

The Free Press Short Story

WATCH NIGHT

MARGARET E. SANGSTER

HE winter wind that blew so violently against her window-pane made Anne Wood think of the surf. The roar of it was not a wild sound, somehow; it was a sea sound!

Here it was New Year's Eve; yet the whole experience was as vivid as it had been on that early July afternoon when Anne had left the crowd of merry bathers and gone swimming alone. She had come down the beach from the office in which she worked, one of a holiday-making group.

This time, however, had been different! Anne never knew when the first premonition of disaster overtook her; it happened before, not after, a first agonizing cramp shot through her rhythmically moving limbs!

She did not know how to cope with the situation when she found that her strength was going. She did realize, poignantly, that she was too far away from the shore for the other bathers to notice her struggles or hear her cries.

"Oh, help! help!" she called, more as a matter of course than because she expected help. Her voice sounded weak and impotent in that vast and lonely expanse of sea and sky.

"I'm drowning!" she screamed again, and her voice rose more frantically than it had before. Even as Anne screamed, however, she knew that the crowd from the office was back on the beach, unaware of her plight.

Turning over on her back, Anne held her aching limbs still and tried to float. She had sorely tried the strength to pray; yet she did pray, "Oh, God," she pleaded silently and piteously, "I don't want to die! Don't let me drown out here in the waves. There's so much of life and happiness ahead!"

The sky overhead was cloudlessly blue and brassy; it looked curiously smooth and hard to the helpless girl as she stared up at it. It seemed to fling her prayer back at her!

Anne closed her eyes in desperation against the hardness of that blue vista. Something, she did not know what, then made her weary lids lift. As she again stared upward, she saw that a miracle had happened. A face had come between her and the sky; a strong hand was clutching at her limp body.

Just once during her progress shoreward did Anne open her tired eyes. At that moment she again saw the face of her rescuer, a face that turned reassuringly toward her through the splash of the water. The face was no longer between her and the blue sky; it was nearer and somehow dearer. Anne knew that she would never forget that high forehead, those steady gray eyes, the strong line of the masculine jaw.

She had gone out farther than she had realized on her solitary swim. Once or twice, through her half-conscious state, Anne was aware that her rescuer was breathing hard, that he was pausing to tread water. Despite his weariness, however, his voice sounded comfortingly in her ears. "Keep up your courage, girl. We're almost there."

At last Anne heard the rush of the surf on the beach and was being dragged up over the grateful roughness of the warm white sand. Her friends from the office were closing in on her. Even as she tried to force her eyes open and say a word of heartfelt thanks to her rescuer, the world slipped oddly away and she passed into a deep faint.

"Of course you can take her home to-night," he was saying. "She'll probably be better at home, and less nervous. Our course," he hesitated, "you say that she lives alone in a boarding house. But still—"

Anne spoke for the first time since she had been taken from the water. "Certainly I'm going home," she told the doctor, with something of her old strength. "But where," she broke off with sudden anxiety, "where is the man who rescued me? I must see him."

"No matter," answered Anne; "I'll write him a note to thank him."

She did not, however, write her rescuer a note. In the confusion and the excitement of her accident, nobody had thought to ask for the young man's name and address, and nobody had thought to give the young man hers!

She had just swum into Anne Wood's life and had drifted out again; but he had left an indelible impression upon her heart and mind. Anne knew, as the days went by and weeks became months, that the unknown young man's face was going to stand for the rest of her life, between her heart and the faces of other young men!

When she went to a big football game along in November, Anne fully expected to collide with her unknown in the thronged stadium. When the festivities of the Christmas season drew near, and the city was teeming with happy faces, Anne was sure that she would catch at least a glimpse of him.

Christmas passed, however, and so did the week following Christmas, without event; now it was New Year's Eve, Anne, making herself ready for the Watch Night Service at her church, told herself that she was defeated! She would never see her rescuer again.

Going to the Watch Night Service was a custom that Anne Wood had learned as a child when her parents were still alive, she had grown with it, and so it had become a custom. Waiting up until the middle of the night had been, at that time of childhood, a great event.

As she pulled a tiny hat over her curly hair, as she wrapped herself in her heaviest coat and went down the boarding-house stairs and out of the street door, however, Anne felt a sudden sense of intense loneliness! It was a feeling that she had never experienced on any New Year's Eve hitherto. It seemed as if the very wind, rushing to meet her, held a challenge!

Thrusting her hands into the pockets of her coat and walking with her head bent against the bluster of the December night, she hurried along toward the sanctuary of warmth and peace that her church would afford. As she hurried along, however, she asked herself whether or not the church would have for her the same peace that it had held on other evenings; for on this evening she had admitted defeat, a thing she had never admitted since a certain July afternoon.

