

GOOD MANNERS AND THE WATER COMPANY

BY CASPAR DAY

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MRS. KINSHALLA was not at home when the Sling Mountain Water Company sent its collector to Duck Hollow on the twenty-ninth of June. There was an iron-clad rule that the two dollars for the quarter must be paid in advance; and though people grumbled four times a year, they always paid over the money without resistance. This time, however, the former collector, whom everybody knew, had been promoted, and a stiff-necked, new Scotch lad was making his rounds for the first time.

Irene Kohlmeser, Mrs. Kinshall's married daughter, was visiting her family for the first time since her runaway match in October. She was alone in the house that afternoon. She met the collector at the door with a dignity that was terrifying in so pretty a girl of eighteen.

"I never buy a thing off agents," she told him in the first breath. "You always get cheated if you do. I'm the lady of the house, yes; but I know better 'n to buy what I don't want. So you'd better not waste time on me."

The Scotch boy stared at her, startled.

Irene was charmingly dressed in a blue muslin, with her fluffy hair piled high on her head; the hot June weather only brought a becoming color to her cheeks.

If the stranger had had but a touch of blarney in his system, he could have looked his admiration, said something polite, collected his two dollars, and gone his way.

But he was a sour, stiff-necked body. He suffered from prickly heat, and hated the world because his collar was wilted and dirty: in a word, his temper was bad. He had been asking for water-rents in and around Duck Hollow for three hours, and the Irish had said things to him for which he could not find adequate replies until the next midnight.

"That 'll do,"

snapped the Scotch boy. "I'm col—"

"I believe ye!" cried Mrs. Irene. "Well, this is no place for your kind. Move on. Try next door. We don't buy nothing on the instalment plan. We get most o' the things we need off my



"I NEVER BUY A THING OFF AGENTS,"
SHE TOLD HIM

husband's relations, wholesale price, I 'd let you know."

"Yir hoosban's relations can dro-on!" the lad told her. "I want the—"

"Ye 're drownding yerself, ye impident snippet! Drownding by inches. Yer face an' yer collar 's been dead sincet breakfast time, by the looks."

"The watter-rent."

"An' you need a hair-cut. Such a lookin'—"

"I do na care to leesten t' the reest of it, young wummun. Two dollars, the chairge is, to next quarter-day, payment in odvonce."

"You don't say!" Irene set her hands on her slender hips and cocked her head to one side. "An' who may you be, young wummun? King o' New York? Or fortune-tellin'?"

"I 'm the watter coomp'ny," spoke the Scot. He was furious enough to be perfectly calm,—especially as Irene's temper was quite beyond control. "An' if ye don't put oop the requered soom the night, I 'll toorn yir watter off accordin' to steepulations pervided in the contrac'."

"You 're no gentleman," she raged at him. "The way you 'd behave to a lady shows it, too! Two dollars, indeed! 'Tis paid the whole year ahead, an' we 've the receipt up-stairs in Pa's 'Key of Heaven.' You 'll not cheat us, Mister, nor your comp'ny won't neither, there, now! Turn it off, if ye dare! An' I bet you my mother 'll have ye arrested. Try it oncet!"

"Weel," said the collector, "I think pairhaps a bit lesson 'd do ye a mighty lot o' gude. I wull do it."

"I dare yez!" she cried, making ready to slam the door. "As good customers as *we* been can make you sorry! Anyhow, 't is paid, an' we 'll not pay it twicet. You hear me? We won't! There, putt that in yer pipe an' smoke it!" (*Bang.*)

"Ye air obleeged to ha' food an' dreenk, young wummun," moralized the collector looking at the blank door-panels. "Though of all the veeicious young Jeezebels! Weel, I 'll be doon by wi' the wrench. Expeerience is the fine teacher."

He noted the house number in a pocket-book, and went into Mrs. Toole's place, next door.

Mrs. Kinshalla was late in coming

home; and by the time Irene had tried the three new ways of dressing her hair given in the "Ladies' Illustrated" for June, she had forgotten the impudence of the water company. Not until her mother was washing the dishes did it occur to the daughter to speak of it.

"There was a party around to-day, Ma," said she, "abusin' me for not payin' the water-rent."

