SERMON.

ABIGAIL'S INTERCESSION.

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And Abigail fell at David's feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

1 Sam. xxiv. 24.

A woman acting as mediator between her husband, who had grievously offended, and David, who was about to punish him, is a ray of prophetic light from the Old Testament, pointing forward to the cross and intercession of Jesus Christ. There are always forelegends before the day; and there are hints and suggestions of Christ's atonement scattered all through Old Testament history. We recall the woman of Tekoa pleading for the restoration of the banished Absalom, saying unto David, "My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house; and let me live now in the sight of this my lord king." We remember Esther going before the stern Ahasuerus, and saying, "O king, and, if it please the king, let my life be given at my petition, and my people at my request." And here is Abigail throwing up the pen in the king's face, as when one and begging for his life. How often has God honored holy women to be the antetype and forerunners of Christ in standing as mediators for the ungodly!

For this text, we have three lessons suggested:

I. The innocent bearing the sins of the guilty. "Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be." Abigail was utterly innocent of her husband's conduct; but it is the old story repeated of the blameless being involved in the blame of the wicked. Nabal was a cross-grained man, early farmer, a hard drinker, as the story shows; and, in a fit of insolvency, he had insulted David, violated the Oriental courtesy, and an army of four hundred men was coming down to exterminate Nabal and all his family and possessions. That was very hard, seeing none had offended but Nabal. But it isn't con-demned. This is neither the theory of God nor that of drumknar; it has involved his home and his property in ruin by his sin. It is an awful fact that we have to face in multitudes of wretched tenements in this city. How does it come about? How does it come about that I, to whom the Bible, and who open your Bibles, and you will read that God "visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." And there is then the book of human experience, and you will find it answering to the book of God line by line and page by page. A pale-faced child passes you in the street to-day, into whose body and blood the drugs of a hanger of the wicked, a cross-grained mother, a hard drinker, and heart is broken by some broken home experience. What does it mean? Mother and child are both innocent. Yes; but this is only a transcribed copy of God's law of the sins of the father visited upon the children, of the wickedness of the husband borne by the wife. "But this is wrong," you say; and the heart rises up in instinctive rebellion against such a law.

But remember that it is not an arbitrary law, but a necessary law. As the race is made up, it could not otherwise. Every human being is related to every other. The roots of our humanity are all entangled and interwoven, so that what affects one must move or less vitally affect another. The Scriptures use the figure of the body, and tell us that, "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." The hand may have to pull the piece of wood out of the fire; the foot must carefully step upon the ice and breaks an arm. If the lungs inhale malaria, it may be that the head shall be most severely visited for the transgression, in the fevered brain and the disordered mind. All the nerves of the body are related like a complicated network of telegraphic wires; and a message of pain or pleasure, sent over one, may run off upon another, and report itself at a very unexpected point. Thus, it happens that, in the body corporate of our great humanity, the feeble members have often to bear the transgression of the strong; the innocent child staggering under the heavy penalty of the father's sin, and the frail wife borne down under the guilt of the wicked husband. It is so in families; it is so in States; it is so in nations.

"His iniquity shall be on us and on our children," cried the murderers of our Lord, as they clamored for his crucifixion; and upon that Jewish race, upon the innocent children of guilty ancestors, the truth of an awaking Paul, of the Roman censuses, set out for eight hundred years, till it may be safely said that no nation since the world has passed through such awful sufferings. We acknowledge the infliction of some which has been the body of the house of Israel; and, turning to Jesus Christ, a son of Abraham, we ask him what it means, and hear him saying, "That upon you, the Jewish race,—that upon you may come and the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." So the sin of the whole Hebrew generation culminated at last, and the body of the Nation was left as one catastrophe, which overthrew the Temple and the nation.

