

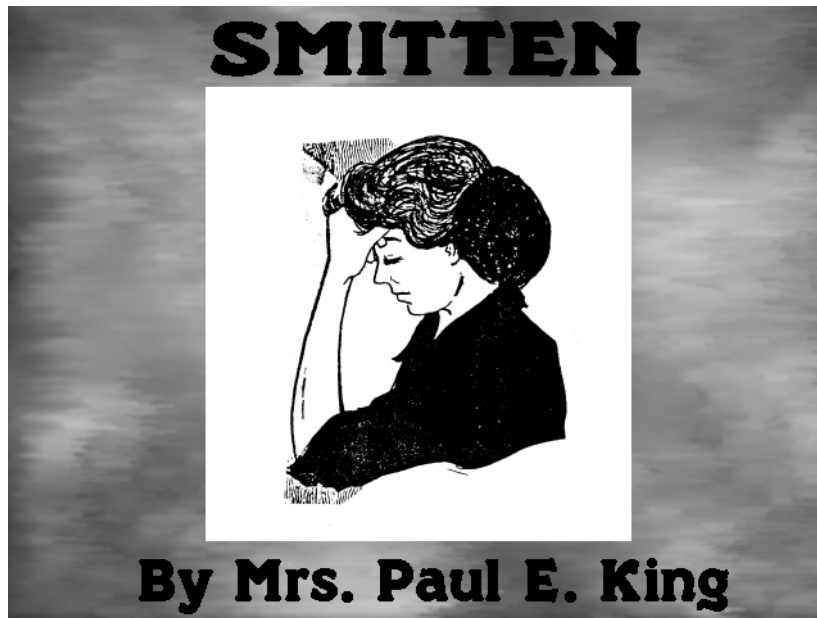
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SMITTEN
By Mrs. Paul E. King

She paced the living room floor, back and forth, back and forth, as nervous and jittery and as much on edge as a caged lion or tiger. She tried to avoid looking down the hallway to the last bedroom door on the right where Karl, her dear husband, kept a faithful vigil over the snowy-white-haired man on the bed. Her conscience, ever like an unfailing sentinel, taunted her

fiercely, accusing her and urging her to do the noble thing and get things rectified and straightened out before there was not time to do so.

Beads of perspiration formed on her forehead and trickled downward in rapid and warm succession. Her heart hammered wildly inside her chest. Her conscience, all the while, urged her to obedience and restitution. She had known better when she committed the sin and did what she did. All her life she'd known the way -- God's way; known too what God forbade and what He hated and condemned. Oh, yes, she knew. How well she knew!

Her thoughts raced quickly from her dreadfully wicked and evil sin to the man against whom the sin was committed, lying now on his death bed -- her grandfather. For six years now, her grandmother was enjoying the bliss and the grandeur of Heaven, and now her grandfather, whose loneliness over the Homegoing of his companion of sixty-four years had left him with an aching void and an indescribable emptiness, was about to make the crossing and be reunited with that much-loved one. And she had done nothing to rectify the wrong she'd done him!

She continued her restless pacing, thankful that her husband was too busy with the sick one to observe her and her state of extreme agitation and nervousness. Her better judgment warned her of and alerted her to the fact that unless she acted speedily and hastily upon what she knew she must do that her opportunity to do so would be forever lost; already, it was slipping away from her as rapidly as sand falling through fingers.

She grabbed for a handful of tissues and dried the profusion of sweat from her forehead and her face, recalling so many things about her beloved grandfather. When she first knew him, and remembered him from when she was a very small child, he was young and energetic and oh, so very good and kind to his family. She remembered thinking that he was more like God than any other man she knew. His face was ruddy and healthy looking, and when he stood up to testify she saw a glow upon that face that was of another world. And now, at almost 90, his face was pale and wrinkled with age and his once copper-bronze cheeks were hollow and sunken. Behind the sallowness and the wrinkles, however, was nearly a century of love and devotion and service to God, and a history of stories, some fictitious, but most of them true.

Among the many things she had always loved and admired in and about her grandparent, was his God given ability and talent for making stories come alive. He kept her, and his large Sunday school class of boys and girls, spellbound and completely immersed in what he was telling at the time. She could still feel the chills of fear that traced every vertebra up and down her spine as her grandfather related the sad story of King Saul's apostasy and his visit to the witch of Endor under cover of the darkness, his soul even more dark and black than the night and oh, so destitute, because God was departed from him and answered him no more His death was a thing of horror.

She discovered that she was trembling and shaking with remembering now. And suddenly she found herself comparing the calm, quiet, totally resigned and ready-to-meet-God form of the man on the bed in her home with that of the disobedient, long-ago king of the Bible.

