

FURTHER REMINISCENCES

1864-1894

BY S. BARING-GOULD

Plenus rimarum sum, hac atque illac perfluo

TERENCE, *Eun.* I. 2

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1864-1894

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

EARLY REMINISCENCES

1834-1864

DEVONSHIRE CHARACTERS

CORNISH CHARACTERS

THE LAND OF TECK

THE BODLEY HEAD

PREFACE

THIS book is the continuation of my *Early Reminiscences*. As Paul Scarron says in *Le Roman Comique* : “ Si le lecteur bénévole est scandalisé de toutes les badineries qu’il a vues jusqu’ici dans mon récit, il sera fort bien de n’en lire pas davantage ; car, en conscience, il n’y verra pas d’autres choses, et si, par ce qu’il a déjà vu, il a de la peine à se douter de ce qu’il verra, peut-être que j’en suis logé là aussi bien que lui ; qu’un chapitre attire l’autre, et que je fais dans mon livre comme ceux qui mettent la bride sur le col de leurs chevaux, et les laissent aller sur leur bonne foi. Peut-être aussi que j’ai un dessin arrêté, j’instruirai en divertissant.”



S. BARING-GOULD

From a Photograph

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FURTHER REMINISCENCES

1864-94

CHAPTER I

HORBURY-BRIG

1864-66

I WAS ordained by the Bishop of Ripon upon Whit Sunday, 1864, a memorable day in my life ; and the following day went to Horbury to enter on my curacy.

Horbury is a township near Wakefield, from which it is distant three miles. Formerly, it was a mere chapelry in the parish of Wakefield, but it is now independent of its mother, has a large church of its own, and two filial churches as well. That latter phase, however, is subsequent to my time. The town, if so it may be called, occupies a ridge of high ground, above the River Calder, the name of which is Scandinavian, and signifies the Cold-River. At the present day it would qualify as the Warm or Lukewarm river, on account of the amount of hot waste water injected into it from the factories.

At the time when I went thither, when my clerical life was initiated, in 1864, Horbury was in the condition of one who had ceased to be a boy, but had not as yet attained to manhood. It was in the hobbledehoy period of existence. No longer a large village, it had not then attained the size and acquired the dignity that would entitle it to be called a town.

Horbury stands upon a height composed of sandstone, that flakes into slabs, and which overlies the coal-measures ; accordingly a portion of the population is composed of colliers.

The valley of the Calder is deep in rubble brought down from the western hills that divide Yorkshire from Lancashire. In

this valley, and on the slope of the sandstone hill, were situated manufactories of yarn, of cloth and of devil's dust or shoddy. A few more lie on the further side of Horbury on the road to Wakefield, and also in the township of Ossett to the west.

The manufacture of shoddy consists in the tearing to pieces of old cloth, and reducing it to dust. This dust is disposed of to the cloth manufacturers, and is dribbled into the material that is woven during the process of textile work. The adulteration may be overdone. Whilst I was at Horbury, a large order for blankets came from New York, and the order when executed was consigned to its destination. On discharge at New York, all the blankets had to be carried away in wheelbarrows, resolved into their original constituents, dust, with a limited amount of fibre to retain the particles in place. The demand for old worn-out coats, waist-coats and trousers, however tattered and torn, to supply the shoddy mills was great. Whether, since I was in Horbury, it has been discovered that adulteration, if excessive, is inexpedient, and this discovery has led to rectification in the process of cloth weaving, I am unable to say. I write of matters about sixty years ago.

I generally meet with shoddy now in the sermons of clergy who neither read nor think.

On the further side of the Calder dale the character of the country is totally different: there is clay there with brick works; but the population is for the most part agricultural and the intelligence of the people is below that of the inhabitants of the manufacturing districts.

To the east the height declines gradually towards the station of Horbury Junction. On the way thither is California, a spring of water so charged with gas that, if a match be applied to it, the gas bubbles explode in flame. The water of this spring is so soft that it wants "no-but a kettle" to hold it to make strong tea, though no leaves have been infused.

