

# Word Worth



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and editorials

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## Editorials



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# The Censorship Conundrum

by Marien Helz

For good reason, censorship is politically incorrect and mentioning it favorably is social anathema. Our founding forebears had borne the brunt of the harmful effects of censorship and set deep protections in the foundation of the county to withstand its assaults. In the recently departed century, we saw how deadly the effects of censorship can be with the dictatorships in Russia, Italy, Germany, and Japan most notably. As a result, "everyone" is against censorship.

Unfortunately, it's a far more tricky issue than that. I am familiar with the situation of a children's literature professor railing against the very idea of censorship, even in the primary grades, and teaching that it was a universal truth that censorship is an unmitigated evil. That same professor had no problem with eliminating any material from school libraries or classrooms that had the slightest leaning toward any form of racial bias even to the point of advocating eliminating material that failed to demonstrate enough diversity. The professor was blind to the fact that this is censorship! Surely we can agree that guarding against hate literature and the evils that it brought to the world relatively recently is a good idea. This is a particularly good idea when we are talking about schools, and the younger the children, the more pressing the issue. What we cannot deny is that it is censorship. When children are concerned, it's also called guidance.

Recently, I heard a parent talk about not believing in censorship relative to her own children's reading and viewing. That particular parent exercised a great deal of judgment and wisdom in what was brought into the house and therefore in the material to which the children were exposed. In effect, the parent exercised censorship through example and tutelage.

The problem is that when we see censorship as a universal evil, we both deny reality, and in the worst cases, fail to provide the direction and protection that adult members of society are obligated to provide for the youth. Parents who feel that they have no right to exercise censorship are simply abnegating their

responsibilities.

Restricting reading and viewing materials for young children is essential for preventing harmful fears and nightmares. Two years olds can be very frightened by Disney movies like *Snow White* and *Cinderella* which are fine for slightly older children. Many nature shows which photograph carnivores tearing apart herbivores are not good viewing for little children, and it is the schools' and parents' responsibility to control—to



to censor—what is watched and read. This control, this censorship, should gradually be diminished up to the college level when it becomes inappropriate.

Censorship, and the lack thereof, is a more perplexing issue now that radio, television, and computers can beam images through the air into the living rooms and minds in every household. Countless studies are beginning to tell us what common sense told those who have it all along: viewing murder after murder, beating after beating is not good for children.

It is not possible to rely on parents to control, or censor, what children watch because the children most at risk have parents who are barely able to provide for their offspring's physical needs and don't begin to have the resources to provide for their more perplexing well being especially for the structure to see that they are in bed rather than watching programs that are scheduled after they are supposed to be in bed. Even more ordinary households, parents hesitate to exercise control over what their children watch. To some extent, they would have to sit with their children every minute to prevent the harmful effects of trends which become more and more prevalent. We fund programs to lower teen pregnancy and the risk of AIDS, but show the nation's youth ad after ad in which sex appeal is the ultimate value, and present them with show after show in which stars, only slightly older than they are, copulate more frequently than they change their underwear. In the nineteen-forties and fifties, tobacco and alcohol companies paid the movie industry to show actors smoking and drinking in order to sell their products. Now we are showing all varieties of anti-social behavior as though we were getting paid for it.

What is written in air is then written in neurotransmitters and can have more



## Columns



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# Organic Gardening

by Susan Johnson

## Bitter Irony

In 1939, Paul Muller, a Swiss chemist, identified DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloro-ethane) as an effective pesticide. He later won the Nobel Prize for his innovations with the chemical. Twenty-three years later, in 1962, Rachel Carson, an American marine biologist, published *Silent Spring* identifying DDT as a deadly residual chemical and carcinogen. She died of breast cancer at the age of 56, conceivably caused, as many breast cancers are, by pesticides.

Due to Miss Carson's work, DDT was finally banned in the U.S. in 1973 but it continues to be used in developing countries, and its allegedly less dangerous fellow chemicals live on in the U.S., contaminating drinking water and causing many human illnesses.

It seems as if it would be simple to pass laws banning all of these chemicals, a move which would, ostensibly, encourage a return to natural methods. And, in fact, the City of Buffalo is in a rarefied group of cities that have passed sunset laws that progressively prohibit their municipalities from using pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and rodenticides on any public property.

The Buffalo Pesticide Management Board and the Western New York Society for Organic Horticulture are two not-for-profit associations that have been established to provide technical consultations and educational programs to help those who are affected by the transition to organic methods.

