

CATCHING THE FISHERMAN

In many places along the Ohio River are to be seen small boats or shacks of fishermen who spend year after year fishing and hunting. One afternoon in springtime a party of five persons, of whom I happened to be one, decided to take two or three days' vacation and spend the time in fishing along the Ohio River. Our equipment consisted of a rowboat, a tent, and a necessary camping and fishing outfit.

After rowing down the stream a few miles, we stopped at what we considered a suitable place, and pitched our tent. As we were not very successful in fishing, later in the afternoon some of our party went further upstream to fish. During their absence I became ill, and, going a short distance from the riverside, I lay down upon a brush heap. After lying there for some time I heard groanings in the distance. My first thought was that some of our number had been hurt, and although I was quite ill, I concluded I was not so ill but that I could pray the prayer of faith for some one who might be in a worse condition. Therefore I arose and started in the direction from whence came the groanings. I had gone but a short distance when I saw a man dragging a double-barreled shotgun with the locks set, so that the gun could be easily discharged.

He did not, however, happen to be one of our party, but was a fisherman about forty-five years of age, who was cursing, moaning, and groaning in such a manner as I had not heard in many days.

He did not know that any one was near, and upon my approach he stopped. I inquired the cause of his trouble. With an oath he replied that he was suffering more than death and that he had decided to put an end to his miserable existence. Between his oaths he told me that he was suffering excruciating pain and that he had endured such from time to time for many years. Occasionally for days at a time he would have attacks of suffering that seemed almost beyond endurance. During these times he would become very irritable and would make life miserable not only for himself but for his wife and family. He had a good wife and two or three lovely children, but he said, I intend to put an end to this life of torture."

Then he showed me his gun, which he had so arranged that it could be easily discharged by a stick or brush while he was dragging it after him, and which he had placed against his body in such a position that, when discharged, it would put an end to his life. He said he hesitated to blow his brains out by pulling the trigger himself, as he did not wish to disgrace his family by killing himself in such a way that people would know that he had committed suicide; he wished it to appear that his death was accidental. After talking to him for a few minutes, I told him that the Lord was able to deliver him out of all his troubles, and could not only take away his pain, but give him peace in his soul. As I told him of others whom God had delivered out of serious trouble, he became interested and finally

consented to have prayer in his behalf, although he still occasionally gave vent to his feelings with an oath.

I called the other brethren of our party, and when they learned of the situation, we knelt down and prayed that the Lord might have mercy upon him and also touch his body and remove the pains. Almost instantly he was relieved of his sufferings, and as we instructed him in the ways of salvation, conviction seized hold of him, and he himself began to call on God for pardon. Before we left him, he was rejoicing on account of the blessings of God upon his soul.

He made inquiry concerning our success in fishing, and said: "Come and go with me. I have a houseboat a short distance up the river and have my lines set. You can have all the fish you can eat. My wife is a good cook, and you will not be in want so far as cooking your fish is concerned." Furthermore, he was anxious to bear the good news of his salvation to his wife. He also told us that near his houseboat there was an excellent place to pitch our tent. We decided to move our outfit to the place he suggested, and he went home praising the Lord. Upon our arrival his wife, who realized the great change in her husband, was rejoiced to meet us. She hurriedly prepared supper for us while we pitched our tent near by.

After supper the fisherman, being desirous of learning all he could about the Bible and the Christian life, came and spent some time with us, and after a time his wife also came. As we were about ready to have our evening worship, she was

invited to remain with us until after worship. As we read from the Bible, sang, prayed, and testified of the goodness of God, she also became convicted of her sins and began to call upon God for mercy. She soon received the witness of the pardon of her sins, and began shouting the praises of God at the top of her voice. It was almost like a little camp meeting.

The next morning we arose early to prepare to return home. Just about the break of day the fisherman and his wife came to us asking to be baptized, and straightway they went down into the water and were baptized. We went our way feeling that, while we had not been very successful in catching fish, we were well repaid by catching the fisherman.

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