

ABIGAIL JANE'S VALENTINE

By Frank S. Chiawick
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"If a man come to see me Wednesday an' Saturday evenin's for sixteen years an' then"— Prudence Howell's head bobbed vigorously, setting every individual curl in motion. "Well, I'd just like to see one of 'em try it!"

"Si ain't meanin' no harm," put in Abigail Jane gently. "He's just sorter slow; that's all."

"Sorter slow?" retorted Mrs. Howell. "Well, he's kept off every other man for the best part of your life, an' it's his bounden duty to marry you. He loves you, an' you love him."

A faint pink tint crept into Abigail Jane's face at her sister's plain speaking. When Silas Hopkins had first courted her, a charming girl of eighteen, his boyish compliments had brought a warm glow to her face, but the blood courses more slowly at thirty-four.

Si had always meant to marry her, but somehow he had never told her so. He was a complacent, prosaic fellow. First he had lost his father and had been forced to look after the big farm and the family. Then there had been his brother John to send through college, and Louise's wedding dowry and fixings to arrange for, and his mother to send to the hospital in the distant city for an operation. After awhile, when all these duties were fulfilled, he would have time to settle down and marry.

He had never thought of such a tragedy as Abigail Jane's wearying of long waiting. He had always found her alone Wednesday and Saturday nights, sympathetic in his difficulties, rejoicing in his small successes. Yes, Abigail Jane was the very woman for him to marry—some day when he had time.

And of course Abigail Jane must understand all this; she was such a sensible little woman. It never dawned upon him that she would like to hear such words from his lips or to walk down the street with her small hand snuggled against his big arm, as Eliza, the milliner's apprentice, did with the butcher's boy.

"How you do take on, Prudence?" she protested. "I ain't beholden to any man to marry me. I'm comfortably fixed. Me an' Si is good friends, an' he likes to come here of evenin's. I ain't expectin'— The words choked in her throat.

A wave of pity swept over Mrs. Howell. She was sorry she had laid bare the wound; but a happy matron herself, she chafed at her sister's loneliness.

"Well, it's Valentine's day, Abigail Jane, an' perhaps he'll send you something by mail. Maybe he can't put his feelin's into words as easy as my Henry could. Would you mind lookin' in my box while you're at the postoffice?"

Ten minutes later Miss Abigail Jane, with her grandmother's china silk shawl folded over her shoulders, walked down the quiet street to the post-office. It was her daily custom, whether she expected mail or not. On Friday there would be the county paper in her box and on the 2d and 10th of each month The Advocate and Female Guardian.

This morning she caught sight of a square envelope in the box, and her heart beat wildly as she approached the postmaster's window.

"Here you are," he exclaimed cheerily—"two letters for Mrs. Howell and one for you. Must be a valentine." And he grinned broadly at the joke which had done service with every applicant at the window that morning.

A valentine! The word found an echo in her heart. She clasped the precious missive to her breast and hurried homeward.

"Honest?" cried her sister as Abigail Jane stopped with the Howell mail. "He sent you a valentine? Well, I didn't suppose he had the nerve. You might stop here an' open it."

But Abigail Jane shook her head and fluttered away to her own cottage. No one should share this sacred moment with her. Nervously she tore off the wrappings and with a cry of joy held a photograph of Si at arm's length. Then—but never mind; women have done such things ever since the day of the first daguerrotype.

And his hearty laugh fairly shook the windows. "Wonder if old Miss Thompkins got one. Like as not the married women got 'em too. This is a great joke. Eh, Abigail?"

She had dropped wearily into her small rocker. She hardly heard what he said.

"I—I thought perhaps it might have been just for"—

Silas Hopkins wheeled round suddenly and stared at her. Two tears rolled down the cheeks, now pale and drawn looking. He frowned, not at the tears, but at his own thoughtlessness. His eyes were suddenly opened. The complacency, the careless habit of years, fell from him in the twinkling of an eye. Abigail Jane, winking back other tears, almost sprang to her feet, for Si was actually kneeling beside her.

"Abigail Jane," he whispered huskily, "you'd a right to one all by yourself. I thought you knew all along that I loved you!"

"Oh, yes, I knew it, Si, but I sorter wished"— And this time the tears gleamed like diamonds on rose colored cheeks.

