

# The Riverman

By Stewart Edward White

(Chapter Eight Continued)

"It would," said Orde. "Why isn't it done, then?" "Who would do it?" countered Orde. "If Daly did it, for instance, then all the rest of the drivers would get the advantage of it for nothing."

"Get them to pay their share." Orde grinned. "I'd like to see you get any three men to agree to anything on this river." "How many firms drive logs on this stream?" "Ten," replied Orde without hesitation.

"How many do they employ?" "About 500 men." "Now, suppose"—Newmark leaned forward—"suppose a firm should be organized to drive all the logs on the river. Suppose it improved the river with piers and dams, so that the driving would be easier. Couldn't it drive with less than 500 men and save money?"

"It might," agreed Orde. "If such a firm should be organized to drive the logs for these ten firms at so much a thousand, do you suppose it would get the business?" "It would depend on the driving firm," said Orde. "You see, mill men have got to have their logs. They can't afford to take chances. It would not pay."

"Then that's all right," agreed Newmark, with a gleam of satisfaction across his thin face. "Would you form a partnership with me having such an object in view?" Orde laughed.

"I guess you don't realize the situation," said he. "We'd have to have a few little things like distributing booms and tugs and a lot of tools and supplies and works of various kinds." "Well, we'd get them."

"How much are you worth?" Orde inquired bluntly. "Twenty thousand dollars. How much capital would we have to have?" asked Newmark.

"Orde thought for several minutes. "We would need somewhere near \$75,000," he estimated at last. "That's easy," cried Newmark. "We'll make a stock company—say 100,000 shares. We'll keep just enough between us to control the company—say 51,000. I'll put in my pile, and you can pay for yours out of the earnings of the company."

"That doesn't sound fair." "You pay interest," explained Newmark. "Then we'll sell the rest of the stock to raise the rest of the money." "I must have something to live on," said Orde thoughtfully at last.

"So must I," said Newmark. "We'll have to pay ourselves salaries, of course, but the smaller the better at first. You'll have to take charge of the men and the work and all the rest of it. I don't know anything about that. I'll attend to the incorporating and the routine, and I'll try to place the stock. You'll have to see first of all whether you can get contracts from the logging firms to drive the logs."

"How can I tell what to charge them?" "We'll have to figure that very closely. You know where these different drives would start from and how long each of them would take?" "Oh, yes!" "Well, then we'll figure how many days driving there is for each, and how many men there are, and what it costs for wages, grub, tools. We'll just have to figure as near as we can to the actual cost and then add a margin for profit and for interest on our investment."

Amanda now announced dinner. Newmark looked puzzled and as he arose glanced surreptitiously at his watch. Orde seemed to take the summons as one to be expected, however. In fact, the strange hour was the usual Sunday custom in the Redding of that day and had to do with the late church freedom of Amanda and her like.

"Come in and eat with us," invited Orde. But Newmark declined. "Come up tomorrow night, then, at half past six for supper," Orde urged him. "We can figure on these things a little."

gathered. Jane herself, tall, delicate in movement and in speech, kindly and thoughtful, talked in a corner with Ernest Colburn, who was just out of college and who worked in a bank. Orde, standing in the doorway, looked upon quite the usual thing, only he missed the Incubus. Searching the room with his eyes, he at length discovered that incoherent, desiccated, but persistent youth vis-a-vis with a stranger. Orde made out the white of her gown in the shadows, the willowy outline of her small and slender figure and the gracious forward bend of her head.

"So you're back at last, are you, Jack?" drawled Jane in her lazy, good natured way. "Come and meet Miss Bishop. Carroll, I want to present Mr. Orde."

Orde bowed ceremoniously. The girl inclined gracefully her small head with the glossy hair. The Incubus, his sallow face twisted in a wry smile, held to the edge of his chair with characteristic pertinacity.

"Well, Walter," Orde addressed him genially, "are you having a good time?" "Yes, indeed!" His chair was planted squarely to exclude all others. Orde surveyed the situation with good humor.

"Going to keep the other fellow from getting a chance, I see?" "Yes, indeed!" Orde bent over and, with great ease, lifted Incubus, chair and all, and set him facing Mignonne Smith and the croquet ball.

