



A FISHER OF MEN AND A FISHERMAN.

ONE day, a summer or two ago, a gentleman whose real name we withhold—just whom for convenience we will call Mr. Ainslie—was walking along the beach at Brighton, England, when he was accosted by a rough-looking fisherman, who had just pulled ashore and hauled up his boat. “Beg pardon, sir,” he said, with haste in his tone, “but can you tell me whether that gentleman’s going to preach to-day?” “I do not know any gentleman who is going to preach,” answered Mr. Ainslie; “I should not think it likely that any one will preach to-day; it is not Sunday.” “But this gentleman preaches any day that folks will come to hear him,” persisted this man,

evidently trying to keep up his hopes in the face of discouragement; "he aint a parson, you know." Mr. Ainslie did not know any thing about it, nor did he care, and he was strongly inclined to say so and to walk on, but there was something in the rough, weather-beaten old face that interested him, and he inquired, "What is the name of the gentleman?" "I don't rightly know that, sir; it's rather a noble kind of a name, and he's a noble man too! I aint got much of a memory, but I'd know it if I heard it; and I'm well-nigh sure that, as I went down to my boat this morning, I heard a gentleman tell another that he was going to preach to-day. But I'm going along there," he added, pointing to a wooden erection at a little distance covered with posters and placards. "I thought there might be a bill about it stuck up, and somebody'll read it for me; I'm no scholar myself." "I am going that way," said Mr. Ainslie, whose curiosity was now rather excited; "come along with me, and we will see what we can make out."

In another minute the two were standing before the varied notices of promenade concerts, theater benefits, etc., all putting forth their rival claims to public attention. Very prominent among the rest was the simple announcement: "Lord Radstock at the Pavilion at two o'clock P. M." Mr. Ainslie read it out, and the old man's face brightened. "That's him! I told you he had a grand name! I must be off now." "But stop, my good fellow, what makes you so anxious to hear him?" asked Mr. Ainslie. "I should not have thought it would have mattered to you whether the preacher had a titled name or not." "That's not it," said the fisherman decidedly, "it's because he told me all about somebody else that's got a title, and that's come to be my friend. I remember *his* name, because I've spoken to him every day since, and he speaks back again, and some good talks we've had together in the boat at nights; they call him Lord Jesus Christ; do you happen to have heard tell of him, sir?"

Yes, Mr. Ainslie had heard of him often

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enough ; but his heart had never been stirred with joy at the news that he was willing to be his friend, as had the heart of the simple old fisherman. He turned quietly in the direction of the town, and motioned to his companion to walk by his side, hoping that he would go on talking ; nor was he disappointed, for old Jim Waters was in the state the hymn describes :

“ My heart is full of Christ, and longs
Its glorious matter to declare ; ”

and finding Mr. Ainslie willing to listen, he gave him the history of his first hearing Lord Radstock. “ My old woman was ailing, you see, sir, and a good lady came to see her, and she told us about the preaching, and asked her to go, and I went just to please her, for I had never troubled myself much about that sort of thing. Still I'd been to different places of worship in my time, but this gentleman didn't speak like any body I'd ever heard in any of them ; he just spoke straight away without any ins and outs, no more words than were wanted, sir, just as if he'd got something to say that he

wanted very much to tell us, because he thought it would be good for us. It reminded me," the old man went on, "of us fishermen when we're out, sir; we want no nonsense, and we're bad about it if we catch nothing, and it seemed much the same with him; he was in real earnest, and no mistake." "Then what difference has there been in you since you heard this sermon?" inquired Mr. Ainslie; "perhaps you were an unsteady, swearing man, and you made up your mind then to turn over a new leaf; was that it?" "I cannot say that I was an unsteady man, sir, for I'd been joined teetotal for ten years, and though I might rap out an oath by chance, I was no great hand at it like some of my mates. But I'd never thought about God, except to hope he wouldn't be over particular at last; and when the preacher asked, what preparation are you making for eternity? I knew I'd made no more than if there was no eternity at all. And he talked about the Lord Jesus Christ coming out of heaven to die for us, "that whosoever believed in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" and he said

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that was God's way of showing mercy; that any body that felt he was a sinner, and was sorry for it, and wanted to live a real Christian life and get ready for heaven, Jesus Christ would be there, and would take away his sins, and put him on the right road as soon as he asked him. So I began to pray to him right away, and when I came home I told my old dame, and she prayed too, and we've been praying, off and on, ever since, and we're as happy as larks now, because we know that the Lord Jesus Christ has put our hearts right."

It was wonderful that Mr. Ainslie should listen so patiently to words on such a subject. He had always entertained the thought that religion consisted in attendance at church once at least on the Sunday, and in a respectable, moral life; but for the rest he had, like Jim Waters, trusted in a vague way to God's mercy for making all right at last. Now he was brought face to face with true Bible religion: the heart cleansed from sin by the precious blood of Christ; the life made right

and happy afterward by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in a moment a strange, uncomfortable conviction seized him *that he had all his life been wrong in the sight of God.*

They had ascended the steps from the beach, had crossed the esplanade, and were in front of Brill's Hotel, and here Mr. Ainslie halted for a moment, for he was staying there, and luncheon would be ready. Jim touched his hat, and respectfully bade him "Good-day ;" adding, "I'll beat up for the Pavilion now, it's sure to be full." "But you have had no dinner?" said Mr. Ainslie. "No matter that, sir," replied Jim, his voice ringing with gladness, "it's little I care for eating when I can hear words like his ; chances are that you forget all about it." The true manliness of Mr. Ainslie's nature was roused. "I will not care more for eating and drinking than that fine old fellow does," he thought to himself, and as soon as he saw Jim fairly on his way to the Pavilion he prepared to follow.

The words of the noble preacher that day fell on at least two hearts that were as pre-

pared soil. The old fisherman, with glistening face, listened to the truth, and to him it was "meat and drink." The intelligent, refined man, to whom life had already brought so many good gifts, but who had never found the satisfying food for which his immortal nature craved, listened too, and he felt that the Saviour had said truly, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." And, looking back on the past, he saw that in another respect his experience and that of Jim Waters had run parallel—*he had made no provision for eternity*. But that day, with a deep consciousness of sin, he beheld the Lamb of God, whose blood "cleanseth from all sin," and like the brave young military officer, known and loved so well and so widely, (Captain Hedley Vicars,) he resolved, "If that verse be true for me, henceforth I will live, by the grace of God, as a man should live who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ!"