"Henry Howell," exclaimed that worthy's wife as she laid down her mending. "I've just got to run over an' see Abigail Jane. Somethin' tells me this is the crisis of that girl's life."

"Well, be careful you don't slip. It's freezin' tonight," answered her husband, settling back in his chair.

Mrs. Howell's imperative knock at her sister's front door was answered by Si Hopkins.

"Come right in, Sister Prudence!" he exclaimed, shaking her hand warmly. "You're just in time to settle this dispute. We're goin' to be married next Wednesday a week, an' Abigail Jane insists the ceremony's got to take place at your house, with Henry to give away the bride, bein' as she has no father. Now, I want the wedding here, where I've courted her two nights a week for sixteen years." He was carrying everything before him, and Mrs. Howell nodded her head mechanically.

"Abigail Jane declares she has a sight of sewin' to do, an' she's not to be worried with cookin' the wedding supper. Louise can see to that. An' I wish you'd go down to Springfield next week an' pick out new furniture for the sittin' room an' mother's old room over to my house. I ain't bought a new thing since the girls were married off, an' the place looks too shabby for my Abigail Jane."

Mrs. Howell gasped.

"Well, Si Hopkins, you're slow about movin', but when you get started I must say you're a wonder." Then her eye fell on the photograph. "I got one of 'em, too, by tonight's mail."

Si covered the unfortunate remark adroitly.

"You'll get a better one soon. Abigail Jane an' I are goin' to sit for Linton in all our wedding finery. An' now hadn't I better help you over home? It's slippin'."

"Well, well, Si, you have found your fongue at last! It's the first time I've been unwelcome in my own sister's house."

And with a laugh that belied her sharp words Mrs. Howell kissed the glowing face of Abigail Jane and hurried home.

The action of a spinet. The spinet instrument was an improvement upon what was known as the clavichord, the tone of which, although weak, was capable, unlike that of the harpsichord or spinet, of increase or decrease, reflecting the finest gradations of the touch of the player. In this power of expression it was without a rival until the piano was invented. The early history of the clavichord previous to the fifteenth century is lost in profound obscurity, but it is said that there is one bearing the date 1520 having four octaves without the D sharp and G sharp notes. The spinet was the invention of the Venetian Spinetta.

EXPERT PLAYED BURGLAR

BY HE DID IT INNOCENTLY AND DID IT ARTISTICALLY AS WELL.

The Plausible Scheme by Which a Safe Expert Was Fooled and Used by a Trio of Notorious Cracksmen to Get at Their Plunder.

To the man whose shingle bears the inscription "Safe Expert" and whose little shop, not far from the great dry goods district, contains a full assortment of implements for the forcible opening of safes, the writer said, "Would you be well qualified to play the burglar?"

"Yes," said the little keen eyed man, running his fingers through his scant hair reflectively. "I once did play burglar. In fact, I played the star role in a safe cracking enterprise. I was the innocent means by which a wholesale house was robbed of several thousand dollars which had been taken in too late in the day to be banked."

"I was in business then in another city. I was sitting smoking at my shop door about 8 o'clock one evening when a messenger boy came with a note on the letter paper of a well known house asking me to come at once with my tools to the office of the firm."

"The office was lighted up, and a portly, prosperous looking man sat at a roll top desk, while two clerks, perched on stools, were working at some books."

"I am Mr. —," said the portly one, giving the name of the head of the firm. "Something has gone wrong with the safe, and I want you to open it. The combination is 6-27-45, but something must have broken inside, for it won't open, and we have got to get some books out of the safe tonight."

"As I tried the combination which the man had given me he explained that he had locked the safe when he went out to dinner and was unable to open it when he came back."

"It was one of those 'atum' filled safes, and I suspected rust had done its work inside."

"Nothing to do but drill it open," said I.

"Go ahead," said the portly one, "and don't keep me here any longer than you can help."

"With that he turned to his desk, and I worked away unsuspectingly. There was dead silence except when the man at the desk spoke to one or the other of the clerks about some account, and the tread of the policeman on that beat could be heard as he passed the office."

"I did not realize until afterward that I was working out of view of the passing policeman, for the safe was behind the bookkeeper's desk, but the shades were up and the man at the roll top desk and the bookkeepers could be plainly seen from the street."

