

Our Contributors.

Surprises.

BY WOODMORE.

This life is full of surprises. It is the unexpected that happens. The unforeseen is evermore "bobbing up serenely" to disturb and disarrange the nicest calculations. "Man proposes: God disposes." Truth is stranger than fiction. Life works out more permutations and combinations than the mathematician knows anything about.

The Irishman said that he had made up his mind to go through life expecting the unexpected so as never to be taken by surprise. I expect that he would find life "too many" for him.

If things would only come out as we plan. But there is the trouble. As Dr. Talmage used to say, "In the problems of life there is always some knotty fraction that will not work out."

We contrive to move very carefully over the board but our opponent has seen a weak point, overlooked by us, and lo! he has checkmated us. It was but a little slip we made but it has settled the case.

Upon little things depends a man's success, and little neglects and shortcomings spell failure. Hence the surprises we get when we review the careers of those we knew in College days. A—made a brilliant figure in all his classes yet, how strange! he has never come forward since. He did not please "that many-headed monster thing"—the public, and must run his course "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," in some back country hamlet. Little mannerism, it may be, ruined the effect of his clever sermons so that he found no favor in the eyes and ears of the congregational "powers that be." He was cold, unimpassioned or over vehement in manner, or had some other blemish of address that prejudiced him in the eyes of those upon whose good opinion his preferment to higher place rested.

B—was no student whatever. His name appeared at the tail of the lists when it did not fail to find a place in them, and everybody predicted failure for him. But they were false prophets, for he has a high and honored place in the Church. The power was in him all undiscovered. He was earnest, he was practical, he knew how to put things. His knowledge, though narrow in range, was at command always, and was always growing, as he toiled over books in the effort to "restore the years the locusts had eaten."

And yet, from the nature of the case, surprises are not normal, but irregular and extraordinary factors in experience. A surprise of a good sort is found in the excellent judgment as a general thing, displayed by congregations in selecting men. Men get what they deserve very largely. "Trifles make perfection yet perfection is no trifle," and it little foxes spoil the vine so much the worse for the vines. Knowing the ordeal he had to face, the sacred orator should have prepared himself at all points. God does not need our ignorance, it is true. Yet we may have wide and accurate information and still fail to please and impress our hearers, for it is not altogether what we

say but how we say it. Many a good meal has been spoiled by bad cooking, causing the poor victim to mutter the old saying "God sent the meat and the devil the cook," and many a fine address has fallen dead because mangled in the utterance. We have all heard of the stammering minister who was taking tea with a parishoner, and who, observing that there was some obstruction in the spout of the tea pot, remarked "I notice that your tea pot does not pour well, madam." Her rather blunt reply was "No, minister, it's like yourself; it is troubled with an ill d. livery." Yet, hesitation in speech once earned a young man a compliment he had no right to. The youthful preacher was holding forth in a Church, when the famous Dr. Thomas Chalmers walked in. The speaker was so dumfounded that he stood absolutely still for a time, recovered his composure. The only remark the magnanimous and somewhat absent-minded Chalmers made to the preacher was "That was a very effective pause you made just as I entered the church, 'Cultivate the pause, Sir! Cultivate the pause!'"

Perhaps, on some other occasion, I shall speak of the surprises we get in our dealings with that "Kittle creature, man."

If We Knew.

H. ISABEL GRAHAM, IN FORWARD.

If we knew the heavy burdens borne by pilgrims passing by,

Would we lend a hand to help them, Christ's compassion in our eye?

Would we pause amid our pleasure just to speak a kindly word,

That would make the cross seem lighter to the soul with sorrow stirred?

"Bear ye one another's burdens" would we hear those accents still

Bend to soothe the weary traveller, and the royal law fulfil?

If we knew how fires of passion change the life and sear the soul

How the flood gates break in pieces when the angry billows roll,

Would we sail along serenely close beside the shelt'ring shore?

Heeding not the weeks that signal ere they sink to rise no more;

Would we scorn the one who stumbles, with the Pharisee's disdain

Proudly draw our mantle closer lest our virtue catch the stain?

If we knew—we cannot fathom Life's strange pain and mystery

Here we see but darkly, dimly, let us then walk reverently,

With a smile of love and pity let us stretch a friendly hand

Even though each others motives we may fail to understand;

Mizpah be our watchword ever till all strife and discord cease

Some day we shall meet with gladness when we reach His plains of peace.

The Century Fund.

At its late meeting the General Assembly carefully sized up the situation of the Common Fund Department of the Century Fund. The payments had been very satisfactory. There was good reason to hope that \$25,000 more would be realized from subscriptions promised to be paid this fall. It appeared, how-

ever, that about \$45,000 would yet be required in order to make up the full \$600,000, together with expenses. The Committee has made no recommendation, but the Assembly took action and ordered the Committee to arrange for a further appeal to all members and adherents, with a view of securing the \$45,000 still required.

The Committee, acting on the Assembly's resolution, have prepared and issued a sufficient quantity of envelopes to reach every family and single person in the Church, and have requested congregational authorities to distribute these, and to appeal for such hearty and liberal response as shall assure the ingathering of amount mentioned. The second and third Sabbaths of October have been suggested for the returning of the envelopes, with the alternative of appointing two other Sabbaths in the Congregations where those suggested may not prove convenient.

The reasons which weighed with the Assembly were such as may well be expected to meet the approval of our Congregations and our people. We had begun the movement with the idea of raising \$600,000 for the Common Fund and \$400,000 for Debt Fund, but now it appears that we have \$900,000 for Debt whilst the Common Fund still lags. No one can fail to understand the importance of paying off so much Debt, and to rejoice that it has been done. But it seems that we should, for that very reason, consider ourselves the more bound to complete the Common Fund according to our original intention and pledge. We have proved that we can do much more than we hoped for at the outset and should never be content till that pledge has been fully implemented. It may surely be assumed that in all our Congregations, and amongst all our right thinking people, this view will be most heartily approved.

Further:—The circumstances of our church and country to day are such that, even if we had fully reached the amount originally proposed, it would be quite in place to make a further appeal. No one could have foreseen at Hamilton the immense strides made in our West Land during three years. No one can estimate to-day the additional requirements of our Mission Work there, during the coming three or five years. The same may be said about our Foreign Work. If we had known the need three years ago as we know it now, would we not have asked at least \$800,000 for Common Fund, and have given very much more largely to these great Missionary enterprises? The Methodist Church has seen the necessities of the case, and the General Conference appeals for at least \$300,000 more, to be given at once and to be wholly applied to their Mission work. Should not their action cause us to realize that not only should we provide the \$45,000 asked for by Assembly, but even make it \$100,000, on the understanding that the surplus shall be wholly applied to our Mission work? An average of one dollar from each family would make up more than a \$100,000 and surely our families, looking to the way in which God has blessed them during the last three years, might well make that average in response to the present appeal.

Some may be disposed to say; "see how much we have already done and do not ask us for more." Let us rather put it in this way; "God has greatly blessed