

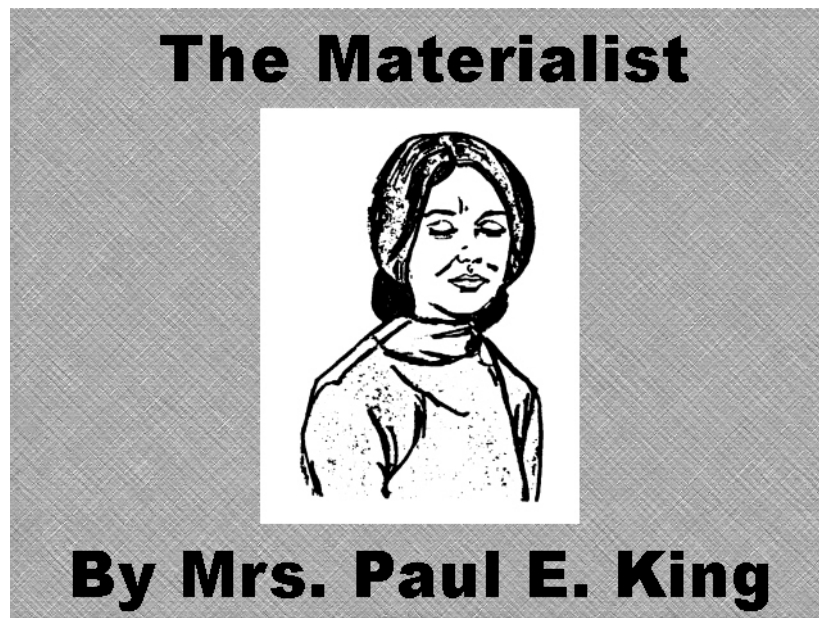
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**THE MATERIALIST**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Elinor Beacon began hanging the clothes back on the rod inside her bedroom closet after having cleaned the closet thoroughly. She had a feeling of accomplishment as she worked to finish the job. Tired? Of course she was. Especially so since she had the cleaning jobs to do after she got home from her full day's work in the store. But the satisfaction of knowing she had

done the job well compensated for the weariness in her body. There was something rewarding about doing one's work well, she soliloquized.

She took the last few dresses off the bed and began hanging them with the others inside the clothes closet when she saw the little pink dress among the group still held in her hand. Placing the last few garments quickly on the rod, she held the simple but neat dress at arm's length. It was the dress she had bought for a cousin's wedding: Cindy had wanted her to stand as her maid of honor, a thing she was delighted to do. The dress had been floor length when she bought it, but it easily adapted to the street length to which she had remade or remodeled it. In fact, Elinor thought it looked better and was prettier after she was finished remaking it than it had been before. She had then worn it over and over as her favorite Sunday dress.

She looked at the dress now, wondering why she hadn't worn it for a while. Then she remembered that it had brought back painful memories, as bits of news regarding Cindy's and Art's fragile marriage came to her hearing. She didn't want to believe the reports; it grieved her too deeply.

"You can't just bury your head in the sand like the ostrich, Elinor," Cassie Burrell told her one day after she had told Cassie that she didn't want to hear whatever it was she was about to say. "Cindy's always been selfish and . . . and thankless. You know this, Elinor; know it as well as I," Cassie had added.

And silently, Elinor's heart had to admit that Cassie's statement was indeed the truth. Still, it grieved her to hear Cindy discussed in such a way. "Wouldn't it be better if we prayed for Cindy?" she had asked.

"Yes, it would indeed," Cassie agreed. "But there are times when I'd like to shake that niece of mine until she'd get some sense in her head. Times like now," she added. "She doesn't know what she has in Arthur. He's the kindest man I've ever met, I do believe. And Cindy's selfish and ungrateful and. . ."

"Please Cassie, don't say anything more," Elinor had pleaded, while, at the same time she recalled that, to date, Cindy had neither sent her a thank you note nor thanked her verbally or personally for the lovely set of dishes she had given Art and her for their wedding.

It bothered her, she had to admit; but she refused to dwell long upon the negative thought, choosing, rather, to follow the Biblical injunction to think upon whatsoever was lovely and pure and good. It would be all too easy to get into the habit of allowing one's mind to dwell on the ingratitude and the thanklessness of one such as Cindy, she knew, and she wasn't about to have the deep inner peace of her heart disturbed over Cindy's thanklessness. No indeed.

She hung the pretty pink dress inside the closet, resolving within her heart that she would again begin to wear it. She would turn the pain of seeing it and of remembering the wedding, into a time of special prayer for Cindy and Arthur.