I have given a very graphic description of Horbury and the Calder vale in my novel, *The Pennycomequicks*, and I will not here repeat what is there said.

The factories are gaunt brick structures, standing in their "folds" or yards, and many of the cottages of the artisans open into these folds.

A pretty sight it is, on Monday morning, to see the troops of lasses going to the mills, in their clean white pinafores, arms bare, and over their heads scarlet, or pink, or blue kerchiefs tied under the chin. Many a joke passes between these lasses and the lads bound to the factories on their several ways. In the evening the "buzzer" having sounded to "loose" work, the lads and lasses swarm out on their way to their respective homes, carrying in hand the bright tin can in which their midday meal had been contained, filled in the morning, empty to the last crumb in the evening. The white pinafore has lost some of its purity, and by Saturday evening has become besmirched and dirty.

Later I picked up a pretty ballad, from an itinerant blacksmith who went by the name of Ginger Jack. Although a Devonshire man, he had wandered over a large portion of Great Britain and Wales, and had collected a wondrous store of ballads with their tunes. I presume that the following was gathered in Yorkshire, but I do not know. Ginger Jack professed not to be able to recall where he learned it. I may add that this wandering blacksmith had made the acquaintance of the inside of several of our jails, on the charge of wife and children desertion. The melody of the song is as fresh as the words.

"I saw a sweet lassie trip over the lea,
Her eyes were as loadstones attracting of me.
Her cheeks were the roses that Cupid lurks in,
With a bonny blue kerchief tied under her chin.

'O where are you going, my fair pretty maid ?
O whither so swift through the dewdrops ?' I said.
'I go to my mother, kind sir, for to spin,'
O the bonny blue kerchief tied under her chin !

To kiss her sweet lips then I sought to begin.
'O, nay sir !' she said, 'ere a kiss you would win,
Pray show me a ring, tho' of gold the most thin.'
O slyest blue kerchief tied under the chin.

'Why wear a blue kerchief, sweet lassie ?' I said.
'Because the blue colour is not one to fade.
As a sailor's blue jacket who fights for the King,
So's my bonny blue kerchief tied under the chin.

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The love that I value is certain to last,
 Not fading and changing, but ever set fast.
 That only the colour my love, sir, to win.¹
 So good-bye from the kerchief tied under the chin.”¹

I may add that whilst at Horbury I collected several folk-songs, carols and folk-tales.

The parish church of Horbury stands in the middle of the townlet. It was erected by a Mr. Carr, an architect, at his own expense, in the eighteenth century, and possesses a respectable tower and spire. Internally it has no aisles, and is apsidal at each end. This construction has its disadvantage, for every sound produced at the west end rings in the ears of the clergy within the altar-rails. Thus, when a mother, sitting under the organ loft at the further extremity of the church, admonishes her son : “ Blow your nose, and don’t snuffle ! ” the priest at the altar receives this injunction in a distinct whisper, as though thus personally rebuked.

The vicarage was on the north side of the church, which cut off the sun from all the windows on the south side. It possessed a small walled garden to the east, the grass, the shrubs and the flowers, so begrimed with soot as to dirty the fingers that touched them. There was an old mulberry tree in it, but the fruit tasted of smoke.

Mr. John Sharp, the vicar, was unmarried, a peculiarly fine specimen of one of the old Tractarian movement, courteous, cultured, and tender-hearted. It always struck me that in appearance he resembled an Italian priest of the highest type. Although he was a ready extempore preacher, he was not eloquent, nor was he original in what he said. I must have heard over one hundred of his sermons, but cannot recall that I ever acquired an *idea* from them. But if not a great preacher, he was a most assiduous visitor, and the people were warmly attached to him. He was nominated to the Vicarage of Horbury by his father, who was Vicar of Wakefield in 1834.² He was quite a young man, but he had very definite Church views. His great-grandfather was Archbishop Sharp of York, a notable Churchman in the reign of Queen Anne, who laboured along with Archbishop Wake

¹ Published with the original music in my *Songs of the West*, Methuen & Co., 1891.

