

### HAROLD FISHER.

"Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,"  
 . . . , and hath not left his peer."

Those words of Milton express the thought that was in the minds of the people of Ottawa on the night of Wednesday, December 19th, 1928, when it became known that Harold Fisher was no more. As the news spread a cloud of gloom settled down upon the City, and the first shock of the announcement that a few days illness had terminated fatally was quickly followed by a deep sense of personal loss. Such was the Capital's immediate reaction to the death of a man who for a quarter of a century had enriched its citizenship by the display of a combination of qualities seldom placed at the service of the public.

Educated at Toronto University and Osgoode Hall, Harold Fisher in 1903 embarked upon the practice of law with an intellectual and legal equipment of a high order. Soon after his admission to the Bar, the writer, on the recommendation of two of the leading lawyers of Toronto in whose office he had been a student, invited him to come to Ottawa and enter into partnership. The invitation was accepted and that was the beginning of a long and happy association. Of an essentially judicial mind, Mr. Fisher, by constant study, painstaking care, and close application to his work, speedily won the confidence of his clients, as well as the esteem of Bench and Bar. Devoted to his profession, he was zealous in maintaining its best traditions and, whether engaged in Court or in his office, he held high the standards of legal practice. "Never do anything as a lawyer which you would not do as a gentleman," he was fond of saying. And to that injunction Harold Fisher was always true.

As further illustrating his constant attitude towards his chosen profession there may be quoted a letter that he sent a few years ago to a young man who had been a student in his office, and who, upon being admitted to the Bar, wrote to him asking for some advice. With his usual kindness and thoroughness Mr. Fisher replied to his correspondent as follows:

Dear John:—

I am in receipt of yours of the 26th instant. I am interested in knowing that you have located and wish you every success. If there is anything we can do at any time to help you please let me know. At any time you have

any troubles where you think my advice would be of any value, you can be sure that I will be very glad to let you have it. This applies to law or anything else.

I do not think I can give you any advice that would not be unnecessary. What you want to do is to give the people of your locality the idea that you are reliable and able to do your work, and the best way to accomplish that is to be reliable and to be able to do your work. You have to do anything that comes to hand, no matter how small. At the same time, you should be prepared for anything, no matter how big. That means that you should keep on studying. Something always depends on the way a man starts. You should dress and live as well as you can, and should endeavour to mix with the substantial people of the community. Keep away from the wrong kind of people and keep them away from you. They can do you more harm than almost anything else. When you have a job to do always do it the best you know how. That helps you in two ways. It helps you to do better work, and, before long, people will come to know that you can be relied on.

What finer advice could be given a young lawyer at the threshold of his professional career! There stood Harold Fisher—self-revealed. It was, therefore, no surprise to his friends, but rather in the natural order of things that, by reason of a general recognition of his sterling qualities and his legal attainments, he was created a King's Counsel, and, later, was offered an appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Ontario. While fully appreciating the honour and dignity that such an appointment carries with it Mr. Fisher, for personal and private reasons, declined the offer and remained in practice.

But it was not as a lawyer only that Harold Fisher was known to his fellow-citizens. Entering into the social and municipal life of the Capital he found an outlet for his manifold energies through membership in various Clubs and in the City Council. He was an ardent fisherman and no less devoted to golf. Although he did not make friends easily, he did win the friendship of a surprisingly large number of people, and such friendships, once formed, became as firmly based as Gibraltar itself.

In municipal politics he began at the bottom and went to the top. First as an Alderman, then as Controller, and, finally, as Mayor, he brought to the discussion and handling of the city's business a trained mind, a vigour and a freshness of view, a reputation for integrity, and a practical and humane course of action, that made the citizens realize that a new and better era had dawned with Harold Fisher's advent at the City Hall. In the service of the public he was untiring and absolutely unselfish. Of that he gave conspicuous proof in 1918 when the prevailing influenza epidemic swept the city. He was foremost in organizing the work of

relief, and, indifferent to the risks he ran, he laboured day and night to succour the afflicted—very often in quarters and amid surroundings from which the stoutest heart might well shrink. No doubt his experiences at that time brought home to him the need of better and more commodious hospital accommodation. To supply that need he forthwith bent all his energies. It is largely to his initiative and driving force that Ottawa owes its magnificent Civic Hospital overlooking the Dominion Experimental Farm, which will always be regarded as the crowning monument of Harold Fisher's work in behalf of his fellow-citizens.

After his career in municipal affairs Mr. Fisher entered Provincial politics, and was elected to represent one of the Ottawa seats in the Legislature at Toronto. Although he ran as a Liberal such was his popularity at the time that Party lines were, to a large extent, eliminated, and he received the votes of a great many Conservatives. In the Legislature he took a commanding place at once and was selected as the Opposition financial critic. The penetrating insight and practical grasp of public business that he displayed in his speeches marked him as a force to be reckoned with if he should continue in the Provincial field. However, his preferences were in other directions, and he retired at the end of his first legislative term. From that time until death claimed him as its own Harold Fisher was immersed in the business of his clients.

In this feverish age the lesson of such a man's life is apt to be lost sight of if his friends do not pay tribute to his memory and offer his career as an example for others to follow. This is an attempt to do both.

No limits of race or creed or country circumscribed Harold Fisher's sympathies. His nature was all-embracing. His religion was expressed in deeds rather than in words. He forgave his enemies; he was the brother of all the poor and struggling; he devoted his talents to the service of his fellow-creatures and he preached and practised the Gospel of Kindness. The list of his charities is known only to the Recording Angel.

A philosopher once said that "All a man carries in his cold, dead, hands across the Valley of Silence is what he has freely given away." Applying that philosophy to the subject of this sketch there is comfort for his friends in the reflection that of the multitudes who have crossed the Valley of Silence there were few as richly laden with the fruits of countless benefactions as was Harold Fisher on his journey to his Home beyond the Stars.

Ottawa.

CHARLES MURPHY.