"Johnny Selden, was it? Mercy be to heaven! I never knew him be oncivil! He greases his tongue most too much sometimes: I been fair sickened more than oncet to hear him go on to Mrs. Toole. Would he be in liquor, maybe, that he would n't know ye?"

"Dear, now, Ma, o' course not! Johnny Selden knows us better 'n to call us a bunch o' dead beats. 'T was a boy, a mere child, like, an' shabby-lookin'; an' his manners was made in the loon'tic asylum. It 's my belief he 'll be arrested for a fakir to-morrow or next day. But I was too much for him. I very kindly and politely told him the rent was paid for, an' he 'd get no two dollars off o' me; an' then I shut the door."

"Serve him right! Well, what 'd he do?"

"What could he do but go off? He 'd met his match with me."

"I disremember whether I paid for six months from January the first, or six months from April the first," meditated Mrs. Kinshalla over the dish-pan. But Irene was off at full speed on a new topic, and did not listen.

"I 'd like to seen that impident little rascal catch his dues if J. Addison Kohl-messer was there! My gracious! Jim 'ud break any fella's back that so much as looked at me cross-eyed! Why, oncet in a store, the floorwalker—" It was a rambling story, but water companies were not embraced in all its far horizons. Mrs. Kinshalla dismissed her mental question as of no account.

The thirtieth of June was Wednesday. Mrs. Kinshalla flew at her work as her wont was, and did not look out of the front windows. About ten o'clock the fancy took her to carry a pail of water out to the pig. She set her bucket under the tap.

The stream ran just as usual until the pail was half full. Then, as if by a mira-

cle, and without any one's going near the faucet, the water ceased. Mrs. Kinshalla waited a moment, though she was far from a patient woman. But when the pipe gurgled once and went dumb, she rushed to the front door. She supposed the neighbors were all drawing together, and

Kinshalla, addressing the universe with a distinctness offensive to the Scotch boy. "Just like Irene said he was. But who 'd suppose he was that sly an' spiteful? Would he have stole that there nice wagon, I wonder?—Hey, there! Mrs. Loughney! Would you be so kind an'



"'WHAT D' YE THINK YE 'RE AFTER DOIN'?"

so depriving her of the water-pressure which was her lawful right.

The sour-tempered Scotch boy was just in the gateway. A plumber's wagon was outside, and a burly Italian laborer was throwing into it a spade and several poker-like tools. The plantains just inside the fence were buried in loose clay. A three-inch iron pipe protruded from the hole which the Scotch boy and his minion had dug.

"Good Lord!" cried Mrs. Kinshalla in utter stupefaction. "What d' ye think ye 're after doin'?"

"I toornt off the watter," replied the Scotch boy, briefly.

"An' what for?"

"Ye ken very gude," the boy told her. He carried a great wrench, and proceeded before her very eyes to cover the pipe and screw the cap home.

"'T is a loonytic for fair," mused Mrs.

run an' ast McCormick to telephone the p'lice? Say I need thim."

"Air you a reelation o' the wummun that lives here?"

"I 'm her meself, ye impident turnip. Why?"

"Ye 've the same bad deesposeetion, I obsarve," said the collector, finishing the job and getting up from his knees as he loosened the wrench. "There! You can coom to yir senses when ye see fit, an' the coompany wull not feel the defecit till ye do. Gude day, mom."

"My soul!" said Mrs. Kinshalla, turning from red to purple. "The dhirty Orangeman! Shut off the water, has he? Oh, the sassy limb!"

"Ye wull find it 's so, clavers or no clavers. Moreover, the neighbors canna gi' ye a cupfu'. They wull be cut off the meenute they attempt such a dishonesty. I ha' spoke to them one after ither, previ-

ous to beginnin' ma beesiness on yon valve. I ha'"—

The wagon drowned the rest of it; he was still sermonizing as they drove down the street. Mrs. Kinshalla was left alone on her door-step.

However, there was one thing she could do to ease her feelings. She took the shiniest tin milk-pail from its hook in the

'T is a dhirty Trust, that there water comp'ny. An' the trusts has had their day; the people are about done with 'em. John Mitchell said so himself, an' I heard him.—So have the courage of a orphan child to stan' up to 'em, an' they 'll back down an' leave ye be. Thry it oncet."