"Here, Mignonne," said he, "I've brought you another assistant." He returned to the lamp to find the girl, her dark eyes alight with amusement, watching him intently.

"Walter is a very bright man in his own line," said Orde, swinging forward a chair, "but he mustn't be allowed any monopolies." "How do you know I want him so summarily removed?" the girl asked him.

"Well," argued Orde, "I got him to say all he ever says to any girl, 'Yes, indeed,' so you couldn't have any more conversation from him. Besides, I want to talk to you myself."

"Do you always get what you want?" inquired the girl. Orde laughed.

"Any one can get anything he wants if only he wants it bad enough," he asserted. "Some people," she amended, "however, I forgive you. I will even father you by saying I am glad you came. You look to have reached the age of discretion. I venture to say that these boys' idea of a lively evening is to throw bread about the table."

Orde flushed a little. The last time he had supped at Jane Hubbard's that was exactly what they did do. "They are young, of course," he said, "and you and I are very old and wise." "Now, tell me, what do you do?" "What do I do?" asked Orde, puzzled.

"Yes. Everybody does something out west here." "I'm a river driver just now." "A river driver?" she repeated. "Why, I've just been hearing a great deal about you from Mrs. Baggs."

"Oh!" said Orde. "Then you know what a drunken, swearing, worthless lot of toughs we are, don't you?" "There is Hell's Half Mile," she reminded him. "Oh, yes," said Orde bitterly, "there's Hell's Half Mile! Whose fault is that? My rivermen's—my boys'! Look here! I suppose you couldn't understand it if you tried a month. But suppose you were working out in the woods nine months of the year. Suppose you slept in rough blankets on the ground or in bunks, ate rough food, never saw a woman or a book, undertook work to scare your city men up a tree, risked your life a dozen times a week in a tangle of logs, with the big river roaring behind just waiting to swallow you; saw nothing but woods and river, were cold and hungry and wet and so tired you couldn't wiggle. And then suppose you hit town, where there were all the things you hadn't had, and the first thing you struck was Hell's Half Mile. Say, you've seen water behind a jam, haven't you? Water power's a good thing in a mill course, where it has wheels to turn, but behind a jam it just rips things. Oh, what's the use talking? A girl doesn't know what it means. She couldn't understand."

The company trooped out to the dining room, where the table, spread with all the good things, awaited them. To Orde's relief no one threw any bread, although the whole hearted fun grew boisterous enough before the close of the meal.

In spite of her half scornful references to "bread throwing" Miss Bishop joined with evident pleasure in the badinage. After the meal was finished Orde, with determination, made his way to Miss Bishop's side. She turned to the piano, struck a few chords, and then, her long hands wandering idly and softly up and down the keys, she smiled at them over her shoulder.

Song followed song, at first quickly, but at longer intervals. The girl still sat at the piano, her head thrown back idly, her hands wandering softly in and out of melodies and modulations.

Orde finally saw only the shimmer of her white figure and the white outline of her head and throat. At last her hands fell in her lap. She sat looking straight ahead of her.

Orde came to her. "That was a wonderfully beautiful thing," said he. "What was it?" She turned to him, and he saw that the mocking had gone from her eyes and mouth, leaving them quite simple, like a child's.

He hesitated and stammered awkwardly. "It was so still and soothing it made me think of the river sometimes about dusk. What was it?" "It wasn't anything. I was improvising."

"You made it up yourself?" "It was myself, I suppose. I love to build myself a garden and wander on until I lose myself in it. I'm glad there was a river in the garden—a nice, still, twilight river."

At this moment the outside door opened to admit Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard, who had, according to their usual Sunday custom, been spending the evening with a neighbor. The company began to break up.

Orde pushed his broad shoulders in to a screen Carroll Bishop from the others. "Are you staying here?" he asked. "I'm visiting Jane."

"Are you going to be here long?" was Orde's next question. "I am coming to see you," announced Orde. "Good night," he announced. He took her hand, dropped it and followed the others into the hall, leaving her standing by the lamp. She watched him until the outer door had closed behind him. Jane Hubbard, returning after a moment from the hall, found her at the piano again, her head slightly one side, playing with painful and accurate exactness a simple one finger melody.

