

IRENE THE FOUNDLING;

Or, The Slave's Revenge.

By the Author of "The Banker of Bedford."

CHAPTER I.

IN THE STAGE-COACH AND AT THE INN.

Thick, misty clouds overcast the sky; peals of thunder in the distance came rolling nearer and nearer, until they burst into one prolonged roar just above a lumbering old stage-coach slowly making its way over the muddy roads of a Virginia post route, the driver incessantly cracking his long whip over the backs of his jaded horses, and urging them, with shouts and exclamations, to accelerate their speed.

This scene occurs in what is now West Virginia. It is west of the mountain range, but where, on every hand, are frowning precipices, deep gorges and swift-flowing torrents. On the right, the jagged headlands are crowned with huge old bowlers, just peeping out from the thicket of evergreens and creeping vines which surround them. Although not called mountains, it is a country whose picturesque heights and ungracious valleys would excite a degree of enthusiasm in the bosom of a lover of the beautiful in those lonely valleys, almost hidden in their leafy groves, was the home of many an old Virginia aristocrat. The great, gnarled oak standing upon the verge of some miniature precipice, and glooming sullenly through the misty rain, seems but part of some pictured scene. Far in the distance, faintly penciled against the misty sky, rise headlands to what seems an enormous height, about them a dark mass of clouds, like some giant's garment, caught upon the peaks and blown about at the will of the wind. It envelops and conceals the highest peaks, leaving the imagination to add to the belief in their stupendous height.

It has been raining all day, and the driver of the stage-coach is anxious to reach his destination. "Set-up! If we don't get to Lander's Hill before dark, I be hand if we don't stick here for the night," he exclaimed.

The stage-coach moves slowly along, and the shafts of evening are closing in. Six or seven passengers are seated within, and are about as comfortable as stage-coach travelers could be. There is but a single lady among them, and the chivalric spirit of the Southern has assigned to her the most comfortable place in the coach. We are interested in but one of these travelers, a man about forty-five or fifty years of age, something over medium size, whose appearance stamped him as a well-to-do Virginia planter. His face was smooth-shaven, and his hair, once dark, was silvered with the flight of years. He was a handsome face, and a pleasant one to look upon; there was something pleasing and attractive about its expression, and the mild gray eyes burned with no ambitious designs of fiery passions; his dress was plain gray homespun, commonly worn as the travelling dress of a Southerner at the time of which we write. His hat was of the finest silk, broad-brimmed and low-crowned, such as Southern planters invariably wore. Though unostentatious in manner, he was evidently a man accustomed to the manifold comforts of Southern life. He was, moreover, a man accustomed to looking at to his side of a question, and arriving at conclusions without bias or prejudice. His frame was a fine type of manhood, and his muscular arms showed him possessed of more than an ordinary degree of strength.

This man alone of all the passengers maintained a silent and thoughtful mood as the coach passed on its way. A constant conversation was kept up by the other passengers on the weather, the roads, the journey, its termination, and last, but not least, the politics of the day. However, when the gentleman whom we have more particularly described, and now introduce to our readers as George W. Tompkins, of Virginia, sat moody and silent, and seemingly utterly oblivious of the discomforts within or the gloomy prospect without, his fellow-passengers were continually talking, and continually jesting against him, without rousing Mr. Tompkins from his reverie.

His mind was clouded by a horror that made him careless of present surroundings. He looked weary and weary, more so than any of the other passengers, and occasionally, when the coach rolled over smooth ground, he would lean back in his seat and close his eyes. No sooner done, however, than a thousand fantastic shapes would glide before his mental vision, that seemed to take delight in annoying him. Whenever he became unconscious to his real surroundings, shrieks seemed to sound in his ear, and he seemed to hear the cry:

"Search, search, search! Your task's not over, your task's not over!"

"And where shall I search?" he mentally asked.

"Ah, where?" the voice wailed.

Then the planter would rouse himself, and glance at the passengers and out of the window in the endeavor to keep his mind free from the annoyances. For a few moments he would succeed, but days and nights of exertion, horror and excitement were telling upon him; once more he would succumb and once more the fantastic shadows thronged about him, and the voice, mingling strangely with the grating roar of the coach's wheels, snatched at his ears.

"Search, search, search! Your task's not over! Your task's not over!"

"Where shall I search?"

"Ah, where?"

"You don't seem to be well, friend," remarked a fellow-traveler, observing the startled and restless manner of Mr. Tompkins.

