

An Unsolicited Contribution.



A man may be famous without knowing it. I have recently learned that public interest has been aroused by my labors on behalf of the Curate's Augmentation Fund at St. Mark's, Suburban, where I am the curate. The incident through which I became aware of this fact presents many gratifying features.

The fund, which is designed to supplement the curate's inadequate stipend, had not attained its customary proportions during the present year, and the bazaar held to make good the deficiency had failed to achieve financial success, owing to the contributions in kind too frequently taking the form of embroidery work and children's apparel.

In previous years any shortcomings in the fund had been made good by the generosity of Mr. Josiah Bailey, a wealthy and public-spirited member of our church. Upon this occasion, however, he was taking the bracing air of Sheerness, owing to indisposition, and his return was not expected until a fortnight after the quarterly instalment was due.

Under these circumstances the vicar suggested that I might, without impropriety, make personal inquiries into the state of Mr. Bailey's health, which naturally caused us great anxiety. I readily assented.

I had taken my seat in a second-class carriage at Victoria, when I became aware that I was attracting a large amount of attention from the

persons who had assembled upon the platform. One rough man whispered audibly, "That's him!" Another remarked, "That's Smith. Bill Smith to a certainty." Now, my name is Smith—the Rev. William Smith, B.A., Oxon,—but I am not ordinarily addressed by the abbreviated appellation of "Bill."

In a short time there was a crowd round my compartment, though no one entered it, and when the train started, several people wished me good luck in my undertaking. One young woman with frizzy hair over her forehead waved a discolored handkerchief, and shouted a hope that I'd come back a richer man.

As the faces of my well-wishers were unknown to me I conjectured that they were either new parishioners, or those of the casual order, who attend only upon those occasions when soup tickets are distributed. As my projected journey was known to the vicar's wife, it would, I realized, naturally be disseminated through the parish.

At Herne Hill a freckled-faced newsboy looked into my compartment and seeing me in the corner shouted, "That's him. I know him. Look at his nose! Hullo, Mr. Smith!"

Of course this imprudent and very offensive salutation I put down to the effect of bad home training, but I was irritated. My nasal organ bears the marks of an accident at school; but I could discover no justification for such a public recognition of the fact that the results of the injury are obvious. I concluded, therefore, that the youth had heard my name from some fel-

low-passenger and did not mean to insult my cloth—so far as that goes there was excuse for him, as my costume was not markedly clerical.

The journey passed slowly and uneventfully till we reached Chatham. Then two stout men, obviously of Judaic origin, after peering in several times at the window, entered the compartment. They addressed one another as "Ikey" and "Abram." When the train had started they addressed me. "Fine day," the gentleman named Isaac observed.

"Very fine day," I agreed. "Better than last time we met," the one named Abraham stated.

"Er—yes," I assented—I did not remember meeting him, but I am always careful to avoid hurting the feelings of the lower orders. "I don't know how it's going to turn out," I added. The clouds were somewhat threatening.

"I only hope it won't turn out worse than last time," Isaac said. "You took a pony off me, if you remember."

"Ah!" I said. "Yes, yes! I dare say—that is, if I remember. I never ride; but I am fond of driving."

They looked at one another and laughed, as if I had said something funny.

"Driving's all right!" Isaac said. "You took me in fair the night before. When I saw your pals wheeling you home in the barrow, I never dreamed it was all a fake, and you was as sober as I was! And Abram here was positive you wouldn't be able to stand on your legs the next day."

"Come, come!" Abraham protested. "We know you! Though I will say as you're got up a wonderful swell,

and might be a parson almost." "Your conjecture is partly correct," I informed them, "but I think you are under some misapprehension as to my identity."

"We'd make a pretty good guess, anyhow," Isaac declared.

"Come now," I said playfully. "I'll lay you can't guess my name, or where I am going, or what I am going for."

"What will you lay?" He took out a grimy little black book and a pencil. "I did not intend to propose a wager," I explained. "It would be inconsistent with my avocation."

They laughed louder than ever.

"Especially if you were to lay against yourself," Abraham remarked. "Not meaning as you would, of course."

"And I wish I hadn't laid against you, either," Isaac stated. "You've got a soft thing on; and if I'd known what I know now—well, I'd be glad to get out of it for another pony, and that's a fact!"

"Same here," said Abraham. "Will you help us?"

They both looked at me in a curious manner.

"I don't quite understand," I owned; "but if I can assist you in any—any reasonable way, that is—I shall be glad to do so."

They looked at one another and whistled.

"Now you're talking!" Abraham pronounced emphatically. "I told Ikey I knew you."

"I don't think you do," I said with a genial smile. "Suppose you guess."

"What's the good of beating about the bush?" Abraham asked impatient-

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