Reaching his home, Orde walked confidently to the narrow stairs and ascended them. Subconsciously he avoided the creaking step, but outside his mother's door he stopped, arrested by a greeting from within.

"That you, Jack?" queried Grandma Orde. For answer Orde entered. He made out the great square bed and divined the tiny figure of his mother. "Mother," said he abruptly, "I've met the girl I want for my wife."

"Who is she?" she demanded. "Her name is Carroll Bishop," said Orde, "and she's visiting Jane Hubbard." "Yes, but who is she?" insisted Grandma Orde. "Where is she from?" Orde stared at her in the dim light. "Why, mother, bless if I know that!"

self. New York born and bred; experience with Cooper & Dunne, brokers, eight years. Money from a legacy. Parents dead. No relatives to speak to.

Orde nodded gravely. "Now," said Newmark, "have you had time to do any figuring?" "Well," replied Orde. "I have a rough idea." He produced a bundle of scribbled papers from his coat pocket. "I take Daily as a sample, because I've been with his outfit. It costs him to run and deliver his logs 100 miles about \$2 a thousand feet. He's the only big manufacturer up here. I suppose it costs the other nine firms from two to two and a half a thousand."

Newmark jotted down figures. "Do these men all conduct separate drives?" he inquired. "All but Proctor and old Heinzman. They pool in together."

"Now," went on Newmark, "if we were to drive the whole river, how could we improve on that?" "In the first place we wouldn't need so many men. I could run the river on 300 easy enough. That saves wages and grub on 200 right there. And, of course, a few improvements on the river would save time, which in our case would mean money. We would not need so many separate cook outfits and all that. Then, too, if we agreed to sort and deliver we'd have to build sorting booms down at Monrovia."

"Suppose we had all that. What, for example, do you reckon you could bring Daly's logs down for?" Orde fell into deep thought. "I suppose somewhere about a dollar," he announced at last. He looked up a trifle startled. "Why," he cried, "that looks like big money! A hundred per cent!"

Newmark smiled. "Hold on," said he. "I don't know anything about this business, but I can see a few things. In the first place, close figuring will probably add a few cents to that dollar. And then all our improvements will be valueless after we've got through using them. You said yesterday they'd probably stand us in \$75,000. Even at a dollar profit we'd have to drive 75,000,000 before we got a cent back. And, of course, we've got to agree to drive for a little less than they could themselves."

"That's so," agreed Orde, crestfallen. "However," said Newmark briskly as he arose, "there's good money in it, as you say. Now, how soon can you leave Daly?"

"By the middle of the week." "That's good. Then we'll go into this matter of expense thoroughly and establish our schedule of rates to submit to the different firms."

THE new partners, as soon as Orde had released himself from Daly, gave all their time to working out a schedule of tolls. Orde drew on his intimate knowledge of the river and the locations of the railways to estimate closely the time it would take to drive them.

At last Newmark expressed himself as satisfied. "Now, Orde," said he, "here is where you come in. It's now your job to go out and interview these men and get their contracts for driving their next winter's cut."

"Look here, Joe," Orde objected, "you can talk business to them better than I can." "Not a bit," negatived Newmark. "They don't know me from Adam, and they do know you. We've got to carry this thing through at first on our own right."

"All right," agreed Orde. "I'll start in on Daly." The following morning Daly listened attentively. "Well, Jack," said he, "I believe you can do it. I'd be only too glad to get rid of the nuisance of it, let alone get it done cheaper. If you'll draw up your contract and bring it in here, I'll sign it. I suppose you'll break out the rollways?"

"No," said Orde. "We hadn't thought of doing more than the driving and distributing. You'll have to deliver the logs in the river. Maybe another year, after we get better organized, we'll be able to break rollways."

"That was smooth enough sailing," exulted Orde to Newmark. "Yes," pondered Newmark. "What was that about rollways? What does that mean exactly?" "Why," explained Orde, with a slight start of surprise, "when the logs are cut and hauled during the winter they are banked on the river banks and even in the river channel itself. Then, when the thaws come in the spring, these piles are broken down and set afloat in the river."

