

THE JERICHO P. O.

POSTMASTER PERKINS TELLS OF THE
SAD CASE OF SAM HOPKINS.

He Was Accused of Stealing a Hog and Was Convicted and Imprisoned For It—Then the Neighbors Began to Doubt His Guilt.

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JERICHO folks don't count much on Sam Hopkins. Sam was lazy and shiftless and fond of whisky, and it was suspected for a good many years that he stole most of his vegetables.

It was the general opinion that he would some day land in jail. One day Ezra Taylor missed one of his hogs, and after searching over most of North America a lot of fresh pork was found in Sam Hopkins' house, and his wife confessed that Sam stole the hog. He didn't have much to say about it himself, thinking as they couldn't find the hogs and bristles he was safe from the law, but they went ahead and made out a case, and Sam was sent to prison for three years. Nobody had anything to say in his favor until he'd served two years on his term. He was getting along all right, having gained fifteen pounds of fat and being lazier than ever, but his wife broke her leg, and that set people to talking again. Ebenezer Holdfast was the first man to come out in a square told way. One



EBENEZER SPOKE UP.

night, as the usual crowd sat around the stove in the postoffice waiting for the mail, Ebenezer spoke up and said: "Boys, whoever stole Ezra Taylor's hog must have had to drive it a mile and a half in the dark and rain. Then he had to kill and scald it and cut it up and salt the meat."

"Of course he did," replies three or four in chorus.

"Well, does any man here believe that Sam Hopkins ever went to all that trouble? Not by a jugful! He was too durned lazy for that, as we all know. You couldn't have hired him to drive a hog a mile for a five dollar bill."

"How did he get the fresh pork?" asks Moses Turner.

"Dunno. He said he found it in the road, you remember. Sam might have got up enough ambition to carry home a hundred pounds of meat he'd stumbled over in the road. It's always been my opinion that we hustled Sam a leetle too hard."

"Can anything be done about it now?" asks Aaron Scott as he hitches around on the head of a barrel in a conscience-stricken way.

"Can't say," replies Ebenezer, "but I'm going to think it over. If Sam Hopkins didn't steal that hog, and I don't see how any one can believe he did, the governor ought to pardon him out of prison. I don't say we'd have the band out to meet him and kill any fatted calf, but it would ease some of our consciences a leetle."

That was the beginning, and the thing grew right along. When folks came to take Sam's laziness into account, they began to believe that there was something queer about the case, and after a time a public meeting was called to get the popular sentiment. Ebenezer Holdfast was made chairman, and he had a speech all ready. He'd been hunting up his figures, and he had 'em to burl at the meeting. He went clear back to the days of the Roman empire and proved that no man too lazy to wash his face once a month or to cut his toe nails once in six had ever been convicted of stealing a hog and working all night to hide the meat. Nobody who had lost fresh pork on the highway had come forward to say so, but maybe he had dropped dead of heart disease or forgotten the circumstance.

Ebenezer was followed by Marrow-fat Johnson, who had made up his mind to say something, whether it hit the case or not. He went over one of his Fourth of July orations and got the audience to whooping, and then he wrung in part of a funeral address and got 'em to crying, and nobody noticed that he left Sam Hopkins out of the matter altogether. When he hadn't any wind left, Levi Goodheart took his place. Levi was on the jury that found Sam guilty, and he was free to say that the fresh pork had received more attention than Sam's chronic laziness. He had been experimenting a little. He had tried to drive a hog a mile and a half on a dark and rainy night, and he had made a miserable failure of it. At the end of twenty rods the hog had turned and bolted, and after two hours of dead work things were where they

started from. It had seemed conclusive enough on the trial that Sam must have stolen that hog, but it didn't look that way now. If a petition went to the governor, it should bear the name of Levi Goodheart as one of the signers.

Adinron White was the only one who spoke in opposition to a pardon. He had known Sam Hopkins all his life and knew that he was once run over by a load of hay because he was too lazy to step aside, but he contended that there were times in the life of every lazy man when he was suddenly aroused to action. He cited many cases to prove this. Sam had left the postoffice at 9 o'clock that evening with a codfish under his arm. Coming across the hog all of a sudden, he had contrasted salt cod with fresh pork, and his dormant ambition had been aroused. An appeal to a lazy man's appetite was better than a skyrocket to arouse him. He felt to pity Mrs. Hopkins in her misfortune, and it was just possible that Sam was an innocent man, but it would do no great harm to let him remain in prison a few months more.

Adinron was small potatoes in that crowd, however. The tide had turned in Sam's favor, and some of the last speakers went so far as to declare that the governor ought to be impeached if he didn't pardon him. Squar Taylor wrote out a petition, and the folks were tumbling over each other to sign it when Lish Billings came in. Lish was also on that jury, and the chairman rose up and softly observed:

"As Elisha Billings has just entered the room, we will wait for some remarks from him."

"What about?" asks Lish.

"About the Sam Hopkins case. We have set the machinery in motion to get his pardon, and I hope you will sign this paper."

"I shouldn't do much worryin' about Sam if I was you," drawled Lish as he began to whittle.

"But why not?"

"Because he died four weeks ago; got too fat and lazy to draw his breath any longer!"

M. QUAD.

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