

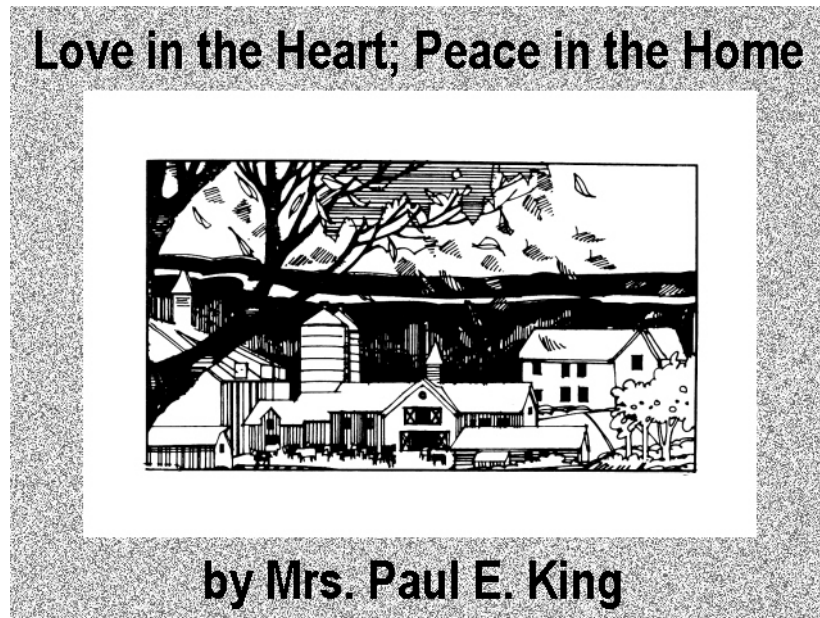
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**LOVE IN THE HEART; PEACE IN THE HOME**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Trenton brought his ten-speed bike to a screeching halt near the dump. Ordinarily he'd not have stopped so abruptly nor used all of that unnecessary pressure on the brakes, for he knew that a slower, more gradual stop was much easier on the wear of his tires than was one made with a screeching halt. He wondered how much rubber was "eaten" off his bicycle tires by this drastic and radical halt.

He jumped off his hard-earned, still new-looking, second-hand bike and checked the tires, feeling guilty for having violated one of the lessons which his father had taught him with the purchase of his first-ever, old but still-good, two-wheel bike. He was still a little boy then, and the money saved from odd jobs like raking lawns, shoveling snow, and pulling weeds, had made that very first and much-prized old bicycle possible.

His father had helped him to repaint it and, as they worked, he had told him how to take good care of it; what to do and what not to do. And that lesson on skidding the tires had come then. Trenton had never forgotten it: He had obeyed it and practiced it. Habits could become so deeply ingrained, he realized, thankful to God that his parents had instilled early into their children's lives the value of establishing and forming good and lofty habits.

He walked over to where he had seen the strange looking bag and gave it a gentle push with his foot. It moved. He saw it with his own eyes! Then he realized that he hadn't merely imagined that he had seen it moving when he brought the bicycle to that abrupt halt. Trenton stooped down. The bag moved again. This time he heard a faint whimper from inside. With trembling hands, he worked at the knot which kept the bag securely shut, talking in a softly-soothing way to whatever was inside. With a final, firm pull, the knot gave way and Trenton opened the bag. What he saw inside pulled at his heart strings and brought tears to his eyes. "Here," he said softly and kindly, "I won't hurt you. You must be half starved. And," he added as he lifted one of the three little puppies out and cuddled it to him, "half-dead, too."

With gentle hands, he picked each beautiful little puppy up, stroked their thin bodies then cuddled them to him. "Hey, I'd better get you home fast!" he added, making a bed out of the prison-bag sack and placing it in the basket on his bicycle.

"Here, fellows, I'm taking you home, where you'll get good food, a cozy house, and a chance to live," he said, placing the weak puppies down upon their sack bed inside the basket.

Something within his being recoiled at the thought of men being so brutally wicked that they would put the helpless little pups into a hopeless situation and leave them to starve to death. But God's Word had declared that even the "tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," hadn't it?

How, he wondered, could anyone be so cruel? So heartless? There were many people who would have been delighted to have had one of the cute little pups as a pet for their children or even just for themselves, Trenton knew. Too, the animal shelter may have been able to find a good home for them.

He pedaled carefully, trying hard not to jostle and jar the little bodies in the basket. A quick glance told the seventeen, almost eighteen, year old that the pups had more cocker spaniel in them than anything else. They were beautiful. One was jet black, another a golden-yellow, and the third was a beautiful mixture of black and white. Each was beautiful in his own right. Maybe he could keep them all, he thought, as he pedaled into the town and turned down the street to his home.

His father met him in the driveway. Smiling broadly, he exclaimed, "Well, well! What do we have here? Where did you get these little beauties, Trent?"

"I went to the dump to find a piece of junk metal for something that I'm fixing, Dad, and I found these instead. Somebody dumped them there; to die of starvation inside this old gunny sack. Imagine that!"

"And my noble son rescued them. God bless you, Trent! Let's take them into the basement and give them some nourishment and see if we can't save their lives. They can go out into Brownie's dog house when they are strong and a bit more grown up, God willing." "You mean I may keep them all, Dad?"

