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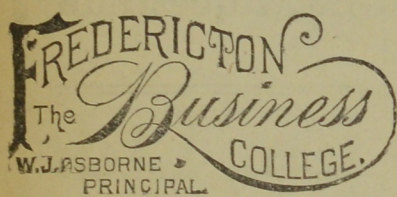
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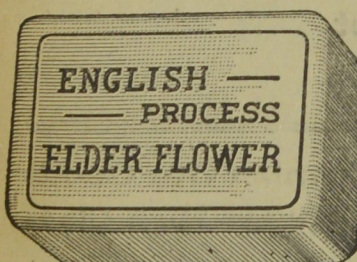
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WEST END DAIRY

The Riverman

By STEWART
EDWARD WHITE

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[CONTINUED.]

"Now," said he, a new ring in his
voice, "come on and let's get some-
thing 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 strengthen-
ing the defenses. The men were able
to take their quota of meals and of
sleep.

The jam had been successfully held
at the iron railroad bridge above Red-
ding, 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 jubi-
lantly expressed it, "It's a hundred
dollars to an old hat she holds!"

Orde received all this with satisfac-
tion, 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 pike poles and peavies,
began cautiously to dig their way
through the tangled timbers. The govern-
ment pile driver, which had finally
been sent up from below, began plac-
ing five extra booms at intervals down-
stream to capture the drift as fast as
it was turned loose. The troubles ap-
peared to be quite over when word
came from Redding that the waters
were again rising. Ten minutes later
Leopold Lincoln Bunn, the local re-
porter, came flapping in on Randall's
old white horse, like a second Paul Re-
vere, 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.
No; the logs didn't jam there—just slid
right under!"

"That settles it," said Welton.
"You won't quit?" cried Orde.
"Certainly. You're crazy!" said Wel-
ton, with some asperity. "If they can't
stop a little jam with iron, what are
your wooden defenses going to amount
to against the whole accumulation?
When those logs hit the tail of this
jam she'll go out before you can wink.
It's sure death, and I'm not going to
sacrifice my men."

Already the news was spreading
among the workers on the jams. Orde
saw the government driver below cast-
ing loose from her moorings. A mo-
ment later her tug towed her away to
a side bayou of safety out of the ex-
pected rush to the lake.

"But we can hold her!" cried Orde
in desperation.

"It's no use, boy," said old Carlin;
"it's sure death."

"Sure death!" Orde laughed bitterly.
"All right; sure death, then. Isn't
there a man in this crowd that will
tackle this sort of sure death with
me?"

"I'm with you." "And me," said
North and the Rough Red in a breath.
"Good!" cried Orde. "You, too,
Johnny Sims and Purdy and Jimmy
Powers? Bully boys!"

"I reckon you'll need the tug," said
Marsh.

A dozen more of Orde's personal fol-
lowing volunteered.

"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 at-
tended to the connecting defenses.

"Now, boys," said Orde as his last
word, "if she starts to go save your-
selves the best way you can. Never
mind the driver. Stay on top."

Slowly the tug and her consort nosed
up through the boiling water.

"Work fast!" Orde called to the
men on the pile driver. "If we can
close the opening before those Redding
logs hit us we may be able to turn
them into our new channel."

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

Tom North ordered a pile placed in

the carriage. The hammer descended.
The work went forward as rapidly as
possible. Four times the jam struggled
and settled, but four times it paused
on the brink of discharge. Three of
the clumps had been placed and bound,
and fifteen piles of the last clump had
been driven.

"One more pile!" breathed Orde.

The hammer ran smoothly to the top
and fell. A half dozen times more it
ripped. 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 to-
gether 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 to-
ward the middle. When they met Orde
ordered Red aboard the tug.

"I'll tie this one, Jimmy," said he.

Aboard the tug all was tense prepa-
ration. In the engine room Harvey,
his hand on the throttle, stood ready to
throw her wide open at the signal.
Armed with sharp axes, two men pre-
pared to cut the mooring lines on a
sign from the Rough Red. They watch-
ed his upraised hand. When it should
descend their axes must fall.

Orde folded a knot. Upstream the
jam settled deliberately forward, cut-
ting a clump of piles like straw.

"She's coming!" cried the Rough Red.
"Give me every second you can,"
said Orde, making the last turns.

The mass toppled slowly, fell into
the swift current and leaped with a
roar.

"Jump!" the Rough Red cried, and
his arm descended.

Orde leaped blindly for the rail,
where he was seized and dragged
aboard by the Rough Red. The axes
fell; Marsh whirled over the wheel;
Harvey threw open his throttle. The
tug sprang from its leash like a bound.
And behind the barrier the logs, toss-
ing and tumbling, the white spray fly-
ing before their onslaught, beat in
vain against the barrier, like raging
wild beasts whose prey has escaped.



Chapter 34

ORDE now took steps to deflect
into the channel recently
dredged to Stearn's bayou the
mass of the logs racing down-
stream from Redding. He estimated
that he had still two hours or so in
which to do the work.

This at first he succeeded in doing,
and very successfully as affecting the
pressure on the jam below. To the
crew working in the channel dredged
through to Stearn's bayou the affair
was that of driving a rather narrow
and swift stream, only exaggerated.
A large proportion of the timbers
found their way into the bayou.
Those that continued on down the river
could hardly have much effect on
the jam. As yet only the advance of
the big jam had arrived at the dredged
channel.

"We can't keep this up when the
main body hits us!" Orde panted to
Jim Denning. "We'll have to do more
pile driver work."

To be Continued.

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