

IN SKELETON POOL.

Due north is the general direction of the Brazeau River, but it takes one very sharp turn to the west, and in the angle is "The Devil's Elbow," which is so much a terror to raftsmen that none but the boldest will hire for the Brazeau drive.

Beneath the surges of its great eddy, Skeleton Pool, the bones of many drowned men are supposed to drift endlessly around; and he is a past master of river-craft who can boast truly of having safely run the Elbow twice or thrice.

It is difficult to convey in words a picture of so complicated a phenomenon as the Elbow. Unless the reader can be made to realize the configuration of the ground, the surge of the river against the precipice, the fury with which it turns to roar away on its western course, the impulse with which it hurls off the eddy toward Tower Island, and the remorselessness of that whirlpool's grasp, and assault on such timber cribs as enter it, he will not quite understand Duncan Stewart's adventure.

Running out of a low-lying, timbered country, the Brazeau's course is intercepted by the face of a plateau some three hundred feet higher. Into this bluff, which elsewhere descends less precipitously, the torrent, by many ages of persistence, has cut such an angle as a huge carpenter's square might fit. Three pines, bunched just at the apex of this angle, and conspicuous as the only trees on the upper level, swing their long arms over the sheer cliff, their sliced straight down as a stick is by a hay-knife. Almost incessantly these long arms seem to gesticulate in the current of air rushing up out of the chasm.

Opposite this, some four hundred feet distant, the face of Tower Island rises straight about one hundred feet; and on every side, but one, shoots up as suddenly. It divides the Brazeau into rapids of nearly equal descent; but the north of Devil's Elbow Channel has the "draw," and takes most of the water.

The trick of running a crib of logs safely through is to gain the south channel, which, unless the crib gets into the mild eddy at the foot of Tower Island, quickly hurries the timber into the calm reach a mile below.

Here high spring wagons wait, at a tavern kept by the Widow Black, to carry the raftmen back to the head.

Sometimes, at long intervals, a wagon laden with men rattles by without a cheery song. In such a case, it is a fair inference that some gang, failing to catch the south channel, and having missed the turn at the dreadful angle, are being whirled away dead down the river, or rolled among the vexed bones in the depths of Skeleton Pool.

Not that the Elbow is certain death. Probably five cribs out of six get safely through, or lose but one or two men. I believe this to be oftentimes the result of sudden changes in the river's action, though raftsmen insist that all depends on the judgment, strength and nerve of a crew.

For this run each crib carries four men and eight sweeps—four at each end. If carried into the Elbow channel, all hands, when near the angle, take to the sweeps at the rear.

Just as the crib's front seems likely to crash against the precipice, the stern begins to wheel down, and the men assist this action of the current. If they miss here, and are borne sidewise away instead of stern down, the crib does not get close enough ashore, and the thrust from the precipice commonly carries them into the raving edge of the whirlpool.

There the crib usually is wrenched instantly to pieces or plunged so deep that the men are swept off. In this case they are wholly beyond rescue, and are drowned.

Well-made cribs have been known to wheel, tossed like corks in the pool, for ten days before breaking up; but never, perhaps, except once, did any of these sad derelicts carry a living man.

In the summer of 1868, at the beginning of my apprenticeship to a surveyor, I was sent up the Brazeau. Duncan Stewart was my chief.

"A better fellow than Stewart never lived," my master had said. "Years ago he was given to drink, but now he's quite reformed. He hasn't touched a drop for two years."

"I'm giving him this job," my master went on, "partly because he'll do it well, partly because he'll do it cheaply, and partly because I want to help a lame dog over a stile."

"But mind, you're my apprentice, and while you give due obedience to Mr. Stewart, it's your duty to let me know promptly if anything goes wrong. After all's said, it is impossible to place perfect confidence in a man who was long lost in drink."

I liked Stewart from the start. He was kind and friendly; he took pains to teach me, and often entrusted me with the transit, taking the chain himself.

"I mean to make a surveyor of you before this job's done," he would say.

Everything went well until we camped at the Widow Black's. Next morning we were driven up to "the head." Some of the men, though they were not drunk, had obtained whiskey at the tavern. Stewart seemed out of sorts. No doubt he was tortured by the smell of and craving for liquor.

That afternoon, after starting the new line, Stewart left me to run it, saying that he would see the camp put in shape for the long stay which we had to make there. When I came back at night he was sleeping. He slept while I took supper, and when I turned in beside him he made no stir.

The men were whispering, and I thought them "up to something," but my fatigue was greater than my curiosity, and, in spite of the mosquitoes, I was soon sound asleep.

"Ned! Mr. Ned! wake up! rouse, rouse, there's trouble brewing!"

