

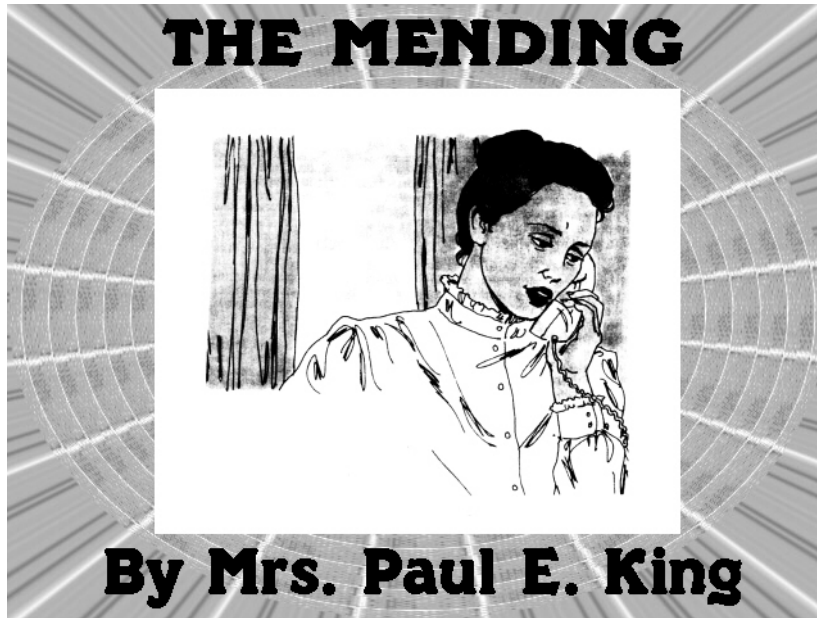
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THE MENDING
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Connie slid the clothes hangers along the rod inside the closet, wondering which blouse to wear with the new skirt she had bought in Benfer's Department Store from one of the sale racks. Holding the floral patterned skirt up beside the blouses, she removed a pink polyester from the rod. It was a perfect match for the skirt; color for color, the pink blouse matched that of the roses in the skirt. Smiling, and congratulating herself for

having taken advantage of Benfer's semi-annual sale, she hung the blouse next to the skirt then closed the door to the closet and hurried to the bathroom to shampoo her hair before leaving for her much loved job at Harmony's Gift Shop.

With her long honey-blond hair still dripping from the refreshing shampoo, Connie reached for a towel and wrapped it around her head. It struck her then -- the blouse. Elaine had bought it a year ago and given it to her on her eighteenth birthday. It had become her favorite of all blouses. Dainty and ever so feminine looking, she had never had a blouse that she wore more.

A lump came up in Connie's throat now. Elaine Sanders and she had been best friends for years. Each summer, they had gone to camp meetings together and, due to their trust-worthiness and adult-like behavior and conduct, they had, for two years, been over a small dorm of girls at the Bethany-Peniel Camp.

Memory after memory rushed back now to haunt her. Sacred memories, all of them: times of spiritual outpourings upon the camp; times when several of the girls tried sneaking out after curfew for the night; the night Elaine and she treated their charges to hot dogs and popcorn, all they could eat; the night they prayed into the wee morning hours in their dorm with some of the girls who were earnestly seeking God.

On and on the events of the past paraded before her and once again Elaine's face was there, mixed up in each and every one of them. When had it happened? She wondered.

What had brought about the rift between them? Was it because she had told Elaine she must be firm in dealing with Miranda? Maybe it was because Elaine had said she felt she, Connie, was too hard on Miranda; was that it? No, she thought, recalling how each had apologized to the other after having verbalized her feelings about the pretty but headstrong girl in their care in the dorm.

Drying her hair in the folds of the thick, heavy towel, Connie remembered hearing the inspired, Holy Ghost anointed messages that were thundered with power from the pulpit at Bethany-Peniel Camp. The ones on holiness and on having a pure, clean and sanctified heart came back with

clarity and no uncertain sound. It was as if the preachers were even now declaring to her that, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

She trembled as the Spirit of God re-preached the power-laden sermons to her soul. She had professed to having been sanctified, hadn't she? And she had consecrated her all to God, too. At least she thought she had. Then why the estrangement between Elaine and her? she wondered, once more trying to recall what, actually, it was that had driven them apart and caused them to not speak to each other any more.

She recalled with sudden recollection that Elaine had tried on numerous occasions to speak to her, only she had asserted stoutly that she was too busy to talk and had more important things to do. Finally, Elaine had stopped calling completely and the months of separation had rolled along and the gap had widened. In her heart, at least.

