

might as well fall in love with a girl whom he had only seen once as with one whom he saw every day, because he would never dare speak to her anyhow; so he began to believe that it might be as well for him never to see this particular girl again, because even if he ever got to know her, she would never have anything to do with a ruffian like himself. It never occurred to Bodley that a girl who would complain at having her life saved in the most certain, speedy, and, indeed, the only possible manner, would be an idiot who ought to have been left to drown.

But then, as has been stated before, Bodley was in love, and, as has been stated and sufficiently demonstrated, Bodley was bashful.

It did seem an awful pity to him, however, that so long as he was fated to fall in love under such circumstances, it must be with a girl who, if she ever thought of him at all, could only do so with loathing. He realized the triteness of the saying, that true love never did run smooth, and composed himself to a life of settled melancholy.

Things had been running on in this way for some time, and Bodley had almost succeeded in adjusting his feelings to their new conditions, when, as he was walking down the front stoop one October morning on his way to business, his left eye was suddenly attracted by the glint of golden hair, and a more comprehensive glance showed him that walking down the stoop of the adjoining house, step by step with him, was the girl he had pulled out of the water at Fire Island.

It seemed so absurdly impossible to him that he thought he must be getting a little crazy on the subject, so he looked again. No, there was no mistaking it, she was the very girl. He instantly withdrew his gaze and looked straight in front of him. Cold shivers ran up his legs and into his body, paralyzing his nerves, so that his brain lost control of his actions, though remaining dimly aware of their results. He was totally unconscious of the fact that he continued walking down the steps, although he felt that he must be, because he could see that he was approaching the level of the sidewalk. Then he began to wonder which way he would turn. His ordinary course would take him past the house next door, and his mental impulse was to turn the other way, but he began to perceive that his legs, though he had lost all sense of their existence, were turning him in the usual direction. Then he began to hope that the girl was going to turn the same way; but no, he could see that she was turning toward him and he was going to meet her face to face.

It was a terrible moment in his life. He did not know whether he should be able to live through it. No one who has not been through a similar experience can really understand what that moment was to a man of Bodley's temperament.

He tried to look away from her in order to avoid the look of contempt and horror and disdain he expected her to cast on him, but his eyes would pay no attention to his will and gazed at her, full in the face, as his unresponsive legs carried him by her. He walked on for some time in this semi-conscious state, and then, little by little, the numbness left his body and ran down his legs, and he began to feel the pavement once more under his feet, and his heart, which had been thumping like a trip-hammer, began to resume its normal beats.

Then suddenly two great facts thrust themselves upon his consciousness; the first that the bruise on her forehead had entirely disappeared! This was not strange when Bodley came to think of it, because it was now three months since he had hit her; but such an impression had the blow made on him that it had never occurred to him that she would not carry that black-and-blue lump between her eyes as long as she lived. And he blessed the happy chance that had permitted him to see her once again, so that in the future he could bring up her picture in his mind without that hideous reminder of his cruelty.

The second fact was that she had not regarded him with horror and contempt, but that she had not apparently regarded him at all. Not that she hadn't seen him, for he remembered that as she had looked brightly about her, her glance had fallen on him, but without the slightest sign of recognition.

And after Bodley had wondered at this for awhile, he suddenly realized that she had never seen him before. For when he came to put his mind on it he perceived that she could hardly have been sufficiently

conscious to notice anything when she opened her eyes for the first time after she had been taken out of the water, and that even if she had really seen him then she could scarcely be expected to recognize him now. And Bodley's heart was lighter than it had been for many weeks, and he walked all the way down town with elastic tread, which made him late at the office; and when he met a member of the firm as he was coming in, he alluded to his tardiness with a jesting remark, and seemed in so bright and pleasant a mood that the member of the firm seriously considered suggesting to him to come late every day if it were going to have so delightful an effect on his spirits. But, being a member of the firm, he did not do it.

Bodley got through the day in a sort of ecstasy, floated home at night, passed the evening looking out of his window thinking happy thoughts, which he could not formulate, and floated to bed and off into dreams in which he was always meeting golden-haired angels at every turn.

Then it was morning and he woke up, took his plunge, and he was on earth again. He began to wonder if he had really seen the girl at all, or if she were not possibly a vision sent to show him the folly of his melancholy and to bring him to a better understanding of himself. Then he remembered that he was not superstitious and that he didn't believe in visions, whereupon he easily persuaded himself that it was not the same girl, but one who greatly resembled her. But he was glad, nevertheless, because his thinking it was she had served to clear his mind on many points. So it was with quite his old-time manner that he started off for business after breakfast.

Again he caught the glint of golden hair.

This time she was several steps below him and he could observe her, unobserved himself, as she turned and walked past the house. He experienced no return of his ridiculous tremors of the day before, and was able to watch her closely and critically.

No, he had made no mistake the previous morning. She was undoubtedly the very girl whom he had pulled out of the water. He knew he could not be mistaken in that. He had carried away too vivid an impression ever to forget her. If he had only caught that one first glimpse of her pale face as she sank beneath the water he knew that it would have stayed with him forever.

If she had proved to be some other girl, Bodley would have continued in the normal condition which he had been restored and would have lived happily ever after; but the fact that the object of his affection—he no longer had any doubt on that subject—was actually living next door to him so disturbed his mental equilibrium that he did not know whether to be glad or sorry. But he was so sorry when he failed to see her the next morning that he knew he was glad.

After this Bodley used to see her quite often—not every day, but several times a week—and the oftener he saw her the gladder he was. He was beginning to consider himself one of the most fortunate beings in the world when it gradually dawned on him how much more fortunate it would have been if she had taken board at the house where he lived instead of going next door. Then he could have seen her many times oftener; in time he might even have come to know her. The very thought made him rush up-stairs to his room and shut the door in a sudden attack of embarrassment. But by and by he became quite accustomed to the idea, and he pictured to himself how, perhaps in time, he might have mustered up courage to speak to her, and to lead the subject up to the dangers of ocean bathing, and to tell of the various ways of saving drowning people, and how, if one grasped you so as to render it impossible to swim with him, the only thing to do was to hit him, so as to render him insensible, and then save him, or both would drown. Bodley had armed himself with numerous authorities which he would have cited to back up his case. If he could only get from her an expression of forgiveness for the unknown person who had so maltreated her, he was sure he could ask nothing more, and he cursed the fate that had tantalizingly sent her to the house next door instead of to the house next door to it.

The more he thought of it the more the possibilities of what might have happened widened, until he gasped at his temerity in even thinking of it; but the more he

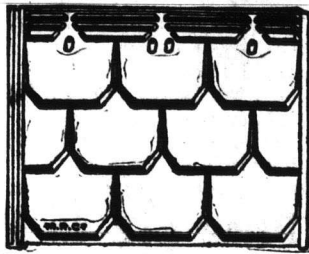
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