With that, Mrs. Kinshalla took her



"SHE . . . MARCHED ACROSS THE STREET TO MRS. LOUGHNEY'S HOUSE"

kitchen and marched across the street to Mrs. Loughney's house.

"I 've come for some water, Annie," she announced.

Mrs. Loughney sat on the porch peeling potatoes. Had the Paradox Washing Machine beside her been a Maxim gun, she would still have lacked courage to pull the lever, after Mrs. Kinshalla had addressed her in those masterful tones.

"Was he here to you yet,—the crazy man, I mean?" the visitor continued with a noble nonchalance. Her pail was in the kitchen sink, and Mrs. Loughney heard the splash of water. "Holy Mother, I never got such talk off a man yet, in church or in politics or in liquor!"

"He stopped in," the house-owner admitted. "Look out will ye get me into trouble, Mrs. Kinshalla. I would n't want no expenses an' law business this summer, Charlie losin' six months off his job so lately as he did."

"Aw, get brave for the oncet, Annie! Stand up for yerself, an' don't give up to everybody that lifts a toothpick at ye!

pail of water, and strode out into the street and so home. Annie Loughney looked puzzled, but she went on peeling her potatoes.

A terrible scene there was a few minutes later when Mrs. Loughney came sobbing to the Kinshalla house. The Scotch boy had looked over his shoulder and had seen his first victim returning with her stolen pailful: he had come back, and said six words, and he was even now cutting off the Loughneys' water supply. Promises and tears did not move him.

Irene and Mrs. Kinshalla were sufficiently moved as they faced Annie at their front door. They outdid themselves in voicing their thoughts and feelings. But Annie slipped quietly to a chair in the front room and cried.

"'T is done now,—the dhirty, sneakin' informers!" Mrs. Kinshalla called in to her after a while.

"Oh, but looka, Ma,—what 's this else they 're after? They 're doin' the same to Evanses' pipe! How 's that?"

"'T is the loonytic!" groaned the

mother. "Would you expect different, Irene?"

"Evanses rents off us," cried Mrs. Loughney, "an' Charlie pays for the whole three houses in the lump,—ours an' Evanses' an' Costello's. He saves 'em bother, an' he gets it out the rents, same as he does the taxes. Oh, oh! Whatever will Mrs. Costello do to me for gettin' her water took away on her? I might 'a' knowed the whole three houses was on the comp'ny books for Charlie Loughney. I won't dare show my head out in the yard again, the one o' them wimmen one side o' me an' the other on t' other!"

DUCK HOLLOW was lively the last evening in June. Irene and her mother told their story to Martin Kinshalla and the four grown boys at supper-time; and previous rehearsals of the story had made them so eloquent that the men went into a splendid rage. Next, J. Addison Kohlmeser came into town unexpectedly on the 5:34 train. His feelings upon the insult offered his bride were so burning that he wrote to a schoolmate of his who was a newspaper reporter, and sent the letter off to New York by the evening train.

Young Tom Kinshalla left home while the scholarly J. Addison was employed upon this despatch, and met Charlie Loughney and Aloysius Costello down at McCormick's saloon. Certain prominent residents of the Hollow were this evening saying hard things about Irene and her mother; and in discussing the merits of the question Tom broke Costello's nose for being so wilfully blind. By midnight, therefore, the Kinshallas, Loughneys, and Costellos, hated one another singly as much as, collectively, they hated the water company.

J. Addison Kohlmeser deferred his business engagements and remained in Duck Hollow on Thursday. His chivalrous intention to protect the ladies of his family from corporate insult was rewarded when the evening paper came into town, with his letter prominently printed on the fourth page. His communication had been an imposing piece of English in the first place, but high-priced New York talent had touched here and refined there and added a thought yonder till the whole was perfect. It was a history to make the blood boil in any free-born reader's veins.

Duck Hollow thrilled with pride and sizzled with anger as the Tyrant Monopoly stood revealed.

