

"ONWARD & UPWARD"

(from the *Western Morning News*, 2nd August 1934) Baring-Gould MS:

A manuscript of much interest to the Westcountry is to be sold this week by Messrs. Sotheby, of New Bond Street. This is the original manuscript of the famous hymn, "*Onward Christian Soldiers*," by Rev. S. Baring-Gould, who was born at Exeter, and who came of an old Devon family. The latter part of his life was also spent in Devon as in 1872 he succeeded to his father's estate and in 1881 he became rector of Lew Trenchard.

The manuscript, which was the property of a Miss E.H. Healey, is likely to attract many bidders, as it is in excellent condition, and it looks almost as fresh as on the day it was written, although the ink is a little faded. It is in clear, fine writing - the hand of a Victorian and a scholar.

(from *The Times*, 4th August 1934)

The manuscript of Baring-Gould's hymn "*Onward Christian Soldiers*", described in *The Times* on July 26, was sold for £24 (Quaritch), and £16 was given for the manuscripts of three other hymns. "*On the Resurrection morning*," "*Through the night of doubt and sorrow*," and "*Now the day is over*."

"Onward Christian Soldiers"

BARING-GOULD, SABINE. (1834-1924). English author of theological works, and hymns, including "*Onward Christian Soldiers*". Superb Autograph Fair Copy Signed, "S.Baring-Gould" of his most famous hymn "*Onward Christian Soldiers*". One page, folio. No place, no date, but after 1864. Baring-Gould has penned forty lines of the hymn in 5 stanzas on a folio leaf, and boldly signed it at the conclusion of the last stanza. This hymn was written in 1864 for a Children's Festival and published in the *Church Times*, London, October 15, 1864. It was set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan and published in that form in 1871. In nearly twenty years of experience in the autograph field, this is the first time we can recall seeing this hymn written out by its author! Excellent condition.

(from the *Western Morning News*, 12th December 1934)

Gift To Exeter Cathedral:

Autographed Copies of Four Famous Hymns

Exeter Cathedral literary treasures have been enriched by the addition of autographed copies of the four famous hymns composed by the late Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould.

The MSS. were recently presented to the Dean and Chapter by Sir R. Leicester Harmsworth, Bt., and Mr. Harold C. Harmsworth, proprietors of "*The Western Morning News*," and were displayed at a meeting of the Chapter on Saturday.

The Archdeacon of Exeter (Ven.A.H. Thompson), who presided in the absence of the president, expressed the Chapter's warm appreciation of the generosity and kind thoughtfulness of the donors, and the Chapter clerk was instructed to convey to Sir Leicester and Mr. Harold Harmsworth the Chapter's grateful thanks.

The hymns, which will be exhibited in the glass case in the south choir aisle of the Cathedral, are "*Now the day is over*," "*On the resurrection morning*," "*Onward Christian soldiers*," and "*Through the night of doubt and sorrow*."

In Inscribed Cases

Each hymn is contained in a case of crushed red morocco, beautifully decorated with gold tooling, and having two neat clasps. On opening the case, the hymn is seen, framed in red morocco and glass, the whole being in a red plush setting. In gilt lettering there appears the inscription: "In the autograph of S.Baring-Gould."

Opposite the hymn there is inset in red plush a card inscribed:- "Presented to Exeter Cathedral by Sir R. Leicester Harmsworth, Bt. and Mr. Harold Cecil Aubrey Harmsworth."

Purchased at a sale of literary treasures in London, the hymns are in the author's small, neat handwriting, and were presented by him to Miss Evelyn Healey, either on her birthday or on some other special occasion. They are of particular interest to Exonians, because Rev. S. Baring-Gould was born at a house in Dix's Field, Exeter, and was baptized at St. Sidwell's Church, where his parents were married. The date of his birth was January 28th, 1834. He died at Lew Trenchard on January 2nd 1924.

The two biographies (Dickenson p.46ff) and Purcell (p.78ff) reveal that this display was destroyed by enemy action during World War II, and also that there was originally another verse between the 4th and last. Whether the longer version was sung in the Horbury procession of 1965 or not, it disappeared from the hymn books after the 1860s, and does not appear in SBG's manuscripts. The American dealer may have thought he was selling a unique item - hence the inflated asking price of \$3500!

However, the controversy over the origin of the hymn remains. Whit Tuesday 1865 was undoubtedly the occasion of its famous 'outing' at Horbury (Sabine's ordination took place on Whitsunday 1864, and he could not therefore have been involved in the conversations reported as having taken place on the Saturday, or in the printing and rehearsal on Whitsunday). Equally certain is the fact that it was published by the Church Times late in 1864. Purcell's footnote suggesting that it may have originally have been written while SBG was at Hurstpierpoint is not necessarily denied by his claim that he "knocked it off" - or, I'll write them a hymn" - "in ten minutes"; in fact, it makes the lightning penmanship more credible if it was a composition that was already clearly in his mind. Tantalisingly, no mention whatever is made of the hymn in his own Reminiscences.

And now for a World War I perspective from across the Pond (from the *Literary Digest* of 2nd February, 1918).

A Battle Hymn For Our Army

America's battle-hymn might well be "Onward Christian Soldiers!" and perhaps will be if our fighting men so decide. The suggestion, at any rate, comes from a corporal in the Headquarters Troop of the 101st United States Cavalry, and *Trench and Camp*, the weekly published at the national camps and cantonments for the soldiers, has set out to collect the vote. The hymn has already been used as a marching-song and its effect is always electrical. When the last suffrage parade took place in New York one section comprised the mothers and wives of enlisted men. They carried an enormous banner bearing the stars indicative of their devotion, and when passing the grand stand at the Public Library they sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Perhaps it was their farewell message, now taken up by the -men themselves. The corporal, in making his suggestion, writes:

"Do we not need a battle-hymn that characterizes the cause for which we fight and give our very lives and fortunes for its victory? Can it better be expressed than by that old familiar marching hymn of

*Onward, Christian Soldiers!
Marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus
Going on before.*

"Have you ever heard that wonderful hymn blared forth by massed bands? Have you ever listened to your regimental band play it on their way to or from Sunday church-service? Have you ever felt the thrill – the cold chill creep up your back until it came with a rush to the very roots of your hair, when you heard it as you marched on parade in the old home town? Is there anything more inspiring than its marching rhythm - its words and simplicity of meaning! Has it not been the old reliable of band-leaders for years to bring applause from an unresponsive audience? Does it not appeal to you as the battle-hymn of the hour - the very thing we need - that extra something not expressed by bayonets or bursting shells, but the human dynamic force back of them inspired to an overwhelming victorious strength?

"We will not have time to sing it in the trenches nor going over the top, but we can sing it and have our hands play it as they march through the streets of America, England, France, Italy and Russia on our way to the front. It will proclaim to nations everywhere that America has a divine objective.

"Let us then sing it everywhere, on the march, in the divine service - in our hearts. Let it grow and kindle within us. Let us thoroughly understand our objective in that song, so that no matter what the

experience or sacrifice may be we will stick to our task with that tenacity which has ever marked American victory. Therefore, let the bands sound off - The Battle-Hymn of America: Onward Christian Soldiers!