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ABIGAIL

STORY BY THE "HIGHWAY AND BYWAY" PREACHER

(Copyright, 1901, by the Author, W. S. Edson.)
Scripture Authority:—I. Samuel, chapter 25.

SERMONETTE.

"For the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord."—A good woman's testimony to a good reputation. Abigail had heard of David and evidently held an opinion concerning him which was entirely opposite to that held by her evil-hearted husband. She was a Godly woman and a believer in the ultimate triumph of righteousness, else could she not have so confidently spoken of the certainty of David's future.

How splendid to be known as a man who "fighteth the battles of the Lord." The forces of evil are at work in the world and it requires strong men to withstand them. There are enemies within and without which assail the soul of man. It is the Lord's battle that they should be withstood, nay more, that they should be attacked and driven back.

The man who fights the Lord's battles should be on the aggressive; should push the line of battle. And how mighty is one man who is ready to stand with God. Scripture saith that "one man shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you."

One must needs see with the prophet of old the Lord's innumerable hosts standing between himself and the threatening army of the enemy. He must realize that the final triumph will be his no matter how desperately the forces of evil may fight, no matter what temporary victories may be won. Through all those long, weary years of struggle, when it seemed as though his best and noblest efforts were of no avail, David never forgot that God was faithful and that ultimately he would be vindicated and would be established in the kingdom as God had promised.

Faint heart take courage from this noble example, and know that he who patiently and faithfully fights the battles of the Lord to him will the Lord give certain victory.

"But the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God."—A beautiful figure of speech is this which Abigail has given us. She must have been a woman of mental gifts and education, as her address to David would indicate. What a thought does her words open up to the human heart. That of such close identification with the life of God that they are practically one. It was the condition which Paul speaks of as the "life hid with Christ in God."

THE STORY.

IN ALL Israel it would have been hard to have found a more ill-matched couple than that of the wealthy Nabal of Carmel and the fair, young Abigail. He was miserly, with a greed for gold that stifled every other impulse and desire, and it had created no small amount of wonder when he had suddenly decided that he should be able to turn his thoughts from his fields and his flocks and his herds long enough to take a wife. His neighbors and friends knew that sentiment had little to do with the marriage, and much was the speculation as to what had prompted the move.

At any rate, whatever the motive that stirred within his selfish old heart, he had sought out the parents of the fair Abigail and then had come the announcement that she was to become his wife.

Never before had there been such a splendid wedding feast as that which Nabal provided, and if the announcement of the coming marriage of Nabal had caused surprise, the bountiful hand with which he had arranged for the celebration created greater surprise, for never before had he been known to open his heart or his hand to anyone or for any occasion.

And Abigail—while her heart had not been won, she gave herself freely and frankly into the keeping of the man who had pledged his troth to her, for duty and obedience to parents stood far above any other thing in life and their wishes in the matter were law for her. Fortunately she was heart-free, so that there was no stifling of other affections. She was too true and pure a woman to enter the solemn relationship with other than the highest motives, and after the ceremonies were over and the guests had departed she took her place in the home of Nabal and strove earnestly to be to him all that a wife should.

But it was not long after the marriage vows had been taken when the surly, selfish side of the man began to assert itself, and Abigail had her first glimpse of the real man within. How her pure, unselfish soul recoiled from the meanness, the selfishness, the hard-heartedness of his warped and shriveled nature. She had rejoiced in the thought that as the wife of the rich Nabal she would be able to do much to help her less fortunate neighbors. When at home before her marriage she had always been seeking out some home where she might bestow the word of comfort or the trifle of food or raiment which her scant means permitted, and now that

larger means were at her command she found increasing delight and comfort in this work of ministry.

The day before there had come to her attention a case of special need lying at the far side of the little village adjacent to Nabal's estate. Without any thought of incurring Nabal's displeasure, or of bestowing that to which she did not have a perfect right, she had selected one of the best of the lambs and, together with a sack of grain, had sent them to the home where the father had just died and the poor widow had been left with a family of little ones to care for. Filled with the thought of the joy and comfort which she had thus been able to bring to that home, she had related the story to her husband in the evening after he had come in from the field.

