The
Transactions
of the
Sabine Baring-Gould
Appreciation Society
Volume 8 (2008)

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The original talks from which the main articles in this journal are drawn were presented at the annual gathering of the Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society at Hurstpierpoint College, Sussex over the weekend of 26 - 28 October 2007.

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Published for SBGAS by Greenjack Publications, 100, Cheltenham Road, Gloucester, GL2 0LX

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Articles for publication
Articles for publication are welcomed. The main categories of material published in this journal are:

• Papers presented at the SBGAS Annual Meeting
• Original essays on aspects of the life and work of Sabine Baring-Gould
• Reprints or transcripts of hard-to-find published material and manuscripts written by or about Sabine Baring-Gould

If you wish to offer a piece for publication, please submit a brief description to the editor by e-mail at the address above.

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A style/format guide is available from the Transactions Editor
Introduction

This, the 8th issue of Transactions of the Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society, is the first to be sent automatically to all members of the Society as part of their membership package. I hope that those of you who have not seen the Transactions before will find it interesting and that it will add to your knowledge about Sabine Baring-Gould and his work.

The main aim of this publication is to make the talks given at the annual gathering of SBGAS available to all members in a permanent form. It also aims to publish original material based on members’ research and to reproduce work by Sabine Baring-Gould that is not easily available to members and the general public.

This issue features papers given at the 2007 annual gathering held at Hurstpierpoint and based on Hurstpierpoint College where Baring-Gould taught in the 1860s.

**Becky Smith** is a writer by profession and is currently working on a new biography of Sabine Baring-Gould. Her researches took her to Hurstpierpoint College and she met Martin Curtis there and, between them, they organised the Annual Gathering at Hurstpierpoint. Her talk was based on articles about Sabine Baring-Gould taken mainly from ‘The Hurst Johnian’ – the college magazine.

**Martin Graebe** was diverted from his work on Baring-Gould’s folk song collection when he discovered the letters that Baring-Gould wrote to his mother about the visit that he made to Iceland in 1861 while he was teaching at Hurstpierpoint. After transcribing these letters and doing further research on the visit he prepared this talk on it in 2000. He has subsequently visited the country three times, following in Baring-Gould’s footsteps. He has also written the foreword for a recent reprint of the book that Baring-Gould wrote about the visit, *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas*.

**Ron Wawman**’s research into Baring-Gould’s life and work has taken him down many avenues. His play ‘Like a Buoy’, based on Baring-Gould’s life was one of the most memorable events of 2007. We look forward eagerly to the promised publication of his transcription and analysis of Baring-Gould’s diary. Ron also found time, though, to prepare his paper about Baring-Gould’s religious development, which was prompted by his discovery of a notebook that Sabine had used when he was a teenager.

The supplementary material included in this issue of the Transactions is closely linked to Hurstpierpoint. The **Mission Paper** which Baring-Gould wrote for the Hurst Johnian *Horbury Brig in the Diocese of Ripon* is remarkable in treating Yorkshire seriously as an opportunity for missionary work and gives a graphic description of the challenges that he faced as well as giving details of his success.

The ghost story **‘The 9:30 Up-Train’** is set in the locality and features the Clayton railway tunnel, to the South of Hurstpierpoint. This story was written while Baring-
Gould was teaching at Hurstpierpoint College and published in ‘Once a Week’ in August 1863. In 1904 it re-appeared in Baring-Gould’s ‘A Book of Ghosts’. Both of these are hard (or expensive) to find so I am sure that many members will welcome the opportunity to read and enjoy it.

Martin Graebe
21st April 2008
Becky Smith’s talk was given ex tempore from notes and based mainly on passages about Baring-Gould taken from the college magazine ‘The Hurstjohanian’. Becky has provided this compiled version for the SBGAS Transactions. While dates have been given for each of the quoted passages it has not proved possible, in most cases, to provide precise references for them.

We are still trying to discover exactly when Sabine Baring-Gould took up his post at St. John’s College, Hurstpierpoint, though we know that it was sometime between September 1856 and the spring of 1857.

The earliest date for which we have documented evidence of his being here is from Baring-Gould’s diary.

I was at Lew to my sister’s marriage – unfortunate marriage – with T H Marsh, and then I returned to Hurstpierpoint where I was a master at the time. 1 A few days after, something occurred to me and I wanted particularly to communicate with her. I sat up deliberating in my mind what I had better do, I thought that if I wrote home for her address it would cause a delay, as she was on her wedding tour, and I was moreover very doubtful whether my mother knew where exactly they would be. The next day I got a letter from my sister ‘Do write to me, Dear Sabine, and tell me what you want, or whether you are ill. Last night you came to my bedside, drew the curtain, and said ‘Margaret, write, I must say something to you’ And now I want to know what you have to say, for the incident has made such an impression upon me, that I cannot shake it off” In the meantime I had made up my mind not to consult her in the matter, and therefore wrote back, that I had nothing to say to her, except that I wished her every happiness. 2

The following extract, also from the diary, seems to suggest he began in 1856, to allow two years of seriously hard work, before producing the ‘Oraef—a-daI’ and other writing in the ‘Hurstjohanian’ in the middle of 1858.

There I was satisfied I had found the work and place I wanted. I was given £20 per annum for the first two years – the salary was afterwards raised. I was very hard worked for the first two or three years, so hard that I had scarce any time to myself for not only did I teach in the school all day but I was required to teach the servitors in the evening.

I believe the headmaster thought I was an enthusiast and he would prove me by hard work. I stood it and the work was made lighter afterwards. I was very happy

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1 This wedding took place in May 1857
at Hurstpierpoint. At Danny Hall in the parish lived the Campions. Mrs. Campion was a relative through the Barings, and I saw a good deal of them. ³

Baring-Gould became a regular visitor to Danny House. The Campions were supporters of the School and the Hurstjohnian included the following:

Danny House

Sir William Campion Kt, who lived and died in the bloody days of the great rebellion, was an ancestor of the family of the same name who now occupy the ancient house of Danny in the parish of Hurstpierpoint….The old house with its quaint gables, and deep windows; the park that surrounds it, the woods that shelter it, and the downs beneath which it nestles, and all pictured in the memory; and perhaps when our thoughts revert, as the often do, to our schoolboy days, there is hardly a reflection connected with them impressed on us more vividly, or recalled with more pleasure, than a summer’s stroll beneath that old avenue…

For a flavour of the school, there is the following, from ‘The Hurstjohnian’ as are all the subsequent quotes in this talk, unless otherwise stated.

1858.

The Ascension Day visit to the top of Wolsonbury took place as usual at 3.00pm. Just before starting, a thunderstorm passed over, and happily settled the weather. On reaching the hill, the party was met by Mr Campion and Mr Blencowe, who brought good things for a scramble. Tea was begun, the kettles having long been boiling under the direction of ‘the Colonel’, who observes this part of the Festival’s duties with scrupulous regard. After tea the Hymnus Eucharisticus was sung on the hillside, and the boys then rushed up the steep for the annual scramble down its declivity. In descending, one fellow had a good purl and a tolerable fright, for he rolled pretty nearly from top to bottom. He lost his watch as well as his footing, and got down, in consequence, in no time at all, as we heard a very little boy remark.

In August 1858 ‘The Hurstjohnian’ recorded the sudden death of three boys at Lancing School (another Woodard School).

The boys were bathing in the Adur, about five hundred yards from the College cricket ground, with some other boys. The three reached a sandbank in the middle of the stream and found, after resting a few minutes, that the tide was rapidly rising. They tried to return but were out of their depth as soon as they had left the sandbank. All was quickly over and the school fellows on the shore saw them sink. Others came close to drowning. Two were buried in Lancing churchyard, with their parents present. Aged 12, 10 and 14 (his birthday would have been the next day). Ten-year-old F.R.Wix was given a medal for his heroic efforts to save his friend.

The magazine goes on to record the completion of a large bathing pool St. John’s ‘filled with pure water from the well by means of a steam engine, plus rain water.’

³ Entry in Sabine Baring-Gould’s Diary dated 12th September 1880
There is also a record of the design work done by Baring-Gould on the Boys’ Library at the school.

This room has, during the current year, been undergoing a process of decoration, which when completed will render it very effective. Already two sides are fitted up with bookcases, the doors of which are of very delicately wrought iron, coloured vermilion and gold, with bands of zinc, simply pierced and uncoloured, the effect of which is to furnish a stay for the iron work and to tone down its polychrome. The design is by S. Baring Gould Esq, who has also completed four very pleasing medallions upon the jambs of the window, opposite the entrance. The subjects are from the Canterbury Tales and the Faery Queen, presenting the stories of the Patient Grizzle and Little S Hugh from Chaucer, and the betrothal of Chivalry and Religion and Una teaching the wood nymphs from Spenser. The other window is to be similarly adorned with subjects from Shakespeare. Several busts and models from the Society of Arts adorn the walls; the brackets which support them being like the bookcase doors of wrought iron and reflecting great credit on their designer, as well as on the College smith, who executed them.

There were also portraits, stuffed hawks and other birds. The Dean of Westminster presented a copy of each of his valuable works. Mr W.K.Tyrrer of Liverpool sent £2.2s to be expended in books and Mr W. Vokins of Great Portland Street some choice casts from the studio of Campbell, the late sculptor.

Baring-Gould was also very active in drama at the school. The magazine describes a performance of ‘Much Ado About Nothing’ on 28th October 1858 in which Sabine Baring-Gould acted the part of Claudio. The hall was full, and ‘fully three hundred visitors’ attended, including the Bishop of Oxford and many local dignitaries. The part of Claudio contains in excess of 220 lines. Sabine also painted the scenery – The night scene in Messina and the prison scene ‘being especially deserving of note’. It was a ‘strong cast…diffusing widely in the College a genuine appreciation of Shakespeare and in cultivating a spirit of refinement in some degree worthy of the Poet.’ ‘Claudio and Don Pedro carried off their parts with great care’. The female parts, ‘attained positive merit’ given the ‘circumstances so embarrassing as a change of sex involves’. The music was greatly praised, too.

Baring-Gould’s first published short story, ‘Master Sacristan Eberhard’ was published in the December issue of ‘The Hurstjohnian’. He felt it necessary to justify this story to his mother in the following letter:

My dear Mama…There is a story of mine in the Johnian this month, besides ‘Oroefa-dal’, which I am afraid you will not like, as it is in my 'mystic' style, which is not 'so called' practical. You have a great dread, I know, of imagination, but wrongly, I think. The modern view of it is that it should be quenched, not cultivated; that is a very narrow view of the human mind and soul.

If the imagination is a gift of God, it is intended to be developed. Minds are comparative or creative, ie intellectual and imaginative, one system of organisation must be trained as well as the other. I believe that every work of the pure imagination is inspired, not when shackled by comparison with facts. 'Vanity Fair' or one of Dickens' novels would be types of imagination coupled
with earth, like Pegasus yoked with an ox to draw the plough; but where free and purely imaginative, such as 'Undine', 'Sintram' and most fairy stories, I would consider them heavenborn, their beauty is unearthly and mystic, always containing some subtle awful mystery of Nature or Revelation worked out. The charm in these stories is that we feel this without understanding it when children.

This is the fourth sheet I have written and then torn up one after another intending not to write this as you would not believe or appreciate it; however it is no good I have not been able to help writing it.

We read that the Boar’s Head Ceremony and Choir Fete were held on December 13th and that Handel’s ‘Messiah’ was performed, for the benefit of the Organ Fund, with reserved seats at 5/- and others at 2s 6d. Some of the singers had colds. ‘The Hallelujah Chorus’ produced a very marked sensation. £15 was raised for the organ. A 25 foot Christmas tree (a spruce fir) blazed at the foot of the dais with ‘upwards of 300 tapers and brilliant with every variety of glittering decoration.’ Christmas boxes were distributed. As well as carols a number of lively songs, including ‘The Cork Leg’, ‘Villikins and his Dinah’ and ‘Dulce Domum’ were sung. The boar’s head was then brought in, with a picturesque procession up the Hall. Torch bearers, for the first time, heralded the line of march. The junior chorister presided at high table for the evening. Presents were distributed so that every boy, all masters and servants had a gift, while a ‘basket of elegantly devised bon-bons was handed among the ladies.’

Boys seem to have died at the school with alarming regularity. Following the three drowned at Lancing in 1858, further obituaries occur frequently in the magazine, for example the following:

W.H. Coxwell died of tuberculosis of the lungs. ‘The patience and cheerfulness he showed through his illness deserve to be commemorated, as the proof of a happy end that ever awaits an innocent and affectionate life. He was buried…on the slope beneath the old thorn tree, bright with Christmas berries, in Hurst churchyard.

Note that the boy was not taken home for burial.

It is recorded that the College had many visitors, most of them clergymen. An exception was the following:

Herr Bosco paid a visit to S. John’s College on Friday evening 11th February 1859. He performed with great success, amid deserved applause, his marvellous series of conjuring tricks. Such exhibitions of manual dexterity are not only interesting as shewing the skill that practice and perseverance may achieve, but they suggest in answer to any who may cavil at the supposed uselessness of such pains, whether, besides the refreshment and pleasure they afford to many spectators, they do not serve a purpose in helping us to realise the wonderful mechanism of our frame, when we see its delicate operations leading to such

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4 Baron Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, ‘Sintram and His Companions – A Northern Tale’
5 Devon Record Office, Ref 5203 (Baring-Gould Archive), Box 25, Letter to Baring-Gould’s mother, Sophia dated ‘Dec 7th’ (1858).
perplexing and baffling results - the gross material flesh endowed, as it were, almost with the elasticity and subtle motion of spirit itself.

1859

The commencement of work on the new organ for S. John’s Chapel is recorded:

This important work is now actually in hand, the building of the instrument having been placed under the superintendence of L.G.Hayne Esq., Mus. Bac. of Queens College Oxford. It is to be ready by Easter Day. The estimate is 100 guineas. It is capable of enlargement to any size when it shall be necessary to remove it from the temporary chapel.

The money needed to complete the organ was still being actively sought and a concert was arranged on Shrove Tuesday to raise funds for the Organ Fund. The proceeds ‘cleared upwards of £10.’

A highly diverting interlude took place by Mr S. Baring Gould, who represented a dwarf lady of anything but fairest form or proportion. A more hideous object than appeared, it is difficult to conceive. The trick was well managed and the amusement caused by a song, original we believe, composed and sung by the lady in a high and well sustained falsetto, was excessively droll.

The record of Port Latin Day (an important annual event at the school) records another of Baring-Gould’s artistic contributions to the school: ‘St John ante Portam Latinam. May 6th, on a lovely sunny day. The Services were as usual, and the Chapel adorned with its customary festive decorations, of which it is not necessary to remark in detail, except to mention the new coverings for the lectern and faldstool, embroidered from designs furnished by Mr. Gould, which had a very good effect.’

There was a performance of ‘Macbeth’ on 9th November 1859. Food was served bountifully between the Acts.

