

the third or fourth they made good their promise. One lurching hip joint banged the drawn-out leaf of the chief clerk's desk, sweeping a shower of papers to the floor.

"John — dammit!" snapped Heitmuller irritably. The other hip caracoled against the unopened half of the double doors as John yawed through. The door complained loudly, rattling upon its hinges and in its brazen sockets, so that for a moment there was clatter and disturbance from one end of the office to the other.

The orange shipper started nervously, and the chief clerk, cocking his head gander-wise, gazed in disgust at the confusion on the floor, while far within Robert Mitchell, the General Freight Agent of the California Consolidated Railway, lifted a massive face from his desk with a look of mild reproof in his small blue eyes.

Yet when the huge stenographer came back, and with another scuffling of clumsy feet stooped to retrieve the litter about Heitmuller's revolving chair, he seemed so regretful and his features lighted with such a helplessly apologetic smile that even his awkwardness appeared commendable, since it was so obviously seasoned with the grace of perfectly good intent.

Appreciation of this was advertised in the forgiving chuckle of the chief clerk who, standing now at the rail, remarked *sotto voce* to the orange shipper: "John is as good as a vaudeville act!"

At this the red moustaches undulated appreciatively, while the two "mourners" laughed so audibly that the awkward man, once more in his chair, darted an embarrassed glance at them, and the red flush came again to his face. He suspected they were laughing at him, and as if to comfort himself, a finger and thumb went into his right vest pocket and drew out a clipping from the advertising columns of the morning paper. Holding it deep in his hand, he read furtively: