

at the same time as "Wally Thomson," as the future scientist was then known. This takes one a long way back. The two were born in the same year, 1824. The "Napoleon of Natural Philosophy," as Kelvin was called, matriculated in his eleventh year, died in 1907, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. As a young man Mr. Barr Smith was engaged in mercantile pursuits in Glasgow. For many years he has been one of the richest men in South Australia—perhaps the wealthiest. Yet such has been his public and private liberality that no class and no individual has ever begrudged him his possessions. Irrespective of class or creed, he has been generous to all. The working masses of Adelaide have reason to hold him in remembrance, because he presented them with the land on which to build the Trades Hall, a gift which showed that he realised that labour as well as capital has rights. The whole community respects Mr. Barr Smith. The people know that ostentation is incompatible with his nature, and that his gifts are based on the principle that those in most need should be first assisted and that those who help themselves deserve to be helped in a practical way.

#### A NOBLE PAIR.

South Australians are proud to claim Mr. Barr Smith and his wife as among their greatest benefactors. Mrs. Barr Smith is, like her husband, a liberal and cheerful giver. No one knows the full extent of their charity or the beneficent influence which this fine old couple exert. No one can tell the amount of sunshine they have given to hundreds of lives, the amount of happiness and blessing to the poor and distressed, the widows and orphans. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Mrs. Barr Smith is one of the best French scholars in Australia. She is ten or a dozen years younger than her husband, and is wonderfully active. She personally deals with her mass of correspondence, and her letters are written in clearer and bolder hand than usually characterises the caligraphy of one half her years.

#### POWER BEHIND THE SCENES.

Always of a retiring disposition, Mr. Barr Smith has preferred the quiet and happiness of his own home to attending social gatherings and encountering public gaze. He could never be induced to enter Parliamentary life, though it is known that in his own quiet, unobtrusive way he has made his influence felt, and very properly so. Holding the wealth and stake he does in the country, it was only right that he should often be consulted. And so in the years that have gone his influence has been exerted, not merely because of his wealth, but also on account of his wide knowledge and experience and his ripe judgment. Politicians and men of business and finance have been glad to consult him as a sound authority whose advice and counsel were worth having. He has always commanded the utmost respect; in days gone by he was a power behind the scenes, a personal force felt if not seen, an influence that has been for good. As a benefactor he leads the way in South Australia to-day, and his fine example has inspired others to aid the advancement of national and other worthy movements. It is understood that Mr. Barr Smith has more than once declined knighthood.

## AN EMINENT SONG- WRITER.

### THE LIFE OF MR. FREDERICK BEVAN.

#### AN ENGROSSING STORY.

##### A GENTLEMAN OF THE CHAPEL ROYAL.

##### VICTISSITUDES OF A RENOWNED SONG.

(By our Special Reporter.)

One of the many distinctions which Mr. Frederick Charles Bevan, of the Adelaide University, might claim if he were not somewhat indifferent to fame is that of being a freeborn citizen of the foremost city in the world, for he first saw the light of day on July 3, 1856, within the sound of Bow Bells. He was christened in the celebrated Church of St. Andrews, Holborn, in which church his father was a warden. In the same church he was married while still a very young man. He was but a few years old when his child voice developed into a sweet soprano, and when eight foggy winters had passed he became a chorister in the Church of All Saints, Margaret-street. He has been "in music" ever since; it has been his only profession, and, indeed, he has but made use of his natural gift, for undoubtedly he was a musical born. When he left school and his voice broke his



Mr. Frederick Bevan.

