

as soon as the packet gets there. You'd better go by the packet, get off and see the mortgage recorded yourself, and then take the mail boat."

To this Gray agreed, and the next day, when Jack went on board the packet *Swiftsure*, he found Mr. Francis Gray going aboard also. Mr. Beal had warned Jack that he must not let anybody from the packet get to the clerk's office ahead of him—that the first paper deposited for record would take the land. Jack wondered why Mr. Francis Gray was aboard the packet, which went no further than Madison, while Mr. Gray's home was in Louisville. He soon guessed, however, that Gray meant to land at Port William, and so determined to head him off. Jack looked at Mr. Gray's form, made plump by good feeding, and felt safe. He couldn't be very dangerous in a foot-race. Jack reflected with much hopefulness that no boy in school could catch him in a straight-away run when he was fox. He would certainly leave the somewhat puffy Mr. Francis Gray behind.

But in an hour's run down the river, including two landings at Minuit's and Craig's, Jack had time to remember that Francis Gray was a cunning man, and might lead him off by some trick or other. A vague fear took possession of him, and he resolved to be first off the boat before any pretext could be invented to stop him.

Meanwhile, Francis Gray had looked at Jack's lithe legs with apprehension. "I can never beat that boy," he had reflected. "My running days are over." Finding among the deck passengers a young fellow who looked as though he needed money, Gray approached him with this question:

"Do you belong in Port William, young man?"

"I don't belong nowhere else, I reckon," answered the seedy fellow, with shuffling impudence.

"Do you know where the county clerk's office is?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Yes, and the market house. I can show you the way to the gaol, too, if you want to know; but I s'pose you've been there many a time," laughed the wharf-rat.

Gray was irritated at this rudeness, but he swallowed his anger.

"Would you like to make five dollars?"

"Now you're talkin' interestin'. Why didn't you begin at that end of the subjick? I'd like to make five dollars as well as the next feller, provided it isn't to be made by too much awful hard work."

"Can you run well?"

"If there's money at t'other end of the race, I can run like sixty for a spell. 'Tain't my common gait, howsumever."

"If you'll take this paper," said Gray, "and get it to the county clerk's office before anybody else gets there from this boat, I'll give you five dollars."

"Honour bright?" asked the chap, taking the paper, drawing a long breath, and looking as though he had discovered a gold mine.

"Honour bright!" answered Gray. "You must jump off first of all, for there's a boy aboard that will beat you if he can. No pay if you don't win."

"Which is the one that'll run ag'n me?" asked the long-legged fellow.

Gray described Jack, and told the young man to go out forward and he

would see him. Gray was not willing to be seen with the "wharf-rat," lest suspicions should be awakened in Jack Dudley's mind. But after the shabby young man had gone forward and looked at Jack, he came back with a doubtful air.

"That's Hoosier Jack, as we used to call him," said the shabby young man. "He an'two more used to row a boat across the river every day to go to old Niles' school. He's a hard one to beat—they say he used to lay the whole school out on prisoners' base, and that he could leave 'em all behind on fox."

"You think you can't do it, then?" asked Gray.

"Gimmie a little start and I reckon I'll fetch it. It's up-hill part of the way and he may lose his wind, for it's a good half mile. You must make a row with him at the gang-plank, or do somethin' to kinder hold him back. The win's down stream to-day and the boat's sure to swing in a little aft. I'll jump for it and you keep him back."

To this Gray assented.

As the shabby young fellow had predicted the boat did swing around in the wind, and had some trouble in bringing her bow to the wharf boat. The captain stood on the hurricane deck, calling to the pilot to "back her," "stop her," "go ahead on her," "go ahead on her labberd," and "back on her stabberd." Now, just as the captain was backing the starboard wheel, and going ahead on his larboard, so as to bring the boat around right, Mr. Gray turned on Jack.

"What are you treading on my toes for, you impudent young rascal!" he broke out.

Jack coloured and was about to reply sharply, when he caught sight of the shabby young fellow, who just then jumped from the gunwale of the boat amidst hips and barely reached the wharf. Jack guessed why Gray had tried to irritate him—he saw that the well-known "wharf-rat" was to be his competitor. But what could he do? The wind had held the bow of the boat out, the gang-plank which had been pushed out ready to reach the wharf boat was still firmly grasped by the deck hands, and the farther end of it was about six feet from the wharf, and much above it. It would be some minutes before anyone could leave the boat in the regular way. There was only one chance to defeat the rascally Gray. Jack concluded to take it.

He ran out upon the plank amidst the harsh cries of the deck hands who tried to stop him, and the oaths of the mate who thundered at him, with the stern order of the captain from the upper deck, who called out to him to go back.

But luckily, the steady pulling ahead of the larboard engine, and the backing of the starboard, began just then to bring the boat around. The plank sank down a little under Jack's weight, and Jack made the leap to the wharf, hearing the confused cries, orders, oaths and shouts from behind him as he pushed through the crowd.

