

III

It was a week later that he returned to the penitentiary (with a young burglar who whistled rag-time sibilantly through his teeth all the time, to show his courage). And in the meantime Daneen had become "Silent Sam" to the whole prison. He had been put among the dish-washers in the kitchen, and no one had been able to get a word out of him. For two days he had held back the line by the fumbling slowness of his movements, which seemed blindly automatic rather than guided by any attentive intelligence; and because dish-washing is a rushed and hasty affair, particularly in the evening when the kitchen squad are the last to reach their beds, the men harried him with muttered imprecations, tried to jostle him into greater activity, and complained of him to the "trusty" who was their foreman.

On the morning of the third day, Sam dropped his arms into the dish-water without even rolling up his sleeves. When the trusty came to remonstrate, he seemed unable to control his hands, staring at them like an idiot when the tin dishes slipped through his fingers and clattered on the stone flagging of the floor. The steward finally took him away and put him with the men who sat all day peeling the potatoes that were boiled for the prisoners by the barrel.

Here he did better for a time, hunched on a stool, scraping away mechanically at the big Western tubers with a dull knife, in fits of industry that alternated