Thomson, Captain of the school, played Lady Macbeth. A bold, bad unscrupulous woman…had she lived in our times, she might have figured as another Mrs Manning. Powerful music, gloom of the landscape, wildness of costume, fantastic dancing of witches, imps and sprites, charming vocal accompaniments – the witch scenes were perhaps the most effective of any…The scenery was by Mr Gould, who also undertook the direction of the elements themselves. His thunder and lightning were most successful, rivalling in effect the efforts of Jupiter Tonans himself. We can almost imagine that it was the jealousy of that selfish deity, to which the slight disaster in the incantation scene must be referred, who, envious of a mortal’s power to imitate the detonations of his wrath, sought to avenge his outraged prerogative by a malicious downpour of thunderbolts and lightning on the legs of his ephemeral rival, in the destruction of whose pantaloons the Olympian power found a paltry outlet for wrath.

During the year a number of pieces written by Baring-Gould were published in the Hurstjohnian. These included two short stories: ‘The Fire Man’ (extremely imaginative and sensational) and ‘The Dead Trumpeter of Hurst’. His translation of the Icelandic saga the ‘Orafa-Dal’ was serialised throughout 1858 and 59.
1860

There are a number of articles in ‘The Hurstjohonian’ that refer to the Hurst Rifle Volunteers of which Baring-Gould was a member. It is useful to bear in mind that Sabine’s father, Edward, was also actively involved in the Volunteers in Devon, and it seems likely that the son was trying to please his father by emulating him.

This body now numbers members enough to be enrolled as a corps. Drill began at the New Inn, for the first time on Feb 11th. Mr Baring Gould, Mr Ling, Mr Pratt, Mr Gray, Mr Blackman and Mr J.H. Davies are the contingent furnished by the college.

March 28th. The corps was enrolled and sworn as the 13th Sussex Volunteers with 65 on the roll call. Baring-Gould was first in the list of volunteers from St. Johns. There was some discussion of the uniform – amusing and animated. A majority voted to adopt the Lewes corps pattern. The parade ground was in the front quadrangle. It was hoped that the corps would ‘promote a sound patriotic feeling in these uneasy days, as well as benefit the physique’.

Port Latin Day. During the day’s speeches Mr Lane responded that ‘he trusted that, if the Rifle Volunteers of England should ever be called on to take part against any foreign invader, the Hurst Volunteers would be found among the first to distinguish themselves, and on that point he entertained no fears.

In 1861 there was a reference to ridicule for the Volunteer force when it first began. The 13th Sussex Volunteers gave a large Ball on 10 January with 220 guests or more including the officers of the corps and local gentry and there was dancing till dawn.

1861

On 17th September 1861 the laying of the foundation stone for the new chapel took place and was a ‘grand event’ in which:

Mr Gould and Mr Gray undertook the decorative parts. ‘A beautiful archway was constructed, supporting on each face a Latin Cross, beneath which was a circular inscription of the first verse of the Psalm beginning ‘Except the Lord build the house, etc’. The upper part, which formed a kind of canopy, was covered with evergreens and profusely decorated with flags, kindly lent by Mr Campion, while the spandrils were filled in with banners bearing alternately the devices of S. George’s and S. John’s Crosses. The poles supporting the canopy were coloured in red and white and blue and white alternately; while wreaths of flowers formed natural capitals, which, by their colour, heightened the general effect. The lower part again was thickly covered with evergreens, the whole producing an artistic effect, combining architectural features with ecclesiastical symbolism, such as is seldom attempted in like structures.

… A magnificent event, never to be forgotten. … Before concluding, we may mention that as the silver trowel was the offering of the boys and Probationary Associates, to the expenses of the day, the Masters and Senior Associated added
their contribution in the form of the handsome silk banner which was carried before the Bishop of Oxford. St. Saviour’s School also furnished a banner, from a design of Mr Gould, which appeared on this occasion for the first time, in one of the S. Nicholas College processions.

On the 9th November a performance of ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ gave Baring-Gould another opportunity to exercise his thespian skills. He played the part of the Pedant - an old fellow set up to personate Vincentio. The report said:

Of the other actors, Mr Gould as Pedant and Boyd as Grumio, carried off the lion’s share of applause. The get up of the former was inimitable, and the rendering of the character wholly original, yet so irresistibly comic as to draw down loud cheers and to secure a call before the curtain at the end of Act IV.

1862

This was the year in which Baring-Gould visited Iceland and in September ‘The Hurstjohnian’ recorded that the Boys Library and Museum had acquired a number of new exhibits including ‘some beautiful skins of Arctic foxes and water fowl from Iceland by S.B. Gould Esq.’

In the Autumn an attack of Scarlet Fever was recorded under the heading ‘Dispersion of the School’. The death from scarlet fever caused some alarm, and several other cases occurred. About a third of the children were summoned home, against advice. The rest were ‘dispersed’ some to the village. Miss Knollys at the House of Rest opened her home to 20 boys. During the fortnight’s holiday, the College was whitewashed, coloured and cleansed from one end to the other. Ventilation to the dormitories and hall was improved.

Unfortunately, though, the November issue included an obituary notice.

Cecil Duntze Turner, at the Mansion House, Hurstpierpoint on October 9th. With some other convalescents from Scarlatina, he was staying there for change and had apparently recovered his health, when he was suddenly attacked with a dropsical effusion on the brain, which carried him off after a very short illness. He had only arrived in England a few months from India, and was an entire stranger in this country. He had been here long enough to win many friends, whose grief at his removal was genuine. Buried in Hurst Churchyard by the Head Master.

It was also recorded that the College had taken Western House in the village of Hurst as a Sanatorium for invalids.

In December the arrival of gas lighting was recorded.

Our readers…will rejoice to hear that the day on which our December number is published is the day when the College will be lighted with gas. The news of this great event has already inspired the muse of a contributor in Oxford, nor can the thoughts of such a boon so long desired and so greatly needed, fail to excite any, whose present interest, or past association has connected them with the discomforts of our hitherto imperfect system of lighting.
December also saw a performance of ‘The Merchant of Venice’ in which Baring-Gould was to play the part of Old Gobbo.

…the part had been assigned to Mr Baring Gould, and those who remember this gentleman’s grotesque assumption of the Pedant in ‘Taming of the Shrew’ last year were prepared to expect now another character, in itself of minor importance, made prominent by the original conception of the actor, and by the highly finished completeness with which his ideas are carried out. A severe sore throat, however, deprived the Society of Mr Gould’s services, and our thanks are due to Mr Barrow both for the kindness with which he undertook a new character at a few hours’ notice….

1863


In December ‘A Farce of Domestic Economy’ was presented. ‘The scenery as heretofore was the work of Messrs Field and Gould. One architectural scene by the latter gentleman was extremely beautiful. After all, the main labour of theatricals is behind the scenes.’

1864

Theatricals featured again in the Shrove Tuesday entertainment on 9th February with the presentation of a farce, ‘Mad as a Hatter’.

S.B. Gould played Mr Wye Zed F.R.C.S. (Author of treatise on ‘Congenital Imbecility’) ‘Mr Gould’s disguise of himself as an elderly physician in shorts and buckles, was astonishing. … ‘The other performers are all well known names and they played with their accustomed spirit.’ They only had a ‘short week’ to rehearse.

In June 1864 a report about the new chapel said: ‘An approach to completion is really visible. The roof is already going on’. The Archbishop of Canterbury sent £10 for the fund.

However this issue also reported the end of an era under the heading ‘Resignation of the Rev S. Baring Gould’.

Many Johnians, past and present, will hear with regret that Mr Gould has closed his eight years residence at S. John’s by accepting the Curacy of Horbury near Wakefield, to which he was ordained by the Bishop of Ripon on Whitsunday. He carries with him many prayers and good wishes from the College that in the exercise of his energy, well known self denial and varied talents in his new field of labour he may do much for the good of men and the glory of God. Many boys will miss him as a companion in their walks, especially in Sunday rambles.

‘The Hurstdjohnian’ did, however record a visit by Baring-Gould on Port Latin Day in 1894.
The widespread fame of Mr Baring Gould as an author, prolific, versatile and full of old world lore, attracted many who knew him in his books, and the hearty greetings of friends who remembered his Hurst days proved – it that were necessary – then permanence of the impression his character set upon those then privileged to know him.

After leading the dedication of new parts of the Chapel, Baring Gould preached the sermon:

… to which it is vain for us in this report to do justice. With singular grace of illustration he drew from the simple phrase ‘an instrument of ten strings’ a noble vindication of the definite religious teaching which our School are founded to provide. He began characteristically with a beautiful story, told by Clement of Alexandria, of a competitor at the Greek games who was dismayed, as he came forward to play his prelude for the prize awarded to the best musician, by the snapping of one of the strings of his lyre. …

Following which the congregation sang his hymn ‘Hail the Sign’. The Editorial for that month made much more of this visit. Mr Baring Gould was the ‘show figure’, and numbers were swelled by people hoping to glimpse the author of ‘Mehalah’, ‘John Herring’ and ‘Curious Myths’. His visit enabled those present to appreciate Mr Campion’s description of him in ancient days telling stories to listening crowds. ‘During the six years that Mr Baring Gould was a master here, he did so much and left so many marks of his personality that we cannot but understand that he was destined to be as famous as he has become.’

The magazine did, of course, carry an obituary after Baring-Gould’s death in 1924 noting that: ‘During his nine years at Hurst, Mr Baring Gould was a frequent contributor to the Johnian…’
Farewell Heat and Welcome Frost - Sabine Baring-Gould in Iceland
Martin Graebe

Today I am going to tell you about Sabine Baring-Gould’s visit to Iceland in 1862 and the book that he wrote about it, *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas*, which has recently been republished by Signal Books and for which I have written the foreword.\(^6\)

I first put this presentation together in 2000 for the Baring-Gould Study Day at Lewtrenchard, and I have subsequently given versions to other audiences. So it is a pleasure, at last, to be able to talk to the Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society about this key event in his life. It is also very exciting to be able to do so at the expedition’s headquarters, Hurstpierpoint College, where Baring-Gould was teaching at the time.

As most of you know, my fascination with Sabine Baring-Gould started with his work on folksong and you may wonder why I have taken such a strong interest in this episode in his life. Soon after the ‘forgotten manuscripts’ first came out of the cellar at Killerton in 1992, I discovered, while working through the boxes, a packet of letters from Baring-Gould to his mother. These described his preparations for the expedition and part of the journey itself and I had copies made of them.\(^7\) Indexing the folk song collection was the main task but, for amusement, I transcribed these letters and wrote a couple of small articles based on them. When we were looking for a theme for the Baring-Gould Festival in 2000 we chose to invite an Icelandic group, Embla, to come along and so I started serious study of the letters, the journey and the book.

Since then Shan and I have visited Iceland three times and have followed Baring-Gould on parts of the journey that he made. Indeed, we have been to some of the parts that he was not able to reach. It is tempting to say that things have changed since his visit 145 years ago – but, of course, the physical geography, the nature, and the weather that he described are much the same. It is the people and their lives that have changed beyond anything that he would have recognised. He was not always kind in his descriptions of the Icelanders of the time – though this sort of criticism seems to have been common to many of the books about Iceland written in the Nineteenth Century.\(^8\) I am also horrified, at times, by the attitudes and activities of the travellers he describes. Their disrespect for the environment and their idea of ‘fun’ would not go down well today. But they, and the Icelanders that they met, were from another time.

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\(^7\) Devon Record Office, Ref 5203 (Baring-Gould Archive), Box 25. Packet of letters from Baring-Gould to his mother written in 1862 about the visit to Iceland.

I am planning to give you no more that a quick sketch of the journey and of the book today – after all, I want to encourage you to buy it and read it. So, I’m hoping to give you just enough information to spark your interest. But there are also some things that I am going to show you that could not be included in the book – pieces of background, other people’s views and, of course, some of the things we have seen in our own travels in Iceland, following in Baring-Gould’s hoof-prints.

I will make a couple of disclaimers. I am not an expert on his work on the Icelandic sagas, though I have recently had the good fortune to meet someone who is. Andrew Wawn is the Professor of Anglo Icelandic Studies at the University of Leeds, and he has shared some interesting ideas with me. He has also opened my eyes to a feature of the book that I had not thought about and which I will share with you later. I will also get my apologies in early for my pronunciation of Icelandic names – but I have had a bit of coaching and I managed to pass muster with an audience in Reykjavik.

It is appropriate, at this stage, to say why I think this journey and this book are so important. Baring-Gould was by no means the first Englishman to visit Iceland, nor was he the first to write a book about it. However, this was a serious expedition into territory that had been explored by very few people. This probably fell short of the equivalent for him of a grand tour, but perhaps we could say it was his gap year adventure. Certainly he was the first to focus an expedition on visiting the saga sites in this way. It also brought him firmly into contact with people who really knew about sagas and it gave him a huge amount of material to mine for articles and ideas in the future.

Sources

As I have said, it was while looking through the newly discovered material in 1992 that I found, in one of the boxes of papers, the packet of letters written by him to his mother about the preparations for his expedition to Iceland and about the journey itself. There are seven letters in this collection, one of which is duplicated. The first was written on 23 May 1862 and the last on 28 June.9 There is also a later letter to his brother, Willy, which outlines his thoughts on how geysers work. The letters contain lovely little drawings by Baring-Gould, some of which you will be seeing shortly. Transcribing the letters took some time. Baring-Gould's handwriting is difficult to read at the best of times, but these letters, written on board a ship at sea or in a tent under the midnight sun, were more than usually challenging.

Apart from the letters, the main source of information has been the book; Iceland: its Scenes and Sagas which was published in the year after the expedition, and the articles, based on his journey, that Baring-Gould wrote for a number of magazines. I also had the good fortune, with the help of American researcher, Stephen Reynolds, to successfully identify the fellow traveller who Baring-Gould called 'The Yankee' in

9 The first letter is actually dated 23 May 1861, possibly explaining Baring-Gould’s later confusion about the date of this expedition in his Early Reminiscences where he gives, on page 307, the start date for the expedition as 7 June 1861. A later letter in this series has the wrong month.
his book. He was the writer J. Ross Browne who worked for Harper's Magazine. Browne's account of his own experiences makes an interesting contrast with that of Baring-Gould and we will be hearing from him later on.

Preparing for the journey

In 1862 Baring-Gould had been teaching at Hurstpierpoint College for nearly 6 years. Because of his serious lack of interest in sport, part of his job was to take groups of boys for walks in the country-side around the school at weekends. This proved to be a great opportunity for him to exercise his talent for story telling. Baring-Gould had developed a strong interest in the Nordic legends and, in particular, the Icelandic Sagas. Having taught himself to read Icelandic, he began to translate the sagas into English and then to turn these translations into stories for the boys. One of these stories ‘Oraefa-dal’ was published in the school magazine. It was this interest that led him to take leave of absence to visit the land in which the sagas were set.

In the preface to Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas Baring-Gould describes his purpose as twofold - 'to examine the scenes famous in Saga and to fill a portfolio with water-colour sketches'. His plan also included, of course, writing a book about his adventure.

Preparing for the journey

Baring-Gould's preparations for his journey were thorough. In the weeks before he left he told his mother about many of his purchases with some pride.

I take with me all that is necessary, by poncho I meant a waterproof one, and I shall have waterproof stockings for crossing rivers and a life belt in case of accidents. If I take my Aetna, of course I take spirits. … I have got such a snug little tent with a hammock slung in it. It all fits up with a neat case of tarpauling which will counterpoise my trunk on the horse's back.

In his letter of 3rd June he gives further details of the tent and of his equipment.

