's mysteries why this and other of Baring-Gould's novels have lain undisturbed and unappreciated for so long.

This is Praxis Books' second title. It was the fact that I already had a small press in operation which gave rise to the project of reissuing Red Spider. My mother and I have financed it out of our savings, with the hope of earning a modest return. Now that publication is achieved, we are seeing a great deal of interest in the book. If it sells well, we may roll the dice again, and bring out another of Baring-Gould's novels.

Review Page

"Songs of the West" - a Wren Trust cassette

Do most of your tapes frustrate you with the unintelligibility of the lyrics? Here is a glorious exception - every word, said or sung, perfectly clear and often movingly rendered. Here is an hour of excellent entertainment and a model of good presentation. Of the 202 songs deposited by SBG in the Plymouth Library between 1892 & 1900, we have here a judicious selection, with introduction, comment and readings from SBG's autobiographies, together with a memorial tribute to many of the song men themselves.

If one were to pick the two star items, for me they would be 'Sweet Nightingale' and 'The Bellingring'. It would be easy to miss the excellent summary on the inside of the sleeve of 'the principal achievement of my life' (to use SBG's own words), and so the entire sleeve is reproduced on p.7-10 of this issue (a slightly revised version of the Sidmouth Festival programme - see no.8, p.7-10). This represents a thoroughly good £7.00 worth (£7.50 by post from Killerton House, Broadclyst, EXETER, Devon).

Footnote: the sleeve mentions SBG's 211 publications, excluding the articles; no precise mathematical summary is possible at the moment, but this reviewer would put the total in book form at 153 plus a further 8 with shared authorship. The articles, letters and small pamphlets currently add up to approx. 221 items.

"Storms at Sealandings" - Jonathan Grant

The Mehala mystery continues with another period piece of 534 pages from Lovejoy author's alter ego. (See newsletter no.8, p.2f; no.9, p.6; no.11, p7,15). The heroine's identity and status - and the fate of her former husband - are gradually unfolded, as is her love for the despised but dedicated doctor - and finally his for her - through all the tribulations of an east coast flood and an outbreak of cattle disease. Intriguingly, the whereabouts of Sealandings seems to have shifted from Brightlingsea to Kessingland or thereabouts - if the clues can be relied on.

As with the earlier novel, a medical author's distinctive touches are to be found - an abscess of the tooth 'tergid with pus', stethoscopy in its primitive form, rural prostitution, and the 'modesty' of a gentleman's six-course breakfast taken to save time. The book's jacket gives the date as 1827, but the only specific clue in the text would put it 8 years earlier.

The SBG reader will pick up references in addition to Elijah Rebow, Josiah Baring and Mrs. Trenchard, to such as Matilda Gould and the estate of Arminell.

East Mersea Festival

Ronald Blythe, the well known author (many will have read his book, Akenfield, a portrait of an English Village') came to preach at the East Mersea Patronal Festival Eucharist on 20th November, St. Edmund's Day. We enjoyed his visit very much. The following week we got an honourable mention in his 'Diary' column in the Church Times ... as follows:

"Shadows Of The Evening

To St. Edmund's Church at East Mersea on St. Edmund's Day to preach at the patronal festival. Malcolm Oliver, the mast bellringer, drives me across the Strood to the dark flat island. The church is elegant and airy and gently lit by oil lamps. Its single Richard-the-Secondish bell clangs out over the black fields for the elevation. My address might have been called "Will the real Edmund stand up?" as I extricate the man from the myths. But it is not the saint who looms over me in this intensely evocative place but Sabine Baring-Gould, its formidable rector during the 1870s. I hear him rehearsing his fishermen-farmingsmuggling parishioners in "Now the day is over". Tall John Swallow now occupies his seat. The church is full, faces indistinct, and time thrown out by persistent notions of eternity. We get home dreadfully late for Malcolm, who has to drive the first commuter train from Colchester to London in the morning."

