

The Riverman

By Stewart Edward White

(Chapter 32, Continued)

By 3 o'clock in the afternoon Jimmy Powers reported a rise since morning of six inches.

"Tom," said Orde to the old riverman, "I'm going to send Marsh down for the pile drivers and some cable."

"What in blazes do you expect to do with that?" he inquired.

"We may need them," Orde stated, with conviction. "If those logs ever break through they'll go on out to Lake Michigan and wouldn't be worth the salvage."

"That's a mighty long chance," North commented.

"If this drive goes out it surely busts me," replied Orde, "and I'm not taking even long chances."

A cloudburst in the China creek district followed by continued heavy rains was responsible for the increased water. The evening papers mentioned this only incidentally. Their columns were filled with an account of the big log jam that had formed above the iron railroad bridge. The piling mill's booms had given way under pressure, and the contents had piled down stream against the buttresses.

Orde slept that night at the booms. The water by morning had crept so far up the piles that there began to be danger that it would overflow their tops. In that case, of course, the logs in the booms would also run out.

Orde set a crew of men to raising the height of the piling by tying logs firmly to the bolted timbers atop. This would take care of an extra two feet of water, a two feet beyond all previous records. Another crew stretched the fifteen inch manila cables across the field of logs in order to segregate them into several units of mass.

About two hours later the pile driver moved up. The swing was opened, and the men began to drive clumps of piles in such a position as to strengthen the swing when the latter should be shot. It was a slow job. Each pile had to be taken from the raft at the stern of the scow, erected in the "carrier," and pounded into place by the heavy hammer raised and let drop in the derrick at the bow.

Long before the task was finished the logs in the temporary booms had begun to slip atop one another, to cross and tangle, until at last the river bed inside the booms was filled with a jam of formidable dimensions. From beneath it the water boiled in eddies. Orde, looking at it, roused himself to sudden activity.

"Get a move on," he advised Captain Aspinwall of the driver. "If that jam breaks on us we want to be ready, and if it don't break before you get this swing strengthened maybe we can hold her where she is. There's no earthly doubt that those boom piles will never stand up when they get the full pressure of the freshet."

The driver's crew labored desperately, hoisting the piles into the carriage, tripping the heavy hammer, binding feverishly the clumps of piles together by means of cables.

Two of the clumps had been placed and bound when suddenly, with a roar, the upper booms gave way, projecting their logs upon the opening and the driver.

The half dozen members of the crew were scattered by the winds of a panic. Two or three flung themselves on their faces; one leaped into the river. Instant destruction seemed upon them.

Tom North, at the wheel, however, retained his presence of mind. At the first rag onward of the boom piles he set in operation the machinery that closed the gate. Clumsy and slow as was his mechanism, he nevertheless succeeded in getting the long arm started. The logs, rushing in back of it, hurried it shut. Immediately they jammed again and heaped up in a formidable tangle behind the barrier.

Tom North, his little black pipe between his teeth, stood calm, the lever of his winch in his hand. A short three feet from the spot on which he stood the first saw log of the many that might have overwhelmed him thrust forward its ugly head. The wash of the water lifted the huge pile driver bodily and deposited it with a crash half on the bank and half in the water.

Instantly after the first break Orde had commenced running out over the booms from the shore.

"Good boy, Tom!" he shot at North. Across the jam he hurried to where the pile driver lay. Captain Aspinwall examined the supports of the derrick on deck.

"That was lucky," said Orde briefly. "Stove you in?"

"I-I don't think so," replied the captain.

"That's good," Orde said over the tug to help get her about. "We've got our work cut out for us now."

"You don't expect me to work my driver under the face of that jam?" cried the captain.

"What's your answer?" asked Orde.

"I'll be damned if I'll risk my men or my driver."

Orde, with a heavy sigh, turned toward the man and thrust him toward the side to the bank.

"Safe, you white-headed skunk!" he roared. "Safe! Go over in the middle of that ten acre lot and lie down on your face and see if you feel safe there! Get out, the whole pack of you! I'm in charge here now!"

Aspinwall picked himself up. "Get off my driver!" he snarled.

"This driver is requisitioned," cried Orde. "Get out! I've got to save my logs!"

Tom North and some others of the crew came running across the jam. "Get a cable to the winch!" Orde shouted at these as soon as they were within hearing. "And get Marsh up here with the Sprite. We've got to get about."