² Born 1810, retired 1899, died 1903.

of Canterbury to effect an union between the Gallican and the Anglican Churches. When John Sharp became vicar, he found the interior of the parish church pewed up from the one end to the other. The "horse-boxes" were of various sizes, and were turned in diverse directions. They were possessed by the "respectables" of the parish, the mill-owners, the doctors, the lawyers, and the retired gentlefolks; and none of these were assiduous in church attendance. They might or might not put in an appearance in the morning, but never in the evening, when they were too seriously and vigorously engaged upon their dinners or suppers. As to the factory hands, no provision had been made for them.

Accordingly, the first attempt at innovation made by Mr. Sharp was to get rid of the pews. He had been left a small income by his father. This he expended in legal and other expenses in attaining his purpose. Happily none of the pew-holders had considered it necessary or expedient to obtain "faculties" for their pews; nevertheless they managed to obstruct him in various ways as suggested by the lawyers, in the expectation of exhausting his finances or his patience. However, he persisted. The horse-boxes were swept away, and replaced by open benches. Then, and not till then, ensued an influx of the factory hands, middle-aged and young, and the vicar found himself surrounded by a band of zealous young men ready to help in the choir, in the savings bank and in the various benefit clubs that he had instituted. It was noticed, and not forgotten, that disaster had come upon all those who had been the vicar's most strenuous and persistent opponents. Although the struggle over the pews had occurred thirty years before I came to Horbury, this fact was still recorded, and among those who had resisted his efforts with the greatest vehemence not one remained in the place.

There was something peculiar in my first arrival at Horbury.

I had left Ripon by a morning train and arrived in due time at Horbury main station, having changed trains at Wakefield, where I had my lunch.

On reaching Horbury Station I found that the place provided no cabs, and possessed no omnibus. No porter was available for my portmanteau. So I shouldered it and walked up the hill towards the houses surmounted by the spire. I heard a brass

band playing, and soon fell in with a procession of men. On inquiry I ascertained that this was the School Festival. So I deposited my portmanteau in a little shop, and joined the procession. What caused me some surprise was the halting, and partial dissolution of the procession at the door of the public-house. But I understood that the instrumentalists, what with the ascent of the hill with the sun on their backs, and their exertion upon horns and pipes and drums, needed refreshment, and called for pots of beer. I could appreciate as well the sympathy exhibited by the processionists, in that they as well called for pots of beer, to show brotherhood with the orchestra.

When, after a while, refreshed and reinvigorated, the band reformed and after a brazen flourish, blew lustily "See the Conquering Hero comes!" I concluded that this was a delicate allusion to myself, who along with another man brought up the tail of the procession. But when the band and all who followed it passed the church and vicarage, without entering or noticing either, I began to entertain suspicions, and, turning to the man with whom I walked, I inquired as to the nature of the school in which he was, as he had confided to me, a teacher. Then only did I learn that this was a Dissenting demonstration. I dropped from the tail, flew back, got my portmanteau, and stole very crestfallen into the house of the Rev. John Sharp, where I was heartily laughed at for my novel entry upon my duties.

I, myself, being a Devonshire man, and familiar with the minds, habits of thought, and prejudices of the agricultural and artisan class of my native county, found myself transported into a surrounding of people of a totally different mental and social complexion, and it took me some time to orientate myself towards them. I recall the shock given to me, in the very first cottage I entered. A mother was engaged at the stove over some cooking. Her infant was seated in a tall child's chair with a knife in its hand, smearing a piece of bread with treacle. I suppose that my sudden entrance startled it, for it fell headlong upon the stone floor out of the chair. It was not seriously hurt. I remonstrated with the mother at furnishing the child with a knife, and putting it on a tall chair unstrapped in. "The poor child might have fallen on the knife and have transfixed itself." "Eh! so she might," said she composedly, "but she wouldn't ha' done it

again." That was the way in which a Yorkshire woman taught me to mind my own business. We remained very good friends, and when I was married she made me a wedding present of a nutmeg-grater.