Footnote

Our member in East Mersea, Jim Sunnucks who kindly sent the item adds: "I think Blythe has got his Richards muddled up - 1430 seems to be about the true date."

A Safe Home for Triptych

A rare 16th century Flemish triptych from Lewtrenchard church is now in the chapel of Buckland Abbey.

The painting on three panels was offered to the National Trust on a long loan by Lewtrenchard parishioners worried about theft or damage to the antique triptych. It is one of several continental trophies acquired for the church by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, squarson of Lewtrenchard for 43 years.

The central panel represents the deposition from the cross and the side panels depict the way to the cross and the ascension. It is reputedly by the artist Cornelis Engelbrecht (1468-1533) of Leyden in Holland. Its complex and detailed composition is crowded with animated figures.

The triptych was restored some years ago but the lower half of each panel is less easily discernible.

The National Trust says the scale of the painting and its subject matter make it ideal for Buckland's chapel which has other church paintings and furnishings. The Trust has made an exact photographic replica which has been framed and positioned to replace the original at Lew Trenchard.

(Article in local paper sent by member)

Alphabetical List of Printed Material Containing SBG References Noted So Far

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British Folklorists X/3

Characters and Caricatures of N. Devon X/3 Church Monthly 1890, 1891, XI/6

(The) Coasts of Cornwall I1/2

(The) Companion Guide to Devon & Cornwall IX/4 Cornish Notes & Queries X/3

(The) Country Parson IX/4

(The) Country Priest in English History V11/7 Dartmoor (E.W. Martin) VII/7

Dartmoor (Ward Lock) IX/5

Dartmoor (ed. C. Gill) X/3

Dartmoor (Worth) XI/5

Dartmoor Crosses & Some Ancient Tracks VII/10 Dartmoor Pictures from the Past XII

Dartmoor Then & Now VII/10

Dawlish & S.E. Devon XII

Devon (A. Mee) VIU7

Devon (J. Chard) IX/4

Devon (Penguin) IX/4

Devon (Shilling Guide) XII

Devon Curiosities 111/2

Devon Reflections XII

Devonshire (D. St. Leger-Gordon) XI/5

Devon & Cornwall (C. Trant) VIU7

Devon & Cornwall (D. Kay-Robinson) IX/4

Devon & Cornwall (J.C. Blair) XII

Devon & Cornwall in Pictures VIU7

Discovering English Folksong VII/7

East Anglia (M. Jebb) XI/6

(The) English Country Parson II/2

(The) English Parsonage VII/7

Essex Heyday VII/10

Essex its Geography & History XII

Essex Past & Present XI/5

(The) Evangelical Library Bulletin No. 86 XI/3 Exploring Dartmoor Again VII/10

Exploring the Ancient Tracks of Dartmoor &c 11/2 Extraordinary Parsons of Devon & Cornwall 111/2 Favourite Hymns (Lion) XII

(A) Field Guide to the English Country Parson 11/2 Folk Tales in Devon VII/7

Great Hymns & their Stories XII

(A) Guide to Devon & Cornwall IX/4

Handbook for Travellers in Devon IX/4

Haunted England VII/7

Hawker of Morwenstow (P. Brendon) XII

Hawker's of Morwenstow IX/5

(The) Homeland Guide to Dartmoor X/4
Home Words 1903 X/3
(A) Hymn Companion XII
Hymns we Love XII
(An) Introduction to English Folk Song XII
Late Booking IX/4
Moon Lore XI/5
(The) Moors of the South West XII
Notes & Impressions of Lew Trenchard Church III/2 Once upon a Tide XII
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Popular Hymns (Duncan) XII
Popular Hymns & their Writers (Mable) XII
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SBGAS Newsletter, No 12.

The venerable lover of life (Editorial)

A recent visit to a bookshop in a remote part of Suffolk produced a copy of *The Vicar of Morwenstow* containing two articles from "The Daily News" on Baring-Gould at the end of his life. One of these is reproduced in this issue, the other will follow in due course.

