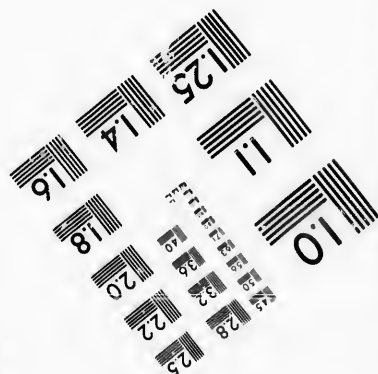
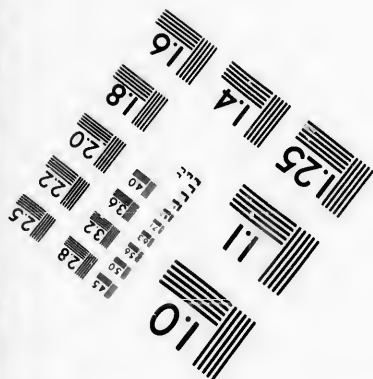
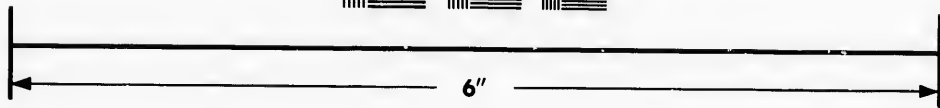
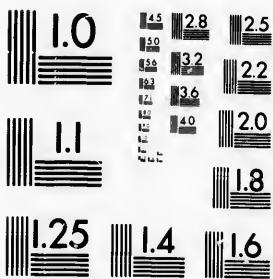


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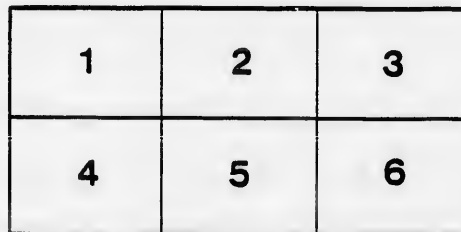
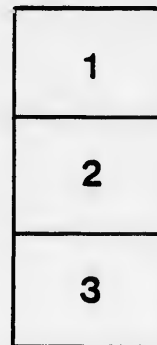
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A FISHERMAN'S FOLLY

BY THE REVEREND A. B. MACKAY, D.D.
CRESCENT STREET CHURCH MONTREAL
LATE CHAPLAIN ROYAL SCOTS GREYS



“Lest we forget.”

AB

MACKAY, ALEXANDER BISSET
A fisherman...

Canadian
pamphlet

Ma
phlet

A FISHERMAN'S FOLLY

— BY —

THE REV. A. B. MACKAY, D.D.

MINISTER OF THE CRESCENT STREET
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MONTREAL.
LATE CHAPLAIN ROYAL SCOTS GREYS



— 1900 —

MORTON, PHILLIPS & CO., PRINTERS,
MONTREAL.

The following Sermon
Preached on the Sabbath after
The Relief of Ladysmith
is dedicated to
My Young Men's Bible Class
at whose request it was printed.

A FISHERMAN'S FOLLY.

HABAKKUK 1, 16: "He sacrificeth to his net and burneth incense to his drag."

What have we here? A fisherman's folly. Look at him. What is he doing? Offering up a sacrifice to his net, as if it were a god, and burning incense to his drag. What leads him to do this? His great success, a big catch of fishes. So elated is he, so intoxicated with his astounding haul, that he loses his senses and actually deifies his net and drag, ascribes all his success to these instruments of his calling. Well, what better could you expect from a poor, ignorant, superstitious fisherman? But no one is so stupid

now. I am not so sure of that. I think this may be

A MODERN FISHERMAN'S FOLLY.

