

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## THE "DUKE OF ORLEANS."

AT a little before four o'clock the "Duke of Orleans" came around the head of the island. She was one of the typical "lower country" boats of that day. The mail boats were built light of draught, and, for that time, swift of speed; the stern-wheelers and the insignificant, old-fashioned "chicken-thieves" were still lighter. But the lower country boat was heavy in build, deep in draught, slow in the revolution of her wheels; with a sturdy bull-dog look when seen in front, and an elephantine solemnity of motion when viewed at broadside, the wheels seeming to pause at each semi-revolution. The lower country boat of that day defied all time-tables. She started whenever she was ready, and she stopped as often and as long as she found occasion. The arrival of a New Orleans boat at the wharf of one of the river towns at this time of the year was a great event. It was only in an exceptional season that there was water enough in the channel for such craft above the falls of the Ohio in October.

Now that the boat had actually come around the island, the fact that Mark and Roxy were not anywhere yet to be seen was a great disappointment to people on the wharf. They were, perhaps, to be cheated out of their spectacle; they would not see Roxy's tears, nor any of the other entertaining things they had a right to expect. Mr. Adams moved testily to and fro, fearing he knew not what. Twonnet strained her eyes up Ferry street in vain; Granny Tartrum's boy, Zeb, was exceedingly active in the effort to find out what it all stood for; and the wharf-master's little brown dog dashed about in a way that showed how keenly he also felt that a crisis had come, and that something ought to be done. The "Duke" approached with majestic tardiness, her captain ringing the great bell on the hurricane deck in a slow and imperious fashion. He rang five great taps, which were echoed faintly in the distant hills. If he had stopped at three, it would have signified that he intended only to send out the yawl for his passengers; but the five solemn tolls were the sign of a landing. Then the boat "rounded to," —brought her bow round so as to point her head upward against the stream. The line was thrown out to the wharf-boat and caught by the wharf-master, who, with Haz Kirtley's help, quickly took a turn with it round the check-post. This important operation was vigilantly superintended by the little brown dog, who, with tail in the air, ran round the check-post till the line was made fast, and then dashed away to attend to the running out of the "walk-plank."

Here was the boat and here the baggage; but the passengers were