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Here and There.

Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, novelist, hymn-writer, folk-lorist and half-a-dozen other things, was 70 in February. It is 50 years since he began to write, and he has been a prolific producer all the time. Mr. Baring-Gould has an estate in Devonshire, and deals in his stories preferably with Devonshire scenery and folk. He is a High Churchman, and does not always fairly represent what Nonconformity stands for in his novels. Mr. Baring-Gould will live longest, perhaps, in his hymn, "Onward, Christian soldiers."

Since the sudden and pathetic death in his arms of little Princess Elizabeth of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Tsar has been more than ever devoted to his religious duties. He alwrys has been religious, but now he spends hours at his private devotions and in writing prayers in Russ and Slavonic for the Imperial family. A strange rumour is current in both Moscow and St. Petersburg that if the child expected next June should be a son the Tsar will abdicate in favour of his brother, who will become regent until the Tsar's son comes of age.

The damage done to the Iroquois Theatre, Chicago, by the recent fire was small. The fireproof floor and roofs were not damaged either by heat or by water. The partition dividing various dressing-rooms from the stage formed a complete barrier to the progress of the fire. The columns in this partition were covered with wire lathing and plaster, and their protection remains intact. The girder supporting a heavy brick wall over the proscenium arch was protected with cinder concrete and wire lathing covered with plaster. In this case the plaster was destroyed, but the concrete was uninjured.

Sir William Ramsay's name has been constantly before the public lately in connection with his discovery that the much talked-of element, radium, changes into a gas known as helium. Sir William is the son of the late William Ramsey, C. E. His uncle, a sugar planter, left his library to Mr. Ramsey, and his son found among the books "Graham's Chemistry," which he devoured eagerly. It is a curious coincidence that he has lately been appointed to the very post which Professor Graham himself once held—that of Professor of Chemistry at the London University College. Sir William's name first became known to the world at large as the discoverer of three new gases—neon, krypton, and xenon. All these exist in the air.

After a disappearance of forty years, an early opera of Bizet, the composer of "Carmen," has come to light. It is entitled "Don Procopio," and is an opera bouffe in two acts. When Bizet won the "prix de Rome" in 1859, he was expected, under the terms of the scholarship, to send to the Paris Conservatoire a mass composed in the Eternal City. "Don Procopio" was the work that Bizet forwarded; and Ambroise Thomas, then director of the Conservatoire, while acknowledging the invention and verve of the composition, expressed surprise that an opera bouffe should have been sent in place of a solemn mass. "Don Procopio" is to be produced at Monte Carlo, and although it is unlikely to prove another "Carmen" or "Pecheurs des Perles," it is certain to be both melodious and original, which are rare features in operas bouffes nowadays.

Sir Frederick Bridge, organist of Westminster Abbey, lectured at Church House, Westminster, recently, on "Shakespeare and Music," pointing out that in the time of Elizabeth music was an important part of general education, also that beyond question Shakespeare was a lover of the art. In his works appear upwards of one hundred words that are exclusively musical. Sir Frederick discussed the setting of "Where the Bee Sucks," by R. Johnson, a contemporary of Shakespeare, and Pelham Humfrey who was sent from the Chapel Royal by Charles II. to study in France and Italy, the expense being defrayed out of the Secret Service Fund. John Canister, who gave the first public concert at a tavern in Whitefriars, then a London Alsatia, was represented by his music to "Come Unto These Yellow Sands." Miss S. Maris, Mr. Bertram Mills, and the Westminster Abbey boy choristers rendered these and other examples.

Clerics, as fellow-passengers at sea, were not to Thackeray's liking, to judge by a passage from one of his letters to Mrs. Baxter, published in the "Century Magazine." Writing on board the Baltic in May, 1856, he said: "There are three yellow-gilled Popish priestlings in the cabin now—they know all about kingdom come, and have the keys of heaven in their portmanteaux—yet why did one of 'em faint almost the other night because it blew a little hurrykin? What numbers of gates to heaven have we built? And suppose after all there are no walls? But this is a mystery. The Rev. Osgood, the Rev. Hawkes, the Rev. Hughes have the keeping of it—I am come, twaddling in the dark almost—to the end of my page. Good-bye and God bless you, my dear friend."

In "Macmillan's Magazine" for February, Mr. H. F. Abell writes scathingly about the tyranny of football in England. He inveighs not only against the players for commercialism, but against the spectators, who are pictured as thoroughly unsportsmanlike in sentiment. "When the game is quiet the vulpine and sodden faces are eager, but not happy; when an exciting phase occurs the general expression is one of malignant anxiety, here broken by an outburst of frantic disappointment, there by one of savage joy. There is enthusiasm, plenty of it, but it is an ungenerous one-sided enthusiasm, without a spark of chivalry or appreciation of alien worth in it. . . . Every Saturday during eight months of the year at least 200,000 men, for the most part young and strong, are idling round a football ground in a state of perpetual excitement and passion not to be soothed by incessant smoking."