Gen'l Sabine provided me with opera glasses and compass. … The whole village here in excitement about my expedition, the trades-people having received from me such extraordinary orders. I have just got today a knife and fork which shut up into one and go into the pocket easily.

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10 Early Reminiscences (1923), p. 282 says that he had a German-Icelandic Grammar and used his German as the basis for learning Icelandic. In the preface to Grettir the Outlaw (1890) he says “At that time I had only a Danish grammar of Icelandic and an Icelandic-Danish dictionary, and I did not know a word of Danish. So I had to learn Danish in order to learn Icelandic”. In his library there is a copy of E. Rask, A grammar of the Icelandic or Old Norse tongue translated from Swedish by G.W.Dasent. London, 1843. This may have been acquired later.

11 Letter dated May 23rd 1861 (should, of course, have been 1882). The ‘Aetna’ referred to is a travelling spirit stove. A device of this name is described in the catalogue of the great exhibition of 1851.

12 Letter dated May 3rd 1862 (actually June 3rd).
The letters refer to his travelling into Brighton to get his photograph taken for his Mother, inviting her to admire his new coats and waistcoat. In a subsequent letter he says, however:

I think that my photographs ought decidedly to have been taken of me in my travelling costume with my bulky fishing stockings and my waterproof poncho. This is my tent, just 7\text{th} long by 5\text{th} wide and nearly 6\text{th} high, with a bit of waterproof over the top to let the rain run off. Instead of trousers I shall travel in knickerbockers and stockings as trousers are sure to cut to shreds on the lava very soon and besides are more likely to rub and gall on the saddle.\textsuperscript{13}

After discovering that he could not get a ship to the north of Iceland he planned a journey starting and finishing in Reykjavik which took him north through Thingvalla and Kalmanstunga to Arnavatn. He would then strike across to Akureyri and Myvatn before the most difficult part of the journey, a great loop south-eastwards and then turning west to run along the edge of Vatna Jokull before heading northwards through Sprengisandur back to Akureyri. It would be the first time, he said, that an Englishman had visited the Vatna Jokull. He was planning to leave in early June and return in late September.

\textsuperscript{13} Letter dated May 3\textsuperscript{rd} 1862 (actually June 3\textsuperscript{rd}).
His absence from Hurstpierpoint was to be covered for the rest of the summer term. He was expected to return to school for the start of the Autumn term but he makes clear in his letters that he was actually planning to stay for as long as it took to complete the journey and that he might well not return until around Michaelmas (September 29th). He would take 'French leave' with only a little feeling of guilt since he was paying 'an Oxford Man' to substitute for him at the rate of £12. 10s per quarter.

The voyage

Baring-Gould arrived in Edinburgh just after dawn on 8 June and spent the day looking round. It is worth saying, though I will not go into detail here, that he was not impressed with the city and even less impressed by its inhabitants – in fact he said in his letter to his mother “I abominate the Scotch!”

In the evening he boarded the *Arcturus* at Grangemouth. He described it as “a neat English built boat with steam screw, not much bigger than a Thames boat”. The *Arcturus* had been built in Dumbarton in 1856. For two years it had sailed between the Clyde and the Mediterranean as the *Victor Emmanuel* before being chartered and then purchased for the mail service between Copenhagen, Grangemouth, The Faroes and Iceland. Her name was changed to *Arcturus* in 1859. She was the ninth ship in the fleet of the Danish shipping company DFDS and sailed with them until she sank in 1887, with no loss of life following a collision off the Danish coast. DFDS kindly let me have this picture of the *Arcturus*.

![Arcturus](image)

Once he got on board Baring-Gould found that he did not have a cabin and, in fact, didn't even have a bunk since his accommodation was to be a sofa in the passenger cabin. Captain Andersson joked that this was unfortunate because of its proximity to the table and the danger that he would spoil the gentlemen's supper if he was sea-sick.

The ship did not sail until the next night so Baring-Gould filled his time by getting acquainted with his fellow passengers. He wrote three letters to his Mother in which he gives little pen portraits of them - often wide of the mark.
These included, for example, the 'Dissolute Icelander' (above), who subsequently turned out to be French and the 'Young Consumptive Dane' who turned out to be an Icelander. With the latter he took the opportunity to polish up his Icelandic pronunciation. He also took an interest in the pretty Danish stewardess.

Such a sweet Dansk Stewardess who is very French in her ways, dresses with short sleeves … I suppose it is the Danish fashion, and brushes her hair back à la Eugenie. She has a little waist round which I could put my arms twice and knot it at the back to prevent it from coming undone. She has been flirting with the cabin boy, chaffing the Captain, gossiping with the dissolute Icelander and is now off helter-skelter into Grangemouth to buy some bracelets or artificial flowers for her gay bonnet. 14

He describes the party of three young Englishmen who were also travelling on the Arcturus.

Two English men, a Mr Lawson from a swell London club and a Mr Haigh sail as well, I know that the swell Mr Lawson (who has not arrived yet) will be fraternising with the Stewardess in ten minutes. 15

Later he writes:

The two English men who are going on a trip have arrived bringing heaps of articles with them and do not seem to be anything but conceited puppies who are in a huff because they can not have a state cabin to themselves. I suspect that they will not remain long in Iceland. 16

Then, once they were under way he wrote again:

The three excursionist Englishmen I told you of on board are Mr Haigh, a merry good-natured, clever fellow, full of life and vivacity but of rather easy morals I suspect - he was walked off from Cambridge after having been a month there. The second a Mr Lawson a scotchman who has just come into his property & has come of age, shoots, fishes, makes a great row and is very good-natured. The third [who we subsequently discover is called Robertson] is his friend and is

14 Letter dated Whitsun Monday (i.e. 9th June)
15 Letter dated Tuesday Evening (i.e. 10th June)
16 Letter dated 15th June
rather quieter. I shall not keep long in their company, they are rich and reckless about their money I suspect, besides their pursuits and mine will not tally.\textsuperscript{17}

In the event he was to share their company and their pursuits for much of the journey round Iceland.

Then there was 'The Yankee' who Baring-Gould describes as 'a nice, quiet, gentlemanly fellow, who travels all over the world sketching for Harper's Magazine, New York.' J Ross Browne, as I now know him to be, wrote an account of his own journey for Harper's Magazine\textsuperscript{18}. In it the ‘English Dandy Tourists’ are described with scathing wit, though he does say of Baring-Gould:

One of the others, a quiet, scholastic-looking person, who did not really belong to the party, having only met them on board, was a young collegian, well versed in Icelandic literature. He was going to Iceland to perfect himself in the language of the country, and make translations of the learned sagas. \textsuperscript{19}

The Arcturus left Grangemouth on the night of Tuesday 10\textsuperscript{th} June and almost immediately ran into rough weather. Baring-Gould was seasick for the first two days of the journey and wrote

How Danté failed to put perpetual seasickness among the worst of the torture in the Inferno I cannot well understand\textsuperscript{20}

He emerged from his cabin when the ship docked in the Faroe Islands on Friday morning and describes going to the clubhouse with the Yankee for a breakfast of eggs and coffee, his first food since Tuesday. After wandering through the town and meeting the local priest he headed off into the hills, pleading malnutrition and tiredness as an excuse for not following the Yankee on a walk across the island. Instead he examined the local flora and enjoyed scenery that stood still for a few hours before dining with the priest on Puffin stuffed with raisins and sago soup (with raisins).

The other Britishers, meanwhile (if we are to believe Browne's account) had taken their shot-guns on shore and were slaughtering the local wild-life, much to the upset of the Faroese people.\textsuperscript{21} It is at this point in my story that I should, perhaps, issue a health warning. There are many aspects of this journey that will cause distress to anyone with a modicum of environmental sensitivity. When we hear of shooting rare birds, picking wild flowers, or tossing stones into geysers to make them jet we should

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{17} Letter dated Trinity Sunday (i.e. 15\textsuperscript{th} June)
These three articles formed part of a series chronicling Browne’s travels in Northern European that were subsequently re-published as a book, J. Ross Browne, \textit{The Land of Thor}, New York: Harper and Brothers (1867). The articles may most conveniently be viewed through the ‘Making of America’ website. Go to \url{http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/browse_journals/harp.1863.html} (accessed 21 April 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{Harper’s New Illustrated Magazine}, 26, 152 (January 1863) p. 153
\item \textsuperscript{20} Letter dated Trinity Sunday (i.e. 15\textsuperscript{th} June)
\item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{Harper’s New Illustrated Magazine}, 26, 152 (January 1863) p. 156 - 157
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
remember what the standards of the age were. As Baring-Gould notes, at this time, a
reward of £100 was being offered in Denmark for a living specimen of a Great Auk
and £50 for a dead one.\textsuperscript{22}

You do sense, from his descriptions, that Baring-Gould did not approve of all these
excesses and in his book he writes:

It always goes to my heart to kill a bird. The feathered creation are so wonderful
in their perfection and beauty, that it gives me real pain to rob them of the
precious gift of life which God has bestowed upon them … it inspires me with a
sickening disgust to see the wanton manner in which some take pleasure in
destroying these precious pieces of mechanism; these glorious little bodies, so
matchless in their beauty, so lovely in their motions, so buoyant in their joy of
life.\textsuperscript{23}

But, then, a man has to eat.

They set off from the Faroes on a beautiful evening and enjoyed a pleasant sail
through the islands before the wind blew up and he spent the night on deck to avoid
being sick again. Saturday gave Baring-Gould a chance to see whales and seabirds
before getting his first glimpse of Iceland at six o'clock on Sunday morning. Then
another bout of rough weather occupied his mind and stomach until the ship finally
docked in Reykjavik on Monday morning, the 16\textsuperscript{th} June.

Having got his luggage on shore and settled into the inn, Baring-Gould started to get
his provisions together, to buy his horses and to hire a guide. This was a young
student of theology who he called Grimr Arnarson in the book but whose real name
we never learn. Grimr was to be paid £17 for his services over a period of two and a
half months.

He made a number of visits to people in the town including the rector of the grammar
school, the watch-maker and the apothecary (who was also the French consul), as
well as the roman catholic priest, the dean of the cathedral and a university professor,
seeking advice to help him on his journey. He describes the town and its people and,
of course the church. Reykjavik was a very small place in those days with around
1400 people living in modest wooden houses forming only two main streets. He
thought the people friendly but a bit lazy and addicted to snuff - which he suggests
they use as an antidote to, and vaccination against, the fishy smell that hung over the
town.

Baring-Gould noted that on that first day his fellow Englishmen achieved little except
to get their luggage on shore. On the second day their main achievement was to lose
and find their dog a number of times. He allowed them to join him in the process of
buying horses on the following day and offered them advice on the selection of
guides. He is fairly restrained in his comments, however, and if we turn to J Ross
Browne's account we get not only corroboration of the dog-losing episode but also a

\textsuperscript{22} Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas, p. 23 - 25
\textsuperscript{23} Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas, p. 334
description of the party choosing their horses. Brown also comments on their selection of equipment for the journey:

My English friends were so well provided with funds and equipments that they found it impossible to get ready. They had patent tents, sheets, bedsteads, mattresses, and medicine boxes. They had guns, too, in handsome gun-cases; and compasses, and chronometers, and pocket editions of the poets. They had portable kitchens packed in tin boxes, which they emptied out but never could get in again, comprising a general assortment of pots, pans, kettles, skillets, frying-pans, knives and forks, and pepper-castors. They had demijohns of brandy and kegs of Port wine; baskets of bottled porter and a dozen of Champagne; vinegar by the gallon and French mustard in patent pots; likewise, collodium for healing bruises, and mosquito-nets for keeping out snakes. They had improved oil-lamps to assist the daylight which prevails in this latitude during the twenty four hours; and shaving apparatus and nail-brushes, and cold cream for cracked lips, and dentifrice for the teeth, and patent preparations for the removal of dandruff from the hair; likewise, lint and splints for mending broken legs. One of them carried a theodolite for drawing inaccessible mountains within a reasonable distance; another a photographic apparatus for taking likenesses of the natives and securing facsimiles of the wild beasts; while a third was provided with a brass thief-defender for running under doors and keeping them shut against persons of evil character. They had bags, boxes and bales of crackers, preserved meats, vegetables, and pickles; jellies and sweet-cake; concentrated coffee, and a small apparatus for the manufacture of ice-cream. In addition to all these, they had patent overcoats and undercoats, patent hats and patent boots, gum-elastic bed-covers, and portable gutta-percha floors for tents; ropes, cords, horse-shoes, bits, saddles and bridles, bags of oats, fancy packs for horses, and locomotive pegs for hanging guns on; besides many other articles commonly deemed useful in foreign countries by gentlemen of the British Islands who go abroad to rough it.\(^{24}\)

Browne contrasts this extravagance with his own modest requirements and the fact that he was on his way a full day and a half before them. He does, though, forget to mention in his account that he was planning to be away only six days, whereas the English party had a longer journey in mind and Baring-Gould was planning to be out for two and a half months.

The journey

Baring-Gould had planned to travel with only his guide for company but was persuaded to form a party with the other three Britishers. They left on the afternoon of Thursday 19\(^{th}\) June and made only 12 miles on that first evening with their twenty horses and three guides between them.

Having risen at ten o' clock on the following day they made about 18 miles on the second day, and rode down the Almangagia Gorge to reach their first major objective, Thingvalla. Baring-Gould was unimpressed by the gorge. Now we know that it is one

\(^{24}\) Harper's New Illustrated Magazine, 26, 153 (February 1863) p. 295
of the most interesting geological sites in the world – the place where the American and European continental plates meet and where their movement apart at 7 mm a year can be measured.

Baring-Gould writes:

We were at 'Thingvalla' at 12 o'clock at night and found the Parson's house full and that rain threatened. We camped in the churchyard, outside the church door, and got the Parson's servant to cook some of our birds for us. On these we supped, making the church steps our table as well as chair, and drank our brandy and water. I slung my hammock this night and faired better - but my cold was worse and I felt very feverish. A good sleep however and a bright morning did me a world of good. (I did not wake till 12 o'clock, so no forenoon) A breakfast of oatmeal porridge and the birds which we ourselves cooked, set me up.  

J Ross Browne, who had left a few days before and was now returning to Reykjavik from his short expedition, was one of those in the priest’s house at Thingvalla when Baring-Gould and his compatriots arrived. He pretended to be asleep to avoid being drawn into conversation but spoke with them in the morning and heard about their difficult journey. He captured their misery in a drawing, together with the following description:

[Image: The English Party]

At a seasonable hour in the morning, I got up, and looked about in search of my fellow-passengers, whom I really liked, and in whose progress I felt a considerable interest. They were camped close by the church, under the lee of the front door. Two canvas tents covered what was left of them. A general wreck

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25 Letter dated June 28th
of equipments lay scattered all around broken poles, boxes, tinware, etc. It was plain enough they had encountered incredible hard-ships. The usual greetings over, I inquired how they had enjoyed the trip from Reykjavik. In reply they gave me a detailed and melancholy history of their experiences … Of the twenty-five horses with which they left Reykjavik only thirteen were sound of wind, and of these more than half were afflicted with raw hacks. The pack-animals, eighteen in number, were every one lame. Then the packs were badly done up, and broke to pieces on the way. Sometimes the ropes cut the horses’ backs, and sometimes the horses lay down on the road, and tried to travel with their feet in the air. Incredible difficulty was experienced in making twelve miles the first day. It rained all the time. The bread was soaked; the tea destroyed; the sugar melted; and the Champagne baskets smashed. When the packs were taken off it was discovered that some of them were quite empty, and the contents, consisting originally of hair-brushes, flea-powder, lip-salve, and cold-cream, were strewn along the road probably all the way from Reykjavik. In short, it was a series of disasters from beginning to end; and here they were now but two days’ journey from Reykjavik.26

This is the last we will hear from Browne who was now on the return leg of his journey. Baring-Gould and his colleagues, however awful their experiences to date, had barely started theirs. They spent the whole of Saturday and Sunday at Thingvalla recovering. Baring-Gould actually had a bad cold and was feeling very unwell. He did, though, find sufficient energy to do some sketching while his companions went shooting and fishing. He also explored this historic site of what is regarded as the oldest parliament in the world.