I sat up to find old John Shouldice shaking me.

"What's up, John?"

"They're all drunk except me."

"Drunk?"

"Drunk as fools! The surveyor, too."

"Mr. Stewart? Impossible!"

"Yes, Mr. Stewart himself. Burns and Fletcher put six bottles into their pockets this morning. The surveyor had some. Now it's all gone, and they're wild for more."

"Well, they can't get any; that's one good thing."

"They're going back to the widow's."

"But they can't in the state they're in. It's five miles after they cross."

"They're going to run down in the bateau."

"What?" I started to my feet. "The Devil's Elbow will get every man of them!"

"Not if they catch the south channel. Burns knows the river well; but he's too drunk."

Hurrying out, I found the ten men grouped, with Stewart staggering among them.

"Yes, sir, I can run ye over all right, sir," Burns was saying.

"What does this mean?" I asked.

"It's all right," said Stewart; "you go back to bed."

"Better go yourself," I said, "and the rest of you. Come, I'm not going to stand any nonsense."

"We're taking our orders from the surveyor," said Burns, "an' I'd be pleased to know you set you over us. Hi! We're going where there's whiskey, so we are. Come on, boys!"

They staggered down to the big red boat.

"Shouldice, there's no stopping them. The Elbow will have them as sure as fate."

"We'll have to go with them," said brave old John. "I know the water. I've been over it fifty times. You take the bow. We'll get over all right enough. Some of them ain't too drunk to do the rowing. But for the humanity of it, I should feel a sight more like letting the brutes go than risk our skins for 'em."

Nevertheless, that was what we did.

The run was a wild adventure, but we gained the south channel, left the Elbow shrieking far behind, and reached the Widow Black's at one o'clock in the morning.

When we awoke the sun was well up. Most of our men were lying about the sheds in a state of deep intoxication. Stewart was nowhere to be seen.

"He went up with the first gang at daylight," said the widow. "He's run the south channel once already, and now he's back wild to run the Elbow. Last I heard, he was offering twenty dollars to any gang that 'ud try it an' the boys was laughin' at him. Oh, he's far gone with his liquor."

"Give me some breakfast, quick," said I. "I'll follow him. And look you, woman, if you give our men another drop, there'll be trouble for you. You can depend on that."

I knew she had no license to sell liquor.

"Bah!" she cried, snapping her fingers in my face. "I don't fear you, not a bit. The boys would take care of you, or any one else, that interfered with my business. But there's no more drink for that crowd. I'll tell you that to please you. Not a cent of money has one of them left."

While I hastily ate my pork and beans, I heard the noise of men coming up to the wagons. Stewart was not among them.

"We left him layin' on the raft," mumbled the gigantic foreman, Tom Benson. "None of the boys would fetch him this trip. He swears he'll go over the Elbow if he has to swim for it. But the cook'll watch him."

I leaped into a wagon, and went up to the head of the rapids. Shouldice went with us, but he was too old to render much service.

When we reached the raft, there stood the men who had preceded us, bunched together and gazing down the river.

Far away, and drifting into the Elbow channel, went a crib with one man upon it, who danced and waved his hat, then stood looking ahead into the fearful angle, then flung up his arms and leaped to and fro as it in delirium.

"It's Mr. Stewart!" said the cook.

"When I wasn't thinking of him he sneaked down to the lower cribs, knocked away the bonds, and was off!"

"You've seen the last of him," said Tom Benson, now thoroughly sobered, "unless the timber goes through all right. Even then he'll surely be swept off. But there's a rope on that crib. Maybe he'll know enough to hang on."

"I'll go down with you, Tom. We must save him, somehow," said I. In a few moments our men were rowing hard to pull out of "the Devil's draw," as Tom called it.

"Look, Ned! Not you, boys! Pull—pull for your lives! Let into it. But you, Ned—look!"

At that moment we could see Stewart's crib slanting up like a roof and apparently just at the angle. He was on his knees, clutching something.

"It's the rope he's got!" said Tom.

Then his crib began to swing round. Next moment the cliff of Tower Island hid man and timber.

"If we don't see him pass down ahead of us, we'll haul over into the eddy at the foot of the island," said Benson, as we passed into the south channel.

That is what we did. Soon we landed and began the ascent of the Tower, for it was impossible to see into Skeleton Pool from the low rocks at the island's foot.

"But it's too late, I fear," said Tom. "He's gone long ago, and we can't save the timber. But, anyhow, let us see it flying round!"

When we stood above the pool, there was the crib almost beneath our feet, racing up the eddy. From below, had there been standing room, we might have reached it with a pike-pole.

But a hundred men with pike-poles could not have held it for a moment. The forces of the pool carried it away with incredible speed, and flung it about like a chip. But Stewart was there, and alive.