I have known some very pious fishermen who ascribed all their success in their precarious calling to Almighty God. Before they shot their nets I have known such bare their heads while the captain of the boat asked God to give them good success. I have known them resolve to give their first haul, whatever it was, to the service of the Saviour, as the first fruits of their increase. I remember one, a most successful fisher in Scotland, who has a European reputation for his technical skill, who was consulted by the Swedish Government as to the development of the fisheries in Norway and Sweden, and who for his services was enrolled in one of their orders of nobility. That fisherman is a devout Christian, and again and again as he has pointed to his stake nets in the German ocean has he said to me, "We may do

all that skill and experience can suggest, but without the hand of God we cannot catch a fin, far less reap the harvest of the deep." Such a man would not be guilty of this folly. But I knew others in my native town who laughed at that man's piety, who said it was all rubbish, sheer cant. It is carefulness and skill and knowledge of the weather and how the fish run to which all success is due, *i.e.*, their intelligence and skill in the use of the net and drag are the little gods to whom they burn the incense of their vanity. Their idolatry is not so gross and palpable as that of the ancient fisherman, but is just as real. But

A MERCHANT'S FOLLY.

He also is a fisherman, goldfish being his spoil, and he also can imitate this ancient mariner in his folly. When a speculation turns out very profitable and he gets a good haul;

when stocks rise here and fall there as he had foreseen ; when everything works smoothly with that masterly combination, does he not congratulate himself on his shrewdness, his promptness, his ability to get on the inner track ? Does he not attribute to these his success ? Or it may be he gives all the credit to his industry, his integrity, his uprightness. What is he doing ? Sacrificing to his net and burning incense to his drag. Who bestowed upon him all these good qualities which have made him so successful ? Should not He be thanked and praised and practically acknowledged by **the** consecration of his substance to His service ? Should not **great** prosperity be the cause of deeper gratitude and humility ? But how frequently has it the very opposite effect ? This is also

A CHURCH'S FOLLY.

When things are very prosperous in a congregation to

what do we attribute the prosperity? A splendid church building, a rich and fashionable congregation, an eloquent minister, a magnificent organ, an unmatched organist and a peerless choir? In how many congregations is there an idolatry of wealth, refinement, learning, eloquence? Should there be none of these things and no reverential and seemly worship of God? By no means, but let us see that all our trust is in the Lord and not in such things, otherwise we also sacrifice to our net and burn incense to our drag. This is also

A CHRISTIAN WORKER'S FOLLY.

A pious and very successful Scottish minister writes: "I see that few can bear to be instruments in conversion; there is such a tendency to become proud and lifted up." This testimony is true. Salvation is of the Lord. If a man

attributes it to himself he is sacrificing to his net and burning incense to his drag. And God is very jealous of His glory as a Saviour. I heard a man say publicly in this city, not very long ago, that he could save souls as easily as he could raise wheat. I am not surprised to hear that already that man is spiritually a wreck, that so far as usefulness in saving souls is concerned, he is dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel. God is not mocked. He has sent us to be fishers of men, but if we have any confidence in our own skill or might He will not bless our efforts. We may toil all night and catch nothing. Only as we follow and imitate Jesus and put down the nets at His bidding can we have good success. Paul may plant and Apollos may water; God alone can give the increase. The fisherman's folly is bad, the merchant's folly is worse, but worst of all is the folly

of those who, engaged in the Lord's work, trust in anything but Himself. His word is plain: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Therefore let no Christian worker be so idolatrous as to sacrifice to his net or burn incense to his drag.

However, Habakkuk had more in his eye than fishermen, ancient or modern, when he wrote these words. He saw here

A CONQUEROR'S FOLLY.

This, indeed, is the great thought he wishes to express, and he only uses the fisherman's folly as a picture of the conqueror's. The people of the earth are like shoals of fish, and conquerors are like fishermen, enclosing them in their nets and thus "making their portion fat and their meat plenteous." General Roberts made a great haul the other

day when he so gloriously reversed the disaster of Majuba.

