

### THE CHIMES.

The quarter hour chimes, like some young life  
Whose tender melody  
Has just begun:  
Not till the hour is done  
Can we know fully what the tune shall be.  
The half-hour sounds; an added chord is played;  
Yet the melodious tone,  
Though rich and sweet,  
Is still incomplete—  
Like infancy when but to boyhood grown.  
Three chimes play next; the time is wearing on,  
The air is much more clear.  
I now can see  
What the last note shall be,  
As manhood ripe in goodness doth appear.  
Four chimes, the tune is done. Soft, sweet, and  
low  
Sounds forth the final chord.  
I think I see  
An old man patiently  
Await the coming summons of his Lord.  
The hour strikes; to an eternal rest  
The immortal comes at last.  
And every chime  
Has sounded in its time.  
And age itself forevermore is past.  
—Anna Temple, in S. S. Times.



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### CHAPTER XXII.

THE GLADIATORS OF THE MISSISSIPPI.  
The Cotton Queen was behind time at Donaldsonville, and the hours that we waited there were torturing ones. What would have happened had pursuit overtaken us before the boat came is a matter of certainty with me! I had found an opportunity to arm myself. Le Fevre did the same. We exchanged significant looks but no words. There was no need of words. We had already earned a term of imprisonment, and we and our fair charge were not now to be captured without bloodshed.

Aboard the Queen, and she rapidly putting miles of the wide and crooked river between us and pursuit, our spirits rose. We did not then know how narrow was our escape at that point. We got our breakfast with a crowd of passengers, cheered up Coralie and, bringing her again on deck, enjoyed with her the glorious panorama. We passed Plaquemine without stopping. Le Fevre inquired of the captain, and learned that there was to be no stop until the boat reached Baton Rouge.

"Do you stop there?"

"Of course. All the boats do."

This intelligence made us uneasy, and we were consulting together about what we should do to avoid the detention that we had reason to fear had been prepared by telegraph for us, when the most unexpected chance favored us.

I stop at this point, to say that the occurrences narrated in this chapter came mainly under my own observation. The minor ones that I did not personally see and hear were afterwards told to me by those who did see and hear them.

The day wore on; the boat was within a mile of Baton Rouge. A call from the pilot's speaking tube brought the captain up into the pilot house.

"What's up, Dobbin?"

"Look up the river," said the pilot, with both hands on the wheel.

The captain shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked.

"Seems to be a large steamboat putting out from Baton Rouge."

"Take the glass, sir."

One look through the glass and the captain threw it down, fairly jumping with excitement.

"The S. S. Prentiss, by —! Why, she left New Orleans twelve hours ago of us."

"She's been waiting for us," said the pilot, quietly.

"She has not waited for nothing, then. I've heard of their brags from St. Louis down about what they'd do with the Queen when they had a chance. By the Lord Harry, we'll show 'em! Here's almost a straight course to Port Hudson bluffs, and no chutes or side-cuts. I'll beat 'em or go to the bottom!"

He rang the engineer's bell for more steam. Presently the black smoke began to pour from the lofty stacks in clouds. The speaking-tube brought up the night-pilot who was sleeping in his berth. The two men at the wheel kept their eyes fixed on the glass front of the pilot-house, ready to take any advantage offered by the current or the curves of the shore.

The speed of the Queen was visibly increased. The vibration of her powerful engines could be felt in every part of her. The puff of the pipes and the fierce churning of the paddles mingled in a steady sound.

Baton Rouge was passed, many people standing on the shore and waving their hats and cheering. Some of the passengers clambered up to the captain that they must get off here, and that they had freight aboard that was to be delivered here.

"You and your freight be d—d!" roared the captain, leaning out of the pilot-house. "Do you think the Queen is going to stop a race that we've tried for months to get to oblige you?"

Hundreds of other passengers laughed, cheered and applauded. The excitement of the contest had by this time spread all through the boat. The bows were so crowded that some of the boat's officers came and ordered half of the people back, that the boat might not settle too much by the head. Thousands of dollars were wagered on the length of time before the Queen would pass her rival. A few disloyal folks, who were willing to bet that she would not pass at all, had the chance promptly offered them to take ten to one. Before the contest was determined the Baton Rouge men were as crazy with excitement as anyone.

"We're gaining a little," said the captain.

"Precious little," said Pilot Dobbin.

Again the speaking-tube.

"How much steam is on?"

"Hundred and fifty," came back in a sepulchral tone.

"Pile her on! Stick her up to seventy-five."

"She'll stand that," said Dobbin, *sotto voce*, as the four hands made half a dozen rapid turns of the wheel, and the bows took an acute angle for the farther shore.

"She'll have to carry more than before she catches that flyer ahead," said the other.

To the feverish passengers who were watching the leading boat, the interval between them seemed the same for hours. It was in fact very slowly closing. The half-mile was reduced to a quarter. At a speed against the current that caused the immense boat to tremble in every fiber, foot by foot, yard by yard, she gained on her rival.

The mass of faces at her stern could be separated and almost counted with the naked eye. Then the Prentiss took a sudden spurt, and a cheer from her crowded decks showed that she was increasing her lead.

The captain of the Queen raged round the pilot-house, and shook his fist at the other boat.

"What steam?" he shouted down through the pipe.

"Hundred and eighty—and everything redhot and groaning. Dunno how much more she'll bear."

"We've got to find out!" yelled back the captain. "Keep the water buckets ready to drown the furnace when we've passed her by a mile or so, and crack on the steam. Pile it up, I tell you!"

The Prentiss was overcrowded and it was difficult to move about. But quickly my attention was arrested by the fact that we were moving with the current.

"How is this?" I asked of a man whose hair and eyebrows were singed. "We're not going down stream?"

"That's what we are doing. My heart sank within me. What's this for?"

"It's all right. We're much nearer to Baton Rouge than to Vicksburg; there's only one doctor aboard, and no opiates, and the captain of this boat decided that he must get those poor wretches below to a place where they can be cared for, as quickly as possible. I need the doctor myself, and I got off pretty well, too. You was on the Queen, wasn't you?"

Steadily the Queen pulled up on the Prentiss, her officers almost coming to blows with some of the passengers in the effort to keep more of them afloat.

"There's a hundred hams and shoulders for'd that belong to those Baton Rouge passengers. Tell the niggers to get 'em and chuck 'em in. If the boat won't pay, I will."

Steadily the Queen pulled up on the Prentiss, her officers almost coming to blows with some of the passengers in the effort to keep more of them afloat.

"What is it?"

"The pine is used up and the cypress don't burn well."

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