

THE HURST JOHNIAN OBITUARY - THE REV. SABINE BARING-GOULD

As the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould was at Hurst as a Master from 1855 to 1864, his departure took place two years after I was born; I cannot therefore speak at first hand, and, as sixty years have gone without this attempt at a record, there do not remain many, if any, men who can.

I only met him once, and that was in 1894, when he came to preach. The occasion was the Dedication of the first instalment of the panelling in Chapel, and his sermon was characteristic. I took him to look at the fresco he painted on the wall of the Second Master's bedroom, in the Shield. He covered his eyes, and shrank away from it, murmuring "Crude, crude!" Which in sooth it is. He said that day that his period at Hurst had been of inestimable value as an introduction to life.

Was there ever such versatility! He was painter, antiquary, musician, squarson, theologian, novelist, etc. original, unconventional. He was attracted to Hurst by the originality of our design, and the unconventionality of our very being. Hurst in 1860 stood alone in England. We had been seven years in our buildings. We had 250 boys (no Head Master's house) and our fees were £23, or £20 per annum. Here was something new and strong, and hopeful for a man with vision, and with religion.

In the only notice I read of him when he died the writer pointed out that he had been right in the Oxford Movement for sixty years, and passed unrecognised, as far as Canonries and the like go. But the world knows his hymns and many of his sermons. I once heard an O.J. at the Hurst Dinner, record that Baring-Gould (known as "Snout") on one occasion gave him thirty-six (sic) cuts, and then washed his hands and sat down and wrote "Onward Christian Soldiers." I remember he was pleased when we sang "Hail the Sign" in Chapel 1894. He wrote music and words of "Now the day is over"; he wrote the words of "Thro' the night of doubt." But these things are national.

Every Hurst man ought to know his reproduction of Bishop Wilberforce's sermon (B.G. *The Sunday Round*, Vol ii.No.xxx) an All Saints Eve. He describes the procession moving from the Armoury, round the Cloisters to the old Crypt Chapel, by little, each with a place and a task. They disappear down the steps at the foot of the Hall stairs into a dark belt (the Shadow of Death), then through the door into the blaze of light before the altar, then of course in the Crypt.

He was naturally a pillar of the *Johnian*. "Hurst Echoes" reprinted a poem, "Easter Eve," which it is good to read at the end of Good Friday. He helped with the Play. In the 1860 Macbeth the witches cauldron for which he was providing thunder and lightning, upset and revealed him to a wondering audience with his trousers incinerated. He made and painted (well heraldically) the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales which for many years appeared in the proscenium. The Play used to be invariably on November 9th (birthday of King Edward VII.), and the coat was "England, over all Saxony." Baring-Gould designed the cover of the *Johnian*. "S.B.G." is at the base of S.Jerome's statue. He designed the bookshelves and cases with their wrought iron, originally red and gold, in the Boys' Library. He painted the window jambs with scenes from the Canterbury Tales and the Faery Queen, and probably did work for the Fellows' Library. There is a *Johnian* description of his filling up the interval at a School Concert with a representation of a dwarf lady of inconceivable hideousness, who sang an original song of his.

In 1860 he was one of the "Hurst Rifle Volunteers," who used to drill at the New Inn. Tales have always lingered of his rambles with boys, oblivious of bounds, "chivy," call overs, telling them unending tales of the subjects he knew. He took weird holidays, and brought home a pony from Iceland which lived for years in the North Field. He once asked the famous Jim Pierce to go with him. Something happened to Jim at Hurst, but he was so near going that he became a recognised authority (in the Bill Adams School) on such subjects as Silver Fox, and Aurora Borealis.

He lived in the Shield rooms opposite to Rev. John Gorham. They mutually plagued each other. One put the huge Ammonite in the Fellows' Library into the other's bed. The response to this was the secretion of various cuckoo clocks in the room opposite, which heralded spring unintermittingly through the night hours.