Habakkuk's simile is a very faithful picture of the practices of politicians and conquerors in all ages and places. Herodotus tells us that the Scythians offered a yearly sacrifice of sheep and horses to the scimitar as the symbol of Mars. Especially did this Hebrew seer have in his eye these Chaldean conquerors who oppressed Israel. Nothing seemed able to stand before them, as we read in verses 6 to 11, therefore the conqueror is described as one whose "might is his god." "He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net and gathereth them in his drag; therefore he rejoiceth and is glad; therefore he sacrificeth to his net and burneth incense to his drag." These old world conquerors ascribe all to their arms, to their power, to their military skill, to the number of their soldiers.

to the celerity of their movements. And they did the same four hundred years ago. Hear what the greatest exegete of that age says on this subject. Commenting on this passage he writes: "This is after the manner of all conquerors. They may indeed say that kings rule through God's grace, and when they gain the victory they may offer prayers and pay vows and sing Te Deums. But all this is scenic, theatrical, fitted and intended to show off their own importance, and were one to say to this conqueror, 'God had mercy on you,' the answer would be, 'What, was then my preparation nothing? Did I not provide many things beforehand? Did I not obtain the friendship of many? Did I not form confederacies? Did I not see such and such disadvantages? Did I not opportunely provide a remedy? In a word, they sacrifice apparently to God, but afterward

they have a regard mainly to their drag and net, and make nothing of God."

Far too much of this spirit is manifested in our own day, and therefore we require to be constantly on our guard against this great evil, as individuals and as a nation, if we are not to forfeit the favour of God; for "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble." It seems to me that in the events which have taken place in South Africa God has been teaching the British Empire through its length and breadth to put far from them this great sin and not to forget Him who ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Great outward prosperity is as apt to destroy an Empire as an individual. In both cases, pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. At the great Jubilee there was much to foster this

spirit, and perhaps no better counteractive went forth than the winged words of the Recessional—"Lest we forget; lest we forget." The opening events of the campaign in South Africa echoed, every one of them, that refrain, and made thoughtful Britons everywhere ask themselves, "Have we forgot? Have we forgot?" Have we shut out God in great measure from our national life, and is He speaking to us, reminding us of our utter dependence on Him in the present, and His goodness to us as a nation in the past. We needed, as a nation, to learn the lesson which Churchill learned when he escaped from Pretoria. The courage, the coolness, the audacity, the vigour, the skill, the ready resource he displayed were all admirable; but as he lay hiding in that clump of trees on the first day of his escape, having no notion of his whereabouts, he had no confidence in his

own might or skill. He felt that except God heard his cry and helped him his escape was hopeless. He entered into the spirit of what has been called Robinson Crusoe's text, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee." Let us learn the same lesson. I glory with you all in the great deeds that have been done, in the grand deliverance that has been wrought, and it gives exceeding emphasis to our exultation to know that our own Canadians have borne themselves so nobly. The achievements of our troops, Home and Colonial; English, Irish, Scotch; infantry, cavalry, artillery; both branches of the service, Army and Navy, have equalled the grandest deeds done in our history, and not a man has flinched. Have there ever been struggles more desperate than those of this war? Has there ever been a defence more heroic than that of Ladysmith against

such overwhelming odds and under such sore privations? Was there ever more brilliant strategy than that of Roberts, or more dogged tenacity than that of Buller, or more lofty heroism than that of White? The mention of such names and their noble followers sends a thrill through every fibre of our being. Yet while we do not forget any of these things, let us ascribe all our success to Him to whom it is due—the Lord of Hosts. “Not unto us, Lord—not unto us, but to Thy name give glory.” We believe that the battle is the Lord’s; for this is a conflict to support the eternal claims of righteousness between man and man, and every cry of the oppressed is a prayer to God on our own behalf. Therefore as He has vouchsafed such success, let us ascribe all the glory to Him. Our Gracious Queen has set the Empire a noble example. She commences her telegrams of

congratulations both to General Buller and to General White with the words, "I thank God." We know that this is no pious formula, no piece of cant on her part, but the truest and deepest expression of her heart, a heart that hates war. And it is hopeful to see this feeling echoed in the daily press of England. What could be better than these words of the London *Daily Mail*: "Almighty God, whose arm is strength, has blessed the efforts of General Buller's army with complete victory and the cause of freedom has triumphed once more." In this hour of world-wide exultation let us imitate the piety of our Queen, let us not be so foolish, so idolatrous, so brutish, as to sacrifice to our net or burn incense to our drag.