The next stage of their journey took them on northwards through the Kaldidalr pass. Though barely mentioned in modern guide books Baring-Gould was clearly in awe of ‘the dreaded pass which no Englishman since Henderson in 1813 has been through’. From his description it was obviously hard work

Next morning we started at 10 o'clock to pass the terrible Kaldidalr. Two parties had been thro' it this year before. One had lost one of his ponies, the other, the postman had lost his way, and was within an ace of having to cut the throats of two of his horses as there is no grass - no water, no anything but ice, snow and rock. After a ride through swamps and over snowdrifts, - making straight for the great snow mountains which have an ugly gap between them, closed by some jagged, black sawlike hills, barren and precipitous, we turn the flank of one of these grim teeth of rock, and the wind (sweeps) in our faces up the desolate vale. … The utter desolation of this horrible wilderness is indescribable. We drank here the health of the Queen and 'The Old Folks at Home' and then with whip and spur tore along after the baggage horses which were crawling along, up a dreary neck of land a mile on.27

For three more days they shot, drank and snow-balled their way northwards until he left his British colleagues in Vatnsdalr to pursue the game while he went on to complete his great journey.

26 Harper’s New Illustrated Magazine, 26, 154 (March 1863) p. 463 - 464
27 Letter dated June 28th
He was now fully recovered, and he and his guide pushed on eastwards, able at last to focus on visiting the scenes of the sagas and enjoying the scenery. When they reached Myvatn, however, he heard news that dashed his hopes. A group of horsemen had ridden over from Mothrudalr and they told him that, because of the cold spring, the grass was sparse along the edge of Vatna Jokull and that there would be insufficient for the horses to eat. Baring Gould says

> It was a bitter disappointment for me to have to postpone the execution of my scheme for another and more propitious summer, but it would have been insanity to have persisted in it; no guide would have accompanied me, and I should in all probability have lost my life with that of my ponies. 28

Having travelled part of the road that he would have taken I can fully understand the seriousness of the decision and the wisdom of the choice that he made. The picture of the Sprengisandur Desert shown as Figure 1 in the centre section gives you some idea of the country that he would have had to cross. You can see how little there would be for a horse to eat, even in the best of times.

He then spent two days exploring the area around Myvatn. He visited the volcanic fields at Námafjall where his guide saved him when he slipped and nearly fell into a pool of boiling mud.

He also rode out to the waterfall at Dettifoss, which is reputed to be the most powerful in Europe.

He decided to reverse his course, and head back westwards since he had heard rumours of an active volcano and wanted to investigate. His actual route can be seen on the map shown as Figure 2.

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28 *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas*, p. 222 - 223
Returning to Akureyri, they rode to Holar through the Horgár valley, a difficult route which they completed in a day. Baring-Gould was interested in Holar for its historical importance as a religious centre in Iceland. He had a vision that the churches of Iceland and the rest of Scandinavia could be brought into the Anglican communion, though there was no enthusiasm for the prospect among his prospective co-religionists. Riding westward, he paused only briefly to look out over the Skagafjörd and the island of Drangey where the legendary hero, Grettir, had met his end. From here they rode to Melr where they had heard there was to be a wedding. They were too late for the ceremony but they joined in the celebrations until the early hours of the morning. Here he found one of his companions, Haigh, who joined him as he travelled on westwards to Hrutafjord. There they spent a boozy evening with the captain of one of the vessels which served as a floating shop for the locals. Nursing hangovers, they turned south, through Nordúrárdalur, where, at Hvammmur, he spent spend a more sober evening examining saga manuscripts with the priest and talking about the saga sites that the old man had visited. They crossed the mountains to one of the most famous of those sites, Reykholt and then onward to pass the spot at which they had turned up into the Kaldidalur valley a month before. At Skógkottur, they found the other two British travellers and the party travelled on together, but at a slower pace. At Geysir they spent three days conducting experiments in natural physics and observing the geysers.

Baring-Gould was fascinated to see both Strokr and the Great Geysir in action. The former performed without assistance but to get the Great Geysir to spout they had to divert a stream to fill its reservoir and then to throw a large quantity of turves down its bore to build up the pressure. Baring-Gould commented that a number of the smaller geysers that they had visited on the journey had been rendered inactive by the habit of travellers of throwing rocks into them to see what effect this had, but believed turf less damaging. The Great Geysir has not performed regularly for several years now. The working of the geyser had clearly fascinated Baring-Gould, since he carried out a number of practical experiments, once he was home, and developed a theory of how geysers worked, which he described in the letter to his brother, Willy, that I mentioned earlier. 29

The party then returned to Reykjavik. Baring-Gould had been in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. He does write that he was sorry to leave Iceland but that the parting would have been more trying if he hadn't been confident that he would return in the future. In fact, he never did go back.

They sold the horses at auction, getting back a quarter of what had been paid for them. Baring-Gould kept one Icelandic pony, which he had named ‘Bottlebrush’, and paid for his passage home to England. His home-coming was a little down-beat.

I returned to England in the little creaking Arcturus .... laden with a cargo of Icelandic ponies for the coal mines of Lancashire ... The boat went to Liverpool instead of Grangemouth. I arrived in a very ragged condition. My first visit was to a Turkish bath, where, whilst I was bathing, I had my threadbare garments

29 Letter to William Baring-Gould dated Nov. 19th 1862
baked, to destroy the animal life in them. … On reaching Hurstpierpoint I rode Bottlebrush from the station to the college, but on reaching the first tree he stood still, stared, and positively refused to proceed. A tree was something so strange that it frightened him. I had to drag him past the tree by main force.30

Baring-Gould tells us that Bottlebrush grew fat and lazy on the rich Sussex grass and was never again much use to him, but he was much appreciated by the boys of the school who took the little pony for unauthorised rides.

The accounts that Baring-Gould kept are given as an appendix in the book and show us that the journey cost him a few pence over £100 at a time when he was earning £50 per year. Much of this money had been borrowed from his Father. The accounts also enable us to track his progress with some certainty. They also contain some amusing items such as 3 marks for ‘horses run away’, 2 dollars to the farmer at Vithimyri ‘for food and dirt’ and 2 dollars to the farmer at Melr ‘for nothing at all’. There is also a record of his purchase of little gifts for his family and items for the school museum.

The Book
Though Baring-Gould never went back to Iceland, he referred back to this journey throughout his life. His book, ‘Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas’ was only the third book that he had written and a considerable advance on its predecessors, yet it speaks with authority. It is important to recognise, though, that it is an entertainment as well as a documentary. While the itinerary and the scenery are recorded faithfully there is some liberty taken with the people and events, such as his treatment of his guide and the introduction of the Yankee as a travelling companion in place of one of the British men.

The device of Baring-Gould breaking off at times to tell stories to his companions is an interesting way of presenting the sagas and particularly that of Grettir the Strong. Baring-Gould’s introduction to the book gives a concise history of Iceland and outlines its economics, geography and volcanic activity. The book contains useful appendices including a list of the plants on the island, a guide for sportsmen, and some notes on the ornithology of Iceland written by Alfred Newton. There is also a comprehensive list of the sagas and a bibliography of books on Iceland and its history.

Then there are the drawings that he made and which, translated into engravings, appeared in the book. Baring-Gould does demonstrate some talent in his drawings but they are not ‘great art'. The plates were based on sketches that Baring-Gould made on his journey. There is, for example, a watercolour sketch of Myvatn (Figure 3) among his papers that was used as the basis for Plate 9 in the book (Figure 4).31 Four of the

31 Devon Record Office, Ref 5203 (Baring-Gould Archive), Box 36, Packet of sketches and paintings.
plates in the book were hand-coloured (an example is shown as Figure 5) demonstrating the high quality of its production and the effort that Baring-Gould put into it. The book got quite good reviews when it was published but, sadly, he records in his diary in January 1885 that the book made him no money whatsoever. Once it was complete, however, he did not stop ‘mining’ the record of his travels, as the list of publications about Iceland (Table 1) shows:

Over the next 5 years he wrote a number of articles for weekly magazines and, several years later, he wrote two novels based on his translations of the Sagas. These were produced as a result of requests from former Hurstpierpoint pupils who wanted to tell the stories to their own children, but couldn’t remember the details. The Icelanders Sword. was a re-working of Oraefa-dal, which he had originally published in the school magazine, The Hurst Johnian, while Grettir the Outlaw. brought together the full story based on the translations he had published in Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas. Both books are in the style of ripping yarns for boys, but then the sagas provided ideal material for adventure stories for both children and grown-ups. But you might not want to invite Grettir into your home – Sir Richard Burton, one of the less sympathetic writers about Iceland, described him as ‘a superior ruffian’.

**The Saga Enthusiast**

I said earlier that I claim no expertise in the Icelandic sagas. Baring-Gould has not, in the past, been seen by the academic community as a serious saga scholar. After studying the evidence more closely and, in particular, the additional material in the manuscript papers, Andrew Wawn has concluded that Baring-Gould was, indeed, a serious saga scholar. Some of his translations of the sagas into English were among the first made. The saga manuscripts that he brought home and gave to the British Museum Library were a significant gift to Icelandic literature studies in Britain. His knowledge of Norse, and particularly Icelandic literature was on a par with the leading academics in this field. But, then, he never had serious academic pretensions. He was, and wanted to be, a popular writer, reaching thousands of readers rather than hundreds.

**Conclusion:**

Baring-Gould’s mother died in December 1863, not long after the book was published and his father acceded to her dying wish that her son be allowed to enter the church. So he was ordained in 1864 and moved to Horbury in Yorkshire to begin his ministry. Shortly afterwards he found the young woman who was to share his life. That discovery and the career change gave him a new set of priorities. He didn’t stop travelling until his old age but his journeys were only to the European mainland. But he always remained an enthusiast for Iceland.

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32 Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*, p. 303 quoting Burton
33 I am grateful to Andrew Wawn for information provided in personal communications and for sight of material written by him that has not yet been published.
I will finish by leaving you with an answer and with an unrelated question. The answer came from Andrew Wawn and dealt with a question that I had not asked – and am quietly kicking myself for not having done so. The cover of the first edition of *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas* has a nice design (Figure 6). If you look closely, you will see that the roundel in the centre has runic writing around it. If we copy the runes from the roundel we get:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nýrfruðmaður} & : \text{Nýrfruðmaður} \\
\text{Nýrfruðmaður} & : \text{Nýrfruðmaður}
\end{align*}
\]

Andrew Wawn has translated the writing into Icelandic:

Islendinga skenur og sögur skrifað af Sabini Baringi Gould

Allowing for some words that Baring-Gould has made up, the sense of this is:

Icelandic scenes and sagas written by Sabine Baring Gould

The question relates to a drawing that J Ross Browne published in his article of 'A Dandy Tourist' on board the Arcturus. The same tall, well dressed figure appears in some of the other pictures he drew.

For some time I have believed that this might be a caricature of the young Sabine Baring-Gould on his way to Iceland in 1862. Baring-Gould is known to have been a snappy dresser at this period of his life and he wrote, at different times in the letters, about wearing a ‘brown hat with ribbons’, ‘a scotch cap’ or a 'Glengarry hat'. Keith Lister published a photograph of Baring-Gould in his late twenties which might, I believe, be that he mentions having had taken in Brighton.\(^{34}\)

The features are not very distinct, but there is something in the posture and in the body shape that makes believe that this is Baring-Gould. So, answering my own question, I believe that the drawings are of Baring-Gould, seen through Browne’s eyes.

Thank you for listening.

Figure 1 - The Sprengisandur Desert

Figure 2 - Baring-Gould’s actual route. Outward shown in red, Return in purple
Figure 3 - Baring-Gould’s watercolour sketch of Myvatn

Figure 4 - Plate 9 in *Iceland: its scenes and sagas* based on the above sketch
Figure 5 - Plate 4 in *Iceland: its scenes and sagas*

Figure 6 - Cover of *Iceland: its scenes and sagas* and detail of roundel
Table 1 - List of Baring-Gould’s publications about Iceland

Books:
Iceland; Its Scenes and Sagas, 1863
Grettir the Outlaw: A Story of Iceland, 1890
The Icelander’s Sword, 1894 (re-working of ‘Oraefa-dal’)

Magazine Articles:
Oraefa-dal: An Icelandic Tale, Hurst Johnian, 1858 - 9
Hrafnkel’s Saga, Hurst Johnian, 1862
Hrolfe Krake, Once a Week, 1864
A Glimpse of the Faroes, Once a Week, 1865
A Region of Lakes, Once a Week, 1865
Reykjavik, Once a Week, 1866
Thorgunna’s Ghost, Once a Week, 1867
A Northern Desert: Notes on a journey into Iceland, Good Words, 1867
Hekla, Once A Week, Vol. 4, Series 2, 30 Nov., 1867
The Recent Eruption In Iceland (Letter to the Editor), Once a Week, 1867
Sabine and the Ministry of the Keys
Ron Wawman

The difficult task of following the spiritual development of Sabine Baring-Gould between 1850 and 1866 is compounded by the theological confusion that marked much of the 19th Century. One important development in the 1830s was the emergence of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England and the formation of the Oxford Movement around John Keble as he became increasingly outspoken over the deepening problems of the church. The movement was concerned by what its members saw as secularisation of the church and the extent to which it was being treated like a department of state. They sought a return of the church to its heritage of apostolic order, to the catholic doctrines of the early church fathers and to medieval liturgy. John Henry Newman together with William Palmer and Richard Hurrell Froude joined with Keble in launching a series of *Tracts for our Times* in which they developed their arguments. This led to yet another name for the movement ‘The Tractarians.’ Newman withdrew from active involvement in the face of the huge furore aroused by tract 90 which had been written by him and published in 1841. This claimed that the 39 articles of the English Church adopted by Act of Parliament in 1591 were compatible with Roman Catholicism; by doing so Newman seemed to confirm widely held suspicions in Protestant England that the movement was no more than a subversive branch of the Church of Rome.

