

SILENT SAM

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THE deputy sheriff who brought Sam from the county jail to the state penitentiary came always with one prisoner at a time, because he traveled on a railway pass and charged the state with mileage and expenses for each trip. He would have preferred to bring several prisoners together and make fewer trips, but this would have reduced his profits. He had a wife and two daughters to provide for; and though the trips were a weariness, he sacrificed himself for his family.

He was a bald and genial Welshman of the name of Johns, unhealthy looking, flat in the chest and flabbily heavy-waisted, as if the weight of his flesh had settled down toward the seat of the office-chair in which he spent so much of his time. He had a native genius for gossip — interesting human gossip, particularly of little political scandals and partisan intrigues. It was one of the jokes of his circle that he had been “born to wear a Mother Hubbard and gabble over a back-yard fence.” He would talk to a prisoner as insistently as to a judge, with all the democracy of garrulousness, on the same terms of common human frailty, in a loud