The centre pages this month show an enlarged version of the sleeve for "Songs of the West", a cassette produced by the Wren Trust containing 17 of SBG's collected songs. A review appears on page 13.

Rebecca Smith reports good sales of the Praxis Books reprint of Red Spider. The advertising leaflet for her new edition of The Book of Folklore is enclosed this time. The striking cover and clear print of this venture fully maintain the standard of the former. Image Briggs' new edition of The Mana of Lewis also available from the same source, and is a 'must' for the comprehensive collection.

Short stories and articles by SBG published in Cassells and Chambers magazines and similar annuals are still coming to light thick and fast. When the spate seems to be drying up somewhat, it will be necessary to tabulate these findings in order to make the task of identifying the rest a little easier. Meanwhile, turn to page 16, Members' Notes, for the latest additions to the Bibliography.

At the moment there are plenty of research projects for members with time on their hands - for instance: • 'SBG as an artist.' • 'Were all his novels serialised before publication in book form?' • 'SBG and old churches of Somerset.' • 'SBG and his publishers.' Try your hand!

David Shacklock

Baring-Gould At Ninety

The Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould might well be expected to shake his head a little over an age like this. He belongs to the strange company of "Squarsons," for he owns 3,000 acres at Lew Trenchard, and was presented to his first living by Mr. Gladstone, and to his present one by himself. He claims to be the last person in England who rode in a Sedan chair. He has written a hundred books, a hymn - "Onward, Christian Soldiers," which is the common property of all types of Christians, and at the age of ninety presents us with a large volume dealing only with the first thirty years of his life.

Mr. Baring-Gould goes back to days that seem less interesting to us now than those of Tutankhamen.

"When I was a boy," he says, "a waggon was sent up annually to Exeter, 33 miles distant, to bring down the groceries needed for the year, and now the grocer's motor-bus brings supplies weekly to one's door."

THE RULER

The terrible physicking and the drill-sergeant discipline which would now bring down the NSPCC, left its actual marks on him. "I have on my chest to this day," he says, "the triangular scars produced by the bites of leeches." But even in those days a boy could be boyish. Two rulers were kept in his home - a round one and a square one. On one occasion, after the square one, his Aunt Emily found him seated on the doorstep.

"Why are you sitting there on the stone? You'll get chilled, " "I want to be, I'm burning hot. "
"Hot! You don't look red and heated."
"Not the face end of me. "

No wonder that a man brought up in the days when his father solemnly argued that Providence which designed the human frame to receive sounds and sights had also designed it to receive punishment, thinks a little cheaply sometimes of an age like ours.

"In my advanced age when deafness has supervened, I feel little or no concern over the fact that I cannot hear what is passing from mouth to ear about me. Those whose words I really do value are to be found in books, not in small talk on food, motors, lawn tennis, bridge, and novels."

He dislikes smoking by ladies, and hopes it will go out as snuff-taking did.

"At one time snuff taken among the ladies was quite fashionable. Queen Charlotte had a train of snuff laid on her bare arm and ran her nose along it, sniffing it up from one end to the other."

There is still a touch of the ramrod about this venerable lover of life and good songs. The firmness in his constitution shows in his devotion to the Anglican Church. If he did not love her for her own sake, he would do so for her superiority to all the other Churches. His contempt for Romanism and Lutherism and Nonconformity is awesome. If any members of these Churches are to go "onward", it cannot possibly be as Christian soldiers. To Mr. Baring-Gould they are at best camp followers of the true army.

STORY OF A SAINT

He loves to tell stories of them. One about a female saint in France who sat down on a rock and naturally imprinted the holy face there delights him.

"Don't unbelievers laugh," he said to the parish priest. "Unbelievers will laugh at anything," said that sturdy believer.