So it was that, after a torrid time during which several members, including Newman, seceded to Rome, the battered remnants of the movement regrouped. Edward Bouverie Pusey, who had written an influential tract on *Baptism*, and controversially preached on *The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent* came to be seen as the leading figure. Under Pusey, the doctrine of the presence of Christ in worship and the role of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and auricular confession, in a search for personal holiness became central to the movement but, as it developed, other strands emerged such as the role of liturgy, hymnody, and architecture in worship as well as the importance of good works, especially social works.\(^{35}\) Under the influence of priests working with the poor (particularly Charles Lowder at St. Barnabas and St. George’s-in-the-East), many, but not Pusey, nor, as we will see, Nathaniel Woodard, became convinced of the importance of ritual in worship. Thus the name ‘Ritualists’ became associated with the group. The wrath of opponents and accusations of popery were often focussed on this outward display of Catholicism. The confessional, accepted within the movement as ‘the certain means of restoring a right relationship with God in circumstances of decay and depravity,’ was also regarded by those hostile to the movement as highly subversive.

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During Sabine’s formative years, from the age of 17 when he was living in Bayonne (and, as he later wrote, formed his three great purposes in life), to the time 15 years later when he left Horbury, Sabine was closely associated with the Catholic Revival in the Church of England. This exploration of Sabine’s progress within that movement begins with a quotation taken from the chapter on St. Saviour’s Leeds in his book *The Church Revival*.

‘It was not the ritual of St. Saviour’s that was objected to, for there was practically none; it was the insistence on the confession. Amidst the awful wickedness that prevailed in the district, it was necessary to urge confession.

Nothing could combat it, and conquer it piecemeal, but the Ministry of the Keys, and getting into the confidence of the poor lads and lasses who worked in the mills and were surrounded by evil influences.

He was writing about pastoral work at the new Gothic church that had been founded in a slum area of Leeds as an act of penitence by Pusey. Sabine wrote at some length about the intense hostility endured by the clergy there – some of whom had been recruited by Pusey from clerics in Nathaniel Woodard’s schools.

Two questions spring to mind; to what extent can the reasoning in this quotation be applied to Sabine’s work with ‘lads and lasses who worked in the mills’ at the Horbury Bridge Mission? More fundamentally: what is ‘The Ministry of the Keys?’

Put simply this is the authority from Jesus Christ to forgive (loose) or to retain (bind) a person’s sins. The biblical authority for this is found at Matthew 16: verses 18,19

18. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and what so ever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what so ever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

But the author is familiar with that text in another context. In 1851, at that significant age of 17, Sabine referred to it in a notebook along with other biblical texts and references related to sin, departing from faith; and forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Among them:

1. Timothy IV: 1: Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines of devils.

1 John I: 7: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Matthew XIII: 19: (The Parable of the Sower) When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catches

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36 For the formation of these three purposes at age 17 see Sabine Baring-Gould, *Early Reminiscences*, London: Bodley Head (1923) p. vii – viii.
38 Sabine Baring-Gould, *Adolescent Notebook, 1850/51*, Devon Record Office, Box 5203, (Baring-Gould Archive). This notebook is unpagedinated.
away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that received seed by the wayside.

Revelations I: 5: And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us of our sins in his own blood.

Furthermore these texts are next to two poems in the notebook, one a love poem and the other entitled Night Thoughts. The contents of the latter poem imply mental struggles with sin and feelings of guilt and shame.

Oh. How I love a night walk all my thoughts
Come trooping clust’ring round in wild dismay
And some cry shame and others whisper sin
Then blank despair with sullen tread draws near
And clasps his iron hold. Then pure and bright
A spirit fair descends and on his brow
Is written - Light – Be thou my guide of hope?
It cannot be! for hope ‘gainst hope is but
The reproduction of stern dark despair
And I must stoop beneath her iron sway
These warring powers will burst the mansion doors
Of my tortured mind – But oh, I must despair.

What was going on in Sabine’s ‘tortured mind’ at this time? The following brief entry in the notebook suggests that he was possibly deliberating over the ‘Papal Aggression’ of 1850 ‘when Pius IX parcelled out England into Roman dioceses. I remember how my blood boiled at what I thought was a gross piece of impertinence’ and was searching for the Biblical pros and cons for the claims of the Church of Rome for supremacy. ie: was that church the sole keeper of the Keys, or did the parable of the sower mean that the Bible is the Kingdom of Heaven and therefore the Keys are knowledge of the Bible.

{{pro - Math XVI .18 .19
{{con – the parable of the sower hence “The Kingdom of Heaven” is the bible
{ and the keys of – the knowledge of –

But his pre-occupation with unspoken love and with feelings of guilt and shame, taken together with the biblical texts dealing with sin and absolution; and also with the formation around this time of his ‘three great purposes in life’ suggests something more personal. Perhaps a desire for penitence, confession and absolution? If so, did he consider calling on the services of a confessor?

Two of his three great purposes in life fit well in the context of penance. These are his determination to restore Lew Trenchard Church and his intention to improve the

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39 It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the 17-year-old Sabine was familiar with Edward Young’s series of poems, Night Thoughts written between 1742 and 1744 and later famously illustrated by William Blake. However Sabine’s poem bears no resemblance to Young’s monumental work.

40 Early Reminiscences, p. 214
spiritual welfare of the parishioners. At first sight the third aim, to restore Lew House, sits incongruously beside them. But, taking into account Sabine’s difficult and resentful relationship with his father, it is possible to speculate that his penance could have included reparation towards his temporal father through loyalty to the family estate. This may help to explain why, in later years, Sabine put the restoration of Lew House before much else – including, at times, the needs of his wife and family.  

What can be gleaned of his spiritual development from what he wrote in Early Reminiscences about this time in his life? Firstly the bald statement that ‘… all the time we were abroad I never went to a Roman Catholic service.’ If he had attended a Roman Catholic service he would in any case, as an Anglican, have been prohibited from taking part in the sacraments. He wrote that while the family was at Argelez in 1850 he made friends with the village curé who sometimes dined with the family; but that seems to have been as far as it went and the family never attended mass.

Mr. Hedges, the English Chaplain at Pau in 1850, was someone for whom Sabine had the utmost disdain. At Bayonne, where the Baring-Gould family moved in late 1850, there was no English chaplain and the family generally relied on his father reading prayers on Sunday mornings and giving a sermon in the evening.

On one occasion Sabine’s mother took him in “a resentful spirit” to what he disparagingly described as a French Protestant ‘conventicle’. Elsewhere in Early Reminiscences in a passage in which he admitted to no great affection for what little he had experienced of the Church of England at Lew, in London or indeed anywhere, Sabine went on to write:

I obtained glimpses of brighter things from the church history story books I had read. But they taught me to look back to past days for the ideal of the Church and of worship

A patently Anglo-catholic view.

Sabine added that his tutor, Mr Hadow, furnished him with Christopher Wordsworth’s Theophilus Anglicanus to study – presumably in response to Sabine’s desire for a firmer grounding in the church. This book gave him “a rationale of the English Church which I thoroughly laid hold of and from which I have never deviated.” The Theophilus Anglicanus is essentially a student’s manual, albeit with Wordsworth’s Anglo-catholic leanings, and as such contrasts somewhat with Sabine’s earlier use of storybooks for religious education. All these comments, considered alongside the biblical texts written in the notebook suggest that at the age of 17 he had a well-developed understanding of current theological trends and conflicts.

41 Ron Wawman, Introduction to, and Transcription of The Diary of Sabine Baring-Gould, unpublished.
42 Early Reminiscences, p179
43 Christopher Wordsworth, Theophilus Anglicanus or Manual of Instruction on the Church and the Anglican Branch of it, London: Rivingtons (1843)
44 Early Reminiscences, p 197-198
Wordsworth’s manual on the English Church must have made a deep impression on the young Sabine for in later years he bracketed Christopher Wordsworth with John Mason Neale, the warden of Sackville College, (at East Grinstead, a few miles from Hurstpierpoint) as the two people who had the greatest influence on his religious development. Thus he wrote in *Early Reminiscences*

I received my first Church principles mentally from Wordsworth, but spiritually I owe everything to the Warden of Sackville College whose learning, ecclesiology, poetry, historical knowledge, and profound spirituality have made of me a very humble and unworthy disciple.  

John Mason Neale was involved in the foundation of the Cambridge Camden Society while a student at Cambridge in 1839 which later came to be known as the Ecclesiological Society. This influential society advocated a return to medieval styles of Church architecture either through the building of new churches, according to medieval liturgical principles; or through the restoration of old churches. In this context ‘restoration’ involved clearing away the box pews and the three-decker pulpit, refurbishing the chancel and sanctuary, re-installing the font, and uncovering ancient sedilia, ambries and piscinae. The essential aim of this return to Gothic architecture and furnishing was not for aesthetic visual display; it was to provide an architectural medium through which to proclaim a theological message – a sacramental expression of the church catholic and its worship. There was much else to Neale, as is evident from Sabine’s comment on him in *The Church Revival*:

Mr. Neale was not only a man of wide and brilliant scholarship; he was the most learned ecclesiologist and liturgiologist we had at the time in England; his History of the Holy Eastern Church is a classical work, and his hymns [*many of which he translated from Medieval liturgies – rjw*] are to be found in every Anglican Church hymnal, and are used in dissenting meeting-houses as well.  

Neale also delighted in wonders, was intrigued by symbolism and drew heavily on symbolic and mystic interpretation of the scriptures. That also would have attracted a like-minded Sabine.

In his *Early Reminiscences* Sabine wrote that in 1851, at the age of 17, he spent many hours in the beautiful Gothic Cathedral of Sainte-Marie at Bayonne, sketching features of the architecture which greatly impressed him. This Cathedral also features in *Peace* another of the notebook poems written in 1851. So it seems quite possible that he was by then very aware of the significance attached by many in the Anglo-catholic movement to medieval architecture in worship; he probably already knew of John Mason Neale and ecclesiology.

At this time, (1850/51) when the young Sabine was looking for an answer to his sinfulness, members of the Catholic Revival within the Church of England were viewed with the greatest suspicion as a backlash to what was seen in the Church of England as ‘Papal aggression’. Some in England had been severely persecuted and so

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45 *Early Reminiscences*, p 302-303  
46 *The Church Revival*, p 226  
47 *Adolescent Notebook*, 1850/51,
thrown on the defensive. Thus at the Chantry chapel on Wakefield Bridge, the Paschal Cross (see below) was thrown down and damaged by rioters while, at Lancing, Nathaniel Woodard was sweating under intense pressure from Bishop Gilbert of Chichester over the use of the confessional in his schools.48 Sabine would have known all about events like this from his father who not only read the newspapers but was openly intolerant of what he saw as popery; Sabine would also have read the news but, having formed his own views, prudently kept them to himself.

All in all it seems unlikely that Sabine did use a confessor at Bayonne, if for no other reason than because he could not find one. Could it be that, around the time that he formed his purposes in life, studied biblical texts, read theological manuals and wrote guilt ridden poems he was experiencing some sort of conversion followed by an acknowledgement that something deeper than just a sentiment of repentance was called for? If so he would not be the first Tractarian to start out in this way.

It sometimes seems from his reminiscences and his diary that Sabine was blown about by circumstance during his formative years and that, for example, he went to Horbury as a curate by default.49 But there is much to suggest that, despite all the pressures on him to do otherwise, he tenaciously ploughed his own furrow throughout his life. More than once he tells us that he never wavered from his three purposes in life and it is probable that, until great old age when his life was ruled by others, he rarely did anything for negative reasons and generally knew where he was going and why.

On the return of the family from Bayonne to Devon in 1851, Sabine spent time roaming around Dartmoor on his pony, often visiting and sketching the churches he passed along the way. He also wrote that he sought out and hid away pieces of the old rood screen and bench ends from Lew Trenchard church that he had found. This gives us a clue to the sort of restoration he had in mind for that church and why.50

In 1853 Sabine went up to Cambridge where he was for some time ostracised by fellow undergraduates at Clare College. He wrote to his mother:

At first the men used to say most unkind and wicked things about me and it made me so unhappy (that was my first year) that I was almost in despair, they used to show me such contempt and men I had known would stare at me and then walk away without taking the slightest notice of me.51

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49 Keith Lister, Personal communication.
50 Early Reminiscences, p. 145.
This was probably because of his regular devotions, his alms giving and his frequent attendance at services in King’s College Chapel where he would have been attracted to the Gothic architecture and the choral liturgy. He and other undergraduates formed a society of the Holy Cross, mirroring in a small way the Society of the Holy Cross created by Charles Lowder at St. Barnabas in 1855.\(^52\) He also wrote in *Early Reminiscences* that the members of this society attended services at St. Giles because this was the only church in Cambridge where the Eucharist was celebrated every Sunday.\(^53\) His description of the incumbent at St. Giles does not suggest he would be used as a confessor but the society probably had its own links with a network of Anglo-catholic confessors on whom the members of the society could call if they wished.

Another significant happening at Cambridge, not long after his arrival there in 1853, was his purchase of a Paschal Cross from a local wood carver. The history of this cross is chronicled in *The Church Revival*.\(^54\) It is also part of the history of the famous medieval Chantry Chapel at Wakefield.\(^55\) The restoration of this chapel from secular use by the Yorkshire Architectural Society, recently formed, like Neale’s Camden Cambridge Society, along ecclesiological principles, had been initiated and funded in the 1840s by the Rev. Samuel Sharp, vicar of Wakefield and father of John Sharp, vicar at Horbury.\(^56\) The cross had been commissioned by the Anglo-catholic Rev. Parkinson who was appointed incumbent at the chapel when the parish of Wakefield was divided in 1844, but who faced physical hostility there, in the context of the nationwide reaction to the ‘Papal Aggression’ of 1851. In response to this hostility Parkinson gave up, seceded to Rome and returned the cross, which had been damaged in the violence, to its maker in Cambridge.\(^57\) History does not tell us if Samuel Sharp was also of Anglo-catholic persuasion but it is difficult to explain his involvement in, and financial sacrifice to, such a restoration in any other way. It is likely that Sabine did his own researches while at Cambridge and became aware of the role played by Samuel Sharp in the history of his cross. When Baring-Gould arrived in Horbury in 1864, together with the cross, this would have been confirmed to him by Samuel’s son, John, vicar of Horbury.

Sabine was conscious of the importance of good works as part of his Anglo-Catholic commitment and, by 1856 at the latest, this had drawn him to spend time during his Summer vacation at St. Barnabas, Pimlico with the Rev. Charles Lowder, who was to become the best known of the illustrious slum priests within the Catholic Revival.\(^58\)

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53 *Early Reminiscences*, p. 227.
54 *The Church Revival*, p 316.
See articles by Keith Lister on John Sharp, and Samuel Sharp. Also John Goodchild; *The Chantry Chapel of St Mary the Virgin Wakefield*; Wakefield: The Friends of Wakefield Chantry Chapel, (no date).
56 See the history of the Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society - [www.yayas.free-online.co.uk/history.html](http://www.yayas.free-online.co.uk/history.html) (accessed 19 April 2008)
57 Keith Lister, personal communication
58 Ruth Kenyon, *The Social Service of the Catholic Revival*
Built in 1850, St. Barnabas was the first new Gothic church to be erected in London, according to ecclesiological principles and as part of the Catholic revival. That alone would have drawn Sabine there but there were other compelling reasons. St. Barnabas, like most new Gothic churches of the Catholic revival was built, not only amongst the poor, but also for the salvation of the poor. The Catholic Revival had led to a new type of pastoral life in which priests and laity threw themselves into social work because they saw Christ in the poor and in the suffering, and desired to serve Him through them.