"Yes, I am well; that is—no, I am not; I am somewhat wearied," Mr. Tompkins answered.

"So are we all," rejoined the passenger. "This journey has been enough to wear out men of iron, and the prospects for the night are far from cheering."

"I had expected to reach home to-night," said the planter, "but I shall fall by a good dozen miles."

"You live in this State?"

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Tompkins, settling himself in his corner. "I am a Southerner, seeing that Mr. Tompkins was indisposed to carry on any further conversation, relapsed into silence. With another effort Mr. Tompkins conquered the stupor which, with all its fantastic concomitants, was once more over-coming him, and sat bolt upright in his seat.

"This has been a fearful week," he soliloquized, "but I have done all I could."

hat the stage-coach came to a very sudden stop.

"The driver, pressing his face to the aperture at the top of the coach, cried out:

"Here we are at Lander's Hill, and I be hand if the horses are able to drag us all up. They 're completely fagged out, so I guess you men folks 'd hev to hoof it to the top, an' occasionally give us a push, or we'll stick here until mornin'."

"How far is it to where we can stop over to-night?" asked the passenger, who had endeavored to draw Mr. Tompkins into conversation.

"After we get on top of the hill it's only about three miles to Jerry Lycan's inn, where we'll stop for the night, an' it's down a hill most all the way," replied the driver.

With much grumbling and many imprecations on the heads of the managers of the stage line, the passengers clamored out of the coach. A long, muddy hill, in places quite steep, lay before them. It was nearly a mile to the top, and portions of the road were scarcely passable even in good weather.

"These are public roads in Virginia!" exclaimed one gentleman, as he alighted in the mud.

"We can't have railroads to every place," essayed a fellow-traveler, evidently a Virginian; "but you will find our soil good."

"Yes, good for sticking purposes," said the first speaker, trying to snake some of the mud from his boots; "I never saw soil with greater adhesive qualities."

"Now look 'ee," said the driver, "we'll hev some purty smart jogs, where the horses 'll not be able to pull up, and you'll hev to put your shoulders agin the coach an' give us a push."

"May I be blessed!" ejaculated the Southerner. "They are not even content to make us walk, but want us to draw the coach."

"Better to do that an' hev a coach at the top to ride in than to walk three miles," said the driver.

After allowing his horses a brief rest, the driver cracked his whip and the lumbering coach moved on, the passengers slowly plodding along behind. None seemed pleased with the prospect of a walk up the long, muddy hill, but the grumbling Southerner manifested a more decided repugnance than either of the others.

"This is worse than wading through Carolina swamps waist deep," he exclaimed, as he trudged along, dragging his weary feet and mud-freighted boots after him.

The coach had not proceeded more than a dozen rods when it came to one of the "jogs" in the hill alluded to by the driver. "Now help here, or we'll stick sure. Git up!" cried the driver, and the poor, tired horses nerved themselves for the extra effort required of them. The ascent here was both steep and slippery, and it required the united strength of horses and passengers to pass over the place.

Here the passengers discovered the prodigious strength which lay in the broad shoulders of Mr. Tompkins. Not a murmur had escaped his lips when required to walk up the hill, and he was the first to place his shoulder to the wheel to push the coach over the difficult passage. To still further increase the discomforts of their position they were thoroughly drenched by a passing shower which overtook them before they reach the summit of the hill. Here they again climbed into the coach, and resumed their seats, were whirled along through the gathering darkness toward the inn.

Old Jerry Lycan stood on the long porch of his old-fashioned Virginia tavern, and peered down the road through the gloom. It had been dark but a few moments. The old man's ears caught the sound of wheels coming down the road, and he knew the stage was not far off.

"The roads are just awful," said the landlord, "and no wonder it is belted."

The night was intensely dark; not a star was to be seen in the sky; an occasional flash of lightning momentarily lit up surrounding objects, only to render the blackness more complete. Far down the road the old man's eyes caught a glimpse of the coach-light's bobbing up and down as the ponderous vehicle oscillated over the rough roads. Approaching slowly, like a weary thing of life, the ominous stage at last appeared, made visible only by its own lamps, which the driver had lighted. The splashing of six horses along the miry roads and the dull rolling of the huge wheels made the vehicle heard long before it was seen.

"Tude haint no outside passengers to-night," said the landlord, seeing that the top seats of the coach were vacant. "Spose nobody'll want to ride out in the rain."

"Here ye are at Lycan's inn," called out the driver to the inmates of the coach as he reined in his weary horses in front of the roadside tavern.

