

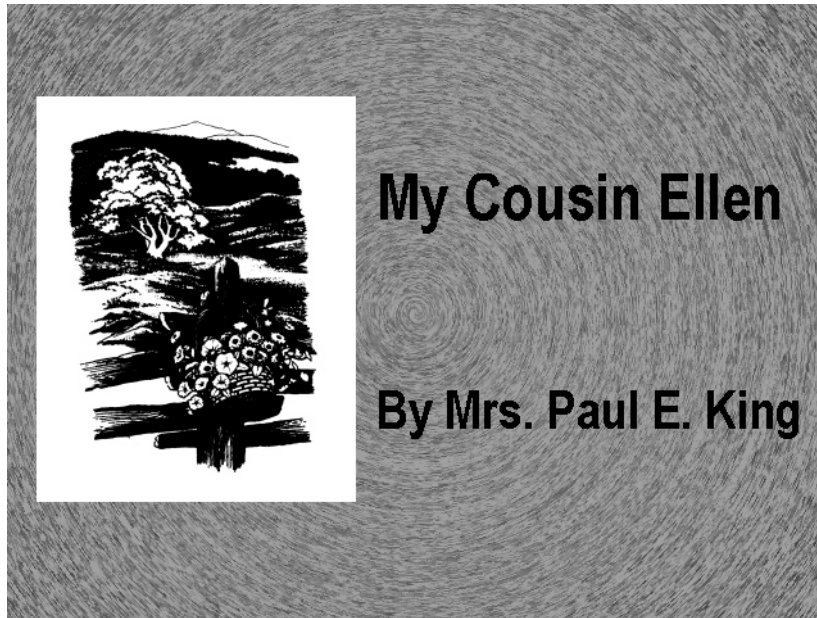
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**MY COUSIN ELLEN**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**  
**(Part I)**

I tore the letter into pieces and tossed it into the oval wastebasket then I slumped down in the nearest chair and let out an enormous groan.

Mother gave me a quick, sideways, surreptitious glance then asked, "What's wrong?" as she continued sorting through the mail that came only minutes before.

Without preamble, I replied, "Ellen's coming! Imagine it! For two whole weeks!" I groaned again: How could this be happening to me? I wondered.

"She's a perfect bore!" I exclaimed, when Mother made no comment. "A bore! So utterly and absolutely and positively boring and uninteresting. No fun at all. All she ever wants to do is read, read, read, and read some more. Or walk. Or ride the bicycle. Talk about a bum summer, that's what I'll have." I felt like crying.

Jumping to my feet, I rushed over to Mother and grabbed her by her shoulders, saying, "Oh, Mom, you've got to help me. Think up some excuse so I can write her and tell her it won't be convenient for her to come."

Mother gave me a scathing, withering look. I dropped my hands off her shoulders. She continued sorting and opening the mail.

I walked around the room several times then I exclaimed brightly, "I know; I'll write and tell her that I'm going on a cruise. After all, Brenda and her folks did invite me to go with them. In fact, Brenda and her mother nearly begged me to go. Mrs. Whitson said it would make the trip so much nicer for Brenda if she had her closest friend along since she'll have no friends on the ship, only as she makes new ones."

Mother dropped the letter which she held in her hand. She was incredulous. "Patricia Jolene Murphy," she exclaimed in total shock, "you'll do nothing of the kind. That would be lying."

"Well, what's so awful about that?" I wanted to know. "None of us are religious. We never go to church anymore. It's been years since you and Dad and I were there. I must have been five or six when you both decided that we wouldn't go anymore. And I used to really enjoy Sunday school with old, white-haired Mrs. Coxen teaching the lessons. But back to Brenda and the cruise: I was invited, you'll remember. I could just tell that boring cousin of mine that I was invited to go on a cruise and leave it at that."

"But you aren't going, Patricia. You would be pretending a lie and, church or no church, I will not allow lying. No matter which way you look at it or try to wrangle out of it, you little schemer, it's still all a lie. When is Ellen coming? How are her parents?"

"I don't know," I admitted candidly. "I tore the letter up as soon as I read that she was coming."