For a week and three days, life went by jerks in the Hollow. More and more people came on the company's blacklist for giving away cups of cold water in obedience to their prayer-books. McCormick's saloon was so full all day that the Father Matthew Cadets threatened to do something radical. The county papers sent their men into the town whenever outside news was scarce; and even the reporters knew that sons and brothers "hauled water" after dark on Sundays to fill the blacklisted Monday washtubs.

On the second Monday, Irene dropped over to see Mrs. Loughney, and stayed from ten till eleven. All the neighbors remembered the feud, and watched and were curious.

If they could have looked into the kitchen, they would have seen Irene established in a patent rocker, and feeling very cool and well-dressed and friendly in her best blue muslin. Mrs. Loughney, meantime, washed the children's clothes in a nervous, jerky way, sousing them up and down when Irene talked, and holding them suspended over the suds when her turn came to answer. The baby was playing on the floor between its mother and her visitor.

At eleven o'clock the stove cracked down the outside of the fire-box; the red coal showed inside. Irene gave notice of the disaster by a scream.

Mrs. Loughney saw, and her first move was to throw the baby into Irene's lap.

"There, you see to 'im!" she gasped. "That 's all you do. I 'll manage."

And then, with all the coolness and bravery of Mrs. Kinshalla herself, little Mrs. Loughney emptied the coal-hod, lifted off the front lids of the stove, and with the fire-shovel began to dig out the red coals. When the hod was half full she carried it out to the ashpile and ran back for another load. In three minutes the danger was over.

"My gracious, what a mess your kitchen is in!" Irene exclaimed, as the little woman ran back panting and sat down on the door-step to recover breath. "That 's a thirty-seven-fifty range, too, ain't it? Oh, but you been cheated on it! They

won't give you a new one, neither, if you 've had it more 'n a year. Still, you was lucky it did n't happen on you in the night."

Annie Loughney was hot and tired and nervous. She tried not to cry.

"Well, I must be goin' home," spoke

"Yer mother does every stroke o' work in that house, as we all know she has sinct you was born. What in the Lord's sake have *you* got to be busy on, Irene?"

"I have to change my dress, for one," said Mrs. J. Addison Kohlmesser, assuming a manner that she had seen Julia Mar-



"MRS. LOUGHNEY . . . WASHED THE CHILDREN'S CLOTHES IN A NERVOUS, JERKY WAY"

the visitor. "Ma 'll have dinner ready; she 's always right on time. Here 's your baby."

"Could n't you stay a bit an' see to him for me, Irene? It ain't near twelve yet, an' I got to finish the washin' an' get it out. I do feel so shaky, like, I 'd take it real kind if ye would. Just the few minutes, now."

"Thanks, but I could n't," responded the young lady. "I 've sat here longer 'n I really could spare the time, already, jus' to show folks there ain't no hard feelin's about what happened las' week concernin' the water comp'ny. You forget, maybe, I 'm a married woman now, an' rushed with the things I got to see to for me own self."

"Holy Saints!" cried Mrs. Loughney, looking up at her as the visitor gathered her skirts to crowd past on the door-sill.

lowe use to a dying lady-villain on the stage. "I would n't want to make you feel bad about it, o' course, because you could n't really stop to notice. But the baby ain't had his face an' han's washed yet this mornin', I should say, an' that there chicken-bone he got out the coal-pail to cut his teeth on is all dirt an' grease. It 's smeared me all up till I look like a Dago. So I must go. Good mornin'."

"Good mornin'," said Mrs. Loughney. She felt blank and guilty and angry and miserable and tired. All she could do was to kiss the baby a dozen times. He was a *lovely* baby, even if he had gone prowling like a puppy! And if Irene Kinshalla ever found out what people really thought of *her*—!

Well! And over there in the tub the suds was cooling. Mrs. Loughney shut the door with emphasis, regardless of ven-

tilation in July weather, and addressed herself determinedly to the children's clothes.

Not five minutes later Mrs. Kinshalla's breadth and brawn appeared. She set her fists on her apron, and smiled a warm, protecting smile on her ten-day foe.