Uncle Jerry as he was called, with his old, perforated tin lantern, came to open the stage door and show his guests into the house. The stage, the driver, tossing the reins to the stable-boy, climbed down from his lofty perch, and went into the bar-room to get "something hot" to warm his benumbed body.

The landlord brought the wet and weary men into the room, where a great fire was blazing, and promised that supper should be ready by the time they were dry. The Southerner declared that he was much too dry within, though he was dripping wet without. Uncle Jerry smiling invited him into the bar-room. The Southerner needed no second invitation, and soon returned, saying that Virginia inns were not so bad after all.

The lady had been shown to a private apartment, while the gentlemen were attempting to dry their clothing by the fire in the public room. The Southerner, who had been in much better humor since his visit to the bar, seemed now to look very philosophically upon his soaking and other inconveniences of travel.

Our planter, Mr. Tompkins, sat in front of the pile of blazing logs, gazing at the bright, panoramic pictures constantly forming there. Sleeping or waking, darkness of the stage-coach and in those glowing embers, he saw but one picture, and its horrors were constantly haunting his mind.

The other guests talked and laughed while their soaked clothes were drying, but Mr. Tompkins was silent, whether sitting or standing. Almost before their clothes were dry supper was announced, and they all repaired to the long, low dining room and seated themselves at the table. The supper, plain and substantial, was just suited to the needs of the hungry guests.

The evening now over, they returned to the sitting room. The Southerner had lit a cigar, and kept up a constant flow of conversation.

"Virginia is too near the Free-soilers," he said, evidently directing his remarks to Mr. Tompkins; "don't they come over here and steal your niggers?"

"They never have," Mr. Tompkins answered.

"I take it for granted you own slaves?"

"Yes, sir; I have a number on my plantation, and never have had an stolen yet."

"Don't the 'Barnburners,' 'Woolly Heads' and Abolitionists from Ohio and Pennsylvania come over here and steal them away?"

"They have never taken any from me."

"Well, that's a wonder. I know a num-

ber of good men on the border who find it impossible to keep niggers at all."

"Perhaps they are not good masters," said Mr. Tompkins.

"They were the best of masters, and they lost their niggers, though they guarded them with watchful overseers and bloodhounds."

"But do you think that a good master needs to guard his slaves with armed overseers and dogs?" said Mr. Tompkins.

"Of course," the Carolinian answered; "how else would you keep the black rascals in subjection? Are we not located almost every week by reports of some of their outrages? Saams and canebrakes have become the haunts of runaway blacks, who, having murdered their master, seek to wreak vengeance on innocent children or women."

Mr. Tompkins started at these assertions, as though he felt a pang at his heart.

"My friend, what you say is true, too true," he said; "but is the master always blameless? The negro possesses feelings, and even a beast may be goaded to madness. Is it not an unrighteous system which is crushing and outraging our beloved country?"

"What system?"

"Slavery."

"Why, sir, you are a singular slaveholder," cried the Southerner. "Are you going to turn a Martin Van Buren and join the Free-soilers?"

"There is a great deal in that question, sir, outside of politics. I believe in slavery, else I would not own a slave; but if our slaves are to be treated as animals, it were better if the institution were abolished."

"How would you treat them?"

"Discharge the overseers, to begin with. I am sure, you would fail."

"The plan has succeeded well on my plantation," said Mr. Tompkins, "and I do not own a single negro who would not die for me."

Here were met two men, both believing in the institution of human slavery, but carrying out its principles, how differently! The one with cool Northern blood and kindly feelings, advocating a humane mode of ruling the helpless being in his power. The other, representing the extreme type of refined cruelty and oppression. The mind of the one grew more and more in harmony with the idea of abolition, while the other came to hate, with all the fierceness of his Southern heart, the idea of universal freedom, became willing, even, to strike at that flag which had failed to protect his interests and his opinions.

The date at which we write was directly after the election and inauguration of Taylor as President of the United States. The opposition to human slavery had steadily been gaining ground, regardless of taunts and sneers, and the ranks of the Abolitionists were hourly on the increase. Slavery was peevishly a selfish institution. It is folly to say that only men born and reared in the South could be numbered among the upholders of this "peculiar institution," for many Northern men went South and purchased plantations and slaves, and in 1861 many of these enlisted on the Confederate side, and fought under the Confederate flag, not from principle, but from self-interest.

