

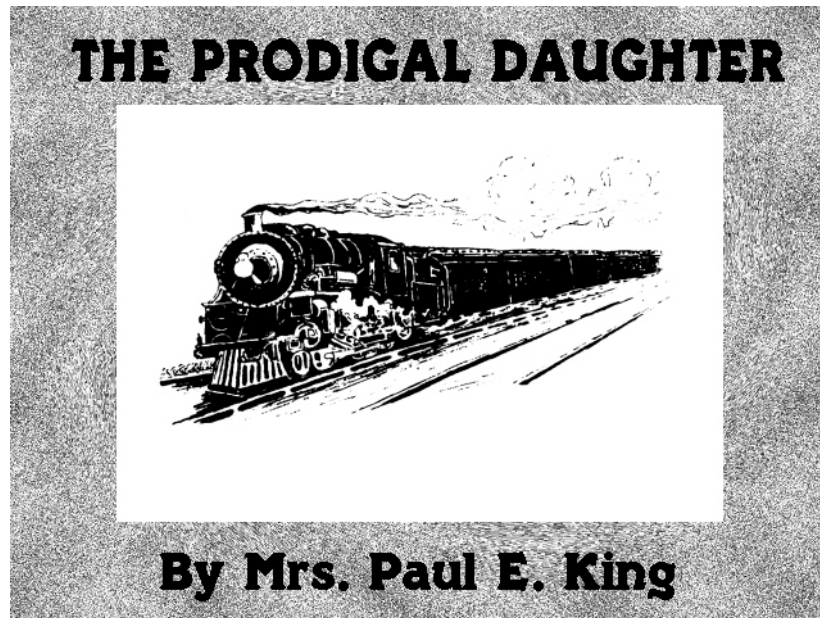
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**THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

A certain man had two daughters, each treated fairly and kindly and showered with love by the gentle-mannered, God fearing, Bible-believing and Bible-honoring parents, who had no idea or inkling that anything was wrong until the older of the two girls came to her father and said, "Father, thou restricteth me too greatly. I no longer believe in parental restraint and restrictiveness: I have been taught a new way; a way of total and complete

freedom. Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me as mine inheritance that I may be gone, to live as I please, to do as I want, and to enjoy life while I am yet young."

"But Daughter," the father pleaded sorrowfully, "thou knowest not what thou sayest nor what thou asketh. The way ahead is filled with tears and grief and heartaches and sorrow and. . . ."

"Say no more!" came the quick interruption. "My mind is made up. I want a different life than the narrow road down which thou hast been leading me. I want Freedom. Freedom, do you hear me?"

"Please Daughter! Please!" came the tearful entreaty of the broken-hearted mother. "Thou canst not mean what thou sayest. Thou canst not! Tarry yet another day with us, while we pray together and help thee get thy bearing and find the mooring. . . ."

"The mooring, thou sayest! Mooring? Ha. Ha. I need no mooring. I want no mooring! I want freedom! Freedom from thee and the 'Thou shalt nots' and the 'Thou shalt' of the Bible. The way is too restrictive for me. I want to live my life to its fullest while I am yet young. Give me mine inheritance."

And he divided unto her his living, the inheritance that befell her.

And immediately she took her journey into a far country, not leaving address or phone number where she could be contacted, and not caring in the least nor having pity upon the weeping parents and the broken-hearted younger sister.

She settled into a cozy apartment in a big city, living life as she pleased; dancing and drinking and dining by night and sleeping and watching the soaps and lewd movies by day. She had her paramours by the dozens; her friends by the hundreds. They partied and gambled and sailed abroad, living life to its fullest on the broad road. She never heard God's name mentioned except in a curse word and she never darkened a church door.

Once away from home, she flung modesty aside like a filthy rag. Her spending spree in one of the most expensive department stores gave to the world a woman with the attire and the make up of a harlot instead of a lady of decency and modesty and chastity. She became loud and bold and brazen;

all former restraints and convictions were cast to the wind. She lived without restraint, feeling she was having the time of her life as she lived it to its fullest, "tasting" everything possible to taste and to try. Never did she have so much fun and never so many friends.

Thoughts of her parents and sister rarely ever crossed her mind. If they did, it was only in a quickly passing flash. She had no time to think of them: her life was a continuously busy, fast-moving, fun-filled life. It was like a ferris wheel or a merry-go-round, going 'round and 'round in one merry round after the other. "She went where she pleased; she did as she pleased, and no one was there to tell her, "Thou shalt not." Indeed not! She was one among many of the new "breed" of free thinking humanists, with their God-hating, Christ-rejecting philosophy of no absolutes.

But God is not mocked. His Word standeth sure. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (St. John 1:1).

The years came and the years went, as years are proven to do, and the once-young elder daughter, with her funds well nigh exhausted and spent, wondered what to do.