"What," he had exclaimed, savagely, "you giving away what I work so hard to get?"

"But I was giving out of our abundance," she had replied. "Surely you would not see another suffer want?"

"Let them work for their bread, as do I."

"But the father has just died, and the mother and little ones are destitute." And Abigail had gone on to relate the sad circumstances.

"Let the relatives look after them, then," Nabal had snarled. "The fellow was a lazy, good-for-nothing. Did I not have him working for me? and did not I have to send him away because he would not do the work assigned him?"

"Perhaps he was sick and could not."

"Then what right had he to ask for wages for work he did not do?" Abigail had not replied, but turned away sick at heart, a contempt for the man rising within her. And from that day his surly, greedy nature had asserted itself, and Abigail had left him much to himself, and he, busy with the affairs of his estate, paid little heed to her, save to watch with apprehensive eye to see that she did not give away his substance.

So it had gone on for several years, and the substance of Nabal increased. It had been an unusually prosperous year. The shepherds had returned from a distance with larger and more thrifty flocks than ever before, and the shearing had begun and promised to be the most bountiful yield of wool that Nabal had ever had. Nabal was too occupied with the thought of his prosperity to pay much heed to the stories of their expenses, but Abigail, as she ministered the household affairs and directed the servants in preparation for the feeding of the workmen, heard the stories which the maidens had heard from the lips of the shepherds. How a certain brave captain named David and his men had protected them and their flocks not only from the depredating bands of robbers which infested the country, but from the wild beasts as well, and had enabled them to occupy the most luxuriant pastures which the country afforded. And many were the tales of David's prowess which the shepherds brought back. Abigail listened to the stories with growing interest, and she exclaimed to herself: "Here, indeed, is a man in whom the spirit of God abides."

So the days went by and the busy season of shearing was almost over and the shepherds were preparing to return to the fields with their sheep. The next day Nabal had arranged for a great feast in celebration of the splendid harvest of wool, and Abigail was deep in the work of the preparations, when one of the servants came to her in much excitement.

"Nabal and his household are as good as dead men," he exclaimed, and then went on to explain how a company of David's men had come asking for an offering from Nabal, which he had savagely refused, and the men had departed with dire threats as to what would follow.

"And David and his men will return and none will be left alive against the morning light," the man concluded.

It did not take Abigail long to grasp the situation and to make her preparations for the journey to meet David. She would take an offering and see whether the wrath of David could not be stayed.

"If he is a man in whom the spirit of God dwells he will listen to my appeal and stay his hand from shedding innocent blood," she said to herself, reassuringly, as she pressed forward in the wake of the laden asses bearing the provisions she had hastily collected.

And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold David and his men came down against her; and she met them.

That was an interview in which the souls of both David and Abigail were drawn together in sympathetic appreciation, so that under the unfolding of the wonderful providences of God eventually Abigail became the wife of David.

Legion of Bosses.
"It is remarkable how much money big corporations and business men generally have to spend to see that their work is done properly," said a builder of houses recently. "Take my own business, for example. In the first place, we put a gang to work, and over the gang we put a foreman, whose sole duty it is to see that the work of the men is properly done. Then over a number of foremen we have an inspector to see that the foreman is doing his work, and over the inspectors we have a superintendent, whose duty it is to see that the inspectors and foremen are really doing the work for which they have been hired. And not content with this, the president of the company insists on making visits to the work once in so often to see that superintendent, inspectors and foremen are actually doing the work they say they are. No one knows who keeps tabs on the old man, but I guess he has to account for his time to his wife."

As to Umbrellas.
A bachelor of the Order of Fuss wants everybody to carry his umbrella in a scabbard attached to a belt, just as though it were a civil sword to be drawn in defense only. Why not, indeed?

BUILDING UP BUSINESS

AN ORIGINAL PLAN TO TEST NEW ENTERPRISES.

AN INDUSTRY INCUBATOR

Suggestions as to Assisting Small Manufacturers Toward Success and Helping Town Interests.