Through the streets she walked on her way to church, her mind as chaotic as the streets, which were certainly neither still nor calm. New Year's crowds were thronging all about her; but Anne, trudging along, felt the confusion rather than the holiday spirit.

A sudden hush fell, the hush that comes before a service is about to commence. The organ was again pealing out, but now it was the lovely old tune of the "Domology," and Anne was rising with the rest of the congregation, to sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," she sang with the rest of the congregation. "Praise Him—"

All at once she stopped singing; she could not go on! Her eyes, glancing across the aisle into a pew not farther than a stone's throw from her own had caught a glimpse of a young, serious face, a face with steady gray eyes, a strong jaw line, and a high, noble forehead. As she saw that face, Anne heard again the beat of water against her eardrums.

When buying high protein concentrates for balancing a milk production ration which is deficient in protein, the guaranteed analysis as given by the manufacturer should be considered. If a choice of concentrates is available, the cheapest per 100 pounds is not necessarily the most economical for raising the protein content of the ration.

HISTORY OF HEMP

Hemp flashed into the pages of history more than 5,000 years ago, and for centuries was the king of fibres. To-day, cheaper fibres are competing with hemp in the cordage factory. Hemp sails dropped out of sight with the manufacture of cotton sails and the development of marine engines; hemp rope met a bitter rival that unsated it when mariners discovered that abaca fibre, which is called Manila hemp, was cheaper, would float, and did not require the application of tar; hemp cotton-bale wrapping bowed to Indian jute and waste cotton; and 20 years ago carpet manufacturers substituted cotton and jute warping for hemp.

Hemp is a cousin of the mulberry tree and a native of Asia. Since 2000 B.C., when a Chinese Emperor taught his subjects to cultivate hemp and to make hemp cloth for clothing, hemp has frequently appeared in historic records. The Chinese also ate the seeds and extracted an oil from the plant.

Worms in children, if they be not attended to, cause convulsions and often death. Mother Graves' Worm Expeller will protect the children from these distressing afflictions.

THE LIFE OF AN OYSTER

I started life as a tiny speck, so small that you could hardly see me. I drifted about on top of the sea with millions of my brothers and sisters, and each day the fish came along and gulped us up. Only a few of us survived—I was one of the lucky ones.

One day, when I had grown a little bigger, I felt myself sinking. Down and down I went to the bottom of the sea, and at last found myself resting on a rock by the side of a lot of shells and sea anemones.

I was now what fishermen call a "spat," that is, a tiny perfectly-formed oyster about the size of a pin's head. It is the ambition of every good oyster to find a comfortable home, and stop there. A few naughty oysters like to go gadding about, but they nearly always come to a bad end.

I had found a very nice spot and there settled down to my thoughts. I thought and thought for about five years, and all the time I grew bigger and stronger and fatter. Taking a look round from my "bed" I noticed that I was easily the biggest oyster to be seen in any direction.

One day a terrible thing happened. I heard a harsh grating sound some distance away, and saw, coming towards me, a lot of horrible-looking hooks and grappling irons. Unfortunately, I could not get out of the way, and suddenly I felt myself whisked off the bottom into a kind of coarse net.

The next thing I knew I was being shot out on the deck of a boat called an oyster-dredger. A man picked me up and cried "I say, what a beauty!" It was nice to be admired.

Alas, in a short while I shall be no more. I was sent to a famous hotel; I was wrenched open by a brutal-looking man, broken in half and then placed in a dish with slices of lemon and crushed ice.

I am to be served at a dinner party. I am half-frozen and shan't be sorry when all is over. Farewell, everybody!

DOMINION EXPERIMENTAL FARMS Weekly News Letter

Winter Feeding of the Breeding Ewe The breeding ewe requires protein, starch and minerals to repair her tissues, build up her reserves and develop a normal lamb. Well cured alfalfa or clover hay, if available, will practically supply all she needs. However, a breeding ewe in poor condition should receive in addition 1/4 to 1/2 of a pound of oats daily. Mixed hay and grass hay are also good if properly supplemented.

Buy High Protein Concentrates on Guarantee

When buying high protein concentrates for balancing a milk production ration which is deficient in protein, the guaranteed analysis as given by the manufacturer should be considered. If a choice of concentrates is available, the cheapest per 100 pounds is not necessarily the most economical for raising the protein content of the ration.

A Honey Candy Try this one and be delighted: 1/2 cup honey, 2 cups sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla, 1/2 cup water, 1/2 cup chopped nuts.

Sunflowers for Ensilage In planting the ensilage crop for next year one should not overlook the fact that sunflowers can often be used with advantage to supplement the corn crop. Sunflowers will sometimes thrive on land that is unsuited for corn and usually they produce heavy yields.

Persian Balm—the delight of dainty femininity. Imparts a fragrant charm to the complexion. Tones up the skin and makes it velvety soft in texture. Cooling, refreshing, it is delightful to use. Never leaves a vestige of stickiness. Invaluable for hands, face, and as a hair fixative. Wonderfully soothing and protective. Especially recommended in cases of roughness or chafing caused by weather conditions.