Mother groaned this time, saying, "Oh, no! How will we know when and where to meet her?"

I hadn't given that a single thought. All I wanted was for her not to come.

Seeing the worried look on Mother's face, I said, "I'm sorry, Mom. But please, please, I don't want her to come. I don't see how I can take two weeks of the kind of life she likes. It's too slow-paced and dull for me. And if she's still in those horrible braces on her teeth I'll be mortified. My friends have class."

Again, Mother was incredulous. "Patricia Jolene, I'm ashamed of you! Ellen's your father's only brother's daughter -- your cousin -- and she is welcome here. Anytime."

"But Mother, you don't understand. She's a bore. And she's clumsy and. . . ."

Mother never did let me finish. "She's coming," she declared with that certain note of finality in her voice which she could use so effectively when necessary. "You haven't seen Ellen for at least three years. She's now a young lady, like yourself, and I'm sure you'll see some changes in her. Now go straighten up your room. Since you destroyed the letter and have no idea when she'll arrive, I want to see your room in constant preparedness and tidiness and readiness for when she arrives."

I groaned inwardly, wondering when I'd ever learn to keep my mouth shut and stop making "snares" for myself. Then I headed for the bedroom to the work before me, wishing for all that was in me that I would have taken Mother's advice -- long ago -and heeded her command to keep my room in day by day tidiness and neat order. It was just as easy, she said, or easier, to

hang clothes on hangers when removed and taken off and not dirty or soiled, as it was to throw them over a chair or on the cedar chest and have to hang them up later or to put them into the laundry hamper.

Habits -- wrong habits, that is -- could be ever so binding and hard to break, I realized suddenly, feeling ashamed of myself for having been so careless and disorderly and disorganized. I had meant to get things hung up and put away; I really had. But in my heart, I knew I was an habitual procrastinator. And why? Because I had failed to discipline myself to get at the job immediately and not wait for that "more convenient" time, which, for me at least, never seemed to come until Mother ordered me sternly and without a second command to set my room in order. Period. Period!

I looked around the room now and saw all the clutter and realized that the beauty of the room was obliterated completely by my carelessness and sloppiness. I winced inwardly with shame. After all, I was no longer a mere child learning the rules of housekeeping by rote and routine; I had been taught all these from girlhood's early days and years by Mother, who was an excellent homemaker and housekeeper. And now, at seventeen years and eight months I was a poor example and scholar of her teaching and training and example. I had done far better as a little girl, Mother often declared, than I was doing now as a young woman interested in boys. But then, maybe the interest in boys added to my lack of being tidy and neat in my room, I realized suddenly: boys were far more interesting to me than hanging up clothes was, I had to admit to my silent thoughts and my heart.

I walked around the room, wondering where to begin. Everywhere I looked I saw work, work, work. Not just an hour's work either; ah, no! I knew I'd be busy for hours. And hours.

I wished I could run away and forget about the mess completely. But I knew the utter futility of such a foolish wish so I grabbed a dress off the pile of clothes on the cedar chest and held it up for scrutiny. Wrinkle after wrinkle met my gaze. Cotton. All cotton. I had insisted on cotton. Mother told me I'd have every bit of my own ironing-pressing to do. I winced. I groaned, and tossed it on the floor. It would be washed too, I decided, if I was going to have to iron it anyway before hanging it up inside the closet.

"What a chore!" I groaned aloud, as I sorted through the mound of clothes on top of the cedar chest and on the chair and in a corner of the

clothes closet. With great, heavy, sickening and sinking sensation deep inside my being, I realized what I was really in for--everything would have to be washed and dried and most of the things would have to be pressed, too, unless I wanted to be seen in wrinkles, which I most certainly did not.

I pulled a kleenex tissue out of its box on the dresser and wiped the perspiration from my face and forehead, exclaiming, "Oh, no!" as I stood looking down at the piles of clothing on the floor. And then I realized that all this extra work was the result of my carelessness and my sloppiness and sloth and could have been avoided had I been diligent and orderly and ambitious on a day by day basis and routine.

