

Which Way to Shore?
by William B. Smart

For stark tragedy, I have seldom heard a story to compare with the one in the papers recently from Miller Falls, Massachusetts. An Explorer age boy, swimming in the broad, quiet river, heard a group of girls laughing and playing together on the bank.

He called out to them: "Which way to the shore?"

But they were busy with their own affairs. They paid no attention.

Again he called: "Which way to the shore?"

And they looked at each other and shrugged and turned their backs.

Yet again, in final desperation: "Which way to the shore?"

Slowly, then, they began to understand that something was wrong. They began looking for help. But it was too late. The boy, exhausted at last, sank and drowned. He was blind.

These girls didn't deliberately condemn him to death. It was just their imaginations failed them. Not one of them could comprehend what was happening. Not one detected the note of desperation in the voice. So they turned their backs when he shouted, "Which way to the shore?"

Isn't that pretty much what is wrong with mankind today? Aren't all of us too busy, too indifferent to recognize the troubles of our neighbours and pals? Do you know what I think? We -- you and I in the Church are on the shore. We have the right goals and we have a program to help us keep working toward them. We're safe. But out there is the river -- the river of worldliness. Most of mankind is swimming there.

Some may be swimming there on purpose, because they want to. But so many of them are blind. So many are calling, "Which way to the shore?" Some of them might even be our own friends who were on the shore, but slipped in -- we could slip in ourselves -- and who need our help now. All that may need to be said is a quiet word of encouragement, a helping hand. But that takes someone who is listening, with love, and understanding. It takes someone who is prepared to help when he hears the call.

The tragedy of Miller Falls, and it is a true story, is repeated every day symbolically in man's indifference to man. Fellows, let's resolve here and now never to be guilty of failing to hear a call for help (from *A Scouter's Minute*).