RADIO AS AN AID TO SHIPS Those who go down to the sea in ships, now know how important to them the radio is for getting their direction. Several radio-direction-finding stations are operated by the Radio Branch of the Canadian Government Department of Marine on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, on the St. Lawrence River and Gulf, and on the Hudson Bay and Strait.

Advocates of "intensive cultivation" are fond of comparing crops obtained in Germany and the Netherlands with those of British farms, but it isn't necessary to go beyond England to find what can be done in this way. The Lea Valley glasshouse trade which has just celebrated its jubilee, is an example that cannot be bettered anywhere.

It is just 50 years since Joseph Rochford erected a glasshouse at Turnford to grow tomatoes. The land of the district was then practically desert, but amazing developments were to follow from Rochford's enterprise, and when he died, just before the 50th anniversary of the industry he founded, the Lea Valley had 450 miles of glasshouses, giving employment to 6,000 people.

The Lea Valley has memories of many famous men—Cardinal Wolsey and Isaac Walton, James I and Lord Burghley—but none of them has done so much for it as Joseph Rochford.

Though steel, concrete and cement are being more and more used in construction work there are still many uses for wood. Oak, mahogany and the soft woods have long been used as also has birch. Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada notes that birch is being used much more commonly and is proving a valuable source of timber.

Always regarded in Canada as a good flooring material, birch is exported to the United States in large quantities for this use, and in the United Kingdom it is gradually being introduced for flooring purposes. Birch flooring in suitable dimensions and with the proper moisture content to conform to the requirements of British trade, is expected to supply in United Kingdom markets an outlet for a large quantity of the better Canadian grades.

For furniture and fixtures birch has long been used in finishes as closely resembling walnut and mahogany as possible. Of late, however, it is appearing in distinctive finishes, and is being sold as birch and not as a substitute for the woods mentioned.

When treated with a preservative, to which birch readily lends itself, a long, active life under severe conditions is added to its natural strength and hard wearing qualities. Creosoted birch has been used for the flooring of the wharves and piers of the Saint John harbor work now nearing completion.

Fall-born heifers from six to ten months of age should be provided with a good grass paddock during their first summer says the Dominion Animal Husbandman.

The different kinds or types of cheese are roughly divided into hard, or pressed cheese, and soft, or unpressed. The hard varieties include Cheddar, Cheshire, Swiss, Eram and other less known varieties. Among the soft cheeses the most prominent are Camembert, Brie, Limburger, Foutl'Eveque, Gervais, Neuf-châtel and many kinds of cream cheese. Another class is the mouldy, or blue-vened cheese like Gorgonzola, Stilton, Roquefort, etc.

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AMBITION YOUTH—Please give me a job, sir; I'm perfectly willing to start at the bottom! BOSS—All right, my boy—if you can find it you can start there.

WARNING! To Delinquent Taxpayers Notice is hereby given that all arrears of taxes not paid on or before Saturday, December 30, 1933, will be published as usual in the Annual Auditors' Report for the year. The books of the Municipality close with the end of the calendar year and the Auditors' Statement is prepared just as the books appear at that time. TAXES MUST BE PAID BEFORE DECEMBER 30 TO AVOID PUBLICATION IN THIS REPORT H. N. Farmer, Clerk Acton, December 18, 1933

YOU will never regret having taken a little time for the serious study of food and the most modern ways of preparing and serving it—for there is nothing else you can do which will contribute so much to your personal satisfaction, or to the health, happiness,—yes, to the wealth of a family. Sincerely, Anna Lee Scott Director The Canadian Cooking School New, Easy Twelve-Lesson Home-Study Course THIS COURSE has been prepared so as to give the utmost in sound information for the least possible amount of study. It presents the true fundamentals of the regularly recognized course in cookery in so simple a manner that a child will understand it—yet it is so thorough and so interesting that the busy business girl or the busy housewife will instantly appreciate its worth to her. The first lesson will appear in our columns on January 13. At the conclusion of the course there will be FREE examinations for those who care to take them and handsome Canadian Cooking School diplomas awarded FREE to those who write satisfactory examinations. Supplementary to the 12 Lesson Course Anna Lee Scott has prepared three books of new ideas which everyone will find indispensable. The Easy Way Cake Book For Beginners and the best of cooks. The Easy Way to successful Cake making. Planning the Party How to win the reputation of being a successful—even a wonderful hostess. Marketing and Meal Planning Wise buying is one of the foundations of real housekeeping. The secrets of keen buying and clever planning are revealed in this interesting book. A veritable library of valuable Cookery and household information condensed for you in handy form. 25c. brings you the three books. Write or call for your copies! The Acton Free Press