

everything, an' once I got thinkin' about that, an' I asked my father if God made the fishes. He said, course he did, the sea an' all that in 'em is, but somehow that didn't seem to mean nothin' much to me, an' I lost my m'rist agin. An' I read the Scrip'ter account o' Jonah an' the big fish, an' all that in Job about pullin' out levin'g with a hook an' stickin' fish spears in his head, an' some parts in them queer books nigh the end o' the Ole Test'ment about fish ponds an' fish gates an' fish pools, an' how the fishers shall l'ment—everything that I could pick out about fishin' an' sech, but it didn't come home to me: 'twasn't my kind o' fishin' an' I didn't seem ter sense it.

"But one day—it's more'n forty year ago now, but I rec'lect it same's 'twas yest'day, an' I shall rec'lect it forty thousand year from now if I'm round, an' I guess I shall be, I heard—suttin'—diffunt. I was down in the village one Sunday, it wa'n't very good fishin'—the streams was too full; an' I thought I'd jest look into the meetin'-house's I went by. 'Twas the ole union meetin'-house, ye know, an' they hadn't got no reg'lar s'ply, an' ye never knowed what kind ye'd hear, so 'twas kind o' excitin'.

"'Twas late, most 'leven o'clock, an' the s'rm'n had begun. There was a strange man a preachin', some one from over to the hotel. I never heard his name, I never seed him from that day to this, but I knowed his face. Queer enough I'd seed him a fishin'. I never knowed he was a min'ster, he didn't look like one. He went about like a real fisherman, with ole clo'es, an' ole hat with hooks stuck in it, an' big rubber boots, an' he fished, reely fished, I mean—ketch'd 'em. I guess 'twas that made me hiss'n a little sharper 'n us'al, for I never seed a fishin' min'ster afore. Elder Jacks'n, he said 'twas a sin'fl-waste o' time, an' ole Parson Loomis he'd an idee it was cruel an' om'marciful, so I'd thought I'd jest see what this man 'd preach about, an' I settled down to hiss'n to the s'rm'n.

"But there wa'n't no s'rm'n, not what I'd been raised to think was the on'y true kind. There wa'n't no heads, no fustlys nor sec'ndlys, nor fin'ly b'athrins, but the fust thing I knowed I was hearin' a story, an' 'twas a fishin' story. 'Twas about some one—I hadn't the least idee then who 'twas, an' how much it all meant—some one that was d'reffle fond o' fishin' and fishermen, some one that sot everythin' by the water, an' useter go along by the lakes an' ponds, an' sail on 'em, an' talk with the men that was fishin'. An' how the fishermen all liked him, an' asked his 'dvice, an' done jest's he telled 'em about the likeliest places to fish; an' how they allers ketch'd more fer mindin' him; an' how when he was a preachin' he wouldn't go into a big meetin'-house an' talk to rich folks all s'licked up, but he'd jest go out in a fishin' boat an' ask the men to shove out a mite, an' he'd talk to the folks on shore, the fishin' folks, an' their wives, an' the boys an' gals playin' on the shore. An' then, best of everythin', he telled how when he was a choosin' the men to go about with him an' help him, an' larn his ways so's to come a'ter him, he fust o' all picked out the men he'd seen every day fishin'; an' mebbe fished with himself, for he knowed 'em, an' knowed he could trust 'em.

"An' then he telled us about the day when this preacher come along by the lake—a d'reffle sightly place, this min'ster said; he'd seed it hussel when he was trav'lin' in them countries—an' come acrost two men he knowed well; they was brothers, an' they was a fishin'. An' he jest asked 'em in his pleasant-spoken, frien'ly way—there wa'n't never sech a drawin', takin', lovin' way with any one afore as this man had, the min'ster said—he jest asked 'em to come along with him; an' they lay

down their poles an' their lines an' everythin', an' jused him. An' then he come along a spell further, an' he see two boys out with their ole father, an' they was settin' in a boat an' fixin' up their tackle, an' he asked 'em if they'd jine him too, an' they jest dropped all their things, an' left the ole man with the boat an' the fish an' the bait, an' follered the preacher. I don't tell it very good. I've read it an' read it sence that; but I want to make ye see how it sounded to me, how I took it, as the min'ster telled it that summer day in Francony meetin'. Ye see I'd no idee who the story was about, the man put it so plain, in common kind o' talk, without any come-to-passes an' whuffers an' thuffers, an' I never conceited 'twas a Bible narr'tive.

"An' so fust thing I knowed I says to myself, 'That's the kind o' teacher I want. If I could come acrost a man like that I'd jest foller him too, through thick an' thin.' Well, I can't put the reat on it into talk very good; 'taint jest the kind o' thing to speak on 'fore folks, even sech good friends as you. I ain't the sort to go back on my word—fishermen aint, ye know—an' what I'd said to myself 'fore I knowed who I was bindin' myself to, I stuck to afterwards when I knowed all about him. For 'tant for me to tell ye, who've got so much more larnin' than me, that there was a d'reffle lot more to that story than the fishin' part. That lovin', givin' up, suff'rin', dyin' part, ye know it all yerself, an' I can't kinder say much on it, 'cept when I'm jest all by myself, or—long o' him.

