

Brown's Job

by F. R. Feland

Brown is gone, and many men in the trade are wondering who is going to get Brown's job.

There has been considerable speculation about this. Brown's job was reputed to be a good job. Brown's former employers, wise, grey-eyed men, have had to sit still and repress amazement, as they listened to bright, ambitious young men and dignified older ones seriously apply for Brown's job.

Brown had a big chair and a wide, flat-topped desk covered with a sheet of glass. Under the glass was a map of the United States. Brown had a salary of thirty thousand dollars a year. And twice a year Brown made a "trip to the coast" and called on every one of the firm's distributors.

He never tried to sell anything. Brown wasn't exactly in the sales department. He visited with the distributors, called on a few dealers, and once in a while made a little talk to a bunch of salesmen. Back at the office, he answered most of the important complaints, although Brown's job wasn't to handle complaints. Brown wasn't in the credit department either, but vital questions of credit got to Brown, somehow or other, and Brown would smoke and talk and tell a joke, and untwist his telephone cord and tell the credit manager what to do.

Whenever Mr. Wythe, the impulsive little president, working like a beaver, would pick up a bunch of papers and peer into a particularly troublesome or messy subject, he had a way of saying, "What does Brown say? What does Brown say? What the hell does Brown say? – Well, why don't you do it, then?"

And *that* was disposed.

Or when there was a difficulty that required quick action and lots of it, together with tact and lots of that, Mr. Wythe would say, "Brown, you handle that."

And then one day the directors met unofficially and decided to fire the superintendent of No. 2 Mill. Brown didn't hear of this until the day after the letter had gone. "What do you think of it, Brown?" asked Mr. Wythe. Brown said, "That's all right. The letter won't be delivered until tomorrow morning, and I'll get him on the wire and have him start East tonight. Then I'll have his stenographer send the letter back here, and I'll destroy it before he sees it." The others agreed, "That's the thing to do."

Brown knew the business he was in. He knew the men he worked with. He had a whole lot of sense, which he apparently used without consciously summoning his judgment to his assistance. He seemed to think good sense. Brown is gone, and men are applying for Brown's job. Others are asking who is going to get Brown's job – bright, ambitious young men, dignified older men.

Men who are not the son of Brown's mother, nor the husband of Brown's wife, nor the product of Brown's childhood – men who never suffered Brown's sorrows nor felt his joys, men who never loved the things that Brown loved nor feared the things he feared – are asking for Brown's job.

Don't they know that Brown's chair and his desk, with the map under the glass top, and his pay envelope, are not Brown's job? Don't they know that they might as well apply to the Methodist Church for John Wesley's job? Brown's former employers know it. Brown's job is where Brown is.

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F.R. Feland was the Treasurer of the advertising agency BBDO, and he wrote the text in 1920 for the firm's internal publication, "The Wedge." It was later published in the *New York Times* as a recruiting ad. "Brown's Job" is a legend in the advertising industry, and is considered one of the 100 greatest advertisements. The business world has changed over the past 100 years, but the fundamentals Feland addresses are timeless.