

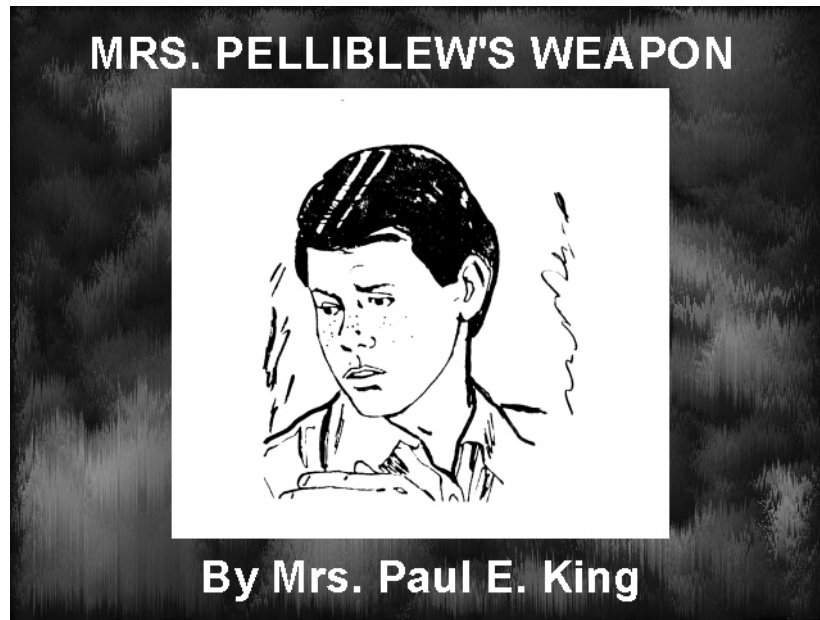
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**MRS. PELLIBLEW'S WEAPON**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

James Bradley Taylor's gaze wandered from the goat he was feeding to the little but neat lean-to shed where Mrs. Pelliblew kept the garden tools, a wheelbarrow, and the riding lawnmower of her late husband. The lean-to had, during Mr. Pelliblew's years, housed at least one, sometimes two or three, well cared for jersey milk cows. Mr. Pelliblew enjoyed the cows as

much as he did the rich, heavy-with-cream milk the docile animals provided for him and his wife twice daily.

In the gathering twilight, James noted how lonely the lean-to looked and seemed since there were no animals inside it nor in the fenced-in area that surrounded it. Death made a lot of changes in the lives of those remaining behind, he thought silently. And in so many different ways, too, he realized, wondering why he hadn't seen Mrs. Amanda Pelliblew in her garden or working with her flowers.

The Pelliblews were a closely-knit family, and after the last of their six children married and left home Mr. and Mrs. Pelliblew seemed to become even more closely knit together. Their children, each one, had invited them to come and live with them, but the content, joyful, and totally independent parents had lovingly refused each child's well-meaning and sincere offer, knowing they were where God wanted them to be.

The sturdy brick house in which they lived and where their children were born and reared, had been theirs since the day of their marriage some fifty-odd years earlier. Except for the lean-to which Mr. Pelliblew had built for the cows and some chickens, the twenty-acre Pelliblew place looked much as it had looked the day the proud groom moved his young and radiantly-happy bride into the three-story house.

James finished feeding Jenny then groomed her carefully. The goat was his pride and joy. She had mothered many a prize winning kid and more than one young F. F. A. man and woman had beaten a path to the Taylor home to buy Jenny's offspring. And why not? Jenny had good blood in her. He had the papers to prove it.

Jenny munched her food nonchalantly, enjoying the gentle hands that were grooming her.

James looked from the goat to the Pelliblew place and marveled, again, that Amanda, the industrious, ever-busy, spry, "young" seventy-two-year-old woman was not outside. The day was a perfect one; cloudless, and not too hot nor too cool, but perfect for one to work in the garden or flower beds. He should go over and check on her he knew, but memories of his last visit were still too fresh and too acute to make a trip over there desirable.

He curried Jenny's back furiously; a bit too furiously. Jenny side-stepped quickly away from him and his currycomb. She turned her head and looked at him, her usual gentle looking eyes boring into him with pain and fear and mistrust.

"Hey, I'm sorry Jenny!" James exclaimed, dropping the currycomb and wrapping his arms around the goat's shiny neck.

Jenny did another quick side-step and stood looking at her young master in perfect amazement.

"Hey, believe me, Jenny, I'm sorry. I guess I got carried away; took my feelings out on you. I didn't mean to."

Jenny stood motionless, eyeing the seventeen-year-old with a critical eye. Under the goat's penetrating gaze, James felt . . . well . . . guilty. It was as if Jenny was accusing him of . . . of. . . . He picked up the currycomb and put it inside the cupboard in the shed where Jenny was housed for the night and during the cold weather, then he left her fenced-in yard and feed lot and wandered across a four-acre meadow of his folks' small farm until he stood at the magnificent windbreak on the Pelliblew place. Birds flitted in and out of the pines and poplars and the Russian olive trees, singing and twittering and seeming as industrious and busy as the little woman in the house which was surrounded on three sides by the beautiful windbreak.

James stood for a while, listening to the music of the birds and the gentle sougning of the pines. He recalled how, as a little boy, he used to come over to the windbreak and play between the rows of the trees, pretending the entire U-shaped windbreak was his palace. He was king of this domain; the branches that oft times brushed his face and tickled his nose was the parapet at the edge of the roof of his magnificent palace. What fun he had had pretending!