He paid no more attention to the ejected crew.

A few minutes' hard work put the driver about. Fortunately its raft of piles had not become detached in the upheaval.

"Tom," said Orde briskly to North. "You know the pile driving business. Pick out your crew and take charge."

Orde took charge of the situation in its entirety, as a general might. He set North immediately to driving clumps each of sixteen piles, bound to solidity by chains, and so arranged in angles and snouts as to direct the enormous pressure toward either bank, thus splitting the enemy's power.

The small driver owned by the Boom company drove similar clumps here, there and everywhere that need arose or weakness developed. Seventy-five men opposed to the weight of 20,000,000 tons of logs and a river of water the expedients invented by determination and desperation.

Orde gave over formal defenses and threw his energies to saving the weak places which rapidly developed. By the most tremendous exertions he seemed but just able to keep even. Piles quivered, bent slowly outward, immediately, before the logs behind them could stir, the pile driver must do its work. Back and forth darted the Sprite and her sister tug, the Spray, towing the pile drivers or the strings of piles. Under the frowning destruction the crews had to do their work. And if ever a break should come there would be no escape. Crushed and buried, the men would be borne to an unknown grave in the lake. Every man knew it. Darkness came. No one stopped for food.

Morning found no change in the situation. The water rose steadily. The logs grew more and more restive; the defenses weaker and more inadequate.

The jam had been successfully held at the iron railroad bridge above Redding, but only by the most strenuous efforts. Braces of oak beams had been slanted where they would do the most good. Chains strengthened the weaker spots, and on top of all ton after ton of railroad iron held the whole immovably. Nolan had all the help he required. Every device known was employed to strengthen the jam. For only a few hours was the result in doubt. Then, as the Clarion jubilantly expressed it, "It's a hundred dollars to an old hat she holds!"

Orde received all this with satisfaction, but with a slight skepticism.

"It's a floating jam, and it gets a push from underneath," he pointed out. "It's probably safe, but another flood might send it out."

"The floods are going down," said North.

"Good Lord, I hope so!" said Orde. Newmark sent word that a sudden fit of sickness had confined him to the house.

Now Orde decided to break out a channel through the jam itself. This was a necessary preliminary to getting the logs in shape for distribution. An opening was made in the piles, and the rivermen, with pile poles and peavies, began cautiously to dig their way through the tangled timbers. The government pile driver, which had floundered sent up from below, began piling five extra booms at intervals downstream to capture the drift as fast as it was turned loose. The troubles appeared to be quite over when word came from Redding that the waters were again rising. Ten minutes later Leopold Lincoln Dunn, the local reporter, came clapping in on Randall's old white horse, like a second Paul Revere, crying that the iron bridge had gone and the logs were racing down river toward the booms.

"It just went out!" he answered the eager exclamations of the men who crowded around him. "That's all I know. It went out! And the other bridges! Sure! All but the Lake Shore! Don't know why that didn't go out."

"If the owners object stand them out with your peavies!"

Down river the various mill owners were busy with what men they had left in stringing defenses across the river in case Orde's works should go out. When Orde heard this he swore vigorously.

"Crazy fools!" he spat out. "They'd be a lot better off helping here. If this goes out their little booms won't amount to a whiff of wind."

He sent word to that effect; but, lacking the enforcement of his personal presence, his messages did not carry conviction, and the panic-stricken owners continued to labor, each according to his ideas. However, Welton answered the summons. Orde hailed his coming with a shout.

"I want a dredge!" he yelled as soon as the lumberman was within distance. "I believe we can relieve the pressure somewhat by a channel into Stearn's bayou. Get that government dredge up and through the bayou as soon as you can."

"All right," said Welton briefly. "Can you hold her?"

"I've got to hold her," replied Orde, between clenched teeth. "Where is it—Newmark's? I need him for things, and he's disappeared off the face of the earth. Purdy, that scoundrel! She's snipped a strand! Get a re-enforcing line on her!" He ran without another thought of Welton.

But flesh and blood has its limit of endurance, and that limit was almost reached. Orde heard the first premonitory signs of reaction in the mid grumbings that arose. Although the need for struggle against the tireless dynamics of the river was as insistent as ever, although it seemed certain that a moment's cessation of effort would permit the enemy an irrevocable gain, he called a halt on the whole work.