He was even safe for the time. Sobered by the wetting and the horror, he had contrived to take several turns around a loading stick with the half-inch rope he found aboard. These turns lay spirally along the stick and formed loose bands. Through one of these he had thrust his legs up to the thighs, through another he had pushed his head and shoulders.

Lying face down, he clutched the loading stick. Up the Skeleton Pool flew the crib, till so near the mighty shoulder of the downward torrent that we expected it to overwhelm Stewart.

At the plunge a roller broke over him. He was whirled out toward the elbow,

"In the Soup" denotes trouble. But the Kerr Vegetables Soup Packet causes trouble in making to disappear, and makes a popular and cheap dish.

then swiftly down, and around the dreadful oval again, and hurrying so close to the sheer wall below our feet that Benson dropped a pebble beyond the crib as it passed.

Sometimes the crib was carried into the centre of the pool, where it floated with little tossing, slowly turning in a small round for many minutes. Then the outer forces called for another struggle to tear asunder the crib, and drew it out and threw themselves upon it, and offered it to the demons of the angle, and hurled and oscillated it again.

"It's terrible with him so close, and we can't help him any more than if we were babies," said Benson.

"If we could only make him see us!" I suggested.

"What good? He'd feel all the worse. You see he's got to die. If he saw us he'd have hope, and that would keep the life in him longer, and he'd suffer more in the end."

"No! He'd feel helped; he'd die easier if he knew we were by him," I insisted.

Benson threw a small stone at the crib. Then we threw handfuls. But a wind came up out of the chasm, and a gale went with its waters, and our efforts were vain.

It any pebble struck Stewart he made no sign.

Benson climbed a pine, and cut off a large branch with his knife. "This is the thing," said he, and waited.

When the crib, racing upward, was within thirty feet of our cliff, he dropped the branch. It wavered down with the sway of a parachute, then turned over and over with the up current, and fell far behind the timber.

But we dropped branch after branch, and at last one was blown by the wind so that it fell lightly upon Stewart himself.

He turned on his side and looked up; but he did not see us until the crib was running down the outer current.

Then he kicked himself nearly free, sat up, and waved his hand.

Just then a roller struck the crib, rushed straight at him, and threw his body off the loading stick.

But his feet were still held by the rope. He recovered his position, passed the band again over his shoulders, and turned his head curiously from side to side as he flew round, gazing at his tumultuous prison.

"I've got it. We'll save him!" cried big Tom. Stay here, till I get back, Ned."

He was off without another word.

Two hours passed before he returned with a "bunch" of men, and all that time I silently watched Stewart. The crib had begun to sag, I thought, when on the crests of the steeper rollers.

"It'll break up soon," said Tom, the moment he returned. "Now boys, down with that tree—put in your best strokes. Fell it straight out."

Four axemen attacked a huge white pine, some seventy feet inland, while the others cut away the underbrush and small trees for its fall. The top, when it crashed down, projected forty feet beyond the cliff, and the branches that broke away fell in a green shower about Stewart's crib.

In ten minutes, big Tom, lying out on the tree like a sailor, cut away such branches as would interfere with the rope, and passed a cable over the outermost crotch that was sufficiently strong.

When the rope began to descend of its own weight, he crawled back to us.

"We can do no more," said he, shaking as with an ague. "Now we'll see if the surveyor can save himself!"

When Stewart passed under the rope for the first time, he sat up and raised his hand, but could not touch the noose. Then he made the surveyor's signal of "down."

We lowered till the noose touched the water and was snatched along by the fierce stream. Then we drew it up till it seemed to hang about five feet above the sluice-like stream.

The second time Stewart came under us, he stood up stooping, braced himself, held to his rope by one hand, and prepared to run his free arm and his head into the noose.

The rope suddenly swung out beyond his reach. We staggered and shook, tumbling backward from the edge against one another, uttering meaningless cries, with the shock and reaction of that disappointment.

"If that happens again, some of us may fall over," said Tom. Taking a new hitch with the rope, he brought us the shore end to hold on by.

The crib was now very plainly sagging as it rose and fell.

Once more Stewart rose, and tried to put his arm through the noose. The rope struck him on the head; he lost his grasp of his own rope and fell down, but saved himself, and crawled back to his hands in time to get within them before passing into the breakers.

But at the shoulder of the rapids the crib began to break up. One side-stick whirled loose, and then another. Both were thrust up from the pool's outer edge soon afterward. They shot half out of water before falling.

The fourth attempt was long delayed, for the crib moved into the middle of the pool and whirled gently around the inner circle. There Stewart loosed himself, stood up, looked at us for a moment, gazed round the shrieking waters, waved his hand toward the now descending sun, looked up to us again, raised his arms above his head and dropped them to his side with a strange gesture of utter despair.