Tears stung my eyes and washed my cheeks. I felt like accusing Ellen for the work before me but I realized sincerely that she wasn't to blame. Or was she? If I hadn't received her letter and told Mother she was coming for a visit I wouldn't be standing in the middle of the mess. Sure, I'd have had to clean it up sometime, I knew, but I doubted that it would have been at this precise moment of time.

Fiercely, I grabbed up a load of clothes from the floor then headed for the laundry room. I'd be hours washing, drying and ironing, all that besides cleaning and dusting in my room.

"Don't forget your bedding," Mother said as we passed each other in the hallway. "The spread, too," she called over her shoulder.

"Oh Mom! I'll be all day at this."

As if she hadn't heard, Mother said, "I'll be in to inspect it when you're finished. And honey, the old axiom still holds -- it's still in effect -- If it doesn't pass inspection it's a do-it-over-again thing."

"But Mom, that was for when I was a little girl, learning."

Mother turned, came along the hallway to where I stood with my arms cradling a huge load of soiled clothes, and smiled at me. "You've forgotten what you learned," she said softly. "When learning becomes a practiced thing and a good habit, then we'll talk. Now get busy, and see that all you do is done well. Ellen's coming. We don't know when, but our house shall be prepared and in beautiful readiness every day for whenever she arrives."

I watched Mother turn and head back down the hallway and go about whatever she was doing in the first place when we passed. Then I shuffled toward the laundry room, knowing my day's work was all cut out for me.

I dropped the clothes to the floor, turned the dial on the washer to the proper cycle, added detergent and softener and, finally, the clothes -- load number one muttering under my breath, "Look what you're doing to our lives! Just look at it! You're ruining my life and I . . . I . . . I think I hate you, Ellen."

I startled myself with the words that I had just uttered, and then I was afraid. Never could I remember having felt that bitter thing called hatred before. Trembling, and feeling all quivery inside, I hurried away from the laundry room.

(Part 2)

I was in the bathroom brushing my teeth, five days after having received Ellen's letter, when the phone rang. Daddy had gone to work and I knew Mother was in the garden gathering thyme and marjoram and rosemary from the herb garden for drying. I rinsed my mouth and hurried to answer the ring.

"Hello," I said, almost breathless from haste. "The Murphy residence; Patricia speaking."

"Pat! Did you forget what time I said I'd be in on the train?" Ellen's voice sounded sweet and softly-soothing. And so excited.

"I . . . I . . . I'm sorry," I stammered, feeling true shame and guilt over having torn the letter up without having read it through.

"Oh, that's all right, Pat. We all make mistakes and forget sometimes. I was so happy when you didn't call and tell me it wouldn't be convenient for me to come at this time that I nearly cried for joy. I had asked you to do just that in my letter, if you will remember.

"It's been ever so long since I saw you, and I'm nearly beside myself knowing we'll have two wonderful weeks together. Cousins shouldn't allow years nor time to crowd out their getting together. Just think of it, Pat, we lost

three beautiful get-together summers by giving something else top priority. Well, I'll hang up now; we can talk when we see each other. So forgive me for doing all the talking, but I'm as excited as a little child at being here. You sounded rather out of breath when you answered the phone. What were you doing?"

In spite of my former inner feelings, I felt light and bubbly, caught up in the joyous spirit of my cousin on the other end of the line. And I was laughing. "Oh, Ellen, I was only brushing my teeth," I replied. "But I ran to the kitchen to answer the phone, hence the breathless sounding hello. Now sit tight, and we'll be over there to get you as quickly as possible."

My feet felt like they were flying as I ran to the herb garden, shouting, "She's here! She's here, Mother. Ellen's here. She just called. She's waiting over at the railroad station."

Mother spun around and looked at me. Then she gathered the baskets containing the various herbs and walked over to where I was standing beside a beautiful and very fragrant clump of blooming lavender. She smiled at me. "You sound like you're happy, Pat," she said. "I'm glad."

"Oh Mother, Ellen's so excited and happy to be here. Her excitement is contagious. And Mom, she sounds grown-up and . . . and extremely cultured. Really, she does."

Again, Mother smiled "Three years can make quite a change," she declared as we walked side by side up the garden path to the kitchen, with me helping to carry the baskets bearing their fragrant culinary gifts.