She remembered one of the camp evangelists relating an account of two men who hadn't spoken to each other for years; something to do with a line fence dividing their farms' acreage. It took the death of the one farmer's infant son and a mild heart attack to the other farmer for God to get their attention and open their sin-blinded eyes to the fact that they were eternity bound creatures heading down the broad road to destruction, totally and completely unprepared to meet their Maker-Creator at the end of their life, since each had had a spirit of unforgiveness in his heart.

Farmer "Brown" went to Farmer "Smith," the evangelist related, and begged his forgiveness for holding the years'-long grudge, accepting all the blame for what had happened and caused the estrangement. Farmer Smith, with tears of contrition and deep sorrow rushing down his cheeks, declared himself to be the culprit who brought about the division and the trouble.

Repenting, confessing and taking full blame for the problem, each man was soundly converted and sanctified wholly, the preacher said, adding that God's Divine Love so filled, thrilled and satisfied their soul until they became like biological brothers in their relationship and dealings with each other. The indwelling Holy Spirit made such a sweet change in their lives until all in the valley saw and heard about the radical change and a revival broke out in the community and many came to Christ and were converted.

Connie shivered as the incident came to mind, as related by the evangelist, whose closing words had been, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15).

She remembered now, the time Kate Pittikin came into the shop where she worked and broke one of the costly crystal candlesticks that was on display on a shelf in the store. Store policy was, that, if anything was broken by handling, the price of the item was paid in full by the individual who broke it. Mrs. Pittikin was wealthy; money was no problem to her. Instead of paying for the candlestick, however, she had "brushed" the incident off lightly, exclaiming, "Oops! I didn't mean to do that. But Karri can take it off as loss on her income tax form."

Connie remembered how, inwardly, she had seethed and raged over it and how she had wanted to tell the wealthy socialite just what she thought of her. To say that she was angry was an understatement, and the anger and wicked thoughts that flooded her mind frightened her. She had never before felt such an overflow of anger.

Picking up the broken, fragmented pieces of beautiful crystal, she had carried what was once a candlestick to the owners of the shop and told them what had happened and taken place, adding vehemently, "And she didn't even offer to pay for it! She knows the policy of this store."

Herman had smiled ruefully, saying, "But she is one of our best customers, Connie. Forget it, this time. Here, give me the pieces. I will go upstairs and bring down another one so we will have a set on display"

Karri had patted her hand and exclaimed softly, "Calm down, Connie. I have never seen you so upset."

"I can't help it," Connie had replied. "How could she have taken a thing like this so lightly! 'Karri can take it off as loss on her income tax form,' she said. Imagine it! Not even an offer to pay, nor, even, an 'I'm sorry.' Some people! Ugh!"

"Calm yourself, Connie" Karri had said gently. Then, on a sad sounding note, she added, "I never saw you angry before. I like the Connie I hired over a year ago better than this Connie."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Springle. Forgive me. I, too, like the other Connie better than this one," and she had walked out of the Springles' office into the main part of the store where Mrs. Pittiken was conversing with several of her friends who had come in to do some shopping.

She had put the incident behind her and had made her approach to the women with a smile on her face. And now the memory of her highly-inflamed heart and soul and mind came back like a thunder clap and a bolt of lightning from heaven to remind her that all was not well in her soul.

Getting the Bible, Connie began reading, asking God to search her heart and to help her to be willing to do anything and everything He asked her to do.

As she read, she became more and more convinced that she, like the farmers with the line fence problem, must talk to Elaine and take all the blame for the estrangement and ask her forgiveness. Carnality, that dreadful thing that "is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be," had kept her and her once long-time friend apart long enough. It was time now for "mending"; for making right; for humbling and confessing. Only, she must start with doing her first works over and get her feet planted solidly upon Salvation's Rock: she needed to be forgiven -- saved -- for harboring ill will in her heart against Elaine. For what? She still couldn't pinpoint over what the rift had come. Little matter: the ill will in her heart needed to be forgiven. This was her starting point, she now knew, and not until she was truly forgiven by God and was born again could she ever be sanctified wholly and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Hurrying down the hallway, she dialed Elaine's number. She was thankful she had gotten up earlier than usual.

"Elaine!" she cried, as she heard her friend's voice on the other end of the line.

"Connie! Oh, Connie, it is you, isn't it? I've prayed so earnestly for you."

"Yes, Elaine, it's I. I must see you. I'm to blame for everything. Forgive me. I'm proud and carnal and . . . when will you be off work? I'm off at six tonight, Lord willing I have a lot of 'mending' to do, Elaine. This time I'm going to go to the bottom with God and get rid of every bit of carnality. I must do my

first works over and . . . seven? Did you say seven? Lord willing, I'll see you at seven then Oh, Elaine, I can hardly wait to see you!"

Tears flowed freely down Connie's cheeks as she placed the phone back in place and fell to her knees beside a chair and began to pray -- fervently and earnestly.

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THE END