She was sure, like Cassie had said, that Cindy was largely to blame for the problems in the marriage. She was a much-pampered, badly spoiled young woman who wanted what she wanted when she wanted it, which always spelled out to NOW. Cindy always felt deprived if she failed to get whatever she wanted, and, Elinor knew, Arthur's paychecks just couldn't possibly stretch far enough to accommodate Cindy's demands for all the newest and the latest in furnishings and appliances.

Elinor felt tears sting her eyes as she faced her cousin's dilemma in silent agony. She had known Cindy's attachment to and obsession of things; material things. But there was no way she could have told this to Arthur. First of all, she was told in Proverbs not to meddle in things which didn't pertain to her and, secondly, Arthur would not have thought it important. He may not have believed her, even. Too, Cindy would have told her, "Thank you; mind your own business." Cindy was like that.

Elinor recalled the times when she had begged Cindy to open her heart to Jesus, telling her cousin how God's power could deliver her from sin and materialism. Cindy's good natured retort was, "To each his own, my dear cousin. I choose a broader, wider, more expansive life style and way of living than you. You've always been so puritanical and old-fashioned. It's becoming to you, though. In fact, I couldn't imagine you any other way; it's the only way I've always known you. But it's too restricting and constricting for me. Too narrow."

"But Jesus said the way to Heaven is narrow, Cindy, and strait. Don't you want to go to Heaven?" Elinor had asked, with tears in her eyes and in her voice.

"Someday I may get serious enough to think about such things, Ellie," Cindy had replied, calling Elinor by the pet name used by her family. "For right now, though, I'm too busy enjoying life and looking forward to my upcoming marriage to Art. Just think of it -- a new home, new furniture and every modern appliance imaginable. Sometimes I think this is too good to be true; I feel like I'm dreaming."

And now, Elinor thought sadly, her dream had dissolved and vanished and given way to the harsh reality of exorbitant monthly payments and a paycheck that was stretched to its extremity and still just barely met the demands of the creditors with little left over for ordinary, basic needs. And saddest of all was the fact that the marriage was teetering and tottering on the verge and the brink of failure and collapse.

Elinor felt weak and heartsick over the thought. If only Cindy would "come down a few pegs" and be content and thankful with less and choose to build her marriage upon things that were solid and durable and eternal.

Would she listen to her, Elinor suddenly wondered, if she'd talk to her now? She was such a proud and vain little thing, always feeling she had everything under control. What was her thinking, now that her marriage was going to pieces and falling apart? Would she be willing and ready to take advice from her? Elinor wondered. Or would she resent what was said?

Elinor dropped to her knees beside the bed and poured her heart out to the Lord, seeking His wisdom and asking for His guidance. Whatever she did, she wanted to be sure the Lord was directing, and that it was not of her own doing but was His will.

She prayed until she knew the Lord had heard her cry and her prayer, then she went down the hallway to the phone and dialed Art and Cindy's number. Almost immediately, a scared sounding voice said, "Hello. Mrs. Arthur Neilson speaking."

"Cindy!" Elinor exclaimed. "How are you?"

There was a pause, then a sob. "Oh, Ellie, I wish I could say I'm fine; but I'd be telling you an untruth. Oh-h, Ellie! Ellie, I need help! I'm so thankful you called. I know it's a three-hour drive, but . . . but would you . . . I mean, could you come? Please? I . . . I'm driving Art crazy. And Ellie, I love him."

"Enough to change, Cindy? I mean, do you love Arthur more than the new home and all that new furniture and. . .?"

"Yes, Ellie. Yes! Please help me. I don't deserve him: He's too good for me. You have no idea how patient he's been with me. And I've nagged him and nagged him until he said he can't take much more. Oh Ellie, I've been such an ungrateful and unthankful little thing; and so very selfish, thinking only of Cindy and her happiness. But all these things will mean nothing to me if I lose my husband. Ellie, you were right when you said that material things can't satisfy the longing and the desire of the soul. I'm ready to listen to you, Ellie ready to change, and turn my life over to God. when can you come?"

"Now, Cindy. Right now. I'll see you in three hours, God willing, or sometime near that. And I'll even spend the night. I have a couple days off work."

Picking up her Bible and putting a few personal things into an overnight case, Elinor took the pink dress off its hanger and slipped it over her head. It was a time for rejoicing; a sinner was coming to God.

Prayerfully and joyously, she turned the key in the door lock then hurried to the car and the open highway, thanking God for answering prayer. Not only was a soul going to be saved but a marriage was too.