

THE YEAR OF '96

This year is the centenary of the publication of one of Sabine's still most sought after novels, *The Broorn-Squire*, set in the area of Surrey around the Devil's Punch Bowl between Godalming and Petersfield. It is the story of Mehetabel, another strangely named orphan girl who gets into an unhappy marriage with Jonas Kink, the Broom-Squire of the title, one of a number of gypsy squatters living primitively in the Punchbowl. Convincing characterisation and teasing plot carry the reader along, together with a liberal sprinkling of historical and topographical information concerning the iron trade and its demise, the marshland known as 'The Moor', the three stages of courting (yardin', aiblen', and waistin'), and a description of the gravestone in Thursley churchyard of the sailor murdered on Sep. 24th 1786 (the Hindhead murder), which event provided Sabine with the seed for his story. The book contains twelve illustrations by Frank Dadd, and was twice reprinted in the year of publication. Roger Bristow's bibliography reports the most recent edition as the 13th in 1929.

The other volume form title for 1896 was *Dartmoor Idylls*, containing eleven short stories, or anecdotal accounts, of some of the characters and scenes encountered by the author. One of them, Jonas Coaker, was known as 'The Poet of the Moor' and provided SBG with some of his folksong material, (his cottage was depicted on the editorial page of the last issue). Another item, '*Green Rushes, O!*', has first appeared the previous year in *Chambers Journal* (p.604-8). However, perhaps *Guavas the Tinner* should also be included here despite its 1897 title page date. My copy has its advertisement section dated Nov. 1896, and maybe Methuen were following the tradition of other publishers such as Blackie in issuing their Christmas titles with the following year's date. (A review of *Guavas* will appear in a later newsletter).

Other Dartmoor related items appeared in vol. 28 of the *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association*: (1) Prehistoric Remains on Dartmoor, and (2) 3rd Report of the Dartmoor Exploration Committee (with R.Burnard and others).

In *Good Words* (Isbister) (July-September) SBG provided the historical background and text of some correspondence of one Jane Davies with his great uncle Gen. Sir Edward Sabine, after whom he had been named, under the title 'An Old Maid's letters', dated IR(9)-I I. There are interesting references to Corunna and the Walcheren Expedition, other notables of the time such as Mrs. Hannah More, and to contemporary medical practices leading to SBG's comment, "It is marvellous how many old ladies are left when thus bebolused, bedrenched and beleached."

The Sunday Magazine (Isbister) contains three articles on old furniture: the livery cupboard, the chair or settle, and the cradle. (Some slapdash editing is evident here in the titling).

Chambers Journal - handsome volumes these, but unfortunately this particular year is still missing from my collection - has two articles: 'The Cornish Mining Captain' and 'Our Hedges'.

Cassells Family Magazine presents 'EnglishCave-Dwellers of Today'.

The Magazine of Music includes a piece entitled 'English Opera'

Finally, 'The Two Signs', a poem, was published with two others already found in the *Silver Store*, in a collection edited by W.H.K. Wright entitled *West Country Poets: their Lives and Works* (Elliott Stock).

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