But his story of the Crown Prince of Saxony is enough to make a believer laugh. The prince had vowed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. His father objected, so his confessor agreed that by pacing up the word "Jerusalem" at the end of the long gallery and pacing up and down for three hours a day for four years a suitable equivalent would be offered. The prince had been walking for two years when it occurred to him that there were mountains and seas between Dresden and Jerusalem. His confessor did not give in, but advised him to place a pan of water on the floor with "Mediterranean" painted on it, to have a chair for each mountain range and jump them in his passages.

Mr. Baring-Gould says the Prince was seen doing it. He does not offer the same confirmation of his story of the nuns who, when they thought the French were coming, said "Oui," to make their lips small and pretty, and when they thought the Germans were coming practised saying "Jah" to make them large and tempting.

He looks out from the elevation of his character and his years, and ends his record thus: "I do not look back and say: All is dead. What I repeat in my heart is: "All is promise."

"*Early Reminiscences, 1834-1864.*" By S. Baring-Gould, Bodley Head 26s.

(This article first appeared in *The Daily News* on 16th June, 1923)

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(Items marked * already noted in alphabetical list in issue XI p. I 1-13).

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Songs of the West

100 years ago the first part of a wholly remarkable book was published. That book was "Songs of the West" and had as its subtitle "A collection made from the mouths of the people". The man who wrote it was himself a remarkable character, the Reverend Sabine Baring Gould, the Squire and Parson of the parish of Lewtrenchard in West Devon. Baring Gould was also a scholar, antiquarian, collector and a prolific author of both fiction and non-fiction. He was a man who was, in many ways, out of step with the rest of his generation.

Baring Gould was born in Exeter in 1834 to a father whose career with the East India Company had been cut short by a carriage accident. His childhood was unsettled since his father preferred to escape the boredom of England by travelling through Europe for the greater part of the year. This meant that Baring Gould had little formal schooling but this did not prevent him from scraping through Cambridge, though he could never get to grips with mathematics. His unconventional views and behaviour were obvious even then and he was a persistent critic of the establishment (particularly that of the church) throughout his life. Tales of his eccentricity abound and it is well documented that he taught at Hurstpierpoint with his pet bat on his shoulder. Another of his admirers, John Betjeman, said of him "What curate in an industrial parish in the North today would dare to single out a millgirl and have her sent to a place where she could learn to speak in an educated style and then marry her? What local council would allow a squire today to rebuild his house in a Rhenish style as did Baring Gould in Lewtrenchard? What vicar and Diocesan Advisory Committee would allow a squarson to remove tablets from other churches and put them up in his own, as Baring Gould did at Lew?"

Yet for the greater part of his life Baring Gould was content to settle in Devon where he was responsible for the welfare of the few hundred people that lived in his parish and his manor. This left him time to spare for travelling regularly as he had when he was a boy, for raising his large family, for renovating his house and his church and for writing the astonishing number of books, pamphlets and magazine articles that actually paid for these other activities. No totally reliable list of his publications exists but the best available estimate credits him with 211 publications excluding any of the magazine articles. To most people who have heard his name it is as the writer of a favourite hymn - probably "Onward Christian Soldiers", but of all the achievements of his 90 years on this Earth, he himself

rated most highly that of collecting the folk songs which were published as "Songs of the West".

He worked on the collection for a total period of 12 years and travelled over a large part of Devon and Cornwall. He visited old singers in their homes and in the fields. When touring he would stay with friends and invite the old singers to join them. He was not, himself, a good musician and was helped in his work by two other men, Dr Fredrick Bussell and the Reverend H W Fleetwood Sheppard. When time permitted, one or other would join Baring Gould on his visits and take down the melodies while Baring Gould noted down the words. Baring Gould could not, in his era, have published the songs as recovered since they were too robust for Victorian ears. Rather than publish with blank spaces or dotted lines as some other collectors chose to do Sabine took the course of modifying the words where necessary. He has been criticised for this over the years but it is hard, in reality, to see what other course of action was open to him.

