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## Jim Goodwin's Real Asset

(Continued from page 8.)

trance. The boy kept his eyes fixed on the rug before him. Twice he tried to speak, but the words refused to come. At last he could stand the suspense no longer.

"May I have my job back?" he blurted.

Mr. Randall sat quite still, evidently considering the request; the expression on his face was non-committal. Jim shifted his weight from one perfectly shod foot to the other, and fumbled his gaily beribboned hat.

"I've simply got to have it back, sir. I didn't realize what Randall & Co. meant to me until I had quit. I—I couldn't bear to be barred from it forever."

He drew a purple-bordered handkerchief from the pocket set slantwise in the breast of his coat and mopped his brow.

"Of course," he said, returning to the attack, "I wouldn't expect my old position. If you will only take me back, I'll do anything—I'll start in at filing letters—or running errands—or sweeping and dusting, even."

Mr. Randall glanced whimsically at the pale-hued kid gloves adorning the hands of the applicant for the sweeping-and-dusting job. He settled down in his chair, his face sobering.

"James," he said, at last, "I don't want any man in my employ who is encumbered with superfluous money—with money that he has not earned in promoting the welfare of the establishment. The services of such a man, I find, are not conducive to the best interests of the—ah—the house. Therefore—"

"But, Mr. Randall," interrupted Jim eagerly, "suppose that my money had been—had been—" He paused, a dull red mounting to cheeks and brow.

Mr. Randall noted the flush with secret gratification. Hastening to the boy's aid, he said:

"In that case I would consider the matter. We'll say no more about your inheritance. I shall assume that you have been unfortunate in your investments."

Jim fidgeted miserably. Mr. Randall decided with his usual suddenness.

"All right, James," he said, with his quick smile, "you may go to work."

\* \* \*

JIM GOODWIN, unfortunately, was hopelessly mediocre in the methods that he adopted to make good. It requires no particular brilliance of intellect to be on the job early and late; one's life is anything but spectacular if he devotes it solely to the best interest of the employer that pays his wages. It would hardly seem an index to cleverness that a young man should finish up his own tasks and then, cheerfully and without comment, commence on those left over by the shirks in the little community about him. Surely, this is no way for one to make a name for himself in the busy, selfish world. He gets no thanks for such a foolish proceeding. Not all employers would notice it; some would, however. Mr. Randall did.

One day, at the end of the usual monthly conference—Jim had worked up to his old position—Mr. Randall seemed loath to end the interview. He introduced topic after topic of general interest, letting his conversation ramble on with no seeming definite end in view. Jim listened patiently, a queer, uncomfortable emotion welling up inside that blurred his eyes. He understood it; Mr. Randall was growing old.

In the middle of an interminable sentence he stopped, his eyes regaining, for the moment, their eager, interested look.

"James," he said, "are you aware that your work has been exceedingly good since your—er—reconstruction period?"

The young man looked up proudly. "I admit that I realize it," he said, with calm assurance. "One usually knows when he has done well, sir. That knowledge is the chief reward."

"The chief reward—yes—the chief reward." Mr. Randall's glance wavered.

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