"Boys," said he irrelevantly, "let's have a smoke."

He threw himself full length against a slanting pile, leisurely filling his pipe. The men stared a moment and then followed his example. The horizon lay low and black against the afterglow. Beneath it the river shone like silver. Over beyond the rise of land that lay between the river and Stearn's bayou could be seen the cloud of mingled smoke and steam that marked the activity of the dredge. Orde was apparently more at ease than any of the rest, but each instant he expected to hear the premonitory crack that would sound the end of everything. Finally he yawned and got to his feet.

"Now," said he, a new ring in his voice, "come on and let's get something done!"

They responded to a man. By midnight the water had gone down slightly. Half the crew snatched a little sleep. For several hours more the issue hung in equilibrium. Then, with the opening of the channel into Stearn's bayou, the heaviest pressure was relieved. For the moment the acute danger point was passed. Orde spent the next two days in strengthening the defenses. The men were able to take their quota of meals and of sleep.

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Lord Rosebery has now finished a book dealing with the career of the great Lord Chatham, on which he has been engaged for a considerable time past. The book, which is entitled "Chatham, His Early Life and Connections" is based to a very large extent on the material hitherto unpublished and will be issued next Tuesday by Mr. Arthur L. Humphreys of Piccadilly.

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The city of Eugene owns its own water system, purchased at a price of \$150,000, and is installing a Jewell filter plant of the most improved type, adding new pumps and extending the water mains. The total investment will probably reach \$250,000 when these improvements are completed, and the revenues on the plant will meet interest charges on bonds and pay a neat surplus over operating expenses. With the filter plant in operation, Eugene's water will be absolutely pure and ample for all household purposes.

The city is also constructing a power plant of large capacity on the McKenzie river at Waltherville, 15 miles from the city, which will be completed about January 1. It will involve an expense of nearly \$200,000, and it will be utilized for pumping water, municipal lighting and kindred purposes. The cut above shows the concrete head-gates of the power ditch at Waltherville.

WEST'S PLURALITY KEEPS GROWING; REACHES 6259.

As the official returns straggle in from different parts of the state the calamity which overtook Jay Bowerman on November 8 becomes still more strongly accentuated. With official returns from 29 counties, one county with an estimated plurality, five counties not quite complete and the remainder complete but so tifficial, Oswald West has a plurality for governor of 6259.

The figures now stand at 47,005 for Bowerman and 52,264 for West. In this tabulation Klamath county is estimated with 275 for Bowerman, which is thought to be a liberal allowance. The vote of the other incomplete counties lacks only a few precincts. The final figures, therefore, are likely to be little changed from the 6259 now shown.—Journal.

NEWS OF COTTAGE GROVE AND VICINITY

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"Here, boys," said he, "you can keep these logs moving in this channel for a couple of hours."

Orde now returned to the jam, where, on the pile driver, the tugs and the booms he set methodically to strengthening the defenses.

But shortly the water began to rise again, this time fairly by leaps. For the hundredth time the frail wooden defenses opposed to millions of pounds were tested to the very extreme of their endurance. The network of chains and cables tightened, drawing ever nearer the snapping point. Suddenly, almost without warning, the situation had become desperate.

And for the first time Orde completely lost his poise and became fluently profane.

"We've got to close that opening first thing," said he. "Marsh, tow the pile driver up there."

The opening was to be closed by piles driven in groups of sixteen bound together by chains. The clumps were connected one to the other by a system of boom logs and ropes to interpose a continuous barrier. The pile driver placed the clumps, while the tug attended to the connecting defenses.

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He did not add that if the opening were not closed before the jam broke, as break it would in a very few moments, the probabilities were that both pile driver and tug would be destroyed. Every man knew that already.

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"One more pile!" breathed Orde. The hammer ran smoothly to the top and fell. A half dozen tugs more it reared. Then heavy chains were thrown around the winch, and the steam power began to draw the clumps together.

"Done!" cried Tom North. North unmoored, and the driver dropped back with the current. The tug churned forward to accomplish the last duty of binding the defenses together by means of chains and cables. Two men leaped to the floating booms. Orde and the Rough Red set about the task. They worked from either end toward the middle. When they met Orde ordered Red about the tug.

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