

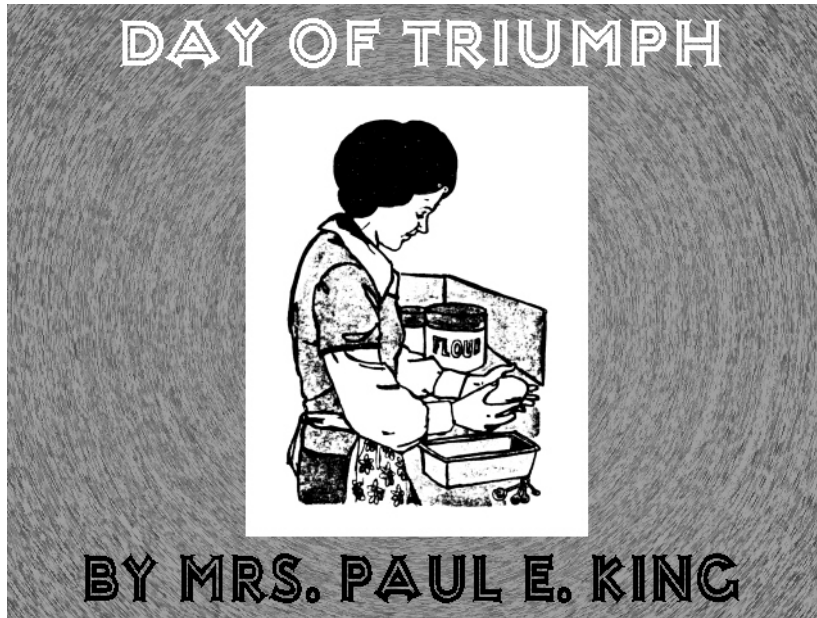
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DAY OF TRIUMPH
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Virginia was seated in the breakfast nook this early Thursday morning. This was not at all according to her usual routine. Being a meticulous housekeeper and an efficient one as well, she would ordinarily have had the dishes all washed and dried and put away. The cleaning would have been well under way, too. The days were always too short for Virginia. Seldom, if ever, did she experience idleness.

But this morning was different. She sat like a woman whose days stared blankly out at her, offering nothing. She felt a little old, too -- and futile. Perhaps it was the strange silence in the house. Such silence! She hadn't known the likes in eighteen years. It was frightening; frustrating, too. This is the way it is going to be from now on, she thought. I might as well get used to it.

Suddenly, with no warning at all, hot tears began to fall.

What was wrong with her, she wondered. She had always had such confidence that this hour would not catch her "high and dry or weepy." She couldn't understand herself. Worse still, her friends wouldn't understand her. "Virginia has such inner resources," they always said, "isn't it wonderful? But she always said a woman needs resources -- something to fall back on -- then when changes come into her life, she's not left high and dry." She was prepared, all right . . . if only they knew how well!

She looked at the clock on the wall. Fred, her husband, was deep in his work at the office. She could call him. Perhaps the sound of his understanding, strong voice would help her. Or, she could call Dan and tell him how she felt! He would understand, would comfort her. But was that fair? Did he get to school all right? She wondered silently. And was he getting orientated? Would he be a blessing or a curse to the school? and was he -- at this very moment -- lonely too? She must forget! He had his work, his classes, his studies and the students.

Brushing her slightly graying hair wearily back from her forehead, she rested her head in her hand. What she and Fred had taught their only child "was written." No more, forever, would they wield as much influence over his life as in those early formative years when he was an eager learner at their feet. His life had been in the mold and the making for eighteen years. Had they done their very best by him? All those questions stood out in bold design in Virginia's mind and were demanding truthful and fair answering.

The work stared her in the face. It could stare on, she reasoned forlornly.

"Every woman needs resources . . . something to fall back on. . . . then when change comes into her life, she's not left high and dry." Her own words

seemed to mock her now. How glibly she had spoken them to her friends! Had they ever smiled inwardly when she said it? she wondered, recalling that Edith and Jon Walling's only son had been killed in Vietnam and that Maribel and Chuck Carson's one daughter would never walk again . . . the result of an accident.

She glanced up quickly. Her eyes rested on the many canning jars she had set out on the sink the night before. There was the sandwich spread and the chili sauce to be made and canned. How Dan and Fred loved it! The vegetables were waiting in bushel baskets . . . all crispy-fresh . . . on the screened-in back porch. Ordinarily, the canning too, would either have been done by now or well under way. Ordinarily . . . ordinarily . . . ordinarily . . .! Shopping, cooking, cleaning, canning, baking . . . oh, the stupid things a housewife does! Nothing important, it seemed today! And her, always loving to keep house!

What made the change in her? And why these hasty, uncontrollable and stubborn tears? Was it the softening effect of the years? Emotions are not so easy to cope with as one grows older, she reasoned. Some few years back she might have listened to this stillness and even have welcomed it. It had been that way when Dan had started to grade school and again when he had gone to a friend's house for three days during one summer. Days of quiet and days of rest, they were. Facing her now were days of endless quiet . . . too many of them. How she longed to be able to recall some of those earlier days.

She remembered with sweet nostalgia when Danny had come running to her in great excitement. "Look, Mommie," he said, beaming proudly, "I pulled a tooth. I did it all by myself."

She remembered that smile of triumph, that look of victory . . . with blood oozing brightly out the corner of his mouth. He had showed her the empty space with pride. "I did it all by myself!" again he said. And she had kept that first pulled tooth, too. Where had she put it? Let's see. Oh, yes, in the very first drawer in her dresser. It was a treasured keepsake.

The tears flowed freely now. Oh, well, what matter if she couldn't control her emotions. She was no longer a twenty-year-old whose resources . . . something to fall back on . . . worked successfully when changes came into her life. This sudden change was something for which she was totally and completely unprepared.

Hastily she arose. Making her way to the bedroom, she reached for the well-worn Bible. After a long time in its pages, she fell on her knees. Here she poured her inmost feelings out to the attentive ear of a loving heavenly Father. A song of triumph filled her soul. She arose . . . victorious.

Suddenly, alone in her joy she heard it ring.

Eagerly she reached for the phone.

"Yes, yes. Oh, good! I'm glad you like the school and your subjects. You're taking Theology! Good. Wonderful! and you have two wonderful roommates! Thank the Lord! I knew you'd make it, Dan. Yes, Dad and I are fine." Was this her voice, this new cheerful sound? And this face! Was it hers, wedged into this radiant, happy smile? "You forgot your Sunday shoes!" she was laughing . . . actually laughing now! "We'll mail them out to you today. Don't worry. And we'll be praying for you. Be sure and keep your Bible reading and daily praying at the top of those 'important' things in life. Goodby, dear. Thanks for calling"

The spell was broken completely now. Virginia's heart felt light and happy. She even felt young again. What was being forty-two for but to live it for God with a joyful spirit. She smiled. Tears of happiness flowed down her cheeks. The Lord willing, Dan would be home for Christmas . . . a fledgling, but off the ground. And she and Fred had helped to grow those wings! That's what they had wanted, wasn't it? Dan was able to fly . . . unaided!

The canning jars stared vacantly at her.

"What a lazy person I am this morning" she exclaimed, putting a clean house dress on and tackling the work with gusto and zest.

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THE END