parents apprenticed him to the great firm of Kirkman, pianoforte makers. Afterwards he secured an appointment with Messrs. John Brinsmead & Sons, and assisted in the erection of pianos and tuning them. At the same time he pursued his musical studies, and his voice, in changing from the boy's to the man's, became a rich, deep bass. As a youth he had studied the organ, and when 16 or 17 years of age was organist and choirmaster in various London churches. His ambition to become a great singer strengthened as his voice developed. Had he not been a born singer he might have become a member of the piano manufacturing firm, but probably he has never regretted that he followed his vocation. Before he was 21 he had gained a position as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal at St. James' Palace. This high appointment he won in open competition, and the achievement alone should bear testimony to the fine voice he possessed. From that time (1877) he was a public singer, a prominent star in the brilliant constellation which shone in London. The appointment to the Chapel Royal gave him status, and he was soon in great demand. But these are things which Mr. Bevan declined to talk about. I trust in outlining his early career I have not said anything which does not meet with his approval. My aim in asking him for an interview was to learn something about

his work as a composer or song-writer. I found there was almost an embarrassment of riches at my disposal, for, using the stock phrase, his reminiscences in that line alone would fill a volume. Without the slightest suggestion of egotism he told me that I would have to let him confine himself to song-writing alone, and must not tempt him on to any other subject, and I was not long in learning that in any digression from the straight path I was threatened with confusion in quite a maze of other paths. Mr. Bevan could have more than filled the space at my disposal simply with a narrative about the Chapel Royal; his reminiscences of sinners he has known are alone enough for a long interview, and even the history of his pupils at the Elder Conservatorium would of itself make a complete article. So by mutual consent we confined ourselves to one subject. I will let him speak without much interruption, for it required few questions of mine to keep him going. The chief danger, as he several times warned me, was in "side tracking" him.

#### Short Shrift for the First Song.

"At the time of my appointment, or very soon afterwards," he said, "I began to write songs, and my first production was called 'Sir Harold the Hunter' (Eliza Cook's words), but that did not live very long, because the publishers of the words confiscated it." He smiled curiously. "We had not had permission to print the verses. Macmillans, who held the copyright, did not publish music, so the song soon was forgotten. What sort? Oh! a rollicking baritone song. I considered it good enough to try another, and I set to music some verses written by a friend of mine. That was the genesis of 'The ship's fiddler,' by Frederick Bal'ol. I adopted that nom-de-plume, because I was making my name as a singer, and wanted to sing my own songs."

I should have thought it would have been an advantage for people to know you were doing so, I said.

"I felt rather diffident as to how the songs would be received."

At All Royal Weddings, Christenings, and Funerals.

To put it bluntly, you had not too much confidence in your powers as a composer?

"That is about the position. However, the song was a great success, and on the strength of it I made an agreement with the publishers to supply 12 songs under that nom-de-plume. Meantime, I was doing well on the platform, and at the Chapel Royal. I might say here that I remained a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1877 until I came to South Australia in 1898. During that period I sang at all Royal weddings, christenings, and funerals, amongst others at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Fife, of the Princess Maud and the present King of Norway, and also at the wedding of our present King and Queen. I sang, too, at the christening of the Duchess of Fife, who married Prince Arthur of Connaught recently. But to return to the matter of my songs. Mr. Patey, of the firm of Patey & Willis, was the husband of Madame Janet Patey, the great contralto, with whom, at the time I was associated on the concert platform. Madame Patey was the Clara Butt of her day—a magnificent singer. She visited Australia in the eighties."

Madame Clara Butt's First Engagement.

Were you associated with Madame Clara Butt?

"I believe I gave her almost her first engagement. I did indeed give Dolores her first engagement—but now we are getting away from the subject."

You have whetted my appetite. Will

you not tell me how it happened to be in your power to give Madame Clara Butt an engagement?

"We will lose ourselves," he replied, with rather an impatient gesture. "If we don't stick to one subject. As time went on," he said hurriedly, as if to get rid of this little aside, "I was an entrepreneur, and lots of 'big' people got their start at my concerts. Madame Clara Butt appeared under me at the Brixton Hall, London, when she was a student at the Royal College. I wonder if I have any programmes left?"

We were in Mr. Bevan's room at the University, and for a moment he burrowed among the papers in his drawer. At last he held a programme out to me, and pointed to his name as one of the conductors.

"My son, 'The mighty river,'" he said, as he turned the pages and disclosed the words of the song, "was sung for the first time by Miss Clara Butt in St. James' Hall, London, on April 23, 1891." The programme bore out what he said. "That was one of my concerts," he added. "Now let us get back to where we left off."