

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 123

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WOMAN IN WATER TWICE IN ONE DAY.



One day I was pottering about in the front garden of our house. I was, as usual, keeping a watching eye on the river, and things happening around the park. I noticed a woman who seemed to be wandering around with no apparent good reason. I became suspicious, stopped pruning the roses, and stood leaning on the garden gate, watching her. It's like a sixth sense, you just get to know when something is not right. Sure enough, she walked down the brae onto the south carriageway, walked westwards towards the weir, stopped, and climbed the fence onto the river banking. I was out the garden gate like a shot and ran as fast as I could the 200 metres or so to where she had disappeared. I jumped the fencing, slid down the banking and was just in time to run into the water and grab hold of the woman who was wading out into the river.



I dragged her ashore and up the banking, lifted her over the fence and half carried, half walked her to our house, all the time talking to her, trying to calm her down and saying silly things like, "You don't want to go into the river, that water is freezing". My sister Ann who had seen some of what was happening from the house window, had already phoned for Police assistance. Ann now took over the looking after of the woman, continuing to calm her down, drying her as best she could and finally giving her a cup of tea and a seat by the fire to chat with my mother. Mother was wonderful at talking to depressed persons, she had so much experience, all those years of helping Dad, and she was so genuinely comforting.



The police took the woman away, hopefully, we hoped to be looked after. Ann and I mopped up the water from the floor, washed the tea cups and generally cleared up. Peace and quiet in the house again, and shortly after, the three of us sat down for our evening meal. Suddenly, the doorbell was rung and rung. On opening it, I was amazed to see the woman whom I had rescued earlier, standing there soaking wet. She fell into my arms sobbing, "You were right, son, the water's too cold ". I helped her again into the house where Ann this time stripped and dried her and wrapped her up in dry blankets until the arrival of an Ambulance which I had summoned while Ann was looking after the woman. This woman had not been taken to Hospital and after being given a good talking to at the police station, it had been decided just to let her go home. The woman did not head home, but had just walked down from the Police Station and again waded into the river. The cold water had made her change her mind and fortunately she made the bank and came to my house. This woman should have never been just allowed to wander about again, as forby her drowning herself, someone else could have lost his or her life trying to save her. The poor woman finally got a warm hospital bed and people to look after her. These are cries for help and should be treated as such. Our evening meal was re heated and this time we did get peace to eat it.



Occurrences like the above, while not regular, did happen every so often, too often. Instead of finding the care they were looking for, the care they required, people were just turned out onto the street again, or to return to a place where they did not wish to live on their own. So many people seeking attention, are just cries for help, and the river has witnessed too many of these.

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