"We feel that without the education of the private and public sectors, that the legislative efforts will have been in vain," says Dave Majewski, who is a member of the Pesticide Board and Vice President of the Organic Society. "You cannot impose mandates without providing alternatives."

## Chemical Users and Abusers

In ranking the largest horticultural abusers of deadly chemicals, Mr. Majewski said,

"Farms are number one on the list due to the highly toxic fungicides that they apply to fruit trees, then golf courses due to the amounts used, and then lawn care companies due to the number of properties that they treat. Alternatives for the farmers are: integrated pest management, liquid compost, and beneficial insects. For both golf courses and lawn care companies, the remedies are: organic top dressing, cultural practices, corn gluten meal, and aeration."

While the antidotes Mr. Majewski recommends sound promising, for some of the people who must contend with them, they're frustrating.

"We have a hard enough time competing with the private and semi-private golf courses that don't have to comply with the law," says Gary Kelchlin who is the last remaining Groundskeeper for the City of Buffalo's three golf courses. "These Category I, II, and III laws were pushed through but the Pesticide Board so far has not been able to recommend effective substitutes. The result is that they've had to waive the rules."

"Practicing organic cultural methods sounds good," said Mr. Kelchlin, "and I'd prefer not to have to work with any pesticides or herbicides, but realistically, they haven't found alternatives that will work for a public golf course."

"Here's an example: we have to control the weeds on the fairways. Organically, the way to do this is to mow the grass at least 3 inches high so that it will shade the weeds, and to mow it twice as often so that the heads of the weeds never get a chance to go to seed. The theory is that eventually, the weeds will give up and die. Well fine, but who's going to play on a fairway with grass that's 3 inches high? The other alternative is to put up with the dandelions. No one likes that either. This doesn't even begin to address the issues of cost or additional labor involved."

"We're willing to try anything," said Mr. Kelchlin. "Last year we experimented with organic products on one green to see if it would control grubs. It worked great. No grubs. But, in fact, we had two other experimental greens where we didn't use anything. Guess what? No grubs there either. So, I guess it was a good year for us and a bad year for the grubs. We'll try it again next year to see what happens."

### The Systems Approach

Although homeowners aren't the largest users of chemicals, Mr. Majewski identifies them as the worst abusers by virtue of the volume used per acre.

Paradoxically, it is homeowners who can most easily use healthy practices in their gardens.

"Organic gardening for the consumer is a systems approach, a philosophy, and a mindset," says Sally Jean Cunningham, a Cornell Cooperative educator. "My organic system has four parts. It consists of plant families, that is growing vegetables in companion groups; plant friends, which means adding helpful flowers and herbs; plant neighborhoods, in other words rotating crops so that they're harder for the pests to find; and finally, invited guests, these include beneficial insects, birds,

toads, frogs, and even snakes!"

As proof that organic doesn't mean shabby or second-best, Mrs. Cunningham used her own extensive and chemical-free garden for all of the photographs in her extremely useful book, *Great Garden Companions*. Filled with practical advice, her book is as much of a must-read for gardeners who are just starting out as it is for experienced gardeners who were discouraged by their early attempts at organic gardening.

"A lot of people who are transitioning to organic gardening make the mistake of trying to substitute product," said Mrs. Cunningham. "For example: fertilizing. At first, you might start comparing prices and you'd see that organic fertilizer prices are higher but that isn't what should be happening. You should be constantly adding organic materials to your garden - most of which are free. Someone just beginning the process has to trust that this living medium will feed their plants. As an organic gardener, I hardly ever buy fertilizer. I add manure, chopped leaves, and compost. This is what feeds my garden."

"Another good example of a common problem is lawn grubs. People want to know how to kill them organically but that isn't the answer. The realistic answer is that first you build the health of your lawn. Choose different varieties of grass and also change your threshold of tolerance. In addition, you can buy milky spore disease and parasitic nematodes that are very effective in controlling the grubs."

Lawn grubs are actually the larva of Japanese beetles that emerge in late Spring. The adult beetles are attracted to large expanses of lawn because this offers their larva a good supply of food. Reducing your lawn area is another way to make an area much less attractive to the beetles.

