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With Contentment

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Adelaide finished tidying the house; then she settled down at the kitchen table for a second cup of steaming-hot tea. How still and quiet the house was, she thought, with the girls in school and Harry at work.

Her eyes wandered from the freshly hung, washed and ironed sunny yellow curtains at the windows to the well-taken-care-of but old kitchen stove, with its one remaining working burner.

She sighed, wondering just what Harry and she would do when that last burner went out like the other three had done. There was no "extra" money for buying a new one, she knew. But the Lord, whose eyes "run to and fro throughout the whole earth" saw and knew their predicament. Perhaps He would keep the burner in working order like He had kept the French's car going long after their gas tank showed empty. He had answered Brother French's prayer -- that God would get them to church and back home again -- hadn't He? Yes, He had. And He could do the same for them.

The teakettle, bubbling merrily away and hissing steam, filled her heart with its warmth -- its companionship. She must not worry nor become faithless, she mused contemplatively; she was admonished to "Be careful for nothing" -not to fret nor become anxious, but to pray and supplicate with thanksgiving and make her requests known unto God.



Her thoughts wandered from the beautiful and inspiring Scripture verse to Linda Tullas and her lovely home of many contraptions, gadgets and beautiful new furnishings, plush carpets and expensive drapes. It would be so nice to have just a few of the newer household items, she soliloquized. There would be no need of anxiety if one had these necessary things, she further rationalized.

A long wistful sigh escaped her lips. Suddenly she was on her feet. What was she doing? Why was she listening to the wrong voice? she asked herself, standing straight and tall like a soldier prepared for drill work.

"Satan," she said out loud in a commanding voice, "the Lord rebuke thee! 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' Until such a time as my Heavenly Father sees fit to supply us with something better, and a bit more efficient and workable, I'll be satisfied with what we have and I will offer Him praises of thanksgiving and gratefulness."

Immediately, a song leaped into her heart. Her blessings were not of the "polished, shining-new" type, like Linda's furnishings, she realized, smiling.

Surveying her cheerful, sunny kitchen with its cozy, homey atmosphere and its old-time flavor of yester-year, she began counting some of her blessings, starting with the kitchen.

In the summer, her kitchen was a merry, jolly frenzy of canning, preserving and putting up for the winter -- what an exciting time for all! The "winter kitchen," on the other hand, had a relaxed, totally at-ease and calm feeling, especially when the family shared an enormous bowl of popcorn and worked a puzzle together around the table. There was no garden to tend then nor rescue from encroaching weeds, and no canning to do either. In winter especially, it was a time of togetherness and closeness of the strictest kind for the family. This was a blessing, a God-send really, knitting and cementing already close ties even tighter.

Another blessing of her "winter kitchen," aside from listening contentedly and joyously to rain on the roof, was the time she could spend cooking and baking. What joy and delight to treat her family to "company fare." Perhaps she was a purist in the sense of feeling that turkey was the only thing to be served for Thanksgiving, but she didn't restrict the bird to that day alone. Since there was nothing finer to set on a table, she felt, it was not uncommon to have the traditional bird at various times through the year. It looked grand and elegant; it smelled delightfully delicious and ambrosial; and it provided food for an assortment of meals.

And what a blessing her love for baking was, she thought, realizing anew that Harry and she could never have afforded to buy breads, cakes, rolls and pies from a store. So she made her own as God gave her the strength to knead, to mix, and to roll. Yes, this was a blessing.

Hurrying to the counter top, Adelaide checked the fast rising bread dough. How very fragrant and appetizing the yeast dough smelled. Of all her baking, nothing relaxed her more, nor took her mind off her problems, than making bread. It needed her attention; so there was no way she could rush away and try to right the upside-down world. Since she had to remain close by, it afforded her added and ample time for more communion and fellowship with God and a way for reading those many extra chapters which she had wanted to read in her Bible.

