

An Interview With Sabine Baring-Gould

Turning in at the stone gateway, guarding the carriage-drive, I saw a tall, spare, ascetic-looking figure walking on the lawn, attended by a handsome collie with one of its legs bandaged. As he drew near I perceived it was the celebrity I had come to see, and mustering up my courage, I went to meet him, and in a few words introduced myself, and asked for the pleasure of a short interview. Mr. Baring-Gould gave me a most cordial welcome, and to my delight, said he had nothing particular to do for the afternoon. He at once led the way into the house.

What a quaint, old-world place Lew Trenchard Manor is, and how absolutely congenial it must be with Mr. Baring-Gould's antiquarian and literary tastes! We made our way to the dining hall where a huge wood fire blazed in an ancient, open fireplace, guarded by fire-dogs of antique pattern. The fire-place at the back of the chimney bore the date 1648, but the chimney itself was much older. The house was built in Henry II's reign, but has been altered and added to again and again. It is a wonderful museum of antiquities. Coffee was brought, and ensconced in two comfortable armchairs, we began to talk. My eyes roamed delightedly around the oak-panelled apartment, lined with oil portraits of ancestors and celebrities.

But the most interesting thing of all to me was the presence of the owner of the house. Before me sat the most voluminous and interesting writer the West country has ever produced, the author of 'Onward Christian Soldiers', and of works innumerable, dealing with a very wide range of topics, but all of them possessing some flavour of romance. Mr. Baring-Gould produced a big meerschaum pipe with a cherrywood stem nearly a yard long from the side of the fireplace (evidently an old and tried friend), filled it with reverent care, and as the blue smoke curled up towards the quaint-carved ceiling, we settled ourselves comfortably down to talk."

'Western Weekly Mercury' Saturday, 4th February, 1911

SBGAS Newsletter 1989/90 Number 1