Mr. Tompkins, who was Northern born, believed in slavery simply because he owned slaves, and not from any well defined principle. Even now the same conflict that later convulsed the Nation was raging in his heart—the conflict between self-interest and the right. Press and pulpit, the lecturer's rostrum and the novelist's pen, had almost wrought out the doom of slavery, when the politician took up the stormy dispute.

The discussion in the Virginia inn was warm but friendly, the Carolinian declaring that God and Nature had ordained the negro for slavery; that his diet should be the snake, his stimulant the whip, his reward for obedience a blanket and a hut, his punishment for rebellion chains and death. Doubtless his passion over-reached his judgment in the heat of argument, and his brain, perhaps, was not so cool since his visit to the bar-room.

"My dear sir," Mr. Tompkins finally said, hoping to end the discussion, which was drawing to them the attention of all, "the whole you suggest will, I fear, plunge our whole country into trouble. For men are torn rulers, and history has never shown one successful who ruled by harsh measures only. Admitting that a negro is not a rational being, kindness with a beast can accomplish more than harshness. It is cruel masters who make runaway slaves. The parting of parent and child, husband and wife, torn ruthlessly asunder, never to see each other again, will make even a negro furious. I fear, sir, that slavery is a bad institution, but it is firmly established among us, and I see no way at present to get rid of it."

The other guests at Jerry Lycan's inn had gathered in groups of two and three, and were listening silently to the different views of these two upholders of slavery; for there were factions in those days among the slavery men. The landlord had entered the room, and, being a politician himself, drank in the discussion with deepest interest.

Just as the argument was at its height the outer door of the inn opened and a boy, wild-eyed, but handsome, entered. A glance at the strangely wild eyes and disheveled hair convinced all present that he was insane. He was about twelve years of age, with a slender figure and a well-shaped head, but some great shock had unseated his reason. His mania was of a mild, harmless type. Walking directly up to Mr. Tompkins, he said:

"Have you seen my father? You look very much like my father, but I know he has not yet come into Egypt."

The voice was so plaintive and sad that it touched at once the hearts of all, and happily put an end to the conversation.

"Who is your father?" asked Mr. Tompkins.

"Jacob is my father. I am his favorite son. My brothers sold me a slave into Egypt, and told my father I had been slain by wild beasts. Have you seen my father?"

"He is crazy. Humor him, say something to him," whispered the landlord.

"Your father is not yet ready to come into Egypt," said Mr. Tompkins.

"And my brother Benjamin—did you see him?" the lad asked.

"Is the famine sore in the land where my father dwells?"

"Yes."

"And does he suffer—is he old? Oh, yes, I remember; my father must be dead. He seated himself on a low stool by the fireside, and, bowing his head in his hands, seemed lost in thought.

"He does that twenty times a day," said the landlord.

"Who is he?" asked one of the travelers, "and where does he come from?"

"He has been here only a few days, and I know nothing about him. His first question was, 'Have you seen my father Jacob?'"

"Have you tried to find out about him?" asked Mr. Tompkins.

"Yes, but to no purpose," answered Uncle Jerry. "He came one morning and said he was fleeing from Potiphar's wrath. After inquiring for his father, he remained silent for some time. I tried to find where he came from, but as he knew and he can not tell, I should judge by the clothes he wore that he was from the South, and, from the worn condition of his shoes, that he came a great

way. He is of some respectable family, for he has been well educated, and I fancy it's too much book learning that has turned the boy's head. He talks of Plato and Socrates and Aristotle, and all the ancient philo-

sophers, and his familiarity with historical events shows him to have been a student; but he always imagines that he is Joseph."

"Where does he live?" asked Mr. Tompkins.

"Oh, he stays here at the inn, and shows no disposition to leave. He makes himself useful by helping the stable-boy and carries in fuel, imagining himself a servant of the high priest."

"Has he lucid intervals?" asked Mr. Tompkins.

"No, not what could be called lucid intervals. Once he said to a girl in the kitchen that it was books that made his head dizzy, and said something of a home a great ways off, from which he had fled to escape great violence. They hoped then to clear up the mystery, but the next moment his mind wandered again and he was Joseph sold into Egypt, bewailing his father Jacob and his brother Benjamin."

"What is his name?" asked Mr. Tompkins.

"We can't get any other name than Joseph, and the boys here call him Crazy Joe."

"His malady may be curable; have you consulted a physician about it?" inquired the Carolinian, who was very much interested in the strange case.

"Yes, sir; a doctor from the State Lunatic Asylum was here day before yesterday, but he pronounced him incurable."