### Healthy Eating

Of course, not everyone has the space or the time to care for any sort of garden, organic or not. For people who want healthy products without the work, most grocery stores carry certain brands of bagged vegetables that are labelled organic but Western New Yorkers have an even more desirable choice. Buffalo Organics at Arden Farm in East Aurora is a certified organic farm that allows members of the community to purchase "shares" of vegetables and herbs.

"We grow 135 different varieties of vegetables, herbs, and melons to insure that there's a progression throughout the year," says Stewart Ritchie, who, with his wife Debbie, manages the 70 acre farm, of which 7 acres are under cultivation. "We begin harvesting in June with a selection that includes scallions, turnips, beets, lettuces, (the farm grows 20 different varieties of lettuces and 12 different types of greens), peas and broccoli. July has many of the same herbs and vegetables plus many others including carrots, summer squash, beans. August adds the watermelons, cantaloupes and tomatoes to the list and so on through to November when we also have a variety of root crops."

The farm starts all of its crops from seeds and uses no chemicals or genetically

modified vegetables. It is at present the only certified organic farm in Erie County.

"A number of our customers are recovering from cancer or have severe allergies," said Mr. Ritchie. "They can't tolerate any chemical residue on their food and so this is an ideal arrangement for them."

Buffalo Organic's brochure explains that CSA (community supported agriculture) is a grassroots alternative to agribusiness. Shareholders know exactly where and how their food is grown. This is particularly important now when so many exotic fruits and vegetables are shipped weekly to area grocery stores from developing countries. While it may be interesting to try these unusual products, environmental regulations in those countries are extremely limited and their \$26 billion a year pesticide habit is concentrated on export crops.

"Last year we had 150 shareholders," continued Mr. Ritchie, "twelve of whom are working shareholders. Families or individuals purchase a share at the beginning of the season. In return, we provide them with a weekly supply of 6-10 different freshly harvested vegetables and herbs. People are welcome to modify their share to suit their preferences and needs. We find that many of our shareholders belong because they really enjoy cooking. They like having access to so many different products."

"This year we're also offering an additional fruit share. Although the fruit is not grown on the farm, we're dealing with growers who can provide no-spray or low-spray fruit. For instance, Singer Farms in Niagara County will supply us with apples and possibly peaches."

"Floating row covers have been our biggest success," added Mr. Ritchie. "The covers provide a physical barrier so that one of the worst pests, flea beetles, can't get to the veggies. In addition, the covers extend our short growing season by creating a micro climate."

"We began working here five years ago and we're really seen an increase in our beneficial populations of dragonflies, spiders, paper wasps, and toads. We use smaller rotating plots so that it's easy for the good insects to get around and harder for the bad ones to find the plants. We also use timing. Most pests have a limited life cycle. Sometimes simply delaying the planting of a vegetable or an herb completely thwarts the insect."

### Another Success Story

Insects also cause big problems for local commercial and private greenhouses. "Biological controls in greenhouses have worked very well," says Karen Dean Hall, who is an educator for Cornell's Commercial Horticulture segment. "This is an area that has the most research available, giving the growers several options. Some immature stages of the white fly are in the soil and so the grower can apply predatory mites or they might want to use insect growth regulators."

"Cost issues in organic greenhouses have actually gone down," says Mrs. Hall, "while

at the same time, health issues for the growers are addressed, and plant quality has gone up. All of the commercial applications are just as pertinent for private institutions and home gardeners who have their own greenhouses. For instance, People Inc. used these processes in one of their facilities that has an attached greenhouse. They wanted to ensure a healthy environment for their residents and their staff and so they adopted organic procedures."

A healthy environment should be everyone's birthright. Isn't it ironic that nearly forty years after Rachel Carson warned us about pesticides, that killing a dandelion is still more important than having clean air and safe drinking water?

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## Arts



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*The earlier chapters of Father Heart are available in the April, May, June, July, and August 2001 issues in the Archives page .*

## FATHER HEART

*by Banwell Goddard*

### Chapter Six

For the most part, our children brought me great happiness but they also brought with them an emotion that I hadn't known before. It was a gnawing anxiety in my throat that I finally came to recognize as fear. I hadn't understood it, hadn't had to face it. Perhaps I was too young or perhaps it was because my life, until then, seemed without meaning. To lose my life would have been sad but it had not been so wonderful that I ever feared death. The love that I felt for Annie, Roy, and Grace and our happiness together made me desperate about losing them. I began to take safety measures.