Squalor, poverty, disease and crime were rife but although these physical problems were also being vigorously tackled, this activity took place almost as an adjunct to what the Rev. Skinner of St. Barnabas described as:

… the task of raising up the ignorant and vicious and oppressed to a higher and truer conception of God and of themselves; they (the priests) learned by experience how much a warm and bright and beautiful ceremonial (i.e. ritual) contributed to this end.

As Lowder himself wrote, the priests and laity were there:

… in the name and in the strength of Christ to save, with the old church weapons and operate on old church lines. Our great object must be to save souls.

The old (i.e. medieval) church weapons were conversion, confession, communion, teaching, catechising and preaching. However, bringing the poor to the ministry of Christ in the celebration of the sacraments and in preaching of the gospel was a challenging task and the priests were convinced that nothing less than the beauty and uplifting effect of the full panoply of Catholic worship would do. Censers were swung, genuflecting was practised and the sign of the cross was used; confessions were heard, holy anointing took place and devotion to the Blessed Sacraments was paramount. Given the crucial part Sabine believed auricular confession had to play in the community around St. Saviour’s where the evils of drunkenness, prostitution, robbery and violence were rife, he would have accepted that this was just as true in Pimlico, and later in the mission at St. George’s-in-the-East, as it was in Leeds.

So what was Sabine involved in during this vacation and when he came down from Cambridge in 1857? The prudently neutral name ‘college’ was sometimes given to institutions created, very much on monastic lines, like other similar communities in the Anglo-Catholic movement.\(^{59}\) These were the communities to which Sabine gravitated, both at Pimlico and in the district in Wapping around St. George’s-in-the-East.

The mission at St. George’s started with three priests including Father Lowder and two young laymen. It is evident from a letter to his mother (see below) that Baring-Gould aspired to be one of these and, as such, would have been involved not only in teaching but in such things as house to house visitations with particular regard to sanitary conditions. There was also the beginnings of a Sisterhood of the Holy Cross under none other than John Mason Neale’s sister. Sabine wrote in *The Church

\(^{59}\) Rev. John Hunwicke, personal communication
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Revival that by 1859 there were 6 members of the clergy and a large group of laymen working there and that 600 children were under instruction at the St. George’s mission.\textsuperscript{60} Clearly education for the children of the poor was high on the agenda. There can be no doubt that, in the face of the high level of what would have been regarded as unregenerate sinfulness, auricular confession would have played an essential part in their instruction. Sabine was there as a layman and could not have been directly involved in this, but it is likely that he, along with the other laymen, would have followed accepted practice and presented himself as a penitent to a confessor – possibly Fr. Lowder himself.

It may seem rather odd that, when Sabine’s father ordered him to leave St. Barnabas and would not agree to the move to St. George’s-in-the-East, Charles Lowder then suggested a move to the Woodard schools for middle class children. Surely schools for the middle classes were far removed from the needs of children of the poor?

Not so. Lowder, together with most members of the Victorian middle classes would have been deeply concerned about one particular behaviour in which then, as now, the young were likely to indulge no matter to which social class they belonged. The ‘heinous sin of self-pollution’ was abhorred as an evil which, if unchecked, would lead to moral and physical decay and death. No doubt the confessionals undertaken by Anglo-catholic priests working with slum children would have addressed this sin along with whatever else they encountered, but what of the sins of the middle classes? If the Anglo-Catholics were to save the poor but neglect the children of the middle classes, what would become of them?

The letter written from Pimlico by Sabine to his mother, probably around Easter 1857, includes the passage

\ldots You seem to be so afraid of my not getting a gentleman’s situation but I don’t care three straws for it being a gentleman’s place so long as I can be doing something which will fit me hereafter for H. orders. I thought that a middle school would be best for that but I think this idea of going to Mr King’s parish would be better\ldots \textsuperscript{61}

It is known that Sabine was drawn to working at St. George’s-in-the-East (i.e. Mr King’s parish) but it has not been generally appreciated that even before his father’s ultimatum he was also toying with the idea of going to a ‘middle school.’ But what exactly was a middle school? Middle schools in those days were not what they are now. They had nothing to do with age, or even academic ability as Sabine seemed to imply with his use of the term ‘upper, middle and lower grades’ in Early Reminiscences. They were concerned with social class, although it is probable that in Victorian times it was assumed that class and ability usually went together and curricula would have reflected this.\textsuperscript{62} These were schools for the children of middle class parents. But, having already spurned the opportunity to go to Marlborough because that school had ‘no sympathy with the Anglo-catholic cause,’ it is evident

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\textsuperscript{60} The Church Revival, p 283  
\textsuperscript{61} Letter to Baring-Gould’s mother, dated ‘Easter 1857’  
\textsuperscript{62} Rev. John Hunwicke, personal communication
that Sabine was only interested in a school that was sympathetic to the cause. The only such schools in existence in 1857 were those recently founded by Nathaniel Woodard. Thus the move to Lancing College as a probationary fellow, probably in the summer term 1857, and thence quickly on, as an assistant master (specifically drawing master) to Hurstpierpoint was not a knee jerk response to his father’s ultimatum. The ultimatum simply helped him make up his mind to follow the softer of the two attractive options on offer. St. John’s Middle school (as Hurstpierpoint College was then called) was the Woodard school earmarked for the ‘middle’ middle classes, with Lancing college intended for the upper middle classes and Ardingley for the lower middle classes. It is possible that St. John’s Middle school was the school Sabine had in mind when writing to his mother from Pimlico.

A further attraction of Hurstpierpoint could have been that his idol, John Mason Neale, and the alms houses and chapel known as Sackville College, were not far away. Neale had founded the Sisterhood of St. Margaret at East Grinstead and the work he was doing with the poor in a rural community there was similar to that being carried out by Lowder and others in city slums. 63 Because of his use of ritual and the Cross in the private chapel at Sackville College, Neale had been inhibited from preaching by Bishop Gilbert of Chichester. He was to remain inhibited for 16 years.

What follows is based on research carried out in the Lancing College by the Rev. John Hunwicke, during his time as chaplain there. Hunwicke delved deeply into Nathaniel Woodard’s archives at Lancing College and I am indebted to him for his diligence and his incisive insights into what the Woodard schools were all about in those early days.

Nathaniel Woodard had this to say on the subject of sins of the flesh:

The people of this country have a very undeserved reputation for chastity; when, notoriously, the whole land is drenched in the sin of uncleanness, and most of our youth grow into life familiarised and reconciled to living in the most deadly sin, and can we doubt but that we will secure the love and gratitude of the next generation, if we have helped to save them from this one source of misery and desolation?

To suppose that there is no remedy for this, would make a father’s life one of unceasing wretchedness, who would desire for his sons an early grave rather than that their case should be that of the common lot of our youth.

Woodard was convinced that the only practical remedy for the sin of self-pollution was sacramental confession. This was contrary to the generally held view of English middle class Protestants who had conveniently persuaded themselves that the sins of the flesh could and would be overcome by strength of character and willpower – with perhaps a little help from such as Dr Arnold.

By the mid 19th century, a system to combat the sins of the flesh had been introduced at Rugby school under the headmaster, Dr Thomas Arnold, who was a latitudinarian and opponent of Anglo-Catholicism; his system can be cynically boiled down to

63 Ruth Kenyon, *The Social Service of the Catholic Revival*
moralistic exhortation, early rising, cold baths and sport. But the Victorian middle classes were comfortable with what was called by some Muscular Christianity or Christian Manliness and this approach quickly spread throughout the Public School system.

But this would not do for the Anglo-Catholics. *Beati Mundo Corde* – Blessed are the Clean of Heart was the motto of the Woodard Foundation. For Woodard nothing less than close supervision of the boys coupled with the use of the sacrament of the confession would suffice. So when in 1848 the Rev. Nathaniel Woodard founded his schools to ensure that the children of middle class parents did not miss out on the education available to the poor, this was central to his purpose. And this could be why Sabine, backed by Lowder, thought the Woodard schools would be a natural progression from Pimlico. One of the basic principles on which his schools were founded was that they should be predominantly clerical

“…having a sufficient number of clergymen attached to them to produce a moral effect. It is intended that in the First Class Schools, (ie Lancing,) there should be one clergymen to every 25 boys. Thus the middle classes will grow up in intimacy with their spiritual guides, and a respect for, and in attachment to the clergy.”

Another principle was that the headmasters and masters (even ordained masters) of his schools were not permitted to exercise spiritual oversight. This would be in the hands of special Chaplains, trained (one might say groomed) through a period of residence in Nathaniel’s own household. These chaplains would be exempt from the authority of headmasters and would be responsible “for moral and religious discipline” and accountable only to the Provost, i.e. Nathaniel Woodard. A senior chaplain was appointed and a few trusted ordained masters within the schools were also licensed to function as chaplains. The hierarchical structure was thus very different from that started at Rugby, and copied at other public schools, where the headmaster was king. At Woodard’s schools the Headmaster did not even have the authority to appoint prefects and had to accept that those of his masters who functioned as chaplains were in some ways superior to him and had a direct line to Woodard. Not surprisingly this led to tensions with some headmasters who felt their position was intolerable and left. Within weeks of opening St. Nicholas College, Lancing in 1848, Henry Jacobs, the first headmaster, departed with acrimony and lost no time making sure that Bishop Gilbert of Chichester was aware of what was happening at the school. This can be described as Woodard’s first confessional crisis. But Woodard was a skilful negotiator who knew how to assuage, to flatter and to attract and use powerful support. He weathered this storm without too much difficulty.

Woodard’s relationship with his closest collaborators seems to have been very intimate and they talked, prayed and fasted together. A network of penitents and confessors emerged and this had links to other Tractarians, especially members of the prudently secretive Brotherhood of Holy Trinity based at Oxford around Pusey. Through Pusey close links were also established with St. Saviours in Leeds. A hint of the subject of confessions within this network emerged through the use, in
correspondence with Woodard, of such phrases as ‘brutish failing,’ ‘accursed habit,’ or ‘that temptation that is always with me.’

In 1843, the 32-year-old Woodard, as a newly appointed curate, had preached a fervent sermon on confession, the content of which led to his dismissal from his curacy by the Bishop of London. This experience left a deep impression on Woodard who thereafter was much less open concerning his views and how he implemented his plans. Thus he carefully avoided ‘advanced’ ritual, seeing this as an unnecessary and provocative adjunct to worship, but nevertheless continued to view auricular confession not as an optional extra but, to use his own words, ‘the strongest and best part’ of his educational plans, as an ‘extraordinary blessing’ and ‘the great stay of my mind, and the foundation of my joys and hopes in the whole undertaking.’

Woodard issued a set of rules the essence of which was that all boys were expected to attend the chaplain before taking communion. As communion took place weekly this meant each boy would have a private weekly meeting with the chaplain. At the meeting the chaplain might suggest that the pupil make his confession and, if he did so, he would be absolved.

Although this course of action was strictly within the provision of the Prayer Book it was by no means in accordance with current practice within the Church of England where communion was usually held no more that 3 or 4 times a year and auricular confession would not be suggested but reserved, if it occurred at all, to use by the dying and those with a desperate need to confess. Woodard’s rules also included the proviso ‘that the consent of the parents be first obtained.’ From the records it seems likely that this rarely if ever took place and that lip service only was paid to the suggestion that boys inform their parents when they would be seeking confession.

When complaints from parents began to arise, as they did, his many opponents increasingly challenged Woodard’s steadfast assertion that there was no compulsion.

Around the time of the ‘Papal aggression’ Woodard faced his biggest confessional crisis during which Bishop Gilbert of Chichester, in his visitational role, made strenuous efforts to pin Woodard down. These culminated in a vain attempt, during the course of the ceremony to lay the foundation stone of St. John’s School Hurstpierpoint, to wring a public commitment from Woodard that the practice of hearing confessions within his schools would cease. Woodard’s response, as reported by a local newspaper, showed that he was a master of what Hunwicke has described as ‘vigorously frank imprecision.’

This was a bona fide transaction. He looked on the Bishop’s appointment as a divine appointment, and on episcopy as a divine episcopy. He looked upon the principles, and must bend to them. He must bend to those truths which were not diametrically opposed to truth and righteousness and if he found the doctrines were opposed to truth and righteousness he should withdraw

Woodard practised what he called ‘not challenging the world.’ And was wont to advise those who worked with him to be ‘as wise as serpents.’ He wrote:
If you are to work with me you ought to be prepared for seeing me act in a way open to misconstruction. I shall certainly humour the prejudices of mankind, but as certainly in the end not give way to them. By some this will be considered ratting, by others Jesuitry.

Having read ‘packet after packet’ of Woodard’s letters, Hunwicke concluded that Woodard used a sort of code.

Cases have occurred’ meant ‘often,’ ‘rarely’ meant ‘not always’ ‘parents are urgently requested’ meant ‘I hope the boy remembered to ask them,’ ‘I have no objection to the boys confessing’ meant ‘we make it very clear to them that confession is on offer.’

This was the confessional hothouse in which Sabine was to spend the next 7 years. It was to remain a hothouse in which Woodard swam nobly but vainly against the tide until his death in 1891. Then, after the death of Edmund Field, (senior chaplain) and the departure of Edward Lowe (Woodard’s close and faithful associate and headmaster of Hurst), the schools soon moved towards the mainstream of Public School education. The knotty problem of the status of chaplains within the schools was then neatly resolved by setting them outside the hierarchical structure altogether.

It is very likely that Sabine knew what he was coming to in the Woodard schools and that he would, like the other assistant masters, be expected to be a penitent, possibly to Field, who remained a friend and is known to have visited Lew in the 1880s – but there can be no certainty.64 As far as the author is aware, nowhere in his writing does Sabine mention self pollution, the use of auricular confession at the Woodard schools, or the struggles Woodard had with troubled parents, with others and with Bishop Gilbert. Neither is there any discussion of the unusual role of the chaplains vis a vis the headmasters. It could be that, over the time he was at Hurst, Sabine’s spiritual beliefs were maturing and that he eventually became uneasy over the quasi-coercive use of the confessional in children. In later years, rather than offend the school he loved and tarnish the memory of well intentioned and earnest friends and associates by writing critically, he decided to ignore this important but controversial subject altogether – even when writing at some length on auricular confession in The Church Revival.

Also, by 1864, Sabine’s mother had died and his father had withdrawn objection to, if not disapproval of, ordination.65 A further sign of maturation was the renunciation of Ruskinesque dress fashions.66 He had also been giving serious thought to finding a wife, as revealed in letters to his mother.67 It was time to move on and, although it was by chance that the opportunity arose for a move to Horbury in place of his friend Fowler, he chose to go there in 1864 for positive reasons. The Anglo-catholic world was small and Sabine would have known all about John Sharp, son of Samuel Sharp and all he had achieved at Horbury; he would have been aware of John Sharp’s status

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64 Ron Wawman, *The Diary of Sabine Baring-Gould*
65 Ron Wawman, *The Diary of Sabine Baring-Gould*
66 *Early Reminiscences*, p 285
67 Letters to his mother 8/10 November 1857 and 17 May 1858,
as a leading High Church clergyman in the North. He would have known of Sharp’s successful struggles to remove the box pews from his church and that, in 1858, he had built a magnificent Gothic ‘House of Mercy’ in which good works were being carried out by the Sisterhood he established there.  