It was originally intended that the book would be published in three parts but, in fact, it ran to four. It was not, of course, the first book about folk songs since there had been several collections of ballads published in the 17th and 18th century. It was not even the first book of songs collected

directly from the singers since the Reverend John Broadwood had published his Sussex Songs privately in 1843. It was, however, the most ambitious collection made to that date and the book set the pattern for the first folk revival at the end of the last century. The conventions devised by Baring Gould were to become the standard practice and, in particular, his recognition that the songs were linked to individual singers who were usually identified in the text. This, coupled with the way he writes about his singers as friends, if not actually equals, is what is special about Baring Gould.

That first edition was written in association with Fleetwood Sheppard and this led to the peculiarity of the collection in that Fleetwood Sheppard would not work with any of the songs collected by Baring Gould's other collaborator, Frederick Bussell. This was on the grounds that he felt unhappy arranging any song that he had not "pricked down" himself since he felt that he could not catch it's special character unless he had heard it sung himself. The second edition of Songs of the West, published in 1905, was very different to the first since Cecil Sharp took over the musical editorship and reintroduced a number of Bussell's contributions, arranging many himself, as well as using some of Bussell's own arrangements. He also re-arranged many of Sheppard's songs.

For a few years at the beginning of the century Sharp and Baring Gould worked closely together and Sharp was a regular visitor to Lewtrenchard. As well as Songs of the West they produced "English Folk Songs for Schools" in 1907 and in the same year Sharp dedicated his "English Folk Song - some conclusions" to Baring Gould. What exactly caused their friendship to fade is unclear but certainly Baring Gould's references to Sharp in later years became less flattering. He certainly believed that Sharp's arrangements were not generally as good as Sheppard's but it is most likely that he was unhappy about Sharp's success in setting up a Folk Establishment in London. Baring Gould was constitutionally unable to get on with establishments of any kind whether of Church, State or the Folk Song Society.

Baring Gould died in 1924 at Lewtrenchard and was buried in his own churchyard just across the road from his house. In West Devon there are still old people who remember

him and most of those do so fondly. To Folk Revival singers in Devon and Cornwall he has left a legacy that will be a source of joy for centuries to come.

Martin Graebe

The Year of 1893

The year which began with the marriage of his daughter Mary to Harvey Dickinson (11 Jan) is passed over in silence in *Further Reminiscences*. But it was not without its literary ventures. April saw the publication in 3 volumes of *Mrs. Curgenvin of Curgenvin* which had first appeared the previous year in *The Cornhill Magazine*. Methuen reprinted it in July and reissued it in one volume in November. Hailed by the contemporary press as 'a novel of vigorous humour and sustained power', in my view it deserved its early popularity.

Set in the country around Liskeard, it tells the story of two ladies who are rivals for the eponymous title. The first is the daughter of the Revd. James Pamphlet, whose chief concern was his own ecclesiastical advancement - and to her "social standing was all -in-all". The second, we are led to believe, had the prior claim to the title, though she was of humbler origins. The style of the book is reminiscent of Jane Austen, though the characters are more diverse, more interesting, and despite the heavy irony, more believable. There is also more plot, and more action than the typical comedy of manners, and some graphic depictions of Dartmoor. It is a thoroughly good read, and would make an excellent television drama, with Diana Rigg as the first Mrs. C. and Stephen Fry as the sly solicitor, Mr. Physic.

Cheap Jack Zita was another popular novel, this time set in the fens of East Anglia (see Raymond Scott's article IX/2f).

A continuation of SBG's article on Trewartha appeared in J.R.LC, vol. 11 p.289f and the following issue.

If anyone has a copy of *The Two Brents* (SPCK Penny Library of Fiction) they have a rare item, which it would be good to reissue one day as a special edition of the Newsletter.

Freaks of Fanaticism & Other Strange Events was the new title given to *Historical Oddities & Strange Events* (2nd series) which had first appeared in 1891. Whereas the first series deals with "eccentric individuals and extraordinary events ... which would be out of place in a general history", the second contains accounts of religious, racial and political fanaticism, most of them of European rather than British provenance.