I wasn't prepared for what I saw when I entered the waiting room at the railroad station. The tall, slender blonde that walked like a queen to Mother and me and hugged us with a hug that was so sincere and warm and genuine, left me speechless.

"Oh," Ellen cried happily as tears warmed her cheeks, "I'm so . . . so thankful to be here. It seems like a beautiful dream. Pinch me, Pat, and tell me I'm not dreaming; that it's really real. And Aunt Doris, I'm so happy to see you again."

Coming quickly out of my state of shock, I pinched Ellen lightly on the nose and said, "It's real, Ellen. Really real. And you . . . you look fabulous. You.

Ellen laughed and reminisced openly. "The last time you saw me I was in oral braces and I was as clumsy as an ox, as the saying goes." Then, waving her hand, she said, "Poor Pat; I must have bored you nearly to death. I was in a rut, if ever anyone was. But not anymore: Everything's different. I'm changed."

"Mother told me that years make changes in one's life and I guess she and Father are in a position to make a statement like that; seeing they've experienced many and varied changes in their years of parenting four extremely different children," I said, laughing.

"We've enjoyed every minute of our parenting," Mother replied quickly. "And while none of you were alike, it added 'spice' to our years of teaching you and loving and caring for you."

I glanced quickly at mother and saw tears glisten in her eyes as she finished the statement. I knew she was missing the three older offspring. I was the only one still at home. Robert, the first and oldest of us four, was in Germany making a career in the Air Force. He had moved his wife and three children over with him two years and five months ago. This was hard on both Father and Mother, whose lives seemed pretty much wrapped up in the grandchildren. Eleanor had married less than a year after Robert's move to Germany, and Chad, the third child, enlisted in the Navy shortly after Eleanor and Greg were married and left for the west coast, where Gregg's work was.

Ellen, always sensitive to one's needs and/or feelings, noticed my mother's unshed tears and quickly slipped an arm around her waist, exclaiming brightly, "Two weeks with the two of us together will surely make you long for the peace and the quiet you have with only Pat at home anymore, Aunt Doris." She winked at me as she said it.

Mother laughed, then remarked, "You've always been such a shy and quiet little thing, Ellen."

"I'm changed," my cousin repeated again, a second time.

I studied this once-dull (to my way of thinking and doing) cousin of mine as we drove home. She no longer seemed shy and timid and quiet. Nor dull and boring. And her physical appearance was . . . well . . . to be truthful, I'd have to say that Ellen was beautiful. She was tall and slender and as graceful a swan.

But her beauty went deeper than that of the external. What it was, I couldn't figure out.

We were scarcely out of the car, at home, when Ellen grabbed me by the shoulders and danced around the garage with me, exclaiming joyously, "Oh, Pat, God is so good to me! I'm here. With you, and Aunt Doris and Uncle Frank. It's almost too good to be true. God is so good!"

"God?" I queried. "What does He have to do with your being here?"

"Everything, Pat. Now come, I can hardly wait till I'm settled in. With you, I hope. I love your darling bedroom. I'll remember forever the way the climbing ivy tap, tap, tapped on the east window when the wind blew. I always pretended it was Grandpa Showers coming down the sidewalk with his cane -- to our house. Remember how his cane always tap, tap, tapped with each step he took?"

I laughed. I had almost forgotten about the little man whom everybody in the neighborhood called Grandpa Showers. And every time I visited Ellen I could be sure of a visit from Grandpa. He seemed to feel it was his moral obligation to make every visitor and newcomer welcome to the neighborhood. His visits were never lengthy and never without humor, and when he departed with his usual cheery, "We're sure glad you're here with us," statement, you knew he meant it. Always, he would add, "Now you come back real soon again, do you hear?" Then he'd turn and, smiling broadly, he'd make his way back to the little cottage home he shared with his mate of fifty some odd years. He and his cane.

"I had almost forgotten about Grandpa," I confessed now as we hurried inside to my bedroom. Was I ever thankful Mother had insisted on a clean and tidied-up bedroom each and every day! Was I ever!

