

Fishing.

BY H. F. ADAMS.

Matt. 4:19. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

In the mind and purpose of the Master, following and fishing were to go together. And what Christ has united, let not man put asunder.

His own life beautifully illustrated these two ideas in perfect unity. While following the Father's will, he reached out after men to become partakers of the divine nature. He asked his followers to do what he found to be his meat and drink, 1st to follow, 2nd to fish.

In the endeavor to expound and apply this text, I have found much profit and instruction in the perusal of a booklet on it, written by a Christian worker out of his experience, J. A. Richards, and I shall weave a good many of his suggestions in this talk.

1. Before men "go a fishing," they are generally filled with the fishing spirit. This spirit is sometimes "catching," especially in the spring of the year.

Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit before he began to fish for men. So were the apostles. They followed Jesus several years before they became fishers of men. After the baptism of the Holy Ghost, not before, Peter on the day of Pentecost threw out the net and drew 3000 into the gospel boat. Why is it that there are so many professing Christians who do not fish for souls? The answer seems to be, they are not filled with the Holy Spirit.

This answer is very apparent when we remember that as the expert angler generally has an Indian guide, because he knows where the fish are, so a fishing Christian must have the Holy Spirit with him, for he knows the haunts and habits of souls. That great fisherman, Paul, was so dependent on the guidance of the Spirit, when he and his helpers "had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not." And the reason is given that in a vision given to Paul that night was a man of Macedonia beseeching him to come over and help us. Spirit-filled fishermen will never lack directions in their divine art.

2. Fishermen usually dress according to their work. When a man goes fishing he does not dress for a ball. A strikingly dressed Christian fisherman may attract the fish from God to himself. As every fisherman knows that it is his business to keep himself out of sight, so a follower of Jesus who won't catch souls, will do well to ponder the following.

A young lady, a new convert, asked her pastor how he thought she ought to dress. His answer was a wise one, to go to neither the extremes of loudness nor quietness, but "to dress so that people will not remember what you wore when you leave a room." That is a good rule for Christian fishermen, and of course, fisherwomen, as we use the term fishers in the generic sense, including both sexes and all races. "Not putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

3. Anglers say that the fish bite better on cloudy days. When the sun of prosperity is shining on men, it is hard to get sinners to do much more than just nibble at the gospel. They go to church, for which we are glad, and they are highly elated by the full cup of good things that is theirs. Preacher throws his line, baited with choice bits of the Word, but the sinner is wary. But suddenly a cloud comes up; sickness, sadness, sorrow, trial, trouble, tribulation, bereavement, bankruptcy, beggary. These are the "dark days" when Christian fishers should get their line to work in earnest, for it is sometimes the "opportunity they must buy up," which comes seldom with many. Souls are more tender then; hungrier for comfort; more accessible; and more responsive. The authorized version of Prov. 11:30 says, "He that winneth souls is wise." But I like the revised version better, "He that is wise winneth souls." The transposition of the words means much to the follower of Jesus who fishes for men. He must be wise before he can win. Nearly all those who came to Jesus were in sore straits. Nearly all the well and wealthy stayed away. They wouldn't bite the gospel bait, only swim around and look at it.

4. The tackle is of several kinds, but most men who fish like a hook and line. Peter at Pentecost was a net fisherman and got a big haul, but this same Peter was caught with hook and line. "Andrew" "He first findeth his own brother Simon," "and he brought him to Jesus." This hook and line method in fishing is the easier of the two. A child can tie a thread on a willow, and with a bent pin for a hook with a worm on it, can get a decent catch of young trout in the brook. So this method in catching souls for Jesus is at once the easiest, possible to the largest number, and, also, the most neglected. A Christian child can do personal work. A bright Sunday school girl was so delighted with what she learned in the Sunday school, that she coaxed her ungodly father to go to. At last he went. Many were the obstacles, but he was enabled to overcome them all. He gave him-

self to God and dedicated his life to his service, then entered upon the work of Sabbath school extension. Mr. Moody knew this man, and said that he succeeded in establishing eleven hundred and eighty Sabbath schools in Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Indiana, and Western Territory, and many of the schools grew into churches.