The remaining items published in 1893 were *A Hymn for Children* found in *Church Monthly* vol. 6; and three articles in *Good Words* for that year, recently come to light - *The Cheshire Salt Region* (p.59-63), *Cider Making* (p.318-324), and *The First Artists Of Europe* (p.600-610).

Greater Than The Bravest?

In my copy of Henty's *The Bravest of the Brave*, preceding the first Henty title in the advertisement list, (*With Lee in Virginia*), and heading the list is the following:

BY S. BARING-GOULD GRETTIR THE OUTLAW: A Story of Iceland. By S. Baring-Gould, author of "John Herring," "Mehalath", &c. With 10 full-page illustrations by M. Zeno Diemer and a coloured map. Crown 8vo, cloth elegant, olivine edges, &c.

A work of special interest, not only because of the high rank which Mr. Baring-Gould has of late years acquired by his brilliant series of novels, *Mehalah*, *John Herring*, *Court Royal*, &c, but because of his earlier won reputation as a historian and explorer of folk-legends and popular beliefs. In the story of *Grettir*, both the art of the novelist and the lore of the archaeologist have had full scope, with the result that we have a narrative of adventure of the most romantic kind, and at the same time an interesting and minutely accurate account of the old Icelandic families, their homes, their mode of life, their superstitions, their songs and stories, their berserk fury, and their heroism by land and sea. No boy will be able to withstand the magic of such scenes as the fight of *Grettir* with the twelve bear-serks, the wrestle with *Karl the Old* in the chamber of the dead, the contest with the spirit of *Glam the Thrall*, and the defence of the dying *Grettir* by his younger brother.

I doubt if there is any other example of Henty being ousted from the head of his own list - and in one of his own titles.

David Shacklock

"Songs of the West" - a Wren Trust cassette

Do most of your tapes frustrate you with the unintelligibility of the lyrics? Here is a glorious exception - every word, said or sung, perfectly clear and often movingly rendered. Here is an hour of excellent entertainment and a model of good presentation. Of the 202 songs deposited by SBG in the Plymouth Library between 1892 & 1900, we have here a judicious selection, with introduction, comment and readings from SBG's autobiographies, together with a memorial tribute to many of the song men themselves.

If one were to pick the two star items, for me they would be 'Sweet Nightingale' and 'The Bellingring'. It would be easy to miss the excellent summary on the inside of the sleeve of 'the principal achievement of my life' (to use SBG's own words), and so the entire sleeve is reproduced on p.7-10 of this issue (a slightly revised version of the Sidmouth Festival program - see no.8, p.7-10). This represents a thoroughly good £7.00 worth (£7.50 by post from Killerton House, Broadclyst, EXETER, Devon).

Footnote: *the sleeve mentions SBG's 211 publications, excluding the articles; no precise mathematical summary is possible at the moment, but this reviewer would put the total in book form at 153 plus a further 8 with shared authorship. The articles, letters and small pamphlets currently add up to approx. 221 items.*

"Storms at Sealandings" - Jonathan Grant

The Mehala mystery continues with another period piece of 534 pages from Lovejoy author's alter ego. (See newsletter no.8, p.2f; no.9, p.6; no.11, p7,15). The heroine's identity and status - and the fate of her former husband - are gradually unfolded, as is her love for the despised but dedicated doctor - and finally his for her - through all the tribulations of an east coast flood and an outbreak of cattle disease. Intriguingly, the whereabouts of Sealandings seems to have shifted from Brightlingsea to Kessingland or thereabouts - if the clues can be relied on.

As with the earlier novel, a medical author's distinctive touches are to be found - an abscess of the tooth 'tergid with pus', stethoscopy in its primitive form, rural prostitution, and the 'modesty' of a gentleman's six-course breakfast taken to save time. The book's jacket gives the date as 1827, but the only specific clue in the text would put it 8 years earlier.

The SBG reader will pick up references in addition to Elijah Rebow, Josiah Baring and Mrs. Trenchard, to such as Matilda Gould and the estate of Arminell.