"Hew To The Line, And Let The Chips Fall Where They May"

Pryde E. Hinton

About four decades after almost all timbers used in construction of buildings, etc., were hewed out with a "broad-ax," in the days when this was still done almost altogether in making cross-ties for the railroads, I used to like to watch Dad swing the big broad-ax so accurately to hew off the surplus bark and wood to leave a beautifully straight and smooth timber. My brother and I would "juggle" and "chip" the trees in preparation for the work of the broad-ax and Dad. We would mark off a line on either side, at the top, to indicate how wide or thick the timber was to be left by the broad-ax.

As I stood by watching Dad swing the big ax so skillfully, sometimes some chips would fly through the air in my direction and hit me. This would hurt. But I never did blame Dad for the chips hitting me. He was trying very hard to "hew to the line," to make the finished timber useful. He wasn't trying to hit me. And that's how people came to use the expression, "hew to the line, and let the chips fall where they may."

No good worker ever hewed to the line just to hit somebody with the flying chips. Hitting somebody with the chips was not a part of the hewers aim at all.

If Dad had stopped trying to "hew to the line," and had deliberately picked up some chips and had hit me with them, my feelings would have been hurt more ways than one.

A Christian has fallen far below the position and spirit of a true teacher of the truth, when he picks up chips, and deliberately hits people with them. Or if he does his hewing with that purpose in mind. Let's teach and preach the truth because it is God's truth, and to save lost souls--including our own!