Regardless of the magnitude of a city or town there must be employment for the people. In fact, population of any city depends upon the opportunity that it may afford the residents gaining a livelihood. The agricultural town receives its support from whatever mercantile traffic it can gain from contiguous territory, and what industries in the manufacturing line that can be advantageously conducted. The city draws support from the smaller towns in an area of country, which, owing to its geographical position and what other advantages it may have, it may command the trade of.

It is to the advantage of every town to have as many manufacturing plants as can be profitably operated. Natural conditions regulate manufacturing to a great extent. Transportation facilities, the cost of raw material and fuel are highly important factors; yet there are certain lines of small manufacturing that can be well carried on in any community if only rightly managed. For many years ambitious towns have followed the practice of offering bonuses to manufacturing concerns in order to secure their location. The bonus system has not always operated satisfactorily. Too often promoters of manufacturing enterprises look to the bonus offered as a means of making profit rather than to the legitimate conduct of the business. Then, again, there are stock-jobbing schemes that operate in connection with the bonus plan, and it has been known that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been lost by people anxious to further the manufacturing interests of their home towns.

Numerous manufacturing centers have been gradually built up through the right kind of co-operation of the citizens. There is one prosperous city in Illinois that owes its activity mainly to the plans pursued by an enterprising class of Swedish citizens, who some 30 years ago organized a Swedish Aid society. This society advanced money to worthy workers who desired to engage in business. Officers of the society supervised the business to a great extent, and small concerns which were established have grown to be factories whose output run well up into the millions annually. This aid society loaned money to be repaid from the profits of the business. The plan was a successful one.

The system here referred to suggests a means whereby each town or city which desires to build up manufacturing interests can do so at the minimum cost; that is, that the dangers and objections offered by the bonus systems are entirely eliminated, as is also the chance for promoters to reap a harvest through the exploitation of unsound enterprises. This plan involves the incorporation of a promoting company. Local capital is deemed expedient. To illustrate: If an organization be formed with \$25,000 capital, \$10,000 of this capital can be employed in the equipment of a building for manufacturing purposes. This building can have facilities for half a dozen to a dozen small manufacturing concerns. The power necessary may be supplied from a general power plant. The machinery for manufacturing can be installed as required. A board of directors shall be selected to oversee the business. Whenever a small enterprise is found to be seeking a location, the directors are empowered to negotiate for its location in the town. The concern may be incorporated and a small amount of stock taken by the holding company. Facilities for manufacturing and marketing whatever the product may be afforded. If the enterprise proves successful it can be moved from the experimental station into a separate building, the holding company investing in its stock, and the dividends on the stock can be placed in the general fund for the extension of other enterprises. Should an enterprise prove to be lacking in merit it can be discarded. In this manner from half a dozen to a dozen different enterprises can be carried on and thoroughly tested as to practical workings. Of course, it must not be expected that all of the undertakings will prove successful, but if good judgment be used in selecting enterprises, a large percentage will prove profitable. Those who subscribe for the stock of the holding company can be compensated by receiving an equitable percentage upon the amount invested in stock.

This plan eliminates the objectionable features of granting bonuses and the subscribing for stock in concerns that are in embryo stage and purely experiments.

TOWN HELPS.

Poor hotels are abominations that cause travelers to pass by the towns where they are located. It has been known that the reputation of a hotel has ruined the prospects of otherwise promising towns.

Each town should have a good public hall, a place where meetings can be held or entertainments given. If such a hall be erected by private enterprise if rightly managed can be made a profitable investment in the average small town.

Quite often when towns are organized the matter of providing for public parks is overlooked. Every town is a city in embryo. No one can prophesy how great it may become in time. It is well to look into the future and to set aside grounds that may be used for park purposes. It has been the experiments of many cities that the park question is a troublesome one when not looked after in ample time. There is nothing that makes the city more attractive or is such a blessing to its people as a city park where they may meet for recreation during the warmer months of the year.

EQUITY IN BUSINESS.

Practice of Live-and-Let-Live Principles Most Desirable.