Mr. Baker placed his hands on his tall son's shoulders. "I've been looking for you all a dog since Brownie died," he replied. "The answer is, yes, you may keep them all, if they live. They look so very frail, don't they?"

"Sure do, Dad. I'm going to do my best to bring them out of their malnourished state though. With God's help, I believe we'll succeed." And Trenton carried the pups into the cool, clean basement and put them into a roomy box.

"Trent. Trent!" Bryce and Paige called, running down the basement steps.

"Daddy said you found some almost-dead puppies," Bryce remarked, looking into the box.

"Oh, aren't they adorable!" sixteen-year-old Paige exclaimed, picking one up and cuddling it to her cheek. "But we must get food into them or they'll die!" the tender-hearted girl exclaimed.

"They're so thin."

"Too thin," Bryce remarked as he stroked the little furry bodies in the box.

"I'm going to see what Mother and I can fix for them," Paige said, starting up the steps. "It will have to be something gentle to their nearly-starved bodies and good for their too-long empty little tummies. But we'll find something nourishing for them, see if we don't. Any woman who's raised eight children will certainly know how to save the lives of half-starved puppies," she declared emphatically.

"That sister of ours!" Bryce remarked to Trenton. "She's pretty wonderful, don't we agree?" Trenton asked, winking at his youngest brother and the last child in the family.

"Sometimes I don't know what I'd do without her," Bryce admitted. "She's just a little bit too overly protective of me at times, though. And I almost feel like I have two mothers." He looked all serious when he finished speaking.

Trenton laughed. "Maybe that's because you're the youngest child in the family, Bryce. Morn has always said that Paige dragged you around . . . not literally; a mere figure of speech for carried . . . ever since she was five years old."

"But I'm only fourteen months younger than she," Bryce declared.

"That doesn't make any difference," Trent answered, laughing softly. "Paige has always loved every minute of taking care of you. You were her living doll, as she used to tell her girl friends."

"Just so she doesn't say that anymore!" Bryce exclaimed with a responding and meaningful smile at his brother. "That could be quite an embarrassing thing to say in the presence of my boy friends."

"Especially since her living doll has shot up to an almost five foot eleven and one-half inch stature," Trenton remarked pleasantly, adding, "But Bryce, did you ever stop to think just how very favored you and I have been? To have been born into a Christian home and a God-fearing family, I mean? Sure, we've been brought up differently than most of our friends have been brought up. But it has served us well and has paid off in big dividends. Each of us eight children are born again and sanctified wholly. This alone has saved us myriad troubles and heartaches and sorrows, for, usually, it's sin that plunges one into a great deal of his troubles. Trouble, then, plunges one into guilt.., for sin and because of sin.., and, quite naturally, the sorrow and heartache follows."

"I guess I'm not quite old enough to think such deep thoughts, Trent. But it certainly is the truth. And, yes, I do realize just how privileged we are to have been born into Dad and Mom's family. They're strict with us. But their strictness is always tempered with love. Lots of love. And kindness, too."

"That's what helps to make this family so wonderful and great," Paige piped up, having overheard some of her brothers' conversation. "Love plus rules plus a certain amount of strictness doesn't come out as the unknown equation; it comes out in Daddy's oft-quoted statement of, 'When there's love in the heart, there's peace in the home.' End of quote."

Bending over the box, Paige set the pan of warm milk and the other one of warm food down before the puppies. One by one they staggered to their weak little legs and began to eat. They needed no coaxing.

When both pans were empty and three pairs of searching eyes looked up to their kind benefactress for more, Paige cuddled them in her arms, saying, "No more for now. Your tummies must have time to get adjusted to food. Period! And time to stretch, so they can retain the food. Later on, OK?"

One of the puppies gave a sort of understanding sigh of gratitude and nuzzled his nose along her wrist. The other two licked her hands in what she was sure was their exclamation of thankfulness. Then, giving her a look of

such love and adoration as to melt the hardest heart, they settled down cozily in her arms and shut their eyes.

"Well, what do you know!" Trenton exclaimed. "You'd think Paige rescued them instead of me," he teased, winking at Bryce.

"Well, while she has three living dolls to care for," Bryce remarked to his older brother, "let's find something nice and soft to put in this box so the pups won't have to sleep on a hard floor tonight."

"Good idea, Bryce. I think Dad may have just the very thing we need out in his shed. The pups are to be ours," Trenton told his brother and sister. "Dad said I could keep all three of them. But I'm sure he had all of us in mind. And just as soon as they're strong enough, they'll be living out in Brownie's ample house, Lord willing."

"Won't they love that!" Bryce exclaimed. "All that fenced in space to romp and play in!"

Paige smiled as she heard the conversation fade away. Looking down upon the sleeping puppies, she said, "You are fortunate little fellows. Yes, very fortunate. You were once at the mercy of someone cruel; but you are now in the hands of God-fearing people who will treat you with kindness and gentleness and love."

One of the pups opened a sleepy eye, looked up at her for a moment, then sighed and went back to sleep just as Paige heard her mother coming down the stairs to add her welcoming touch to the latest arrivals to the Baker household.