A memoir of Charles Wolfe, prefaced to a volume of his poems just issued, tells how his one famous piece, "The Burial of Sir John Moore," came to be written. The account is that of one of Wolfe's college friends, the Rev. Samuel O'Sullivan. He says that one day in the summer of 1814 or 1815 he read Wolfe the account given in the "Edinburgh Annual Register" of the burial of Sir John Moore. The two friends then went out walking, and Wolfe was so unusually silent that his companion wondered at his unresponsiveness, especially as their walk took them through a beautiful country. When at last he broke silence, it was to repeat the first and last stanzas of the poem that was to join Moore and himself in a common immortality. The next morning the rest was finished, and before very long the piece appeared in "Blackwood's Magazine."

On the list of works to be staged at his theatre in Paris this year, M. Antoine has included an adaptation of "King Lear," by M. Pierre Loti. Although not one of the subsidised houses, the Theatre Antoine has been styled "the second theatre in Paris" by no less authority than M. Emile Faguet, the leading French critic of the day. So that the projected production ought to prove an event of the greatest interest from a literary and dramatic piont of view, ranking next to the famous presentation of "Hamlet" at the Theatre Francais, with M. Mounet-Sully as the Dane. It may seem strange to consider the performance of Shakespeare by a company of foreign actors as an important theatrical event. But there are many excellent judges of acting who consider that the greatest Hamlet ever seen in London was Charles Fechter, a Frenchman, who was also famous as the original Armand Duval, of "La Dame aux Camelias." Another foreigner who achieved considerable repute as Hamlet was Herr Bandmann, who was the first to introduce the business of the two miniature portraits—one of the dead King's, the other of the reigning usurper—"the counterfeit presentments of two brothers."

"It's all very well to talk about the wonders of radium," said the scoffer, "but what I want to know is, what practical use is it?"

"My friend," said the man from Invercargill, "you cannot have studied your subject very closely, or you would know that among other uses radium is used down South during the winter months as a means of catching rabbits."

"Pooh, nonsense!" scoffed the scoffer.

"It is quite simple," continued the other. "At dark a glass tube containing radium is placed on the snow near the burrows. The brilliant rays given off by the precious metal of course attract the rabbits. When, with their well-known curiosity, they approach the tube, the glare causes tears to flow copiously. These are frozen into icicles, which hold the rabbits firmly fixed to the ground till the morning, when all that remains to be done is to go and collect the rabbits. Dear me, I'd no idea it was so late! I must be going."

In one examination paper the meaning of cum grano salis was given by the intelligent scholar as, "Although with a corn thou dancest," while the Knights of St. John were described as a sacrilegious order who lives on an island. The question, "Why does true English history begin with the reign of Henry VII.?" evoked the answer "Because up to this time it was all lies." Other facts that will strike most people as new are: The population in the neighbourhood of coalfields is very dense because of the smoke coming from the coal; the sun never sets on British possessions because the sun sets in the West, and our colonies are in the north, south and east; the chief feature of the play of "Richard II." is the decomposition of the King; the feminine of "he-goat" is "she went"; Izaak Walton was such a good fisherman that he was called "the judicious Hooker"; a cuckoo is a bird that does not lay its own eggs; pedigree means a schoolmaster, emolument a soothing medicine; in the United States people are put to death by elocution; the primate is the wife of a Prime Minister; a Job's comforter is a thing you give babies to sooth them; political economy is the science which teaches us to get the greatest benefit with the least possible amount of honest labour.

Many ex-patriated London theatregoers in the colony will read the following from the "Era" with a throb of London—and the Strand—sickness: "There is something very pathetic in the sight of the dismantled ruins of an old playhouse. A few days since the gallery staircase of the old Gaiety Theatre stood almost isolated, amongst heaps of rubbish, the legend of the price paid for admission standing out distinctly in the daylight. There must have been many passers-by who cast pensive glances at the "remains" of the ladder by which in the past they had climbed so often to enjoyment and amusement; and the Olympic Theatre, which has been attacked by the housebreakers, is suffering similar demolition. The Olympic was one of the finest West End minor theatres which won a prominent position in the days of privileges and patents. Drury-lane, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was known as the "Via de Aldwych," until Drury House, built towards the close of the sixteenth century, gave the thoroughfare a new title. Near Drury House the Earl of Craven erected a mansion for the use of his bride, the daughter of James I. In the course of years, the old house was turned into a tavern; and in 1805 it was pulled down, and the ground cleared as a site; and Lord Craven, the owner of the land, granted the celebrated circus proprietor, Philip Astley, a lease for a term of 61 years, at an annual rent of £100. Some old naval prizes being on sale, Astley bought the timber of one of them, the "Ville de Paris." With the yards, masts, and bowsprit of the French vessel, Astley made the main props and supports of his playhouse, and they were noticeable in the old Olympic Theatre till it was destroyed by fire in 1849. The new house consisted of a tier of boxes, a pit, and at the back of this space called a gallery, parted off from the rest of the house by an iron grating."