Are you a one talent Christian? Come on then with hook and line and "go a fishing." It is not hard work, and it is wonderful how the one's mount up. Andrew caught Peter with hook and line; Phillip the Eunuch; Ananias caught Saul of Tarsus; and Paul hooked the jailor and lots of others. And let us not forget the splendid work of the woman of Samaria, and how Phebe caught Apollos and landed him into the gospel boat.

5. The line. You have a hook, a sinker, a float, and good catching bait, but all are useless without a line. And you may sit for days beside the best of fish-filled lakes, but they are all useless without a line. If you want to catch souls for God, you need the hook of faith to be barbed with truth, the sinker of testimony, and a float of sanctified common sense. But before all and uniting all, and holding all in their proper relations, you must have the line of prayer. It need not be "long," but it must be "strong." The first thing every fisher for men does, is to throw out the line of prayer. It seems, (but really it is not so) that the angler's line and the Christian's line go in different directions. He throws his down into the dark muddy waters. Our idea of prayer is that it goes up. But is not God always among the fish, and a fishing prayer will seek him among them. "He is nigh thee."

Believing prayer is a line with a hook on it. A gospel invitation, or a judgmental warning spoken wisely in season form the "living bait." To know just what kind of bait to use, the angler studies both it and the fish. Soul fishers must dig for bait by "searching the Scriptures;" the Bible offers broad acres with fetching bait for sinners, but we must dig for it. And we must know men. How we need to be taught by the great Master fisherman, the Holy Spirit, in this solemn work of fishing for souls. What a record would be written, if all the cases were recorded of souls brought to Jesus in answer to believing prayer!

The old folks living on the farm in Indiana had a son in Boston, unsewed. They had thrown out the line of prayer many times for their boy. This Sabbath, while praying for him, the line had a particularly strong hook of faith on it, and they received assurance that their prayer would be answered. That same evening their son was in Tremont Temple. At the close of the sermon a young fisher for souls spoke to him, and he was caught for Jesus. Correspondence proved that the parents threw the line, the preacher baited the hook, and the young Christian worker used the "landing net" the same evening. "One sower and another reapeth," but they "rejoice together."

A Christian wife threw the line of prayer for the conversion of her husband for 40 years, but failed. Why? Because there was no hook on it. At last she fell into a train of reflections: "I have borne this burden 40 years, I can carry it no further; it is too heavy for me; I must roll it off on God. I feel that I have done. I cannot convert his heart. I can't convert, however much I distress myself. Perhaps I have sinned in distressing myself as I have. God may have seen in me the want of a simple reliance on him, or the want of true and absolute submission to his will. He may have seen me unwilling or afraid to commit the matter of my husband's salvation entirely to him. But I feel that I must, and do thus commit it to him now. I will afflict myself no more. I shall still pray for him, and use such means as may seem advisable, but—saved or lost—I leave the result with God." The next morning she spoke to her husband about his soul's salvation, and two days after he sought and found the Lord.

The line of prayer is good, but it will be in vain unless it have the hook of faith. The bait of the gospel must be accompanied by the sinker of a personal testimony. Then we need the float of an inspired common sense to keep our hook out of the weeds and off the bottom.

I trust we have by this time come to the conclusion that this holy business of fishing for souls is a divine art, and requires to be studied and practiced to become skilled in catching men for Jesus!

6. Pointers for fishers. (1) After the spring the angler lays his rod and line away for another year. It is a cause for severe regret that many Christians get their tackle into use only during a revival, then lay it away till the next revival. Christ never meant his followers act so. Souls are going to hell all the year round, and the Christian ought to be fishing in the streams of life all the year round. If he do not, his line gets short and weak, his hook rusty, his sinker laid away, and his float lost. When he does want to go fishing, by force of some special services, he finds his tackle all snarled up in the garret of his soul, and perhaps his line gnawed into bits by the rats of worldly pleasures.