"Irene tells me you 've had a accident, ma'am. Dear, dear, yes, the stove! An' misfortunes never come single, as the sayin' is. Bear up, Annie Loughney, for your woodshed an' chicken-coop 's afire out behind the lot. I 'd 'a' put it out for you myself an' said nothin', only for what 'ud happen if the water comp'ny was to see us a-stealin' water off Mrs. Toole's hydrant in broad daylight.—She bein' the one house right near here that has n't been shut off, 't would be the awful inconvenience to the neighbors to have her usefulness put a stop to.—So first I run up to the corner an' turned in a 'larm for the fire comp'ny; an' next I come in an' shooed yer chickens out o' danger. So 't is all done *for* you, an' ye need n't to fret. The comp'ny 'll be here any minute."

Duck Hollow had a volunteer fire department which was the pride of all the leading families. The borough had recently bought an engine, and the old hose-cart and ladder-wagon had been made like new in a coat of red paint. Stacy's team, and Mulvihill's bay, and McCormick's old brown mare Bess, were the horses generally chosen to draw this equipment.

Horses and men turned out as usual this Monday noon, and lined up on Meade Street near the Loughney home. There were only six members of the fire company on hand to fire the steamer and lay the hose and open the hydrant and give orders. The other eighteen worked in the mines, and would not come to the surface earlier than two o'clock.

"'T is the hell of a fire," said Willie Stacy to the other five firemen. "Take yer time, boys, an' don't tangle up the hose. Make a exhibition job of it, now, before all the ladies o' Duck Hollow. Nothing can't catch afire, an' the shanty's pretty near ruint on Mrs. Loughney a'ready."

"Run the hose up her path, an' see ye don't spoil Charlie's garden," ordered the foreman. He took the nozzle to be sure that his commands were carried out.

"Easy, now. Charlie 's the awful man about his potatoes an' flowers."

Mrs. Kinshalla stood at the kitchen door and explained matters while the firemen picked their way.

"I 'd never 'a' disturbed ye, such a hot day as it is an' all, only for the Trust an' its water famyne. Not a quart o' water 'ud I dare throw on it at all, till after dark. An' I knew ye had the right to the big plugs out by the road, an' no questions ast whose houses ye used it on."

"It 's all right, ma'am," said the foreman politely. "No trouble at all. Don't minton it.—All right, Harry! Let 'er go! *Wa-ter!*"

"Look out an' be ready for it," Willie Stacy advised his chief.

"Oh, Willie! It was the stove bursted on me, the first place!" wailed Mrs. Loughney.

"Don't cry, Annie. Don't ye fret. What 's the old shanty amount to, annyhow? If Charlie 'd tore it down, you 'd never 'a' raised the single objection to him doin' it, I bet you."

"Help me hold 'er again' the current," ordered the superior officer. "There—now we get 'er! Good stream, for oncet.—Aw, looka! Nothin' to put out, scarcely—hardly smokin'. 'Bout as dangerous as Nick Soldi's peanut roaster. Nick did n't call out no fire-engines."

"If he was a lady he would, though," was the sage reply of Will Stacy. "Given her about enough, ain't we? Though we might sprinkle Charlie's garden for him, if we could get half stream. Will we try it?"

"Not me!" the foreman decided. "I ain't had my dinner yet, an' the boys up to the shops is liable to break into my can any minute an' eat the pie off me. I 'm in a hurry, *I* am. An' it takes us awhile to put away our stuff, too."

"Ye done fine," said Mrs. Kinshalla heartily, as the two passed the kitchen door.

"It 's all out, an' I 'm real obliged, I 'm sure," spoke Mrs. Loughney through her tears. "*Why, Irene!* What you doin' now?"

Irene Kohlmesser smiled her prettiest and looked her best in a light gray tailored suit. She addressed the men, wasting no more than a forgiving glance on the disheveled Mrs. Loughney.

"I come to ast, Mr. Stacy, if you an' Mr. Brennan an' the rest would n't welcome a drink o' cold buttermilk an' a bit o' cake or pie? It 's that hot to-day I sh'd think you 'd need somethin'. I got a big jug an' some glasses in on the table, an' plenty more down cellar. Would n't you step acrosst an' taste it?"