Tornadoes sometimes swept through Kansas, demolishing everything in their path. I had seen the devastation wrought by these storms and heard of the deaths of people who were unprepared. I built a large underground room for all of us and furnished it with cots, ceramic jugs of water, tins of food and candles so that we could safely survive such a storm. On nights when the wind blew hard, I sat on the porch, staring down the storm.

Though I rarely left the farm for long periods, I taught Annie to become a first rate markswoman so that she could defend herself and the children if I wasn't at home to protect them. The days of Indian raids were drawing to a close but renegades and bandits still wandered about.

Tragic fires were also common in those days. I began to take great care with our stoves and lamps and candles. I wasn't satisfied with a fire that appeared to be out. I poured water on the ashes to be sure and lectured Annie on the subject when she left water boiling on the stove unattended.

But, there was one fear that I had which I could think of no way to guard against. I had a horror of illness affecting the babies. My babies seemed healthy, but I worried

about influenzas that sickened hundreds of children, cutting them down, filling cemeteries with hundreds of tiny gravestones. Phyllis' death haunted me, making me worry all the more.

Annie and I discussed taking the children back to Boston to meet their grandparents but we decided against it. A change in diet and contact with unhealthy strangers seemed too dangerous while they were so young. We wanted them to stay at home until they were bigger and stronger, less vulnerable to the world's germs and diseases. We decided that when Roy was six, that we would take a trip to Boston, perhaps move back there so the children would have a more interesting cultural life.

On Grace's first birthday, I had a special surprise for the children. After breakfast, I rode to town and came back with two young Indian ponies, Pierre and Mademoiselle, that I had been stabling at the livery for several weeks since buying them.

I walked into our home and found Annie with Grace bouncing and giggling on Annie's knee and Roy staggering as two year olds do from the chair to the table and back again, eager to be on his way to some new adventure.

"Let's all go outside for a few minutes, I have something to show you," I said.

I picked up Roy and Annie followed me carrying Grace. The ponies were tethered to the porch so that they would be the first things the children saw.

"Philip, what's this?" asked Annie.

"Ponies for the children," I said excitedly.

"They're too young!" she cried.

"Of course they are. But it will take me a year to accustom the ponies to a saddle and bridle plus teach them a few tricks. By then, Roy will be old enough to ride and Grace will be old enough a year after that

We carried the children over to the ponies. Roy patted Pierre on the neck and Grace tried to throw her arms around the neck of Mademoiselle.

"You see, they love them already," I crowed.

"Yes, they are clearly their father's children," Annie said. "Soon they'll be standing on the ponies' backs and cantering through the yard yelling war whoops,"

"Nothing would please me more," I said, pulling lumps of sugar out of my coat pocket for the ponies.

That afternoon, Annie called me in from the barn.

"I'm feeling so tired that I can't stay awake. Would you mind watching the children while I have a short nap?" she asked

"Of course not. Sleep as long you like. I've plenty of reading I'd like to do and a few letters I should write."

"Hopefully, the children will be quiet enough for you to do that," she answered. "I don't seem to be able to get anything done while they're awake,"

Just as it was getting dark, about five o'clock, I heard Annie stirring upstairs.

"Your mama's awake," I crooned to Grace who sat on her quilt on the floor playing with an old wooden spool. "Let's wash your face so she can come down to a clean little girl,"

A heavy thud was what I remember next and the bump bump bump of someone falling down the stairs. I ran to the door to the upstairs and opened it to find your mother crumpled against it. Lifting her up, I hugged her to myself, carrying her to a chair and sitting with her on my lap. She was dazed but awake.

"What happened, darling?" I asked. "Did you trip over your skirt?"

"I don't know. I just lost sight of the first step, I think."

"Maybe you weren't completely awake," I said, rubbing her back. "Did you have a nice nap?"

"Oh yes. It felt wonderful to sleep."

"Let me have a look at you. That was a nasty fall. No broken bones?"

"I don't think so."

"Well, you're sure to have some dandy bruises."

The next day, Annie told me that her skin hurt.

"It must be from your wild ride down the stairs."

"No, I have a sore spot on my derriere, as you would call it, but this is all over. "

"Let me feel your forehead."

"That's what I'm supposed to say,"

"Now nurse. Let's not be a difficult patient. Let the doctor feel your forehead," I said.

Her skin felt hot to my touch.

"Hmmm. Warm heart, warm forehead," I said.

"Is it warm?"