"Could not the doctor tell how long he had been in this condition?" asked Mr. Tompkins.

"Not with certainty, but thought it only a few weeks or months. He said he had probably escaped from his guard and ran away."

At this moment the subject of conversation rose from the low stool and looked about with a vacant stare.

"Do you want to go home to your parents?" Mr. Tompkins asked.

"When the famine is sore in the land they will come for you, run away?"

"My brothers sold me to the merchants with their camels. They made my father believe I was killed, and brought me here and sold me; but I know it is written that my brother Benjamin will come and bring my father to me."

"Is it not written that Jacob did go down into Egypt with his whole family, and that he wept on Joseph's neck, and said he was willing to die?" said Mr. Tompkins, to lead him out of this strange hallucination.

"Yes, yes—oh, yes!" the boy cried, eagerly.

"Did not Moses deliver the children of Israel from bondage long after Jacob's death?"

"I remember now that he did," said Joe.

"Then how can you be Joseph, when he died three or four thousand years ago?"

"The boy reflected a moment, and then said: 'Who can I be, if I am not Joseph?'"

"Some one who imagines himself Joseph," said Mr. Tompkins. "Now, try to think who you really are and where you came from."

"I am not Socrates, for he drank the hemlock and died, nor am I Julius Cæsar, for he was killed by Brutus," the poor fanatic replied.

"Try to think what was your father's name," persisted Mr. Tompkins, hoping to discover something.

"My father's name was Jacob, and I was sold a slave into Egypt by my brothers; but there must be something wrong; my father must be dead."

Again he seated himself on the low stool and buried his face in his hands.

"It's no use," said the landlord; "that's as near as you'll ever come to knowing who he is from him. I have advertised him in the Pittsburgh daily, but no one has come yet to claim him."

"A very strange hallucination," said the Carolinian. "Is he always mild?"

"Yes; he is never cross or sullen, and seems delighted with children. He answers them in many ways."

It was growing late, and the weary travelers were ready to go to bed. The landlord, assisted by Crazy Joe and another boy, took lighted candles to the various rooms for the guests.

By the combined aid of a good supper, a warm discussion on slavery, and his interest in the insane boy, Mr. Tompkins had succeeded in fighting away the gloomy thoughts that harassed his mind, and a few minutes after retiring was sleeping peacefully.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW ARRIVAL.

Forty years ago a Virginia planter was a king, his broad acres his kingdom, his wife his queen, his children heirs to his throne, and his slaves his subjects. True, it was a petty kingdom and he but a petty monarch; but, as a rule, petty monarchs are tyrannical, and the Southern planter was not always an exception. In those days men were measured, not by moral worth, mental power, or physical stature, but by the number of acres and slaves they owned. The South has never possessed that sturdy class of yeomanry that has cheered warriors in the North. Before the war labor was performed by slaves, not it is done by hired help, the farmer himself there seldom cultivating his soil.

The home of Mr. George W. Tompkins, our acquaintance, was a marvel of beauty and taste. Located in the Northwestern portion of the State, before its division, it was just where the heat of the South was delightfully tempered by the cool winds of the North. No valley in all Virginia was more lovely. To the east were hills which might delight any mountain lover, all clothed and fringed with delicate evergreens, through which could be caught occasional glimpses of precipitous rocks. Over the heights the sun climbed every morning to illuminate the valley below with a radiance of glory. Mountain cascades came tumbling and plunging from mossy retreats to swell a clear pebbly stream which afforded the finest trout to be found in the entire State.

The great mansion built after the old Virginia plan, with a long stone piazza in front, stood on an eminence facing the post-road, which ran within a few rods of it. The house was substantial, heavy columns, painted white as marble, supporting the porch, and quaint, old-fashioned gables, about which the swallows twittered, breaking the lines of the roof. In the front yard grew the peach and elm and chestnut tree, their wide-spreading branches indicating an existence for centuries. A little below the structure, and south-west from it, was a colony of low, small buildings, where dwelt the slaves of Mr. Tompkins. One or two were nearer, and in these the domestics lived. These were a higher order of servants than the field-slaves, and they never let an opportunity pass to assert their superiority over their fellow slaves.

Socially, as well as geographically, Mr. Tompkins home combined the extremes of the North and South. He, with his calm face and mild gray eyes, was a native of the green hills of New Hampshire, while his dark-eyed wife was a daughter of sunny Georgia.

