

"Fire me?" he repeated. Then slowly, pondering the idea: "No, he didn't. It's funny he didn't, though; I gave him back talk enough."

"Aw," said McGuire, with a sneer, "that's easy. He'd have fired you quick enough if he dared."

"Why," said Munford innocently. "I wouldn't have touched him if he had. He's too small to touch—I told him that, too."

"'Tain't that," McGuire returned. "He ain't afraid of any man, big or little. I'll give him credit for that. It's his bridge, and that means his job, that he's afraid of."

"What's my gettin' fired got to do with the bridge?" demanded Munford, in amazement.

"Aw, go on; you know what I mean. If Burton has trouble with us the bridge work stops, don't it? And the company'll be askin' Burton the reason why, won't they? Well, Burton knows there's some things we won't stand for, and firin' you after we brought you up here is one of them. And that's right, too, eh, mates?"

There was emphatic assent from the men.

Munford, a little flustered at this wholesale exhibition of homage, fidgeted nervously. "Much obliged," said he, clumsily. "Don't put yourselves out on my account. I——"

"That's all right," broke in McGuire. "Burton won't try it; he knows better. As for gettin' a pass to get out of camp, I dunno about *that*." He got up, stretched himself and yawned. "The way I look at it, it's more up to Munford here than it is to Burton.