Tears swam in her eyes. No need comparing a long dead king and her grandfather, she realized. Rather, compare her own life -- her heart -- with that of the dying man in her home; he was ready to go; she was not. He was waiting with deep longing and eager anticipation to meet his God; she was terrified at the thought of it. And why? What was the difference?

A long-ago memorized scripture verse came quickly to mind. She had learned it in Sunday school as a little girl under Grandfather's Spirit-anointed teaching and his love-induced insistence of weekly scriptural memorization. It was found in St. John's Gospel, the third chapter, verses 19-21. It followed closely behind the oft-quoted, and much-loved, John 3:16 verse. Her grandfather had told them as children that this would be an easy way for them to remember what chapter the three verses were in, since it was in the same chapter as the "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." verse was in.

Quickly and swiftly the verses replayed themselves across the strings of her memory, striking acute conviction and sharp condemnation with each and every letter that formed the sentences of each verse:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

"For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

"But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

She was trembling fiercely now. She didn't love the light, she had to admit, because of her wickedness. And the sad thing was, that the evil which she had done had made her feel extremely uneasy in the presence of her dear, godly grandparent. She had been so very unkind to him at times and so curt and sharp with her words, too. Yet he had done nothing at all to merit or deserve her perversity. Always, he had manifested only the Spirit of Christ and of true holiness.

Tears blinded her vision now. Her hammering heart seemed to beat out a message inside her chest: either she would confess and repent -- and do it now -- or she would never again have another opportunity to do so. The sand in her grandfather's hour glass was fast running out. She must go to him. She must!

Steeling herself, she dried the tears and took a step toward the hallway. Humiliation pulled her back. Humiliation and pride. How could she confess her misdeed -- her sin -- to the dying man? What would it do to him? He might die from the shock and she would have yet another sin against her if he did so. Oh, she couldn't do it.

Do it now. Now. Now! her heart seemed to plead, and her conscience echoed the urgent refrain -- now. Now. Now!

Weeping brokenly and sobbing convulsively, she cast her stubborn pride aside and rushed down the hallway. "Grandpa! Grandpa," she cried, as she ran to the bed and threw her arms around the man on the bed.

"Myrna Oh, Myrna! You've come. You've come!" The eyes of the dying man opened and lingered on those that were now wetting his face and the sheet.

"Forgive me, Grandpa. Please forgive me. I took the hundred dollars you were saving for the foreign missions offering. And . . . and then I lied to

you and said I hadn't seen it, when you came to me about it. Oh, Grandpa, I'm sorry. My heart has been so very wicked and . . . and so deceitful."

Myrna's sobs filled the room. Karl stood speechless, numb with shock. His wife, a thief; a liar!

"I know, Myrna I know," the dying man replied in a weak and barely audible voice. "I've known it all along. I . . . I prayed that you'd confess it before I . . . crossed over, dear girl. I wanted to hear it from your lips; wanted to know you were sorry enough for your sins to repent and make it right. You are forgiven, Myrna. I freely forgive. But have you asked God's forgiveness? It's only as we confess our sins to Him that we can have complete forgiveness and be converted."

"I'll do it, Grandpa. Now. Oh, I don't want to lose my soul and go to hell."

"I can go now, Myrna: I asked the Lord to please allow me to remain long enough to hear you confess your great sins, and to know you were sorry enough to make things right with your God. Pay the price, my daughter, and go through with the Lord. God bless you, Karl. You've been a wonderful grandson-in-law. I'll meet you in heaven. Farewell, my children. Farewell." With a wave of his hand and a smile on his face, the saintly man's spirit took its departure of earth to the Celestial City.

"Grandfather! Oh-h!" Myrna cried.

"He's gone," Karl said softly and gently as he put his arms around his wife.

"I . . . I know."

"Myrna . . .?"

"Yes, Karl. . . ."

"Let's pray. I want us to be one in spirit like we're one in marriage."

Myrna's eyes, red from sobbing and weeping, met those of her husband. "I'm sorry, Karl. I never meant to be a common thief. I never

realized how desperately wicked my heart was until I . . . I took Granddad's hundred dollars. I felt I deserved it; that all the hours spent waiting on him should have some remuneration. Oh, Karl, I'm so ashamed of myself. The carnal heart is indeed treacherous and wicked. Please pray for me. I want God's forgiveness, and His peace and joy restored to my soul. And this time, Karl, I'm going to get sanctified wholly. My eyes are opened; I see the necessity of going on into holiness. I'm frightened at the utter depravity of my heart."

Beside the bed, holding the hand of her now deceased grandfather, Myrna knelt and prayed earnestly and fervently until she knew that, once again, she was forgiven; born again. The joy inside her heart was only the beginning of greater things, she knew, as she hugged her husband and testified to the forgiving power of Christ.