"Stop that thief!" cried Francis Gray to the people on the wharf boat, but in vain. Jack glided swiftly through the people, and got on shore before anybody could check him. He charged up the hill after the shabby young fellow, who had a decided lead, while some of the men on the

wharf boat pursued them both, uncertain which was the thief. Such another pell-mell race Port William had never seen. Windows flew open and heads went out. Small boys joined the pursuing crowd, and dogs barked indiscriminately and uncertainly at the heels of everybody. There were cries of "Hurrah for long Ben!" and "Hurrah for Hoosier Jack!" Some of Jack's old school mates essayed to stop him to find out what it was all about, but he would not relax a muscle, and he had no time to answer any questions. He saw the faces of the people dimly; he heard the crowd crying after him: "Stop thief!" He caught a glimpse of his old teacher, Mr. Niles, regarding him with curiosity as he darted by; he saw an anxious look on Judge Kane's face, as he passed him on a street corner. But Jack held his eyes on long Ben, whom he pursued as a dog does a fox. He had steadily gained on the fellow, but Ben had too much the start, and unless he should give out, there would be little chance for Jack to overtake him. One thinks quickly in such moments. Jack remembered that there were two ways to reach the county clerk's office. To keep the street was the natural way—to take an alley through the square was neither longer nor shorter. But by running down the alley he would deprive long Ben of the spur of seeing his pursuer, and he might even make him think that Jack had given out. Jack had played this trick when playing hound and fox, and at any rate he would by this turn shake off the crowd. So into the alley he darted, and the bewildered pursuers kept on crying "Stop thief!" after long Ben, whose reputation was none of the best. Somebody ahead tried to catch the shabby young fellow, and this forced Ben to make a slight curve, which gave Jack the advantage, so that just as Ben neared the office, Jack rounded a corner out of an alley, and entered ahead, dashing up to the clerk's desk and deposited the judgment.

"For record," he gasped.

The next instant the shabby young fellow pushed forward the mortgage.

"Mine first," said long Ben.

"I'll take yours when I get this entered," said the clerk quietly, as became a public officer.

"I got here first," said long Ben.

But the clerk looked at the clock, and entered the date on the back of Jack's paper, putting, "one o'clock and eighteen minutes" after the date. Then he wrote one o'clock and nineteen minutes on the paper which long Ben handed him.

The office was soon crowded with people discussing the result of the race, and a part of them were in favor of seizing one or the other of the runners for a theft, which some said had been committed on the wharf boat. Francis Gray came in, and could not conceal his chagrin.

"I meant to do the fair thing by you," he said to Jack severely, "but now you'll never get a cent out of me."

"I'd rather have the law on men like you than a thousand of your sort of fair promises," said Jack.

"I've a mind to strike you," said Mr. Gray.

"The Kentucky law is hard on a man who strikes a minor," said Judge Kane, who had entered at that moment.

Mr. Niles came in to learn what was the matter, and Judge Kane, after listening quietly to the talk of the people, until the excitement subsided, took Jack over to his house, whence the boy trudged home in the late afternoon full of hopefulness.

Gray's land realized as much as Mr. Beal expected, and Jack studied hard all summer, so as to be as far ahead as possible by the time school should begin in the autumn.

THE HOMELINESS OF THE QUEEN.

THE *Spectator* concludes a notice of the Queen's book by saying that her Majesty, Queen though she be, is in everything a woman of homely impressions and homely affections. She thinks no domestics to be compared with her most devoted domestic, no girls cleverer and sweeter than her daughters, no courage more admirable than her son's. She was as pleased with getting Dr. Norman McLeod's authority for being as much at Balmoral as she desired, as if Dr. Norman McLeod had been her constitutional adviser instead of one of her spiritual advisers. She is far from feeling too exalted to take pleasure in being advised to do what she wishes to do. She is far from feeling too exalted to be vexed by continual rain in beautiful country or by losing her luggage so that she cannot retire to rest without inconvenient special arrangements. In Church matters she is thoroughly religious, without being able to see any vital distinction between her own Church and that of the Presbyterians. In a word, she is in everything a warm-hearted, natural, simple-minded, undogmatic woman, as well as a Queen. And that is so difficult for the world in general to realize, that this book will probably give as much pleasure by convincing its readers of this, as it would have done if it had contained a great amount of new and original matter on the subject of the Queen's deepest and most carefully considered convictions—which, however, it is certain that she could never have given us without doing far more mischief than she could have done good.

A NEGRO'S PRAYER.

A TEACHER in one of the coloured schools in the South was about to go away for a season, and an old negro poured out for her the following fervent petitions: "I give you the words," said the writer, "but they convey no idea of the pathos and earnestness of the prayer." "Go afore her as a leadin' light and behind her as a protectin' angel. Rough-shod her feet vid de preparation of de Gospel o' peace. Nail her ears to de Gospel pole. Gib her de eye of de eagle dat she spy out sin 'far off. Wax her hand to de Gospel plow. Tie her tongue to de line of turf. Keep her feet in de narrer way and her soul in de channel ob faith. Bow her head low beneaf her knees, an' her knees way down in some lonesome valley where prayer and supplication is much wanted to be made. Hedge an' ditch 'bout her, good Lord, and keep her in de strait an' narrer way dat leads to heaven."