"O Pat!" Ellen exclaimed. "Your room's more beautiful than ever. You have housecleaned it, haven't you? It looks so lovely. It looks squeaky-clean and it smells rain washed fresh."

"Not rain washed, Ellen," I remarked "hand washed. And automatic washer washed, for the curtains, spread, throw rugs and such things."

"You did a wonderful job, Pat. I'm so proud of you. Your room looks fit for a princess to sleep in it."

"You're the princess," I laughed, helping her to hang up her dresses.

It was the Bible that caught my attention as she placed it on the dresser top.

"You . . . you've gone religious?" I questioned. I was absolutely shocked. Incredulously so.

"Not gone religious, Pat; it's far deeper than any such thing. I got converted."

"Converted? What's that? And how does that tie in to religion?"

"To be converted means that one's heart has been changed -- by Christ. As the Bible states, 'old things are passed away and, behold, all things are become new.' This explains exactly what happened to me. I was such a wicked person, Pat."

I gasped. 'You were not!' I cried out in defense of her self-accusation. "Why you wouldn't harm a soul. And you never drank alcoholic beverages of any kind, and you didn't smoke or do drugs either. And you certainly were never, ever immoral and wicked. I know you better than that, Ellen."

"But I was wicked in my heart, Pat. You see, each one of us is born in sin. The Bible says so. And Jeremiah the Prophet states that the heart is deceitful above all things, and is desperately wicked. That was a picture of my heart. True, I didn't do any of the things you mentioned. But my heart, in its sinful state and condition before I became converted, had the potential for each and every one of those hideously evil things you said I hadn't done. And do you know, Pat, that I committed the greatest of all sins by keeping the

Lord Jesus Christ out of my heart and not allowing Him in? My sins helped to keep Jesus on the cross. My sins put Him there. Oh, when I saw this and realized it, I ran down the aisle to the altar and begged Him to forgive me and to come into my heart. And He did."

"But you've always been a good girl!" I cried out again in defense of her reputation. "And I'm sure your goodness would have gotten you into Heaven."

"No indeed, Pat. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and nothing -- absolutely nothing -- can be cleansed and made 'good,' as you stated it, but by and through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. And only after we have been forgiven and our sins are washed away through the blood of Christ are we ready for Heaven. For the first time ever in my life, I found the Source of true joy and peace. Oh, I am so happy. My heart wants to sing and shout the Lord's praises all the time. Honestly Pat, sometimes I can scarcely believe I'm me. Everything is so wonderful and so new and different."

"And what about your folks? They think you've gone off the deep end, I'm sure."

"Is that what you think?" Ellen asked sweetly, coming over to where I stood and looking me full in the face.

"Frankly, yes," I admitted, adding, "but we'll have a perfectly wonderful time together if you'll not try to cram your beliefs down my throat."

"I don't believe in cramming anything down anyone's throat, Pat," Ellen replied kindly. "In that case it goes no farther than the stated 'throat.' But I'll be praying for you, for I love you dearly and I want you to be in Heaven with me someday. And the only way to get there is by being born again -- or being converted. Oh yes, you were wondering what Daddy and Mother think about my heart change: they too, are converted. Oh, we're such a happy family now. Our home is a little heaven on earth."

I gasped; really loud this time. "You . . . you . . . mean that my uncle, my father's only brother, Fulton, is . . . is. . . ."

"Converted, Pat. Yes. And so is your Aunt Kay -my dear mother."

I dropped down on the bed, too weak and shaken up to say anything. Wait till Dad heard this! I thought, feeling as limp as a wet dish rag.

(Part 3)

Sleep eluded me. In spite of the fact that Ellen and I had talked way into the night and were extremely tired and sleepy, I couldn't sleep. Ellen, after giving me a hug and telling me goodnight, rolled over on her side and was asleep almost instantly. Her soft, rhythmic breathing seemed to mock the void and the emptiness I felt in my soul.

My cousin had said things which fanned the memories of yesteryear: I was a small child again, sitting and listening to a white-haired Mrs. Coxen -- a true grandmotherly saint -- tell her Sunday school class of wiggly, giggly little girls that Jesus had died a horrible and painful death on a splintery old cross so their sins could be forgiven and they could go to Heaven; a place so beautiful and wonderful, she said, until there was no way she could begin to describe it.