"I got out my bits, adjusted the brace, and soon steel was biting steel, but the sound of the ratchet was drowned by the click of the typewriter, for the portly party began dictating to one of the clerks as soon as I began drilling the safe. When I thought it all over afterward, it occurred to me that this war to cover the sound of my operations."

"In half an hour I had a hole in the front of the safe, and a little manipulation got the tumblers into place, and the door swung open."

"Here you are, sir," said I, and the portly man came around to the safe.

"Very neatly done," he said. "You'd make a good burglar."

"But the sound of the ratchet would bring the 'cops,'" said I.

Fielding and "Tom Jones." Notwithstanding the good prices he received for his books, Fielding was always more or less in difficulties from his reckless mode of living. "Tom Jones," however, was nearly being sacrificed in one of his impecunious fits for the sum of £25. The publisher fortunately asked for a day to consider if he could risk such a sum, and Fielding in the meantime met Thomson, the poet, to whom he told the transaction. Thomson scorned the idea of Fielding parting with his brains for such a sum and offered to get him better terms, but Fielding felt himself partly pledged. Never did author wait more anxiously on a publisher hoping to be accepted than did Fielding hoping to be refused. He was refused!

Joyfully he carried his manuscript to Thomson to fulfill his promise. The poet introduced Fielding to Andrew Miller, who handed the book over to his wife to read. She discerned its merits and advised her husband to keep it. Over a pleasant dinner given by Miller to Fielding and Thomson the bargain was made which secured Fielding, to his great delight, £200 for the story. Miller is said to have cleared £18,000 by "Tom Jones," out of which he paid Fielding from time to time various sums to the amount of £2,000, bequeathing him also a handsome legacy.

The Structure of Ferns. When flowering plants usually make seed, that is generally the last effort for plant life. The seed is the beginning of the life of the new plant. Ferns, however, only produce spores for reproductive purposes. These spores germinate and go through the same process subsequently that flowers go through in the production of seeds. The spores expand when the germinating time comes and form a flat, green membrane. What are then really the flowers appear on this membrane. As a general rule after these fern flowers have matured the membrane dries up and disappears. In one family of ferns, however, natives of New Holland, named platycerium, this green blade is permanent and continues to enlarge, becoming really a portion of the plant. Every year a new blade is formed which spreads over the old ones. The large plant is of a totally different character, having the fronds of ordinary ferns.

Habits of the Wildcat. To say that a dog can "whip his weight in wildcats" is to pay about the highest tribute to his strength, courage and activity, and there are very few dogs that would care to earn such a tribute if they understood all it implied. Not that a wildcat is of a specially aggressive disposition. On the contrary, he would sooner mind his own business any time than fight. So anxious is he as a rule to keep out of trouble that he has often been accused of cowardice, but he has on so many occasions given evidence of the most desperate courage that it is doubtful if the accusation is a fair one. When wounded or at bay, he is perhaps as dangerous as any creature of his size.

A Fillet of Beef. For a fillet of beef, cut two pounds into round slices half an inch thick and sprinkle with pepper and salt. Fry in two ounces of butter seven minutes at the most and brush over each piece with glaze. Place a border of mashed potatoes on a dish, lay the fillets on it with alternate slices of baked tomato and the fried beef fat. Also have a piece of maitre d'hotel butter on each fillet. Fill the center with nicely cooked vegetables and pour around a little good beef gravy.

Cures For Sleeplessness. Horace in his satires recommended swimming the Tiber three times! Sir Thomas Browne was accustomed to repeat some verses of a certain hymn. Franklin took an air bath, Sir John Sinclair counted, while Sir John Rennie when engaged upon any public works never went to sleep until his head had been combed and gently rubbed by a soft hand.

A Hard Domestic Knot. "I'm in a deuce of a fix. My wife's got the telephone craze."

"Well?"

"If I put one in, she'll swear I'm sweet on the telephone girl."

"Certainly."

"And if I don't, she'll say it's because I'm afraid the thing'll expose my duplicity."—Baltimore News.

Rubbing It In. Borem (11:57 p. m.)—When I was a child, my nurse made me afraid of the dark.

Miss Cutting—Oh, that accounts for it.