Mr. Tompkins was the only child of a

wealthy Georgia planter. Mr. Tompkins had met her first in Atlanta, where he was spending the winter with a class-mate, both having graduated at Yale the year before.

Their meeting grew into intimacy, from intimacy it ripened into love. Shortly after the marriage of his daughter, his only child, the planter exchanged his property for more extensive possessions in Virginia, but he never occupied this new home. He and his wife were in New Orleans, when the dread malarial yellow-fever, seized upon them; and they died before their daughter or her husband could go to them.

Mr. Tompkins, a man who had always been opposed to slavery, thus found himself the owner of a large plantation in Virginia, and more than a hundred slaves. There seemed to be no other alternative, and he accepted the situation, and tried, by being a humane master, to conciliate his wounded conscience for being a master at all.

He and his only-brother, Henry, had inherited a large and valuable property from their father, in their native State. His brother, like himself, had gone South and married a planter's daughter, and become a large slave-holder. He was a far different man from his brother. Naturally over-bearing and cruel, he seemed to possess none of the other's kindness of heart or cool, dispassionate reason. He was a hard task-master, and no "fire-eating" Southerner ever exercised his power more remorselessly than he, and no one hated the Abolition party more cordially. But it is not with Henry Tompkins we have to deal at present.

It was near noon the day after the travelers reached Jerry Lycan's inn. Mrs. Tompkins sat on the piazza, looking down the road that led to the village. She was one of those Southern beauties who attract at a first glance; her eyes large and dark, and brilliant; her hair soft and glossy, like waves of lustrous silk. Of medium height, though not quite so slender as when younger, her form was faultless. Her cheek had the olive tint of the South, and as she reclined with indolent grace in her easy chair, one little foot restlessly tapping the carpet on which it rested, she looked a very queen.

The Tompkins mansion was the grandest for many miles around, and the whole plantation bore evidence of the taste and judgment of its owner. There seemed to be nothing, from the crystal fountain splashing in front of the white-pillared dwelling to the vast fields of corn, wheat and tobacco stretching far into the back-ground, which did not add to the beauty of the place.

On the north were barns, immense and well filled granaries and stables. Then came tobacco houses, covering acres of ground. One would hardly have suspected the plain, unpretentious Mr. Tompkins as being the possessor of all this wealth. But his house held his greatest treasures—two bright little boys, aged respectively nine and seven years.

Abner, the elder, had bright blue eyes and the clear Saxon complexion of his father Oleah, the younger, was of the same dark Southern type as his mother. They were two such children as even a Roman mother might have been proud to call her jewels. Bright and affectionate, they yielded a quick obedience to their parents, and—a remarkable thing for boys—were always in perfect accord.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" cried Oleah, following close after his brother, and quite as much excited.

"Well, what is the matter?" the mother asked, with a smile.

"It's coming! it's coming! it's coming!" cried Oleah.

"He's coming! he's coming!" shouted Abner.

"Who is coming?" asked the mother.

"Papa, papa, papa!" shouted both at the top of their voices. "Papa is coming down the big hill on the stage-coach."

Mrs. Tompkins was now looking for herself. Sure enough there was the great, old-fashioned stage-coach lumbering down the hill, and her husband was an outside passenger, as the sky was now clear and the sun shone warm and bright. The clumsy vehicle showed the mud stains of its long travel, and the roads in places were yet filling with water.

The winding of the coachman's horse, which never failed to set the boys dancing with delight, sounded mellow and clear on the morning air.

"It's going to stop! it's going to stop!" shouted Abner, and both kept up a frantic shouting, "Whoa, whoa!" to the prancing horses as they drew near the house.

It paused in front of the gate, and Mrs. Tompkins and her two boys hurried down the walk.

Mr. Tompkins' baggage had just been taken from the boot and placed inside the gate, and the stage had rolled on, as his wife and two boys came up to the traveler.

"Mamma, frat, and me next," said Oleah, preparing his red lips for the expected kiss.

"And I come after Oleah," said Abner.

Mr. Tompkins called to a negro boy who was near to carry the baggage to the house, and the happy group made their way to the great piazza, the two boys clinging to their father's hands and keeping up a torrent of questions. Where had he been? What had he seen? What had he brought home for them? The poor wretch, Mrs. Tompkins drew up the arm chair for her tired husband.

"Rest a few minutes," she said, "and then you can take a bath and change your clothes, and you will feel quite yourself once more."

The planter took the seat, with a bright-faced child perched on each side of him.