He would also be aware, from Fowler, that Sharp intended opening a mission amongst the mills at Horbury Bridge and that, given his experiences at Pimlico, he stood a good chance of being sent there to put into practice the skills he had acquired in London. It is also likely that by the age of 30 many rough corners had been rubbed off. Sabine never lost his personal deep reverence for ritual. Indeed he privately practiced this into great old age and, while at Horbury, actually wrote ritualistic hymns like Daily, Daily and Hail the Sign. But he knew that if he wanted to be a successful priest who could attract and influence his parishioners he had to be pragmatic, even entertaining (his skills as a colourful actor and story teller had been well honed at Hurstpierpoint) and to feed them a diet they could digest – a recurrent theme in his writing.

Meanwhile at Lancing, also in 1864, Woodard laid the foundation stone for his own towering Gothic Chapel – the biggest in the Northern hemisphere. This was not to be consecrated until long after his death in 1891. At Horbury Bridge in 1884, John Sharp saw the consecration of the church of St. John the Evangelist. This building gave the barest nod to the Gothic, but can nevertheless be seen as the completion of the pioneering missionary work started there by Sabine 20 years previously.

In his 1899 pamphlet The Present Crisis: a letter to the Bishop of Exeter, Sabine wrote with some heat as ‘one who has never been in the habit of using incense in public worship.’ While agreeing that, on the grounds of prudence, the church might willingly accept advice from the Archbishop of Canterbury that it should abjure the use of incense, he vigorously objected to the Archbishop’s opinion that the use of incense should be banned because of the provisions of a 1559 Act of Parliament. He suggested that the Archbishop might instead have followed a different line:

It is possible, nay rather probable, that the mediaeval elaboration of ritual, such as may content a Latin, may be more than a cold Anglo-Saxon can understand and stomach. Long privation from food requires that the administration of indispensable nourishment should be in spoonfuls, and not poured down the throat in pailsful. I knew an old woman, who was given roast duck on her eighty-first birthday.

Roast duck is excellent and savoury meat, but it killed the old woman, because she could not digest it. The English people have for a long time been fed upon wind, and we cannot expect them at once to appreciate and to assimilate the invigorating and edifying diet that the Church possesses in her stores.

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69 Sabine Baring-Gould, The Present Crisis; a letter to the Bishop of Exeter, London: Skeffington (1899)
As for the Ministry of the Keys, this is what Sabine wrote in *The Church Revival* in 1914:

That which led many right-minded men to speak against Confession was the dread lest it should be made compulsory. A little inquiry would have shown them that this fear was groundless. Any one who has lived abroad in Roman Catholic countries will have learned how mischievous, how perilous to souls is the Roman insistence on private Confession before Communion, and the Anglican rule is so clearly defined that no doubt can exist as to what the mind of the Church is—that Confession is to be made in private only when the conscience is stirred with remorse, but that otherwise public Confession and Absolution suffice. Doubters might have learned from common sense that Confession can only be a voluntary act, and, in fact, it is only as such that it is ever urged.\(^\text{70}\)

These two quotations leave the author in no doubt where Sabine stood throughout his ministry in the Church of England. He was indeed a pragmatic and successful minister whose parishioners, certainly in Horbury and Lew, waxed fat on the diet he fed them.

\(^{70}\) *The Church Revival*, p. 304
Sabine Baring-Gould’s Mission Paper

This ‘mission paper’, written by Sabine Baring-Gould, was published in the May 1865 issue of ‘The Hurstjohnian’. Mission Papers were a regular feature in the magazine but, it should be noted, almost all mission papers in the magazine come from far corners of the world, from amongst other races, pagans, etc. To send such a paper from Yorkshire was to make a strong point about the spiritual state of the place.

Horbury Brig in the Diocese of Ripon.

In a few words I may give an account of the starting of our Mission at Horbury Brig, near Wakefield, and give some idea of the manner in which this work has progressed during the few months it has been carried on.

The district is poor, being inhabited solely by mill-hands, barge men and colliers; there are several large manufactories in it, but the proprietors live at a distance and care little for the spiritual welfare of the hands they employ. The Brig is well known in the neighbourhood as a lawless and godless spot, and no kind of religious influence had been brought to bear upon it. On Sunday morning the bridge over the Calder is the rendezvous for hosts of men with their dogs who come to make up matches for dog fights and dog races, take and make bets on favourites. The afternoon is spent in these ‘sports’ which come off in fields by the riverside amidst crowds of boys and girls. On Passion Sunday a novel entertainment was witnessed by a gentleman who acts as churchwarden to the Mission – this was a woman fight; two furious females met in a ring to have a quarrel out, and the engagement was hot and exciting, they pulled out handfuls of each other’s hair, and scratched each other’s faces with their nails – their tongues wagging pretty freely all the while.

There are several public houses, and the number of drunken men reeling about the streets and roads on a Sunday is exceptionally great.

Things being in this condition and the place being a scandal to the neighbourhood, it was determined to start a mission in the midst of the district as soon as possible.

The Incumbent of Horbury had endeavoured for sixteen years to procure a site for a Church, but was unable to obtain any land. He now proposed to rent a portion of a field and erect a temporary wooden chapel. In the meantime a cottage was hired within two doors of the most disorderly of the public houses, this house consisted of two rooms and a wee kitchen, the bedroom upstairs was converted into a chapel, the room downstairs and the kitchen into a school. The chapel measures 14ft by 12ft, the school room 12ft by 12ft, and the kitchen 9ft by 6ft.

On S. Katherine’s day, in November last, the Mission was opened by a short service commencing with the Veni Creator sung by all on their knees to a tune by Mr
Boyd, an Old Hurst Johnian, invoking the blessing of the Holy Ghost on the work then commenced.

Night school was carried on four days a week, and the average attendance was sixty, the number of names on the books being eighty-five; but as in some mills the work is carried on night and day, and most of the scholars being ‘hands’ in the mills, when it was their turn to work at night, they could not come to school. The instruction consisted in reading and writing and a little arithmetic. The young men came on two nights, and the young women on the other two. On Friday evenings we held a savings’ bank and obtained about thirty-five depositors, the amount of money being laid by being about £1.5s in the week. On Wednesday evenings we had a Creed class for instruction in the articles of the Faith. On Sunday afternoons there was a school attended by about fifty-four children, followed by a service in the chapel consisting of a metrical litany and hymns. Evening service was at 6.30 and has always been crowded, the chapel, the staircase and the room downstairs being filled.

A choir has been formed and the singing is remarkably good. The way in which it was collected is curious. Boys from the first took to making noises about the house, pelting the windows with mud and discharging volleys of old boots and shoes at the heads of those who attended the services. I had then to rush out of the back door, make a circuit of the house, come in the rear of the delinquents, seize on the chief offender, drag him into the house, and turn him there and then into a chorister. For some time these wild urchins regarded it as perfectly en règle to suck toffy or rip and eat oranges during the choir practice or during service: and I have had to pull up in the midst of a discourse to possess myself of a large moist and sticky fragment of toffy. By degrees the most disorderly have been reduced to order, and have been taught how to behave during service. It must be remembered that these fellows had never been inside a Church before, the great majority had not even attended a dissenting chapel, as there is not one in the place.

During Lent we have been holding a service on Wednesday evenings with intercessory prayer for the conversion of sinners. The congregation kneel; in silence, praying for some friend who is living in mortal sin, after which they join in a general litany of intercession. There has been abundant token that God has heard and answered this common prayer for others. A remarkable instance of God’s answer to our prayers occurred shortly after the starting of the mission. One of our night scholars, a lassie of about seventeen, was dangerously ill and the doctor had given her up, declaring that she had not many days to live. On the Sunday evening we had five minutes silent prayer for her, and from that night she took a turn for the better and is now a regular attendant at the school and services.

That souls have been drawn to the love of Jesus I know well, and I trust more and more will be brought into the net of the Church as we endeavour by all means to put the whole Mission directly into God’s Hands and entrust it to Him for support, desiring that the beginning and the conduct and the ending may be His, ours the work, and His the glory.
We have now secured a plot of ground which we have purchased for £200 and on which we purpose to build this summer if we can raise £600. The chapel we intend to erect will be of the plainest character and will serve eventually as a school. We are crowded out of our little upper room, and to open the windows involves the chance of a dead cat or a cabbage stump being flung in and descending on the head of the minister or the worshippers. On Sunday afternoons, our good churchwarden stands by the door to turn the key should a drunken man attempt to enter, we have had several come in and have found it sufficiently difficult to turn them out. On Good Friday, one, a quaint individual who rejoiced in the name of old Nut, who is so hard that as he says, ‘Naw buddy has cracked me yet,’ before leaving the public house proceeded to preach a sermon, which consisted as he assured his companions of three points, and they are these – the first point was the driving his head through the first window pane of the inn window. The second point was a similar proceeding with the second pane. The third shattered the last sheet of glass, and ‘my he-ad is no worr for’,” said he. ‘Now I’ll go tu’t Church and see if’t’Parson preaches like me.’ So he came into my chapel where the congregation was assembling to go through the Stations of the Cross. We could not get rid of him till all those upstairs came down and secured themselves in the kitchen, when Nut finding himself alone, and wondering at his solitude came staggering downstairs to go out at the door and see what had become of all the people, when we shut it upon him and turned the key. When men are not so very far gone we allow them to remain, and in one instance it has resulted in a conversion.

S. Baring Gould
The 9.30 Up-Train
Sabine Baring-Gould

This ghost story, published in ‘Once a Week’, Aug 29 1863, was written while Baring-Gould was teaching at Hurstpierpoint and was set in the locality. It was re-published in Baring-Gould’s collection ‘A Book of Ghosts’ in 1904.

In a well-authenticated ghost story, names and dates should be distinctly specified. In the following story I am unfortunately able to give only the year and the month, for I have forgotten the date of the day and I do not keep a diary. With regard to names, my own figures as a guarantee at the end of this paper as that of the principal personage to who the following extraordinary circumstances occurred, but the minor actors are provided with fictitious names, for I am not warranted to make their real ones public. I may add that the believer in ghosts may make use of the facts which I relate to establish his theories, if he finds that they will be of service to him – when he has read through and weighed well the startling account which I am about to give from my own experience.

On a fine evening in June 1860 I paid a visit to Mrs Lyons, on my way to the Hassock's Gate Station on the London and Brighton line. This station is the first out of Brighton.

As I rose to leave I mentioned to the lady whom I was visiting that I was expecting a parcel of books from town, and that I was going to the station to inquire whether it had arrived.

'Oh!' said she, readily, 'I expect Dr Lyons out from Brighton by the 9.30 train; if you like to drive the pony chaise down to meet him, you are welcome and you can bring your parcel back with you in it.'

I gladly accepted her offer, and in a few minutes I was seated in a little low basket-carriage, drawn by a pretty iron-grey Welsh pony.

The station road commands the line of the South Downs from Chanctonbury Ring with its cap of dark firs, to Mount Harry, the scene of the memorable battle of Lewes. Woolsonbury stands out like a dark headland above the dark Danny woods, over which the rooks were wheeling and cawing previous to settling themselves in for the night. Ditchling beacon – its steep sides gashed with chalk-pits – was faintly flushed with light. The Clayton windmills, with their sails motionless stood out darkly against the green evening sky. Close beneath opens the tunnel in which not so long ago there happened one of the most fearful railway accidents on record.

The evening was exquisite. The sky was kindled with light, though the sun was set. A few gilded bars of cloud lay in the west. Two or three stars looked forth – one I noticed twinkling green, crimson and gold like a gem. From a field of young wheat
hard by, I heard the harsh grating note of the corn-crake. Mist was lying on the low
meadows like a mantle of snow, pure, smooth, and white; the cattle stood in it to their
knees. The effect was so singular that I drew up to look at it attentively. At the same
moment I heard the scream of an engine, and on looking towards the downs I noticed
the up-train shooting out of the tunnel, its red signal lamps flashing brightly out of the
purple gloom, which bathed the roots of the hills.

Seeing that I was late, I whipped the Welsh pony on, and proceeded at a fast trot.

At about a quarter of a mile from the station there is a turnpike – an odd-looking
building tenanted by a strange old man usually dressed in a white smock, over which
his long white beard flowed to his breast. This toll-collector – he is dead now – had
amused himself in bygone days by carving life-size heads out of wood and these were
stuck along the eaves. One is the face of a drunkard, round and blotched, leering out
of misty eyes at the passers-by; the next has the crumpled features of a miser, worn
out with toil and moil; a third has the wild scowl of a maniac; and a fourth, the stare
of an idiot.

I drove past, flinging the toll to the door, and shouting to the old man to pick it up,
for I was in a vast hurry to reach the station before Dr Lyons left it. I whipped the
little pony on and he began to trot down a cutting in the green-sand, through which
leads the station road.

Suddenly Taffy stood still, planted his feet resolutely in the ground, threw up his
head, snorted, and refused to move a peg. I 'gee-up-ed' and 'tsh-ed', all to no purpose;
not a step would the little fellow advance. I saw that he was thoroughly alarmed; his
flanks were quivering and his ears were thrown back. I was on the point of leaving
the chaise when the pony made a bound on one side and ran the carriage up into the
hedge, thereby upsetting me on the road. I picked myself up and took the beast's
head. I could not conceive what had frightened him; there was positively nothing to
be seen except a puff of dust running up the road, such as might be blown along by a
passing current of air. There was nothing to be heard except the rattle of a gig or tax-
cart with one wheel loose; probably a vehicle of this kind was being driven down the
London road, which branches off at the turnpike at right angles. The sound became
fainter and at last died away in the distance.

The pony now no longer refused to advance. It trembled violently, and was covered
with sweat.

'Well, upon my word, you have been driving hard!' exclaimed Dr Lyons when I met
him at the station.

'I have not indeed,' was my reply. 'But something has frightened Taffy, but what
that something was is more than I can tell.'

'Oh, ah!' said the doctor, looking round with a certain degree of interest in his face.
'So you met it, did you?'

'Met what?"
'Oh, nothing – only I have heard of horses being frightened along this road about the arrival of the 9.30 up-train. Flys never leave the moment the train comes in, or the horses become restive – a wonderful thing for a fly-horse to become restive, isn't it?'

'But what causes this alarm? I saw nothing.'

'You ask me more than I can answer. I am as ignorant of the cause as yourself. I take things as they stand and make no inquiries. When the flyman tells me he can't start for a minute or two after the train arrives, or urges on his horses to reach the station before the arrival of this train – giving as his reason that his brutes become wild if he does not do so – then I merely say, “Do as you think best, cabby,” and bother my head no more about the matter.'

'I shall search this matter out,' said I resolutely. 'What has taken place so strangely corroborates the superstition, that I shall not leave it uninvestigated.'