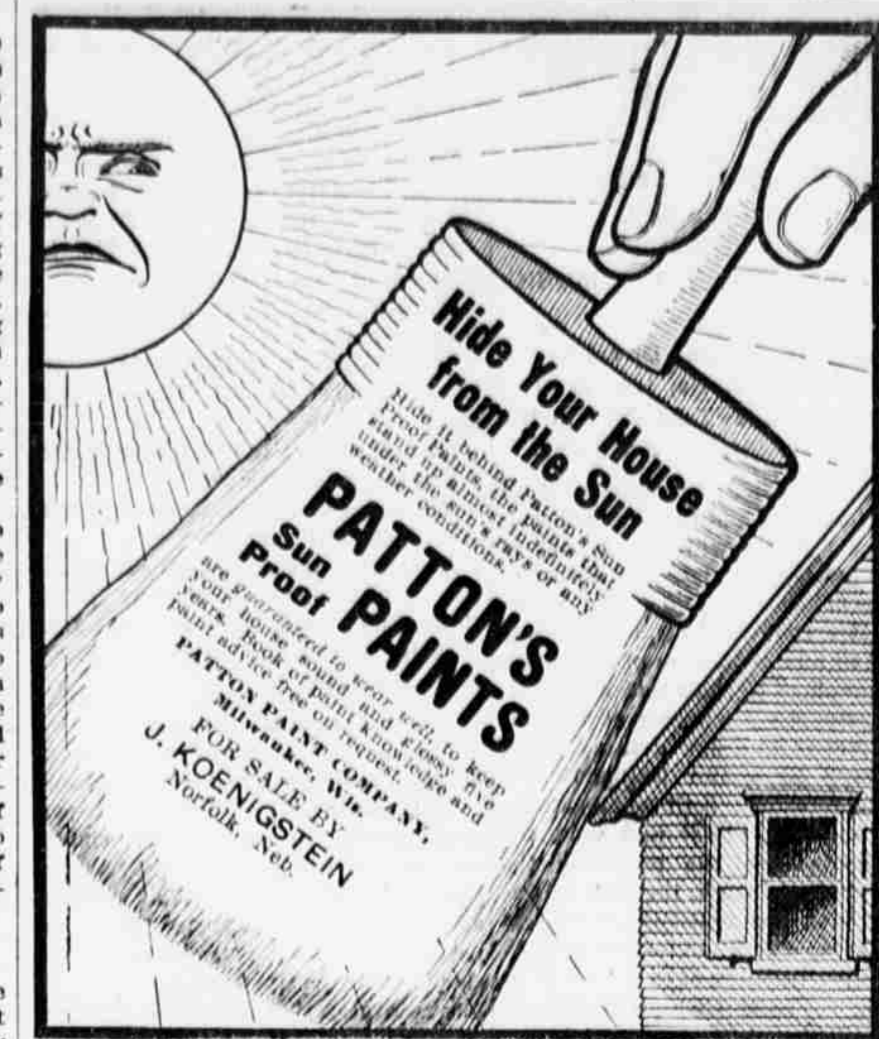
Borem—Accounts for what?

Miss Cutting—You are waiting till daylight so you can go home.—Chicago News.

No Sympathy There. "I am going to marry your daughter, sir," said the positive young man to the father.

"Well, you don't need to come to me for sympathy," replied the father. "I have troubles of my own."—Ohio State Journal.

Unfinished. "If you kind of keep an eye on these self made men," remarked Uncle Jerry Peebles, "you'll find that lots of 'em think the job's so well done it don't need any polish."—Chicago Tribune.



YOU MUST NOT FORGET

That we are constantly growing in the art of making Fine Photos, and our products will always be found to embrace the

Most Artistic Ideas

and Newest Styles in Cards and Finish. We also carry a fine line of Moldings suitable for all kinds of framing.

I. M. MACY.

Advertisement for Frisco System Through Sleeping Car Service Kansas City to Jacksonville Florida. Includes an illustration of a train and a Frisco logo.

Advertisement for F. A. Werman, M.D., treating deafness and head noises. Includes illustrations of a man and a woman's faces.

Advertisement for Johnson Bros. Land Co. Home Seeker's Excursions. Includes an illustration of a train and a 'Headache' pill advertisement.

Advertisement for 'Horses' and 'E. W. Brown' laxative. Includes an illustration of a horse and a box of medicine.