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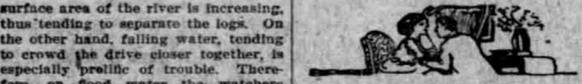
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The Riverman

By Stewart Edward White

(Continued.)
"We're—catch gravel, boys, anyway," said Orde.
The men entered into the spirit of the thing. In fact, their enthusiasm was almost too exuberant. Orde had constantly to negative new and ingenious schemes.
"No, boys," said he, "I want to keep on the right side of the law. We may need it later."
Logs rarely jam on rising water, for the simple reason that constantly the surface area of the river is increasing, thus tending to separate the logs. On the other hand, falling water, tending to crowd the logs closer together, is especially prolific of trouble. Therefore, on flood water the watchers scattered along the stretches of the river had little to do—save strand Heinzman's logs for him.



Chapter 25

THREE days later the jam of the drive reached the dam at Redding. After the rear had dropped down river from Redding Carroll and Orde returned to their deserted little box of a house at Monrovia.

Orde breathed deep of a new satisfaction in walking again the streets of this little sandy, sawdust paved, shantytown, with its yellow hills and its wide blue river and its glimpse of the lake far in the offing.
"Hanged if I know what's struck me," he mused. "Never experienced any remarkable joy before in getting back to this sort of truck."
Then, with a warm glow at the heart, the realization was brought to him. This was home, and over yonder under the shadow of the heaven waiting spire a slip of a girl was waiting for him.

The rest of the week Orde was absent up the river, superintending in a general way the latter progress of the drive.
At the booms everything was in readiness to receive the jam. The long swim arm slanting across the river channel was attached to its winch, which would operate it. When shut it would close the main channel and shunt into the booms the logs floating in the river. There, penned at last by the piles driven in a row and held together at the top by bolted timbers, they would lie quiet. Men armed with pike poles would then take up the work of distribution according to the brands stamped on the ends. Each brand had its own separate "sorting pens," the lower end leading again into the open river. From these each owner's property was rafted and towed to his private booms at his mill below.

Orde spent the day before the jam appeared in constructing what he called a "boomerang."
"Secret invention just yet," he explained to Newmark. "I'm going to hold up the drive in the main river until we have things bunched; then I'm going to throw a big crew down here by the swing. Heinzman anticipates, of course, that I'll run the entire drive into the booms and do all his sorting there. Naturally if I turn his logs loose into the river as fast as I run across them he will be able to pick them up one at a time, for he'll only get them occasionally. If I kept them until everything else is sorted only Heinzman's logs will remain, and as we have no right to hold logs we'll have to turn them loose through the lower sorting booms, where he can be ready to raft them. In that way he gets them all right without paying us a cent. See?"

"Yes, I see," said Newmark.
"Well," said Orde, with a laugh, "here is where I fool him. I'm going to rush the drive into the booms all at once, but I'm going to sort out Heinzman's logs at these openings near the entrance and turn them into the main channel."
"What good will that do?" asked Newmark skeptically. "He gets them sorted just the same, doesn't he?"
"The current's fairly strong," Orde pointed out, "and the river's almighty wide. When you spring seven or eight million feet on a man all at once and unexpected and he with no crew to handle them, he's going to keep all mighty busy. And if he don't stop them this side his mill he'll have to raft and tow them back, and if he doesn't stop 'em this side the lake he may as well kiss them all goodbye."
The boomerang worked like a charm. Orde, in personal charge, watched that through the different openings in his boomerang the "H" logs were shunted into the river. Shortly the channel was full of logs floating merrily away.

"I've got to go down and see how the Dutchman is making it," announced Orde.
He drove to Heinzman's mill. There he found evidences of the wildest excitement. Boats piled in all directions. A tug darted back and forth. Constantly the number of floating logs augmented, however. Many had already gone by.
"If you think you're busy now," said Orde to himself, with a chuckle, "just wait until you begin to tug logs. What's he doing with that tug?" thought he. "Oh, ho! He's stringing booms across the river to hold the whole outfit."
He laughed aloud and drove frantically back to the booms.

"He's shut down his mill," shouted Orde, "and he's got all that gang of highlanders out and every old rum blossom in Monrovia, and I bet if you say 'logs' to him he'd chase his tail in circles. I'm going to take Marsh and the Sprite and go to town. Old Heinzman," he added as an afterthought, "is stringing booms across the river—obstructing navigation."
"Marsh," he called, "got up steam?"

