

## Describe the Happiest Hour in Your Life.

We have pleasure in awarding the 5s. Prize this week to Miss E. Tompkins, North Ormesby Hospital, Middlesbrough, for her description of her Happiest Hour:—

### MY HAPPIEST HOUR.

Two other nurses and I were returning from a holiday spent in Switzerland, and left Dieppe on board the *Seaford* bound for Newhaven on a hot August day. Besides the crew there were 300 passengers on board. When we left Dieppe there was no wind, and the heat of the sun was tremendous. At first all went well, and after a while we went down below to get some tea, which we brought up on deck.

As we sat drinking it we noticed a thin grey fog creeping towards us from the land, but no thought of danger entered our heads. Suddenly a bell rang out, sharp and loud, immediately answered by another, then the *Seaford* slowed down. We looked again towards the land and saw the fog close upon us, and in another moment we were surrounded by it. Still no one seemed alarmed, tea was going on, and passengers strolled about, though the bells were still ringing. Then, without a second's warning, there was a tremendous crash, and down we went on to the deck.

Picking myself up, I turned round and saw a big hole where the second class saloon had been, and the sea washing into it fast. I called to the other nurses, "We have been run into!" and then a voice called out, "Every passenger into a lifebelt, and stand ready to jump."

Quicker than thought almost, the crew got us all into lifebelts, boats were lowered, and orders given. The boat which had run us down had disappeared in the fog, and signals were made to her asking whether she could return and take some of us on board. In a few minutes she replied she would come, but she was badly injured herself. The boats had then put off, and many of us were left on deck, so we waited. I was very anxious about my friends, as I had lost them in the darkness and confusion.

The *Seaford* was fast sinking (she went down within twenty minutes of the time of the collision), and we women were standing lined up with lifebelts on, when at last, through the fog, the boat loomed out. She stood by as near as possible, and we had orders to jump. One woman in front of me jumped, missed, and went down into the sea. Then my turn came, and I took the leap into the fog. In another

moment a man had me by the arm, and was offering me brandy from a flask. I was so shaken and unnerved that my knees badly wanted to give way under me. Happily I found my two friends very soon, and together we saw the captain leave the *Seaford*, and salute her as she sank.

We were told that it was uncertain whether the boat which had rescued us could hold out till she got to Newhaven, so we must be ready if necessary to jump again into the sea and trust to our lifebelts.

After four hours of uncertainty and misery, the fog lifted and we crawled into Newhaven. Once there all the passengers went different ways. We nurses reached our destination at Brighton half an hour after midnight, and after ringing for long were let in by the cook. At last, washed, fed, and thankful for my precious life, I was in bed. Then I cried, oh, *how* I cried, but it was the happiest hour of my life.

Miss Mary Cheston writes:—

I am not going in for the prize because it will not take half 300 words to describe the Happiest Hour of My Life.

For months I had lived in dread of darkness—something had gone wrong with my sight, and as I am alone in the world, and my health is my little stock-in-trade, my heart ached terribly. I don't want much, but I have always had the lust of the eye, and drunk greedily of this most beautiful and interesting world.

I consulted specialists, and they were pessimistic. They held a consultation, and in another room I awaited the verdict—a poor cast-down creature.

Then someone placed a kind hand on my head, and said:

"Cheer up, little woman, all is well."

Of course, I wept for joy. Indeed, it was the happiest hour of my life!

Only a few papers fulfilled the conditions this week—they were too short; but that by Miss M. Harvey we shall publish next week.

We feel sure both Miss Mary Cheston and Mrs. Drew could send us something worth publishing, and hope they will both enter for other competitions.

It is noteworthy that both Miss Tompkins and Miss Cheston found their happiest hour in the escape from death and disaster, not in achievement.

We hope for a wide response to this week's question: "Describe a Baby's Cries and What they Indicate."

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