(2) Some anglers are so impatient to land fish that when fish begin to nibble they get excited, and say or do something to frighten them away. So there are Christian workers who are full of plans, always praying for a

revival, but in too great a hurry to see the blessing, that their fussiness rather drives fish away than draw them to Christ. Hook and line fishing is a quiet business, apparently slow, but this one at a time work has been mightily blessed of God to church and world. Therefore let us possess our souls in patience when we are after men for Jesus. Don't talk so much, don't pray so long, don't scold if the fish nibble your bait away, but put more bait on your hook and wait till you get a bite.

(3) They say a good deal depends on how you throw your line, especially in fly-fishing. Any child can get an expensive tackle all tangled up and useless, catching it onto overhanging branches or fouling it in water weeds. Takes a man of skill to throw it so as to catch a fine salmon.

We ask for some queer things in prayer, and we sometimes blunder awfully when we try to introduce religion to people. Fish are very shy, so are people, at least of religion. So throw your line wisely, winsomely, just in the right place at the right time. Look at our Lord in John 3 and 4. What love, what patience, what self-forgetfulness, what perseverance, and—what success—marked our dear Master in catching Nicodemus and woman of Samaria.

(4) Lastly, the bite. How many things have happened between the fish's bite and—well, what it ended in: a broken line, a stolen bait—or a landing of the fish? Little fish who bite well, one can land it. But if a big fish takes the hook, help is needed. If a strong big fish is on your hook let out your reel, give him time to exhaust himself and his fury. When he stops struggling draw in gently, wisely, quietly; then get a handy friend to slip the landing net right under him and he is safe.

Some souls under conviction are roused to argue, to put absurd questions, and if you try to answer them you may lose your fish. Let out your reel, let out the line of prayer and have faith in God. Be patient he'll come yet. As long as he is hooked you need not worry. If it be hard to land him, get another Christian fisherman to help you with the landing net of consecrated prayer. Next time you meet him you will find the convicted one softening, draw in your reel, hold firm unto the promise, his giving up the struggling and—praise God—he's landed. Jesus said it, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

Lord Roberts.

BY D. A. STEELE, D. D.

I have just finished Lord Roberts' "Forty-one Years in India." In plain style, without any coloring, save that of truth, the veteran tells the story of his life up to the time of re-signing his command and going, as all good Englishmen hope to do, to that country which they call "home." He went out as Second Lieutenant of Artillery, just before the mutiny, and fought all through that struggle against the most formidable insurrection Britain has ever had to meet. His descriptions of the taking of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow are vivid, without being lurid. Indeed there is never the slightest approach to fine writing, no superlatives in describing what is really superb conduct on the part of the British soldier. But neither is it a bold style; it is lucid and presents the scene of march and of battle in so clear a light that the reader has not to wait to consider the meaning of the narrator. It is not a philosophical style like Kinglake's "Crimean Invasion," neither has it that great undertone of patriotism and hero-worship of Napier's "Peninsular War," but it is direct, crisp,—now telling how the sepoy mutineer asked him if he were to be blown from the cannon's mouth, to which he answers a simple "yes," with the remark that "it was a terrible sight and one likely to haunt the beholder for many a long day, but that was what was intended. I carefully watched the sepoys faces to see how it affected them;" now explaining how the almost impossible feat of disarming a native regiment was accomplished by a few determined Europeans. "The commander ordered the disaffected troops to 'pile arms.' Thereupon a sepoy shouted, 'Don't give up your arms! fight for them!' The adjutant of the regiment instantly seized him by the throat and threw him to the ground. The order was repeated and, wonderful to relate, obeyed." The mutiny was a good school for future work, and we find him therefore ready for every new phase of the Indian question—ready to fight, ready to provide for the resting of the troops—he was almost from the first connected with the quartermaster's department—ready to deal wisely with the various peoples of India, making full allowance for their prejudices, religious or otherwise. I do not hesitate to accord to Lord Roberts that meed of statesmanship which is not always combined with the soldierly instinct. His conduct in Afghanistan, after the taking of Kabul, will be found to bear me out in this. But first and last Roberts is the soldier. He sees where an army will be wanted; he counsels the Government to provide for, and hasten forward, such an army; he organizes to the minutest details the force about to start. He watches every man with the eye of a hawk,—notes men with special aptitude and promotes them, and when the stress of battle comes his observation extends to all points of

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