Marsh, a short, square man, eyes blue as the sky.
"Up in two minutes," he answered. "Harvey, fire her up!"
Captain Marsh guided his energetic charge among the logs floating in the stream with the marvelous second instinct of the expert tugboat man. Orde noted with satisfaction that many of the logs had found lodgment among the reeds and in the bays and inlets. One at a time, and painfully, these would have to be salvaged.
Shortly Orde, standing by the wheel in the pilot-house, could see down the stretches of the river a crowd of men working, antlike.
"They've got 'em stopped," commented Orde. "Look at that gang working from boats!"
"What do you want me to do?" asked Captain Marsh.
"This is a navigable river, isn't it?" replied Orde. "Run through!"
The tug headed straight for the slender line of booms stretching quite across the river.
Orde looked at his watch.
"We'll be late for the mail unless we hurry," said he.
Marsh rang the engine room bell. The water churned white behind.
"Get you do? Stop!" cried Heinzman from a boat.
"You're obstructing navigation!" yelled Orde. "I've got to go to town to buy a postage stamp."
The prow of the tug, accurately aimed by Marsh, hit square in the junction of two of the booms. There ensued a moment of strain; then the links snapped, and the Sprite plunged joyously through the opening. The booms, swept aside by the current, floated to either shore. The river was open.

"Slow down, Marsh," said Orde. "Let's see the show."
Up river all the small boats gathered in a line, connected one to the other by a rope. The tug passed over to them the cable attached to the boom. Evidently the combined efforts of the rowboats were counted on to hold the half boom across the current while the tug brought out the other half. When the tug dropped the cable Orde laughed.
"Nobody but a Dutchman would have thought of that!" he cried. "Now for the fun!"
Immediately the weight fell on the small boats they were dragged irresistibly backward. Marsh lowered his telescope, the tears of laughter streaming down his face.
"They'll have to have two tugs before they can close the break that way," commented Orde.
"Sure thing," replied Captain Marsh. But at that moment a black smoke rolled up over the marshes, and shortly around the bend from above came the Lucy Belle.

The Lucy Belle was the main excuse for calling the river navigable. In appearance she was two storied, with twin smokestacks, an iron Indian on her top and a "splutter behind" paddle wheel.
"There comes his help," said Orde. Sure enough, the Lucy Belle stopped. After a short conference she steamed clumsily over to get hold of one end of the boom. The tug took the other. In time they did a bit of much plashing, some collisions and several attempts the ends of the booms were united.
By this time, however, nearly all the logs had escaped. The tug, towing a string of rowboats, set out in pursuit.
The Lucy Belle turned in toward the tug.
"She's going to speak us," marveled Orde.
"Tug shy!" bellowed a red faced individual from the upper deck. He was dressed in blue and brass buttons and was liberally festooned with gold braid and embroidered anchors.

"Hello there, commodore! What is it?" replied Marsh.
"They want a tug up there at Heinzman's. Can you go?"
"Sure!" cried Marsh, choking.
The Lucy Belle sheered off magnificently.
"What do you think of that?" Marsh asked Orde.
"Head upstream again!"
Heinzman saw the Sprite coming and rowed out frantically, splashing at every stroke and yelling with every breath.
"Don't you go through there! Wait a minute! Stop, I tell you!"
"Hold up!" said Orde to Marsh. Heinzman rowed alongside.

"What you do?" he demanded.
"I forgot the money to buy my stamp with," said Orde sweetly. "I'm going back to get it."
"Not through my pooms!"
"Mr. Heinzman," said Orde severely, "you are obstructing a navigable stream. I am doing business, and I cannot be interfered with."
"But my logs!"
"I have nothing to do with your logs. You are driving your own logs," Orde reminded him.
Heinzman vituperated.
"Go ahead, Marsh!" said Orde.
For a second time the chains were snapped. The severed ends of the boom swung back toward either shore. Between them floated a rowboat. In the rowboat gesticulated a pudgy man. The river was well sprinkled with logs. Evidently the sorting was going on well.

"May as well go back to the works," said Orde. "He won't string them together again today, not if he waits for that tug he sent Simpson for."
Orde detailed to an appreciative audience the happenings below.
"Why, he hasn't sorted out more'n a million feet of his logs," cried Railway Charlie. "He hasn't seen no logs yet."
They turned with new enthusiasm to the work of shunting "H" logs into the channel.
A stableman picked his way out over the booms with a message for Orde.
"Mr. Heinzman's ashore and wants to see you," said he.
Orde found the mill man pacing restlessly up and down before a steaming pair of horses. Newmark, perched on a stump, was surveying him sardonically.

To be Continued.

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