I believed it all then; everything she had said, and told us. But things changed after my parents seemed not to care about going to church and Sunday school anymore. In my very impressionable mind, I thought church wasn't important at all or my folks would still have been going and taking me. Our Sundays then became like every other day of the week, in that we bought and shopped and took mini vacations whenever and wherever Dad could get to for a quick weekend getaway.

I rolled over now, battling a fierce struggle inside. Who was right, my parents or my cousin? Ellen was different. Truly different--and changed. And while Daddy made no comment when she told him about his brother's conversion--her father -- I could sense that it shook my father from deep inside. I didn't know if it angered him or what; I only knew it had made an impact upon him. He became deathly silent and he turned white. Mother too was touched, or moved and smitten, by the news. Except for Ellen's bright and bubbly conversation, the meal was a silent affair after her pronouncement of the changed hearts and lives in their family. Ellen's joyous testimony seemed to have rendered my folks incapable of speech, like they were numb and dumb with shock.

I wrestled my silent, but very real inner battles, way into the wee hours of morning, and when I finally fell asleep it was only to wrestle still more with them, this time in my dreams. I felt I was being tossed on the sea like a tiny and insignificant bobber, only, instead of riding the mountainous waves to their crest, I was being submerged in the sea troughs, going down, down, down -- I was drowning. I tried to scream, but couldn't make a sound.

It was late when I opened my eyes and saw the hands of the digital clock on my bedside table. Eleven thirty! With a start, I jumped out of bed. I felt ashamed of myself. Where was Ellen? What would she think of me, sleeping so late into the day? In record time I had the room all tidied up and myself dressed and combed and ready for the day.

Everything was quiet and still when I went into the kitchen, not a soul was around. A quick search through the house and a peek into the garden produced no sign as to Ellen's or Mother's whereabouts. Daddy was at work hours ago, I knew, but where the others were I hadn't the faintest idea, and not until Mother came through the door, several hours later, with a shining face, was I aware that anything special had happened in our household.

"Hi sleepyhead," she said as she came over to where I sat reading the newspaper. "Ellen's quite a girl, isn't she!"

The words came out on a note of exclamation and praise with not even the hint of a question. I dropped the paper and looked cautiously at my mother.

"I guess so," I finally replied, "even though I haven't any idea what made you say that. I know she's changed, if this is what you mean."

"Changed! Indeed so. I guess I was never so shocked in all my life as I was last evening when she told us at the supper table what happened in her heart. And, ultimately, in the heart and life of her parents too. I scarcely slept at all last night."

I sucked my breath in quicklike, hoping Mother didn't notice the gasp that accompanied it. If she did she never gave evidence of it.

"I tell you, Pat, I was troubled all night long in my soul. I knew that for your proud, vain and always cocksure Uncle Fulton to go to all those people

and make restitution and ask for forgiveness, as Ellen told us he did, that there was something real and genuine about this experience called conversion, or the new birth."

"Do you think it will last?" I asked quickly, for lack of knowing what to say.

"Last? Oh, Pat, I have no doubt about it. Fulton, like your father, doesn't do things 'off the top of his head', as the saying goes: He does his 'homework' well in advance of any decision he makes and whatever he does. Ellen told me this morning at the breakfast table that, unknown to her at the time, her father began reading the Bible and searching the scripture for and about every single thing she had talked to them about. And the more he read and searched, the hungrier and sicker he got in his soul, until one day he called her into his library and told her he was finally persuaded in his mind and convinced in his heart that she was right and that he was on his way to hell."

"And then what?" I asked, feeling nervous and jittery inside.

"He asked her to pray for him. And just as they knelt for prayer, your Aunt Kay walked in and, taking Ellen by the hand, she asked that she, too, be prayed for. Ellen said she'll never forget the glory of the hour when both her mother and father prayed through and got saved and were converted. And Pat, less than two hours ago, I got converted. I've never experienced anything in all my life to the joy and the peace I now have in my soul. I'm a born again Christian, honey, and my heart is overflowing with joy. I want you to forgive me for having a part in taking you out of Mrs. Coxen's Sunday school class and for not insisting that your father allow you to continue going to church, those many years ago."

