

With the trembling courage of a coward, he opened the door of room 513; saw with sickening heart the strange face at his desk, shook the flabby hand of Heitmuller, and inwardly braced himself to enter for the last time between the double doors, where presently he confessed his plight as if it had been a crime.

"You don't imagine we would let you go, do you?" Mr. Mitchell asked, while an expression of amazement grew upon his face till it became a laugh. "Why, Jack" — Mr. Mitchell had never called him Jack before — "we should have to pay you a salary just to stick around and keep the rest of us straight."

The stenographer gulped. It was not the first note of praise he had ever received from this kindly railroad man, but it was the first time Mr. Mitchell or any one else in that whole office had ever acknowledged to John that he was valuable for what he knew as well as for what he beat out of his finger-tips.

"You are going to be my private secretary," explained Mr. Mitchell, still chuckling at the simplicity of John. "I have few letters to write, and you know enough to do most of them without dictation. You keep me reminded of things; handle my telephone calls and appointments. Gallagher says your eyes will probably give you no trouble whatever under these conditions. The salary will be fifteen dollars more a month."

The big awkward man was too confusedly grateful and overwhelmed even to attempt to murmur his thanks. Instead, he did a thing of unheard-of boldness. He reached over and touched the General Freight Agent on the arm,— just stabbed him in the upper, fleshy part of the arm with a thrust of his stiff fingers, accompanying the act with a monosyllabic croak. It was a clumsy touch, and it was presuming; but to a man of understanding, it was eloquent.