Kneading the dough now, Adelaide realized again the magic of its spell, the wonderfully therapeutic effect upon her mind and spirit. The dough, warm under her hands, was both pliable and yielding -- a perfect analogy of the sanctified life, she mused joyfully. Like the potter and the clay, she was the "dough" in God's hands; He was the one doing the kneading -- the shaping. Sometimes His "kneading" -- His seeming painful handling of the 'dough' -- could not be understood; but always if (like the softly-pliable piece of dough which she herself was kneading and working) one continued yielding one's self to the Master Creator, His finished product was only the choicest-the best -- making him or her "meet for the Master's use."

Life, she realized as she worked, was rather like the process of bread-making -- starting with a difficult situation, formless, and perhaps a bit sticky. As she coped, the dough changed and took shape; so with life. As she worked, easing the wrinkles and bubbles out of the dough, so the wrinkles of her mind -- the cares of the day -- were gradually smoothed away. Her priorities, now all put in proper perspective, made life seem good and all right-side-up again.

Dividing the now-smooth, satiny-soft dough into loaves, and sliding them gently into the waiting pans, greased and ready and standing like shiny soldiers in a row, Adelaide smiled in perfect contentment. Life, she mused silently, was all the better for having a stability that she could depend upon, like her satisfying kitchen and her household routines. She found that the delicate moments somehow moved a little more smoothly and easily in that frame of reference.

Counseling her two growing daughters was easier if, in addition to the problems between them, there was a cookie board on which their hands touched, and perhaps a smudge of flour on her nose to make the moment less taut and tense. Even though the girls and she might not agree on transient differences, they still had in common the sweetness of love and leavening to tie them together. It worked wonders in a family, she thought with a happy smile; so her girls learned to bake.

Washing the flour off her hands and cleaning the counter top, her eyes took in the wide windowsill and its array of flower pots. Who, among her many friends, had a herb garden growing on their windowsill, she thought with a warm inner feeling.

When she first read of the advantages of growing these versatile and useful plants indoors, she had merely smiled. But somewhere in the "attic" of her mind, the facts of what she had read were stored; and one wintry day, when she needed parsley for something which she was making and there was no parsley, the "lock box" in the attic opened wide and there were those stored-away sentences and paragraphs depicting the beauty and the convenience of an indoor herb garden. That's when she did something about it and started one of her own. Now she would never again be without it. It had served her cooking needs over and over again; it had brightened many a gray, cold, wintry day, and it had assured her that her "green thumb" was still as "green" as ever; this in spite of the sleet and snow covering the garden plot outside.

Going to the cellar after a jar of pears and green beans, Adelaide realized the blessing of her jar cupboard. Canned by the girls and herself, the shiny-clean, filled jars stood in row upon long row; fruits and vegetables and pickles and jams and jellies galore -- all were there, stored on paper-lined shelves, ready for the family's use. She had an entire grocery store at her finger tips, she mused happily and thankfully as her eyes traveled down the rows filled with variety and a combination of beautiful colors.

Then there were the lovely quilts upstairs on the beds. Perhaps they weren't the luxurious velvets like Linda's beds sported, but the quilts which her daughters and she had made were far more special and personal than any that ever came from a store. They were designed and put together, piece by beautiful piece, by the girls and her. Sharon had done one as a Home Ec. project while Pat's beautiful blue and white one was made simply as a hobby.

Back in her kitchen again, Adelaide realized how very rich her family was, not in material things or in a monetary way, perhaps, but in myriad other ways. They had good health and an abundance of food to eat, and theirs was a truly Christian home, with each family member totally and completely yielded to Christ. Then there was love and harmony and unity, too, plus teamwork and cooperation.

Counting her blessings, Adelaide felt like she could scarcely contain her feelings. Their house was old, to be sure, and the stove was in a sad state of affairs -- or repairs -- but God's numerous blessings so far outweighed the other as to make them seem insignificant and unimportant.

Suddenly, she realized that she was content-truly and honestly content with what she had. She knew she had attained: "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

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THE END