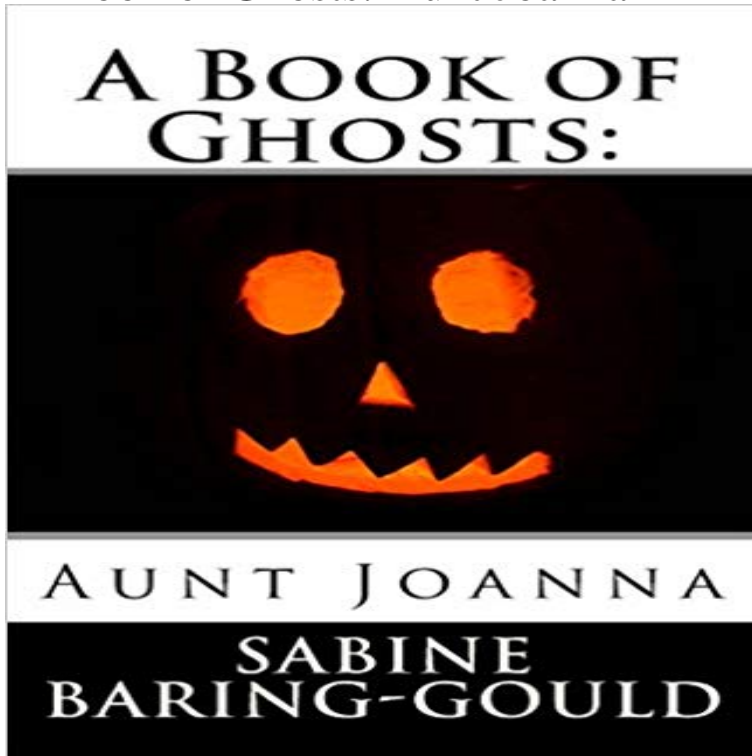


A Book of Ghosts: Aunt Joanna



Aunt Joanna is a short story by Sabine Baring-Gould. Sabine Baring-Gould (28 January 1834 – 2 January 1924) was an English Anglican priest, hagiographer, antiquarian, novelist and eclectic scholar. His bibliography consists of more than 1240 publications, though this list continues to grow. His family home, Lew Trenchard Manor near Okehampton, Devon, has been preserved as he had it rebuilt and is now a hotel. He is remembered particularly as a writer of hymns, the best-known being *Onward, Christian Soldiers* and *Now the Day Is Over*. He also translated the carol *Gabriels Message* from the Basque language to the English. Sabine Baring-Gould (later Sabine Baring Baring-Gould) was born in the parish of St Sidwell, Exeter on 28 January 1834. The eldest son of Edward Baring-Gould and his first wife, Sophia Charlotte (nee Bond), he was named after a great-uncle, the Arctic explorer Sir Edward Sabine. Because the family spent much of his childhood travelling round Europe, most of his education was by private tutors. He only spent about two years in formal schooling, first at Kings College School in London (then located in Somerset House) and then, for a few months, at Warwick Grammar School (now Warwick School). Here his time was ended by a bronchial disease of the kind that was to plague him throughout his long life. His father considered his ill-health as a good reason for another European tour. In 1852 he was admitted to Cambridge University, earning the degrees of Bachelor of Arts in 1857, then Master of Arts in 1860 from Clare College, Cambridge. During 1864, he became the curate at Horbury Bridge, West Riding of Yorkshire. It was while acting as a curate that he met Grace Taylor, the 16-year-old daughter of a mill hand. His vicar arranged for Grace to live for two years with relatives in York to learn middle class manners. Baring-Gould, meanwhile,

relocated to become perpetual curate at Dalton, near Thirsk. He and Grace were married in 1868 at Wakefield. Their marriage lasted until her death 48 years later, and the couple had 15 children, all but one of whom lived to adulthood. When he buried his wife in 1916 he had carved on her tombstone the Latin motto *Dimidium Animae Meae* (Half my Soul). Baring-Gould became the rector of East Mersea in Essex in 1871 and spent ten years there. In 1872 his father died and he inherited the 3,000 acre (12 km²) family estates of Lew Trenchard in Devon, which included the gift of the living of Lew Trenchard parish. When the living became vacant in 1881, he was able to appoint himself to it, becoming parson as well as squire. He did a great deal of work restoring St Peters Church, Lew Trenchard, and (from 1883/1914) thoroughly remodelled his home, Lew Trenchard Manor.

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