

CHAPTER III

WHEN THE DARK WENT AWAY

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General Freight Department
CALIFORNIA CONSOLIDATED
RAILWAY COMPANY

ROBERT MITCHELL,
General Freight Agent.
Walk in!

THIS was the sign on the door that John Hampstead had opened every morning for seven years. This morning he did not open it, and there was something like consternation when as late as nine-thirty the chair of the big, amiable, stenographic drudge was still vacant. Old Heitmuller, the chief clerk, after swearing his way helplessly from one point of the compass to another, was about to dispatch the office boy to Hampstead's residence.

Inside, and unaware of all this pother, sat the General Freight Agent. Big of body, with the topography of his father's heath upon his wide face, soft in the heart and hard in the head, Robert Mitchell was a man of no airs. His origin was probably shanty Irish, and he didn't care who suspected it. By painful labor, a ready smile, a hearty laugh, a square deal to his company and as square a deal to the public as he could give—"consistently"—he had got to his present modest eminence. He was going higher and was not particular who suspected that