"It's rather warm. What shall I do? A cold washcloth? Shall I go for the doctor?"

"I doubt if there's anything wrong. Probably just a little fever," she said. "Let's wait

until tomorrow,"

That night, Annie's fever grew worse. She shivered with cold in spite of three quilts. I cradled her in my arms though her skin felt as if it was baking. She cried with nightmares through the night, freezing in the unconsciousness of her delirium but scorching to the touch. In the morning, she was frantic, her nightmares continued though her eyes were open and looking at me.

"Philip, if I die, do not let my children forget me. Do not let them grow up alone. You must all stay together. You must marry my sister, Emma, and bring the children up together. Don't let them forget me. Bring me paper and pen. I must write to her, tell her to marry you so my children will have a home. Do not let the children near me. Get out of my room. If I have a contagion you must not get it. You must bring up our children," she ranted on and on.

I brought her soup and tea but her hands shook with her inner chill so that she could not bring the spoon to her lips. I fed her a few spoonfuls but she waved me away.

"I must write this letter."

She scrawled the words across the paper, unable to control her hand.

"Here, Philip," she said. "Please mail this to Emma."

I took the letter from her hand and pulled the quilt up under her chin.

"Darling, I'm going to take the children out for a few minutes," I said. "Try to sleep while I'm gone."

I saddled Pippin and bundled the children into blankets and threw diapers and bottles in the saddlebag. Holding them in front of me between my arms, I rode to the nearest neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, and asked them to watch the children while I rode to the doctor.

The doctor followed me back to the farm where he examined Annie. He was with her a long time. I felt fitful and worried. I paced the floor and prayed to God to let her be all right, to make her well. I promised my everlasting soul to God if he would let her be well and healthy again. The doctor finally came downstairs and pronounced Annie convalescent.

"Convalescent?" I said. "What a strange word to describe her condition. What do you mean by convalescent?" I repeated, turning the word over and not liking it.

"Technically, that means she is recovering. Does that mean she is out of danger?"

"A person is not out of danger until they are completely well. But, she is recovering," he answered.

I did not like his manner. He seemed insincere.

"What's wrong with Annie?" I asked.

"She appears to have pneumonia," he answered.

"Pneumonia? There's no cure for pneumonia."

"Your wife is strong. There is a chance that she will survive," he said. "I'll send out one of the visiting nurses to help you. Annie mustn't get up for several days."

"Have you given her any medicine? Shall I go to the pharmacy?" I asked.

"There's nothing that will help. Just keep her as comfortable as you can."

The doctor's manner seemed a vain attempt to dissipate my fears long enough so that he could leave. It was then that I knew how ill she was. I climbed the stairs slowly, arranging my face so that Annie would not see my fear.

"Hello darling. How is my sweet wife?" I said.

"A little better, thank you. Did you mail my letter to Emma?" she asked.

"I will mail it in the morning. Shall I send money to Emma so that she can come and help us with the children?"

"Oh yes. Oh Philip, that is so kind of you," she said. She closed her eyes for a moment breathing heavily. "That makes me feel better. Much better. Things will be all right. Emma will come and help us."

For three weeks, Annie struggled to overcome the illness that choked first one and then both of her lungs. She grew steadily weaker though I pleaded with God for a miracle and with the doctor for a remedy.

One morning, Annie seemed the slightest bit better. She encouraged me to ride into town for the mail and newspapers and I went off with a grain of hope to cling to. In the mail was a letter from Emma, saying she would come and stay as long as we needed her.

"Thank God, " was all Annie said, as she read the letter.

"We'll have to get a room ready for her, won't we, " I said trying to engage her interest.

"Yes," she said, turning over slowly towards the wall.

"Philip," Annie said that evening as I gently patted her back to expel the fluid from her lungs, "please stop."

"It's important for you to cough, Annie," I said, "the doctor said you must."

"It's no use," she said softly.