"No worry," said one of her many paramours. "Thou art still beautiful and lovely. Come with me to the streets. Thou shalt earn much money."

Like a sheep going to the slaughter, she followed her lover to the streets. There, beneath glaring lights and flashing-blinking neon signs, she sold her body.

"See, said I not unto thee that thou could'st make big money?" said he to her when the night turned to dawn and the bright lights stopped blinking and flashing.

"Tis not to my liking," answered she, turning the larger share of the earnings over to her lover.

Day followed night, night followed day, and the elder daughter took to her bed one day.

"Up," said her paramour, "'tis time for thee to work. The lights are flashing and blinking and the streets are full of people. Up, I say, and be about thy business."

"I am too weak and too tired to work," said she.

"Too weak? Too tired? Nonsense! Up, I say, and to work with you. The rent must be paid. . . ."

"'Tis my apartment," said she. "Get thee out and make honest money and pay the rent."

"Ha. Ha," laughed he. "What a joke! And what a fool thou art! Farewell, woman. Farewell. I will find me another; someone Who will be delighted to share her apartment and her food with me." And, gathering his possessions together, he took his departure, leaving her sick and weak and almost penniless.

"What will I do?" she cried into her pillow. "What will I do? I am too weak and sick and tired to work at an honest and respectable job. And that vile man has cared nothing for me. Like my other lovers and friends, he has deserted me, now that my money is gone and I am almost penniless and . . . and sick."

Raising her head off the pillow and leaning her body on her elbow for support she said, "I know what I will do: I will sell my jewels and my fashionable garments and buy a ticket on the fast express and go home. I will say to my father and my mother, 'I am no longer worthy to be called thy daughter; only let me do thy cleaning and work thy garden and do thy laundry and all thy hard labor and I will be satisfied. Give me only a bed in the attic and bread and milk to eat and I shall not complain.' I will arise and go to my father. . . ."

Trembling with weakness, she arose and stumbled to her clothes closets and pulled the soft, expensive garments out one by one and placed them on the bed, saving back only the most practical, less costly outfits and, of them only what she would need and what was necessary to clothe her thin, wasted body.

With the jewels in a sizeable case and clothing over her arm, she stumbled to the pawn shops and second-hand stores, coming away shortly afterwards with enough money to pay the fare home on the Night Flyer's fast express.

The coach was warm; she slept fitfully all night long, yearning for a look at the familiar faces once so dear and loving and caring, but dreading what she may find. Would they receive her back, her with a body rapidly dying with disease -- the result of her sin? Would they welcome her, poor and penniless and. . . .

She buried her face into the coach's deep, thick cushion and wept. She wept! Strange, too, since she hadn't shed a tear in years. How long had it been? No, No, it couldn't be! But it was! Thirty-five years had passed since she left for her "far country!"

She shuddered. Would they know her, those dear homefolks? Recognize her? Without a doubt, her youthful beauty was gone. Her money too. And her friends and paramours. Friends ? What friends?

In disgust, she leaned forward on the soft cushion of the speeding Night Flyer and peered through the window into the darkness outside. Her life seemed as dark as the blackness that stared back at her. She was bereft of everything and she knew it--her money, her luxurious apartment, her fun, her friends, (if one dare call "fair weather" moochers friends) her lovers and her health. She had nothing. Absolutely nothing! Not even faith to stand upon. Her friends -- so-called -- had eroded her faith and reduced it to nothing by their wicked philosophy. What a fool she had been to hearken to them; to imbibe their philosophical lies! Yes, what a fool!

Late afternoon of the next day, she stepped off the train and, with a suitcase and an empty purse, she made her way along a modern platform to a tree-lined street and walked away from town, stumbling and falling with weakness and hunger. Gone were the once familiar landmarks and signs. And people. Like herself, the town and its familiar places was changed.

A mile and a half out of the town, she turned off to another road, no longer dusty and strewn with gravel but well-paved and smooth to walk upon. Two miles! Would she make it? Could she? Would her strength give out, or would it manage -- somehow -- to carry her to the dear, familiar door?

She sat down briefly on a flower-strewn bank and rested her head on her knees, feeling she couldn't go on one more step. Then, mustering every single ounce of strength she could muster, she stood to her feet and, trembling like quaking aspen leaves in a brisk wind, she lifted her foot and started forward -- one step; two. . . .

Well past the supper hour, she rounded the bend that led to the once-carefully kept barn and house. Stumbling forward eagerly, up the few steps to the porch, she let out a sad cry and collapsed at the door: Barely hanging by a single hinge, the door swung back and forth with the slightest breeze, bringing in or sweeping out dirt, leaves and debris of every kind, depending on which direction the wind blew. The house was deserted. For years. The buildings were "going the way of all earth" -- to decay!

They found her there, many days later, this prodigal daughter, with her hand on the doorstep; her body cold and still in death.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8).

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; "Learn to do well; . . .

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:16-18).