I jumped up from the chair and walked over to the window, remarking, in a shaking voice, "Oh, Mom, you know you're forgiven. Where is Ellen?"

"She's out working the neighborhood, trying to 'round up' boys and girls for a sort of daily vacation Bible school class she wants to have while she's here."

Again I gasped. "Wherever will she have it?" I asked, spinning around on my heels and facing my mother.

"She saw a shaded, vacant, weed-infested lot several blocks away; she was thinking of trying to get permission from the owner to have it on there. But I told her I felt our back yard would be more desirable."

"Mother!" I was incredulous. "Your plants and flowers and bushes! They . . . they'll be trampled to pieces. Squished."

"I doubt it, Pat. And even if they are, which is more important and of greater value, crushed flowers or saved souls?"

Weak with something I couldn't define or describe, I dropped down on the sofa. Almost immediately, Mother was sitting beside me. Wrapping her arms around me, she began to weep.

"Oh, Pat. Pat," she cried. "I feel I failed you as a mother. I provided well for your body needs but neglected your never-dying soul. Please forgive me. I . . . I . . . Pat, come to Jesus. Now. Let's make this a complete family in Christ."

"Bu . . . but . . . Daddy . . .?"

"Your father's not far from the kingdom, Patricia. And by God's grace I mean to get in touch with each of your brothers and your sister and witness to them. But for right now, I'm concerned about you."

Mother was sobbing now. Her tears wet my blouse and my shoulder.

"Won't you come to Jesus?" she asked between her shaking sobs. "You must be born again to get into Heaven, honey. . . . Will you come to Him? Now?"

That was exactly what Ellen had told me last night, I recalled.

Taking Mother's dear, tear-wet face between my hands, I whispered brokenly, "Yes, Mother. Yes."

We slipped off the davenport to our knees. Still sobbing, Mother led in prayer. But not for long: my voice rose and fell as I sought forgiveness and petitioned for pardon and mercy. I confessed each sin as it rose before me

and suddenly, instantaneously and gloriously, I knew I was forgiven. Converted. Saved.

Words? I couldn't find any that I felt were adequate to describe what I felt and what I was experiencing in my happy soul. With enlightened and now-spiritual eyes, I realized that salvation from sin was something one had to experience personally in order to understand what another meant when he testified to it being joy unspeakable and full of glory. It was, indeed, that and much more.

Mother was nearly beside herself with joy over having led her daughter to the Lord. True, God used Ellen to lay the foundation and to prepare the way, but it was Mother whom the Lord used to lead me into the blessed experience of salvation. And back of it all -years ago, to be exact -- was a loving, white-haired Sunday school teacher who planted the gospel seeds week in and week out, line upon line and precept upon precept.

Something inside my being stirred and moved with holy desire: It was like I knew God had saved me for a purpose. A cause. He had work that needed to be done. I must help Him to get it done. Suddenly, my life had purpose and meaning. Now I understood why Ellen was out in the neighborhood trying to "round up" the boys and girls so she could tell them about Jesus and His love and power to save them and to forgive them of their sins.

"I must go and find Ellen," I told Mother as I wiped the happy tears off my face. "I want to help her. But first I must ask her to forgive me for the horrid things I said about her and for the equally wretched attitude I had toward her. And the lie I wanted to write her when I knew she was coming. What a scheming little scamp I was!" I added, feeling shame, deep and real, possess me and wash over me.

"Ellen told me this morning, after I was saved, that each of us has the scheming kind of nature in us even after we're saved. She said the Bible calls it the carnal mind, or the carnal nature. She told me that sooner or later this old nature would manifest itself inside of me unless I had it taken out, root and all, by the Holy Spirit. I'm going to pray for deliverance from this awful thing, Pat. I don't want anything to disturb nor trouble this wonderful peace inside my soul. Just remember, dear, you can get rid of that old scheming nature too."

"Oh I will, Mother. I will, by God's grace," I promised, as I hurried away in search of Ellen, the beloved, God-sent cousin of mine.