"It's a sign!" cried Tom. "He's praying for help! I must save him! Boy's, I'll go down and grab him!"

Just then the crib began to run again. It was moving down stream, and would be under the rope again within two minutes.

We were sure this would be Stewart's last chance, for the crib could never hold together through another plunge into the rapids' shoulder.

"Come back. You've no time to go down!" I cried to Benson.

But he had swung himself off already, and now hurried down the rope, hand over hand.

We leaned over with horror. If Benson should succeed in grasping him, could he hold on while we banded both men up? And could we lift both up and back into safety, after raising them to the crotch of the pine? It was impossible.

What madness had possessed the foreman! To save himself he would have to

drop Stewart from the tree after grasping him.

Benson was now within the noose. Only then had we eyes for Stewart and the crib.

We looked; the crib was not now where we expected to see it. We looked over the whole surface of Skeleton Pool. Neither the crib or Stewart could be seen.

Tom dangled down there alone. With the oscillation of the current, its higher billows dragged at his legs.

The men began to haul Benson up. We might save him, anyway.

I looked down into his upturned face. It was positively gleeful! Holding to the turning rope by one hand, he pointed with the outstretched forefinger of the other, as his face turned down stream.

I followed the direction. There was Stewart's crib, a quarter of a mile down the rapid. It had been quietly let go by the eddy, and we knew the surveyor would be saved at the widow's place.

Benson easily lifted himself into the tree and came ashore. No one could ever persuade him that Stewart's sign or prayer for help had not been miraculously answered, though old John Shouldice declared that cribs had once or twice before gone out of the rapids in the same way.

Stewart was taken ashore at the tavern, in a fainting condition. He did not throw away the chance afforded him. Solemnly he vowed, when he had recovered from the delirium in which his fearful adventure and exposure left him, that he would never touch liquor again.

I have known him years now, and know how much it has cost him to keep his vow. Wherever he went he ran the risk of seeing liquor, and whenever he saw it or smelled it, his craving awoke.

But at the same time the remembrance of the Elbow also awoke; and though the constant temptation to drink might well have broken the resolution of a stronger man, he had undergone an experience the lasting memory of whose errors he could call to his aid with good effect.—E. W. Thomson, in *Youth's Companion*.

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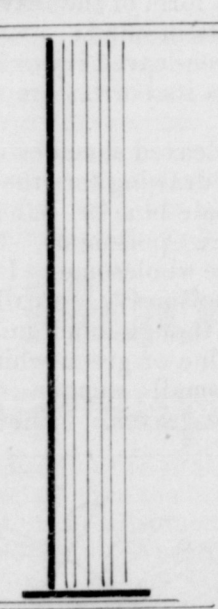
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peated as a speech a couple of pages of a well-known author.

A worse thing happened when, as Lord Dufferin relates, on the authority of the practical joker himself, a gentleman came down to the house of commons primed with a great oration; but he unfortunately dropped his MS. A mischievous colleague picked it up and brought it to Sir Thomas Wyse, who forthwith retired to a committee room and learned it by heart. Then, returning to the house, he joined in the debate. A great number of people had been let into the secret, and were watching the effect produced by the "stolen thunder" upon its rightful proprietor. At first he showed signs of being pleased with support from so unexpected a quarter, but when gradually he recognized his own well-polished periods flowing forth from alien lips, the look of surprise, indignation and confusion which passed over his countenance was extremely comical.—Ez.

Tom I've found a treasure!
What is it Rachel?
Kerr Vegetable Soup Packet: makes 10 quarts are its base, and lime juice and pure extracts are used. All Grocers and Wine Merchants.

A gray beard on a man under 50 makes him look older than he is. The best dye to color brown or black is Buckingham's Dye for the Whiskers.

An English Tom Thumb.

A name quite as famous as Tom Thumb's is that of an English dwarf who lived in the last half of the seventeenth century, one Jeffery Hudson. It is said that when he was seven or eight years old and "only eighteen inches in height he was presented to the queen in a very novel manner. The queen was at dinner at Burleigh on the hill, the seat of the Duke of Buckingham. A cold pie was brought on, and on its being opened, the little fellow stepped out of it and immediately was given over to the Queen, who retained him in her service. He did not grow much until he was 30 years old. Then he shot up to three feet and nine inches. He served as captain in the royal army in the civil war, and in 1644 attended the queen into France. Here he fought a duel with pistols, and killed his opponent. After the restoration Jeffery, returned to England, but was almost immediately thrown into prison on suspicion of conspiracy. Under this close confinement he died at the age of sixty-two.