"That a'ternoon I took my ole Bible that I hadn't read much since I growed up, an' I went out into the woods 'long the river, an' 'stid o' fishin' I jest sot down an' read that hull story. Now ye know it yerself by heart, an' ye've knowed it all yer born days, so ye can't begin to tell how new an' astonishin' 'twas to me, an' how findin' so much fishin' in it kinder helped me to unnerstan' an' b'leve it every mite, an' take it right hum to me to foller an' live up to 's long 's I live an' breathe. Did I ever think on it, reely? I tell ye, his r'ligin's a fishin' r'ligin' all through. His friends was fishin' folks; his pulpit was a fishin' boat, or the shore o' the lake; he loved the ponds an' streams; an' when his d'sciples went out fishin', if he didn't go hisself with 'em, he'd go a'ter 'em, walkin' on the water, to cheer 'em up an' comfort 'em.

"An' he was allers 'round the water; for the story'll say, 'he come to the sea-shore,' or 'he begun to teach by the sea-side,' or agin, 'he entered into a boat,' an' 'he was in the stern o' the boat, asleep.'

"An' he used fish in his mir'cles. He fed the crowd o' folks on fish when they was hungry, bought 'em from a little chap on the shore. I've oft'n thought how tickled that boy must 'a' been to have him take them fish. Mebbe they wa'n't nothin' but shiners, but the fust the little feller'd ever ketch'd, an' boys sot a heap on their fust ketch. He was d'reffle good to child'en, ye know. An' who'd he come to a'ter he'd died an' ris agin? Why, he come down to the shore 'fore daylight, an' looked off over the pond to where his ole frien' was a fishin'. Ye see they'd gone out just to quiet their minds an' keep up their sperrits; there's nothin' like fishin' for that, ye know, an' they'd been in a heap o' trouble. When they was settin' up the night afore, worryin' and wond'rin' an' s'misin' what was goin' ter become on 'em without their Master, Peter got kinder despit, an' he up an' says in his quick way, says he, 'Anyway, I'm goin' a fishin'.' An' they all see the sense on it—any fisherman would—an' they says, says they, 'Well go 'long too.' But they didn't ketch anythin'. I suppose they couldn't fix their minds on it, an' everythin' went wrong lika. But when mornin' came creepin' up over the mountin's, fust thin' they knowed they see him on the bank,

and he allel out to 'em to know if they'd ketch'd anythin'. The water jest run down my cheeks when I heard t' a min'ster tell that, an' it kinder make my eyes wet every time I think on't. For 't seems 'a if it might 'a' been me in that boat, who heerin' that vice I loved so d'reffle well, speak up agin so that nat'ral from the bank there. An' he eat some o' their fish! O' course he done it to sot their minds easy, to show 'em He wa'n't quite a sperrit yit, but jest their own ole frien' who'd been out in the boat with 'em so many, many times. But seems to me, jest the fac' he done it kinder makes fish and fishin' diffunt from any other thing in the hull wirth. I tell ye them four books that give his story is chock full o' things that go right to the heart o' fishermen. Nets, an' hooks, an' boats, an' the shores, an' the sea, an' the mountin's, Peter's fishin'-coat, lilies, an' sparrers, an' grass o' the fields, an' all about the evenin' sky bein' red or lowerrn', an' fair or foul weather.

"It's an out-doors, woody, country story, 'sides bein' the heav'nliest one that was ever telled. I read the hull Bible, as a duty ye know. I read the epis'les, but somehow they don't come home to me. Paul was a great man, a d'reffle smart scholar, but he was raised in the city, I guess, and when I go from the gospels into Paul's writin's it's like goin' from the woods an' hills an' streams o' Francony into the streets of a big city like Concord or Manchester."

The old man did not say much of his after life and the fruits of this strange conversion, but his neighbours told us a great deal. They spoke of his unselfishness, his charity, his kindly deeds; told of his visiting the poor and unhappy, nursing the sick. They said the little children loved him, and every one in the village and for miles around trusted and leaned upon Fishin' Jimmy. He taught the boys to fish, sometimes the girls too; and while learning to cast and strike, to whip the stream, they drank in knowledge of higher things, and came to know and love Jimmy's "fishin' r'ligin'." I remember they told me of a little French-Canadian girl, a poor, wretched waif, whose mother, an unknown tramp, had fallen dead in a road near the village. The child, an untamed little heathen, was found clinging to her mother's body in an agony of grief and rage, and fought like a tiger when they tried to take her away. A boy in the little group attracted to the spot ran away, with a child's faith in his old friend, to summon Fishin' Jimmy. He came quickly, lifted the little savage tenderly, and carried her away.

No one witnessed the taming process, but in a day or two the pair were seen together on the margin of Black Brook, each with a fish-pole. Her dark face was bright with interest and excitement as she took her first lesson in the art of angling. She jabbered and chattered in her old patois, he answered in broadest New England dialect, but the two quite understood each other, and though Jimmy said afterward that it was "d'reffle to hear her call the fish pois'n," they were soon great friends and comrades. For weeks he kept and cared for the child, and when she left him for a good home in Bethlehem, one would scarcely have recognized in the gentle, affectionate girl the wild creature of the past. Though often questioned as to the means used to effect this change, Jimmy's explanation seemed rather vague and unsatisfactory. "'Twas fishin' done it," he said; "on'y fishin'; it allers works. The Christian r'ligin' itself had to begin with fishin', ye know."

But one thing troubled Fishin' Jimmy. He wanted to be a "fisher of men." That was what the Great Teacher had promised he would make the fishermen who left their boats to follow him. "I allers tried to think," he said, "that 'twas me in