He raised his head now and sniffed the delicious resinous odor of the pines. Then he inhaled deeply of the fresh, clean smelling air and sniffed again the delightful fragrance. Almost, he wished he was still that little boy who lived in the pretend world of a few years back. He was open and frankly honest and totally undeceitful then. He loved the Lord with every part of his total being. His greatest delight and chief desire had been to serve the Lord

with all his heart and to make sure that everything he did was pleasing to Jesus. He was so happy those years.

A sob caught in his chest and seemed to hopscotch into his throat in a single leap. He felt like crying. But he wouldn't do it; no indeed! He was seventeen, wasn't he? A young man, really!

Pulling himself together, he cut through the windbreak at the back of the Pelliblew lawn, hoping for a single glance of Amanda's small frame moving about in her usual brisk manner, somewhere -- anywhere -- which would save him the embarrassment of facing her yet would give him the assurance that she was all right and was still among the living.

A bird above him scolded and argued because of his trespassing in and on his domain. James smiled. He took several steps more, toward the edge of the windbreak, hoping there would be no need for him to cross the lawn and go to the door. Peering through the branches, he waited. And waited. And waited. Nothing. Only the sound of the birds.

Like it or not, he knew what he must do. He had a moral obligation to the little woman who was as much like a grandmother to him as was each of his biological grandmothers. It was Mrs. Pelliblew who had saved him from the Bronson's ferocious bull when he had innocently and ignorantly crawled beneath the fence to retrieve the balloon that had sailed like a feather in the gentle breeze and landed near the giant animal as he grazed the lush grasses of his pasture.

Mrs. Pelliblew had seen the mighty animal pawing the ground and charge like some madly demented thing toward where he innocently wandered, following the path of the bobbing balloon. How she managed to scoop him up and save him from being crushed and mangled to death was nothing short of a miracle. But then, Mrs. Pelliblew had faith in God like no one else whom he knew. When she prayed, she believed God for the answer. And that day, so many years ago, she simply cried out to God to divert the bull's attention to the bright balloon instead of on him; and God answered -- only long enough for her to scoop him off the ground, into her arms, and roll beneath the fence to the other side. And not a minute too soon!

James started across the back lawn toward the house. His heart hammered and throbbed inside his chest. What if Mrs. Pelliblew was dead! Or . . . or had had a stroke or a heart attack! He had promised Mr. Pelliblew one time that he would check on her every day that he had to be away. And now he was away, permanently, and he, James Bradley, hadn't fulfilled that promise.

Fear welled up inside him. Guilt rushed to the fore to make him uncomfortable and miserable. He felt as though his heart would hammer its way through his chest area and jump out of his body.

He rushed across the well-kept lawn and was ready to step up on the back porch when he heard a sound. No screams; not even a cry for help; but a sound. And it was coming from -- of all places! -- inside the lean-to shed!

James wanted to run away but his shoes felt like they were glued to the spot with bottles of Crazy Glue; the kind that had a permanent stick-together adhesive. He recognized the sound; he was familiar with it: Mrs. Pelliblew was praying -- for him!

It jolted him. Shook him. Scared him. He knew there was no getting away from her prayers. She was a woman of great persistence; there was no letting go of God until she was assured that God had heard her impassioned cries and that He would answer.

James heard his name called out in full -- "James Bradley Taylor must be saved!" Amanda pleaded, in what sounded like an agonized sob. "Bring him back into the fold, dear Lord, at any cost. Any cost! His heart's grown cold and callused; the fire's gone out. O God, bring him back. Bring him back!"

James felt like he'd suffocate unless he got away. But try as he might to run away, he couldn't move. Positively and absolutely, he could not move.

"Lord," Amanda cried out in desperation, "I'm staying right here on my knees until You answer my prayer for this fine young man. If I die here then I die! I will not leave until You answer prayer. The Devil cannot have James Bradley Taylor; I claim him for Christ and for His work."

James felt like he was going to die. Only two days ago, he had been most unkind and extremely sharp-tongued with Amanda when she had asked him how his spiritual life was progressing, adding that she had been greatly burdened for him and concerned over him. "Jenny has become your god," she had said sadly but observantly.

That did it! Like someone setting a lighted match to a short fuse of dynamite, James exploded verbally. He had never, not in his entire life, said things like he said to Amanda. And that kind, gentle, and loving lady had stood before him and answered him nothing. But her tears! Would he ever forget those fastly-rolling tears and the sorrowful look of her face? Never. Never!

Conviction, so strong and heavy and mighty, now seized his soul -- and his entire being -- until he was sure he was going to die. And why not? He didn't deserve God's forgiveness. Nor Amanda's either.

"God -- be merciful. Merciful! Save him . . ." Amanda's impassioned intercession penetrated his soul. Like a bird flying from a storm to its nest, James started forward. Then, as though his feet had sprouted wings, he raced toward the lean-to, crying to God for mercy. Amanda's weapon -- prayer -- was drawing him like a giant magnet.

"Pray for me, Amanda. Pray/he cried, as he burst into the lean-to, where he found the neighbor sobbing as though her heart was breaking.

Feeling the lostness and the wickedness of his fearful backslidden condition, James Bradley Taylor's knees hit the floor and his prayer for forgiveness reached up, up, up, to the throne of mercy and pardon and grace.

With a shout of victory, he got to his feet and shouted and shouted for holy joy. He was forgiven. Forgiven! Mrs. Pelliblew's weapon was mighty. Powerful! And God's forgiveness was wonderful and marvelous.

He looked over at his beloved neighbor's face; it was shiny-bright and radiant. Her hands were upraised to heaven; she was lost in a psalm of praise and adoration to her Lord. And in that moment James knew that he, too, would be completely victorious -- like Mrs. Pelliblew -- after he was wholly and entirely sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit, like the holy woman was.