The dialect and expressions employed were to me at first puzzling. A little girl meeting me in the street stopped me and, looking up in my face, inquired : " When is the next potation ? " It was explained to me that " potation " meant a public tea.

A funeral feast was a great function. The table was spread with plum-cake, " parkin " or pepper cake, and jugs of ale. Along with the cake were served junks of cheese. If there were, as often was the case, apple-pie, then cheese was eaten in large slices with the apple.

After a while, during which I acted simply as curate of Horbury, my proper sphere was delimited for me by the vicar. This proper sphere was at Horbury-Brig, beyond the station and a mile and a half from the parish church. I was to work among the people who had been wholly neglected, even by the Dissenters, and to do what I could to raise money for the building of a school-chapel there.

Horbury-Brig was a very different place in the 'sixties from what it is now. By means of a canal that drained off most of the water of the Calder, it had become a lively *entrepôt* for coal, and there was great demand for house accommodation. Consequently I had a mighty difficulty in obtaining a *pied à terre* there. Eventually I secured a very small cottage, one in a row, and consisting of a single room on the ground-floor, with a very small back-kitchen. This room was styled " t' house," and it was kitchen and parlour. Out of it was taken a staircase that led to a single bedroom above, and under the stairs was the coal-closet.

The " house " I appropriated for a night school, and the bedroom over it I converted into a chapel.

I began with night school every evening in the winter, and with service every Sunday evening in the chapel. I had to stand on a stool before the chimney-piece, on which stood a cross and a pair of candlesticks. I wore no surplice, only a cassock. Very soon a congregation was formed, that grew till it not only filled the upper room, but occupied the stairs as well, and the kitchen below. Hymns were performed somewhat laggingly, as

the singing had to bump down the stairs, fill the kitchen, and one strain of the tune after another came up irregularly through the chinks in the floor, to interfere with the smoothness and sequence of the melody as sung above. The notes from the stairs also jostled.

Staunch friends were made among the mill-hands, and I experienced the utmost kindness from them. I went to tea in one of their cottages every Sunday evening. My helpers were two nice young women, named Rushworth, somewhat superior to the rest ; they also worked in the mills. I was helped as well by an old muffin-man, who had been a Romanist, but had settled very happily into the Church of England. He helped to teach the boys. At intervals a waft of tobacco smoke passed through the room. I found that the old man had his pipe in his pocket, and that every now and then he drew it forth and refreshed himself with a whiff.

There was some opposition at first from the rowdy element, but that died away, and all went on smoothly. I had an excellent assistant, though not a teacher, in a stout, bald-headed wool-comber named Scholey, who would stand no nonsense, and if any roughs approached my door during school hours he would sally forth, crack a couple of walnuts in his fist, and shout like the bellow of a bull : " If you don't take care and be peaceable, I'll crack your heads as I do these here nuts." He said to me at the outstart : " Let's have no back reckonings." What he meant was : " Begin as you propose to continue, and do not retreat from a position once assumed."

There was a tun of a woman with a blazing red face, named Cardwell, who kept a little shop. The key of my cottage was left with her.

One Saturday I was in a revolutionary condition in my insides, and I had to go down to the Brig to carry on the Savings Bank there for an hour. Seeing how unwell I was, my fellow-curate, Davies, gave me a couple of pilules from his homœopathic chest. Thus fortified I went on my way, and called at Mrs. Cardwell's for the key. She saw that I was unwell and bleached, so said : " Bless your heart ! I have a fine medicine for English cholera. Take some of that." So she administered a dose. Then I went to serve at the Savings Bank. On my return to surrender the