"I see," said Newmark. "Well, but why shouldn't we undertake that part of it?" "It would hold back our drive too much to stop and break rollways."

The next morning they took the early train for Monrovia, where were situated the offices of the nine other lumber companies. Orde separated from Newmark to

spend the rest of the morning with Heinzman, a very reticent, cautious person of German extraction and accent. Heinzman occupied the time in asking questions of all sorts about the new enterprise. At 12 he had not in any way committed himself nor expressed an opinion.

"I'll see Proctor," said he. Orde, rather exhausted, returned to find Newmark. The two had lunch together, after which Orde succeeded in getting two more promises of contracts and two more deferred interviews.

The following morning also he was much encouraged by the reception of his plan. "That's four contracts already," said he, "and three more practically a sure thing. Proctor and Heinzman are slower than molasses about everything and mean as pusley, and Johnson's up in the air, the way he always is, for fear some one's going to do him."

But Heinzman offered a new problem for Orde's consideration. "I had talked with Proctor," said he, "and he like your scheme. If you can deliver our logs here for \$2.25, why do that is better as we can do it? But how do you know you will do it?"

"I'll guarantee to get them here all right," laughed Orde. "But what is your guarantee good for?" persisted Heinzman blandly. "Suppose the logs are not delivered—what then? How responsible are you financially?"

"Seventy-five thousand dollars." "If you will give a bond for the performance of your contract," pursued Heinzman, "that would be satisfactory to me."

Orde's mind was struck chaotic by the request. "How much of a bond?" he asked. "Twenty-five thousand would satisfy us," said Heinzman.

Orde hunted up Newmark. "Heinzman has sense," said Newmark dryly after hearing Orde's story. "I was wondering if ordinary business caution was unknown out here."

"Nobody would go on my bond for that amount." "Mine either," said Newmark. "We'll just have to let them go and drive ahead without them. I only hope they won't spread the idea. Better get those other contracts signed up as soon as we can."

Orde started out early the next morning, carrying with him duplicate contracts. About 11 o'clock a clerk of the Welton Lumber company entered Mr. Welton's private office to deliver to Orde a note.

It was from Heinzman and requested an immediate interview. Orde delayed only long enough to get Mr. Welton's signature, then hastened away. Heinzman he found awaiting him.

"I suppose you would not be prepared to give a bond?" "I hardly think so."

"Well, suppose we fix him this way," went on Heinzman, clasping his hands over his reticent stomach and beaming through his spectacles. "Proctor and I had talked it over, and we are agreed that the proposition is a good one; also we think it is well to help the young fellows along." He laughed silently in such a manner as to shake himself all over. "We do not wish to be too severe, and yet we must get our logs on time. So if you give us a bond secured with stock in the new company that would be satisfactory to us."

Orde's face cleared. "Do you mean that, Mr. Heinzman?" "Sure!" "Now, I call that a mighty good way out!" cried Orde.

"Make your contract out according to these terms, then," said Heinzman, handing him a paper, "and bring it in Monday."

Orde glanced over the slip. It recited two and a quarter as the agreed price; specified the date of delivery at Heinzman and Proctor's booms; named \$25,000 as the amount of the bond, to be secured by \$50,000 worth of stock in the new company. This looked satisfactory.

"By the way"—the little German beamed up at him, swinging his fat legs as the office chair tipped back—"you will be selling some of the stock to raise money. Is it not so?" "Yes," agreed Orde.

"How much will you capitalize for?" "A hundred thousand," replied Orde. "Well," said Heinzman, "you put it on the market some and see me." That evening, well after 6, Orde returned to Newmark to take dinner.

"Well, I've got 'em all," said Orde as soon as the waitress had gone with the order. "But the best stroke of business you'd never guess. I roped in Heinzman."

Continued Next Week.

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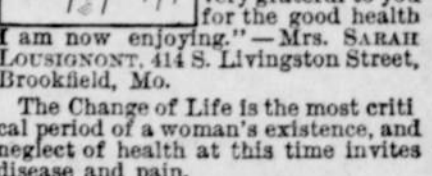
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