It is an awful fact, I repeat, but an inevitable one, since the unity of the race is a reality. If, as a people of God, we are united in sin, independent and unrelated, it would not be so; but they are the living branches of one common stock, planted in Eden. They are members of one common body, all hanging from the root of our first head. We are not independent and inter-related; and, therefore, it must be true that, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and, if one member is honored with all the mercy which God has promised. The truth is, our human race is a unit. We are many; but, in a deeper sense, we are one. We have each of us nerves running back to Eden, and which ache with the pain of Adam's transgression, and have been burnt with the penalty of Moses' law. But now we are to remember that, in this very fact which I have been considering, we have the ground and means of righting that wrong by one man's transgression many were made sinners," then, by one man's obedience, many could be made righteous. When Christ came into our race, say not simply God things which come upon this generation." But that generation had not shed all the blood. True; and neither did that aching foot do all the sin of that drunkard's and libertine's lifetime. But go to, they purify themselves, and put their pains and penalties. "His iniquity shall be on us and on our children," cries Abigail; "and hear the words of thine handmaid." How fitted was she to be a mediator! "A mediator is not of one, but of two," says the Scripture; that is, one who would undertake this office must be in relation to both parties,—the offender and the offended. Abigail had a good understanding and a beautiful countenance,—excellent qualities in an advocate who would plead with David; and she had likewise a wife's affection and solicitude, by which she was strongly moved to plead for Nabal. In other words, it took one from the household of the offender to be a successful mediator. And what is it that the Scripture saith? "Every high priest is taken from among men, who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way." He needs a human heart to put upon his head, and to plead with human pity and to plead with human tears, as well as a divine heart to lay hold on God.

The great problem is to get our prayers fastened at both ends. Our worship may be seraphic, taking a strong and
stealfast hold on God. It may be human, taking a tender
hold on men. The great secret of power, however, is gained
only when we are able to link the throne to the footstool, the
heart of man to the heart of God. He is not a God of
enforced worship. He is not using the pressure of
duress on His children. He is not compelling them;
but, if he can get to the root of their nature, he will
make them his, and his influence, his power, his
might, will be upon them. He is not doing it to
human beings, to fill them with a spirit of
servility, to make them the subjects of his
domination, but he is giving them what he calls the
righteousness which is of God, the power to
overcome. And there is only one way to
overcome, and that is by being transformed
from within. 

Have you never read the story of the mediation of the
Prince of Wales? It was when he was a comparative lad
that he found a boy at the castle gate one day, crying to see
the Queen. No one would take him. The boy was
wearyed of life, he knew no明天, and he
wanted to get relief from her Majesty. But the guards had
thrust him back, and forbidden him to come near, when
the prince found him as he was walking out. The young prince
had a boy’s heart, that could be touched with the cause of
the child; and he had royal blood, that gave him the right of
access to the Queen, and so he took the lad by the hand, and
presented him to her Majesty, where he gained his suit.

Our Lord Jesus Christ can be touched by your infirmities,
my brethren. Your weakness and imperfection, your sins of
beauty still shine in the eyes of the beholder. And he con-
stitute bonds of sympathy, not barriers of separation. I
know that this sounds almost like a sacrilegious saying, that your
sin of beauty still shines on you, and that you, because he was
a prophet, and more than a prophet,—a Saviour and a sin-
bearer,—he did not know what she was, or what she felt. He
had the right to know, but he did not use that right. But
as the minister of transgressors, indeed, and for
this very purpose,—that he might save transgressors.
Why did not Abigail cover up the fact that she was
Nabal’s wife, and refuse to speak to him, not even since she knew
the little fellow to her

The sabbath bells.
The old man sits in his easy-chair; And his ear has caught the ringing Of many a church-bell far and near, Their own sweet musick singing. And his head sinks low on the aged breast, While his thoughts far back are reaching To the Sabbath morns of his boyish days, And a mother’s sacred teaching. A few years later, and lo! the bells A merrier strain were sounding; And heavenward bore the marriage vows Whose manhood’s joy were scaling. But old age’s eyes are cunning now, As memory holds before him The sad, sad picture of later years, When the tide of grief rolled o’er him, When the bells were tolling for loved ones gone! For the wife, for the sons and daughters, To whom one by one, from his home he has to part, And down into death’s dark waters. But the aged heart has still some joy Which his old life daily brings. And his eyes grow bright and his pulses warm ‘Neath a grandchild’s sweet caresses. But the old man wakes from his reverie, And his dear old face is smiling, While the child with her serious eyes reads on, The Sabbath hours begging. Ah! bells, once more ye will ring for him, When the heavenly hand shall sever The cord of life, and his freed soul flies To dwell with his own forever.

"I never knew," wrote the Rev. E. W. Robertson, "but one or two fast readers, and readers of many books, whose know-
ledge was worth anything. Miss Martinina says of her, "she is the slowest of readers, sometimes a page in an hour; but,
then, what she reads she makes her own. Girls read too much thinking little of the music of the language. She is very
good at religious books, I could count upon my fingers in two minutes all I ever read, but they are mine."