

Another Society?

The wisdom of launching yet another society may well be questioned, The Alliance of Literary Societies, recently revived, already has at least 30 member societies, and there must be many others not formally associated with ALS. I note that its officers are themselves each linked with four or five societies apiece, so that booklovers and literary experts clearly like to have a range of interests. That, of course, is just what Sabine Baring-Gould provides: as archetypal Victorian, squarson, folklorist, biographer, novelist, topographer, hymn writer and collector of country songs he offers an unusual variety of theme for a single author; and that list does not include his pastoral and theological writings.

SBG's topographical and folklore books are especially collectable, and a few of his novels are still in demand. General opinion would be united in declining to put him in the forefront of literary merit, though nearly all his writing has a compelling charm about it.

For the SBGAS member I hope that one of the Society's chief attractions will prove to be its annual gatherings in the different parts of the country associated with his life. We plan to start in 1990 with Yorkshire, whence the bulk of the pre-launch support has emanated. However, I must also pay tribute to the good folk of East Mersea, whose splendid Flower Festival on the theme of Sabine Baring-Gould is reported on pages 3 and 14-16, and in particular Mr. James Sunnucks, the Society's first member, who has given much encouragement.

It was in May that I received the letter from SBG's grandson, Lt. Colonel Warwick Calmady-Hamlyn, giving the family's "go-ahead" which seemed so important to have. He wrote, 'I should be proud if you founded a Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society and you certainly have my approval for so doing'. This letter, and my subsequent meeting with the Colonel, was the consequence of being introduced to his niece, Anna Jones, a Baring-Gould by birth, through the kindness of mutual friends.

My own interest in SBG was sparked off by Joanna Bogle in a short article written for a daily newspaper about six years ago. It would be good to hear from members how interest was kindled for them, and how their collections of his work have developed,

David Shacklock.

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