"Do, indeed, Mr. Brennan, an' all of you," Mrs. Kinshalla urged.

gets a fine line o' eatin', if these is samples."

"Only for the kitchen bein' so tore up we might 'a' made choc'late cake, too," Mrs. Kohlmesser told them. "I 'm ashamed to let strangers see the place lookin' so awful, this time o' day. But you see for yerselves. There 's the clo'es washed an' not rinsed, an' there 's the tub empty an' waitin'. Not the drop o' clean



"'HELP ME HOLD 'ER AGAIN' THE CURRENT,' ORDERED THE SUPERIOR OFFICER"

"Why, thanks. I guess it might come good," spoke one man for all.

"Come right ahead, then. You can finish up here after," cooed Irene sweetly.

They followed her in a flock across the street and into the kitchen, Mrs. Kinshalla closing the line. Poor Mrs. Loughney was deserted to her thoughts; and a new chagrin lay over her more serious troubles.

The fire company were hungry, and Mrs. Kinshalla's handiwork as dispensed by Irene made an irresistible appeal. They ate two cakes and four pies and two pounds of pretzels before they rose from the table.

"Well, we 'll be going," spoke the foreman finally. "We 're awfully obliged, I 'm sure. Mrs. Kinshalla, your folks

cold water can we get till after dark; an' then we haul it off our neighbor Mrs. Toole. Awful slow it is, though. I could n't help wishin' our tub was in line with Mrs. Loughney's chicken-coop, awhile back. The fire did n't need all the good water that was poured out on it."

"Why, listen here!" said a fireman, wrestling with a great idea. "Why could n't we fill yer tub with the hose, once, now we have it coupled on the plug an' all?"

"Fill all the tubs as wants it!" Stacy exclaimed. "Annie Loughney 'll be glad, for one."

"Sure thing!" said the fire company with enthusiasm.

"Deed, I wish you gentlemen was to

be called down here every Monday," cried Irene with a giggle. "Wash day is the very time a fire 'd be most help again' the water comp'ny."

"It cud be arranged," Brennan told her solemnly. "Only for missin' our dinners in noon hour, I dunno but the boys 'ud take turns bringin' the hose-cart down to put out chicken-coops every Monday. You see, we all got to be back at our jobs around one o'clock, though we cud always leave work early on a fire call. Well, anyhow, we 'll do the best service we can for the public to-day, now we 're down here. Soon 's we take the hose out o' Loughney's, we 'll come here an' rinse the wash out for you."

Then the work of mercy proceeded through the waterless neighborhoods on both sides of Meade Street. In the wake of the fire company went Mrs. Kinshalla, whispering, advising, consulting. When all was done, she was prepared to take Stacy and Brennan aside.

"This day-week," said she in a mysterious whisper, "will be the dang'rous fire in Tommy Curran's kitchen chimbley. Two weeks to-day, ye 'll be rung for to risk yer lives on Hoy's fence an' coal-bin. An' so on. Always about twelve o'clock, 't will be, an' always some place that ain't insured, you know. Will you six fellas be able to come to the rescue o' Duck Hollow, d' ye think?"

"I would n't wonder," said Stacy. "I'd kinda like to see what the water company 'll say about it."

"Some of us 'll have the fine dinner cooked an' waitin' for ye, amongst us. 'T will be the reg'lar invitation, Mr. Brennan, every week for the six o' ye. You won't need no dinner-pails, Mondays, for a while now."

"You can count on me," Mr. Brennan promised her.

"We 'll all get put in the paper, sure," said Stacy. "But for me, I don't care so long 's I 'm happy."

Six Fire-Mondays came and went before Johnny Selden happened into the district office of the Water Trust. There he listened to a few stories, glanced over the collector's books, and surveyed the Scotch boy. After that, he strolled down to Duck Hollow to pay a few calls.

"How d' ye do, Mrs. Kinshalla?" he

cried, as the parlor door was opened to him. "And yerself, Miss Irene—Mrs. Kohlmesser, I would say! My gracious, I could n't stay away from town when I heard you was back for July an' August. For I thought I—" Here he sighed terribly. "Last September, you know,—I thought I was never to see your blue eyes again!"