Too frequently it is noticed that in the struggle to attain wealth the rights of the individual are ignored. Fair dealing is a desirable thing as well as most simple and it requires only common honesty to practice it. Not alone is there honesty involved in the matter of selling but also in the matter of buying. It is quite as dishonorable for the purchaser to exact that the seller receive no profit on an article sold as it is for the seller to demand an exorbitant price for his goods.

There is much sound philosophy in the live-and-let-live gospel. This is nothing more than an observance of the Golden Rule that has found expression in all ages of enlightenment from the time of Gautama down to the present. In every day dealings it is apparent that there is too much of exaggerated selfishness in evidence, too great a struggle for the vantage. There should be a spirit of Christian cooperation that would be just to all alike. Whole communities suffer sometimes from the lack of this sense of equity on the part of merchants and their customers.

How often is the complaint heard in rural districts that the storekeepers of a town charge too high prices for what they have to sell? How often is it noticed that where this feeling dominates the people that the home town suffers as a consequence? It is short sightedness on parts of merchants to require of their customers more than what may be considered a legitimate and just profit. In fact, it is poor business policy to follow out a plan of this kind. There are many towns whose growth has been prevented through a grasping tendency of the merchants to make all they possibly can in a few short years, and to give the people as small an amount of goods as they will take for their money. The natural result of a policy of this kind is that the people seek other towns in which to do their trading and quite often buy from the distant mail-order house.

Habits once formed are hard to break. It is quite as difficult for the merchant to recover from the habit of making exorbitant profits as it is for the patron of the mail-order house to turn his trade to the home store. Should both the merchants and their customers calmly consider principles that enter into commerce, and both determine to practice equity in their dealings, the merchant to sell honest goods at honest profits and the customer to give patronage to merchants who would practice this principle, it would be wholesome not alone for the home towns, but for all the communities.

TOWN HELPS.

It is easy to estimate the business importance of a place by the appearance of its stores. Dingy, dirty appearing business places always give a bad impression and are generally indicative of the character of the business men of the town.

Good newspapers are important factors in building of towns. Well filled advertising pages, as well as local news pages speak for the prosperity of a place and makes an impression upon the readers that assist the town to greater prosperity.

Large trees grow from little seeds. A small industry in a town may not appear to be much but by proper nursing it may develop into an enterprise of national importance. In every manufacturing undertaking there is a turning point that means failure or success. Each small industry that is established in a town should receive the most careful attention of the townspeople and be given the support that it should have in order to make it successful.

Commercial clubs are important factors in the development of resources of small towns. To the farmer the commercial club of the home town is as important as it is to those residing within the limits of the town. It is the aim of the club to improve the town and in doing so it must benefit the surrounding country. Thus we see plainly the reason why the progressive farmer should take as much interest in the town commercial club as if he were a resident of the town.

OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITIES.

Chances in Average Small Town for Profitably Engaging in Business.

According to the United States census of 1900 there was produced in the United States 1,293,662,433 dozen eggs. The same statistics give the annual production of poultry at 250,623,114. The butter made on farms each year is in excess of 1,900,000,000 pounds. The cheese made on farms averages about 20,000,000 pounds annually. These statistics are interesting, and with each farmer growing poultry and eggs and making butter and cheese, it hardly seems possible that such combinations as dairy trusts and egg and poultry trusts could exist, but that they do is nevertheless a fact.

Every small town in a farming district can command sufficient butter, egg and poultry trade to support a prosperous exclusive produce establishment. The practice has generally obtained in agricultural districts of storekeepers in various lines taking farmers' produce in exchange for goods. The produce thus received by merchants is forwarded to the commission houses in the large city, and these houses are factors that make it possible to maintain trusts in the produce business. It appears that if each town had its exclusive produce establishment to buy what the farmer has to sell instead of the produce going through the local stores, that better prices could be paid the farmers and the business made a most profitable one if rightly conducted.

According to the natural laws of business industry succeeds best where advantages are most abundant. Thus it seems that the produce offers a most excellent field in the majority of agricultural towns.

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