She held her hand out to me, and I held it tight. I prayed that my strength would be conveyed to her and again offered my soul to God in exchange for my beloved's life. Annie seemed to relax as I kissed her hand and ran my hands through her

**silken hair, pushing it off her face.**

**We sat like that for a few minutes and then she gave a slight cough and a small stream of blood ran from her lips. She gasped, "Air."**

**I sprang to the window and hurled it open. Again came an agonizing cry, "Air." And then silence. The end had come.**

**"No. " I sobbed. "Annie, no. You can't die. You must not die." I held her tightly to my chest. "No. Don't leave me. Please Annie." I rocked her as if it would revive her poor overburdened heart, starved of oxygen, too tired to beat.**

**We stayed like that for an hour, maybe two. Darkness came and I lit candles in our room. I now felt as delirious as Annie had been only a day earlier.**

**"How dare you leave me?" I said angrily. "I thought you were a perfect wife, a perfect love. You shared my dreams. Made me feel as if I was your hero. I thought we would grow old together. Travel to foreign cities. Hear music together. Have grandchildren. Even argue. I loved arguing with you. How can you leave me? Why did you let me fall in love with you if you were going to die?"**

**I knew I was raving like a lunatic but my mind had been lost along with my wife.**

**I went downstairs and soaked a cloth in hot water from the tank next to the woodstove, went upstairs and washed Annie's face, smoothed her hair and arranged her comfortably. She looked at peace, as though she were having a beautiful dream. I went back downstairs, poured a glass of rum and took it back up. I sat with her through the night. I told her all of the things I should have told her when she was still breathing. I promised to raise our children, to tell them about their mother, teach them math and languages and proper grammar. Every hour or so I went back down to fill my small glass, but returned again, my eyes glassy from crying and the rum.**

**When daylight came, I went outside to feed and water the horses. Pippin and Jacques whinnied their greetings while Pierre and Mademoiselle stood nearby, unsure of the occasion. Pippin nibbled me gently on the cheek as I staggered against her neck sobbing uncontrollably.**

**When the spasm finally subsided, I saddled her and we slowly made our way through the woods and meadows to the Taylors'. There was no longer a need to hurry.**

**I walked into the Taylors' house. Grace was rocking back and forth in a child's chair, singing at the top of her voice, blissfully ignorant of her irreparable loss. Roy staggered over to me crowing, "Pappa," I picked up Grace and held my free arm out to Roy. I lifted him up and hugged them both to me with a grip that all the furies in the world could not loosen. My swollen eyes welled with tears.**

**"Oh Philip," said Evelyn Taylor.**

For long minutes I couldn't speak.

The children stayed on with Evelyn for two days while I arranged for Annie's burial. Her death had stunned me and I could not eat or sleep. When a friend of mine, Charlie Evans, a locomotive engineer heard the news, he quit his run to Muskogee and rode out to see me the night before Annie's funeral. He found me, disheveled and incoherent, rocking on the porch. I had been there a long time, rarely moving except to care for the animals. Though neighbors had come bringing casseroles and cakes, I couldn't eat. Everything in the house reminded me of Annie.

"Philip, awfully sorry to hear the news," he said sitting beside me.

"Annie's dead," I said.

"Where are the children?" Charlie asked.

"Taylor's house," I answered.

"Have you had anything to eat today?" he asked, looking at me rather closely.

"Not hungry," I said, "Annie's dead, and I am not hungry,"

"Why don't you come on over for dinner tonight. Rose put on a roast hoping you'd come," he said. "She'd like to see you."

"Not much for visiting right now," I said.

"Come on Philip," he said. "Let's get you cleaned up. You're comin' to dinner with Rosie and me."

He reached out his hand to me, and I saw in that simple gesture that he was the truest friend I'd ever had.

"I'll feed and water the animals while you shave and get washed," Charlie said.

"Rosie'll have dinner ready at six,"

At the Evans', there were not innumerable things to remind me of my loss, thereby destroying my appetite. I ate what Rose put before me. Her meal restored some of my strength, if not wholly my mental balance.

The two of them rode into town with me early the next morning for the church service. The minister's sermon preached that Annie was house-hunting in another world. I tried, without any success, to take this view. It was distinctly uncomfortable under the circumstances.

After the service, we rode behind the funeral coach to the cemetery. The sight of a loved one's casket being lowered into the ground is so final, so grim and heartbreaking that I wonder how anyone survives it. Airy sermons and euphemisms do what little they can to blur the razor sharp pain but at best it is only temporary. There can be no pain on earth worse than watching those men release the ropes holding Annie's casket. In my mind, I said to God with a hatred borne of

**grief and self-pity, "You've killed the one fine thing in my life, my beloved, who never hurt anyone in her life, who deserved more than anyone else to live and bring up her children. Go ahead and strike me dead in this graveyard--for I have no desire to live without her."**

**But God had no intention of ending my pain that day.**

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