"Oh, go 'long wid such talk!" cried Irene, immensely flattered.

"An' yer mother, too; she 's lookin' in fine health," spoke Johnny Selden. Then he was taken with such a fit of coughing that he could scarcely breathe, and finally gasped out a plea for a drink of water.

"We have none," Mrs. Kinshalla told him. "But won't buttermilk do ye? The water comp'ny is behavin' that mean an' thyrannical, these days, that it 's again my self-respect as a decent woman to buy water off them. I only steal it by night because I have to, in a manner o' speaking."

"You don't tell me!" cried the ex-collector. "Oh, o' course, there 's some changes up to the office: but I did n't know as the new men had started out to ruin their own business on theirselves by gettin' onpopular. Is there others dissatisfied?"

"There is," Mrs. Kinshalla admitted, squaring her chin. "Though we was the first."

"Forty-seven places, at last count," added the daughter.

"My gracious, that 's the awful loss to the comp'ny!" Mr. Selden exclaimed. "They can't never go on, that way. The insurance agents 'll be after 'em, for one thing; an' they 'll lose money, for another. No, Mrs. Kinshalla, they 'd ought to change their policy."

"They 're called a bloodsuckin' Trust. That 's what!"

"Well, well! An' they used to be a well-liked company, under the old management. It reminds me of a story, Mrs. Kinshalla, that I heard lately about—"

The visitor talked for half an hour on a variety of topics, and then Irene found herself describing the Scotch boy. When she had done her best her mother added a touch or two. The visitor was properly horrified.

"He ain't no one to be sent into decent Christian homes, that 's plain to me. He needs a lesson. I tell you, Mrs. Kohl-

messer: will I get him moved out on the reservoir gang awhile? Or have him fired? He deserves it for his manners. He ain't fit to talk with ladies. Will I see what I can do for him, once? I will, if you say so."

"T is nothing to me, o' course," the young matron replied. "Still, I 'm free to own I 'd like to see him spited."

"He shall be!" cried Mr. Selden, pounding his knee. "An' now tell me about the boys. I ain't seen Tom in three months. You an' the bride can talk an hour to me now, an' not tell me the half I want to know."

Just before it was time to start for his car up to town, the ex-collector's mind went back for a moment to his old business.

"Now, that water-fight, ma'am," said he. "I 'll see it 's settled for you; an'—what 's more—settled right. I 'm a known man at the office, Mrs. Kohlmesser. If I choose to take that impudent cub's book off him, an' come down here to-morrow to your house an' put you an' the neighbors back on the water-rents, why, he can't stop me. Back ye come, for all his complainin's an' spitefulness. Back he must come, an' turn on the valves for ye, if I send him."

"I 'd like to watch him do it!" cried Irene.

"T would amuse me some," Mrs. Kinshalla admitted. "An' I 'd be glad if I did n't have to haul no more pails over the fence, besides. That there is such slavish work."

"Leave the whole thing to me, an' I 'll fix it up," promised Selden. Now I must run: don't fascinate me, or I 'll miss my car. Well, you can expect me around ten to-morrow. The neighbors had ought to know, Mrs. Kohlmesser, how 't was yours an' your mother's good word that rids them o' their troubles. Good mornin'."

"O BLACK AND UNKNOWN BARDS"

BY JAMES W. JOHNSON

O BLACK and unknown bards of long ago,
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?
How, in your darkness, did you come to know
The power and beauty of the minstrel's lyre?
Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,
Feeling the ancient faith of prophets rise
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?

Heart of what slave poured out such melody
As "Steal away to Jesus"? On its strains
His spirit must have nightly floated free,
Though still about his hands he felt his chains.
Who heard great "Jordan roll"? Whose starward eye
Saw chariot "swing low"? And who was he
That breathed that comforting, melodic sigh,
"Nobody knows de trouble I see"?

What merely living clod, what captive thing,
Could up toward God through all its darkness grope,
And find within its deadened heart to sing
These songs of sorrow, love, and faith, and hope?
How did it catch that subtle undertone,
That note in music heard not with the ears?
How sound the elusive reed, so seldom blown,
Which stirs the soul or melts the heart to tears?