'Take my advice, and banish it from your thoughts. When you have come to the end, you will be sadly disappointed and find that all the mystery evaporates, and leaves a dull commonplace residuum. It is best that the few mysteries that remain to us unexplained should still remain mysteries or we shall disbelieve in supernatural agencies altogether. We have searched out the arcana of Nature and exposed all her secrets to the garish eye of day, and we find, in despair, that the poetry and romance of life are gone. Are we the happier for knowing there are no ghosts, no fairies, no witches, no mermaids, no wood spirits? Were not our forefathers happier in thinking every lake to be the abode of a fairy, every forest to be a bower of yellow-fai red sylphs, every moorland sweep to be tripped over by elf and pixie? I found my little boy one day lying on his face in a fairy ring, crying, “You dear, dear little fairies, I will believe in you, though Papa says you are all nonsense.” I used, in my childish days, to think, when a silence fell upon a company, that an angel was passing through the room. Alas! I now know that it results only from the subject of weather having been talked to death, and no new subject having been started. Believe me, science has done good to mankind, but it has done mischief too. If we wish to be poetical or romantic, we must shut our eyes to facts. The head and the heart wage mutual war now. A lover preserves a lock of his mistress's hair as a holy relic, yet he must know perfectly well that for all practical purposes a piece of rhinoceros hide would do as well – the chemical constituents are identical. If I adore a fair lady and feel a thrill though all my veins when I touch her hand, a moment's consideration tells me that phosphate of lime No 1 is touching phosphate of lime No 2, nothing more. If for a moment I forget myself so far as to wave my cap and cheer for King or Queen or Prince, I laugh at my folly next moment, for having paid reverence to one digesting machine above another.'

I cut the doctor short as he was lapsing into his favourite subject of discussion, and asked him whether he would lend me the pony chaise on the following evening, that I might drive to the station again and try to unravel the mystery.

'I will lend you the pony,' said he, 'but not the chaise, as I am afraid of it being injured should Taffy take fright and run up into the hedge again. I have got a saddle.'
Next evening I was on my way to the station considerably before the time at which the train was due.

I stopped at the turnpike and chatted with the old man who kept it. I asked him whether he could throw any light on the matter which I was investigating. He shrugged his shoulders, saying that, 'he knowed nothink about it.'

'What! Nothing at all?'

'I don't trouble my head with matters of this sort,' was the reply. 'People do say that something out of the common sort passed along the road and turns down the other road leading to Clayton and Brighton; but I pays no attention to what them people says.'

'Do you ever hear anything?'

'After the arrival of the 9.30 train I does at times hear the rattle as of a mail-cart and the trot of a horse along the road; and the sound is as though one of the wheels was loose. I've a been out many a time to take the toll, but Lor' bless'y! Them sperits – if sperits them be – don't go for to pay toll.'

'Have you ever inquired into the matter?'

'Why should I? Anything as don't go for to pay toll don't concern me. Do ye think as I knows 'ow many people and dogs goes through this heer geatt in a day? Not I – them don't pay toll, so them's no odds to me.'

'Look here, my man,' said I. 'Do you object to my putting the bar across the road, immediately after the arrival of the train?'

'Not a bit! Please yersel'; but you han't got much time to lose, for theer comes thickey train out of the Clayton tunnel.'

I shut the gate, mounted Taffy, and drew up across the road a little way below the turnpike. I heard the train arrive – I saw it puff off: at the same moment I distinctly heard a trap coming up the road, one of the wheels rattling as though it were loose. I repeat deliberately that I heard it, yet I saw nothing whatever.

At the same time the pony became restless, it tossed its head, pricked up its ears, it started, pranced, and then made a bound on one side, perfectly regardless of whip and rein. It tried to scramble up the sand-bank in its alarm, and I had to throw myself off and catch its head. I then cast a glance behind me at the turnpike. I saw the bar bent as though someone were pressing against it; then with a click it flew open and was dashed violently back against the white post to which it was usually hasped in the daytime. There it remained quivering from the shock.

Immediately I heard the rattle – rattle – rattle of the tax-cart. I confess that my first impulse was to laugh; the idea of a ghostly tax-cart was so essentially ludicrous; but the reality of the whole scene soon brought me to a graver mood, and remounting Taffy, I rode down to the station.

The officials were taking their ease, as another train was not due for some while; so I stepped up to the station-master and entered into conversation with him. After a few
desultory remarks, I mentioned the circumstances which had occurred to me on the
road, and my inability to account for them.

'So that's what you're after,' said the master, somewhat bluntly. 'Well, I can tell you
nothing about it; spirits don't come in my way, saving and excepting those which can
be taken inwardly; and mighty comfortable warming things they be when so taken. If
you ask me about other sorts of spirits, I tell you flat I don't believe in 'em, though I
don't mind drinking the health of them what does.'

'Perhaps you may have the chance, if you are a little more communicative,' said I.

'Well, I'll tell you all I know, and that is precious little,' answered the worthy man. 'I
know one thing for certain – that one compartment of a second-class carriage is
always left vacant between Brighton and Hassock's Gate, by the 9.30 up-train.'

'For what purpose?'

'Ahh! That's more than I can fully explain. Before the orders came to this effect,
people went into fits and that like, in one of the carriages.'

'Any particular carriage?'

'The first compartment of the second-class carriage nearest the engine. It is locked
at Brighton and I unlock it at this station.'

'What do you mean by saying that people had fits?'

'I mean that I used to find men and women a-screeching and a-hollering like mad to
be let out: they'd seen summat as had frightened them as they was passing through
the Clayton tunnel. That was before they made the arrangement I told y'of.'

'Very strange,' said I meditatively.

'Wery much so, but true for all that. I don't believe in nothing but spirits of a
warming and cheering nature, and them sort ain't to be found in Clayton tunnel to my
thinking.'

There was evidently nothing more to be got out of my friend. I hope that he drank
my health that night; if he omitted to do so, it was his fault, not mine.

As I rode home revolving in my mind all that I had heard and seen, I became more
and more settled in my determination of thoroughly investigating the matter. The best
means that I could adopt for so doing, would be to come out from Brighton by the
9.30 train, in the very compartment of the second-class carriage from which the
public were considerately excluded.

Somehow I felt no shrinking from the attempt, my curiosity was so intense that it
overcame all apprehension for the consequences.

My next free day was Thursday, and I hoped them to execute my plan. In this,
however, I was disappointed, as I found that a battalion drill was fixed for that very
evening, and I was desirous of attending it, being somewhat behindhand in the
regulation number of drills. I was consequently obliged to postpone my Brighton trip.
On the Thursday evening about five o'clock, I started in regimentals with my rifle over my shoulder for the drilling ground, a piece of furzy common near the railway station.

I was speedily overtaken by Mr Ball, a corporal in the rifle corps, a capital shot and most efficient in his drill. Mr Ball was driving his gig. He stopped on seeing me, and offered me a seat beside him. I gladly accepted, as the distance to the station is a mile and three-quarters by the road and two miles by what is commonly supposed to be the short cut across the fields.

After some conversation on volunteering matters, about which Corporal Ball was an enthusiast, we turned out of the lanes into the station road, and I took the opportunity of adverting to the subject which was uppermost in my mind.

'Ah! I have heard a great deal about that,' said the corporal. 'My workmen had often told me some cock-and-bull stories of the kind, but I can't say as 'ow I believed them. What you tell me, however, is very remarkable I never 'ad it on such good authority afore. Still I can't believe that there's hanything supernatural about it.'

'I do not yet know what to believe,' I replied; 'for the whole matter is to me perfectly inexplicable.'

'You know, of course, the story which gave rise to the superstition?'

'Not I; pray tell it me.'

'Just about seven years ago -- why, you must remember the circumstances as well as I do -- there was a man druv over from I can't say where, for that was never exactly hascertained -- but from the Henfield direction in a light cart. He went to the Station Inn and throwing the reins to John Thomas the ostler, bade him take the trap and bring it round to meet the 9.30 train, by which he calculated to return from Brighton. John Thomas said as 'ow the stranger was quite unbeknown to him, and that he looked as though he 'ad some matter on his mind when he went to the train: he was a queer sort of man with thick grey hair and beard, and delicate white 'ands, just like a lady's. The trap was round to the station door, just as hordered, by the arrival of the 9.30 train. The ostler observed then that the man was ashen pale and that his 'ands trembled as he took the reins, that the stranger stared at him in a wild habstracted way, and that he would have driven off without tendering payment had he not been respectfully reminded that the 'orse had been given a feed of hoats. John Thomas made a hobservation to the gent relative to the wheel which was loose, but that hobservation met with no corresponding hanswer. The driver whipped his 'orse and went off. He passed the turnpike, and was seen to take the Brighton road hinstead of that by which he had come. A workman observed the trap next on the downs above Clayton chalk-pits. He didn't pay much attention to it, but he saw that the driver was on his legs at the 'ead of the 'orse. Next morning, when the quarryman went to the pit, he found a shattered tax-cart at the bottom, and the 'orse and driver dead, the latter with his neck broken. What was curious too was that an 'andkerchief was bound round the brute's heyes, so that he must have been driven over the edge blindfold. Hodd, wasn't it? Well, folks say that the gent and his tax-cart pass along the road ever
heavening after the arrival of the 9.30 train; but I don't believe it; I ain't a bit
superstitious – not I!'  

Next week I was again disappointed in my expectation of being able to put my
scheme into execution; but on the third Saturday after my conversation with Corporal
Ball, I walked into Brighton in the afternoon, the distance being about nine miles. I
spent an hour on the shore watching the boats, and then I sauntered round the
Pavilion, ardently longing that fire might break forth and consume the architectural
monstrosity. I believe that I afterwards had a cup of coffee at the refreshment-rooms
of the station, and capital refreshment-rooms they are, or were; very moderate and
very good. I think that I partook of a bun; but if put on my oath I could not swear to
the fact; a floating reminiscence of bun lingers in the chambers of memory, but I
cannot be positive and I wish in this paper to advance nothing but reliable facts. I
squandered precious time in reading the advertisements of baby-jumpers – which no
mothers should be without – which are indispensable in the nursery and the greatest
acquisition in the parlour, the greatest discovery of modern times, etc, etc. I perused a
notice of the advantage of metallic brushes and admired the young lady with her hair
white on one side and black on the other; I studied the Chinese letter commendatory
of Horniman's tea, and the inferior English translation, and counted up the number of
agents in Great Britain and Ireland. At length the ticket-office opened and I booked
for Hassock's Gate, fare one shilling.

I ran along the platform till I came to the compartment of the second-class carriage
which I wanted. The door was locked so I shouted for a guard.

'Put me in here, please.'

'Can't there, sir; next, please, nearly empty, one woman and baby.'

'I particularly wish to enter this carriage,' said I.

'Can't be, locked, orders comp'ny,' replied the guard turning on his heel.

'What reason is there for the public being excluded, may I ask?'

'D'now, 'spress order – c'nt let you in; next carriage pl'se; now then, quick pl'se.'

I knew the guard, and he knew me – by sight, for I often travelled to and fro on the
line, so I thought it best to be candid with him. I briefly told him my reason for
making the request and begged him to assist me in executing my play.

He then consented, though with reluctance.

'Ave y'r own way,' said he. 'Only if anything 'appens, don't blame me.'

'Never fear,' laughed I, jumping into the carriage.

The guard left the carriage unlocked and in two minutes we were off.

I did not feel in the slightest degree nervous. There was no light in the carriage, but
that did not matter as there was twilight. I sat facing the engine on the left side, and
every now and then I looked out at the downs with a soft haze of light still hanging
over them. We swept into a cutting and I watched the lines of flint in the chalk, and
longed to be geologising among them with my hammer, picking out 'shepherd's
crowns' and sharks' teeth, the delicate rhyconella and the quaint ventriculite. I remembered a not very distant occasion on which if I had actually ventured there, and been chased off by the guard after having brought down an avalanche of chalk debris, in a manner dangerous to traffic, whilst endeavouring to extricate a magnificent ammonite which I found, and – alas! left – protruding from the side of the cutting. I wondered whether the ammonite was still there. I looked about to identify the exact spot as we whizzed along; and at that moment we shot into the tunnel.

There are two tunnels with a bit of chalk cutting between them. We passed through the first, which is short, and in another moment plunged into the second.

I cannot explain how it was that now, all of a sudden, a feeling of terror came over me; it seemed to drop over me like a wet sheet and wrap me round and round.

I felt that someone was seated opposite me – someone in the darkness with his eyes fixed on me.

Many persons possessed of keen nervous sensibility are well aware when they are in the presence of another, even though they can see no-one, and I believe that I possess this power strongly. It I were blindfolded, I think I should know when anyone was looking fixedly at me, and I am certain that I should instinctively know that I was not alone if I entered a dark room in which another person was seated, even though he made no noise. I remember a college friend who dabbled in anatomy telling that a little Italian violinist once called on him to give a lesson on his instrument. The foreigner, a singularly nervous individual, moved restlessly from the place where he had been standing, casting many a furtive glance over his shoulder at a press behind him. At last the little fellow tossed aside his violin, saying, 'I can not give de lesson if someone weel look at me from behind! Dare is somebodee in de cupboard, I know!'

'You are right, there is,' laughed my anatomical friend, flinging open the door of the press and discovering a skeleton.

The horror which oppressed me was numbing. For a few moments I could neither lift my hands nor stir a finger. I was tongue-tied. I seemed paralysed in every member. I fancied that I felt eyes staring at me through the gloom. A cold breath seemed to play over my face. I believed that fingers touched my chest and plucked at my coat. I drew back against the partition; my heart stood still, my flesh became stiff, my muscles rigid.

I do not know whether I breathed – a blue mist swam before my eyes and my head spun.

The rattle and road of the train dashing through the tunnel drowned every other sound.

Suddenly we rushed past a light fixed against the wall in the side, and it sent a flash, instantaneous as that of lightning, through the carriage. In that moment I saw what I shall never, never forget. I saw a face opposite me, livid as that of a corpse, hideous with passion like that of a gorilla.
I cannot describe it accurately, for I saw it but for a second; yet there rises before me now, as I write, the low broad brow seamed with wrinkles, the shaggy overhanging grey eyebrows; the wild ashen eyes, with a glare in them like those of a demoniac; the coarse mouth with its fleshy lips compressed till they were white; the profusion of wolf-grey hair about the cheeks and chin; the thin, bloodless hands, raised and half-open, extended towards me as though they would clutch and tear me.

In the madness of terror, I flung myself along the seat to the further window.

Then I felt that it was slowly moving down and was opposite me again. I lifted my hand to let down the window and I touched something: I thought it was a hand – yes, yes! It was a hand, for it folded over mine and began to contract on it. I felt each finger separately – they were cold, so cold, so dully cold. I wrenched my hand away, I slipped back to my former place in the carriage by the open window, and in frantic horror I opened the door, and clinging to it with both my hands round the window-jamb, swung myself out with my feet on the floor and my head turned from the carriage. If the cold fingers had but touched my woven hands, mine would have given way; had I but turned my head and seen that hellish countenance peering out at me, I must have lost my hold.

Ah! I saw the light from the tunnel mouth; it smote on my face, the engine rushed out with a piercing whistle, the roaring echoes of the tunnel died away. The cool fresh breeze blew over my face and tossed my hair; the speed of the train was relaxed, the lights of the station became brighter; I heard the bell ringing loudly; I saw people waiting for the train; I felt the vibration as the drag was put on. We stopped: and then my fingers gave way. I dropped as a sack on the platform, and then – then – not till then – I awoke. There now! From beginning to end the whole had been a frightful dream caused by my having too many blankets on my bed. I must append a moral – don't sleep too hot.