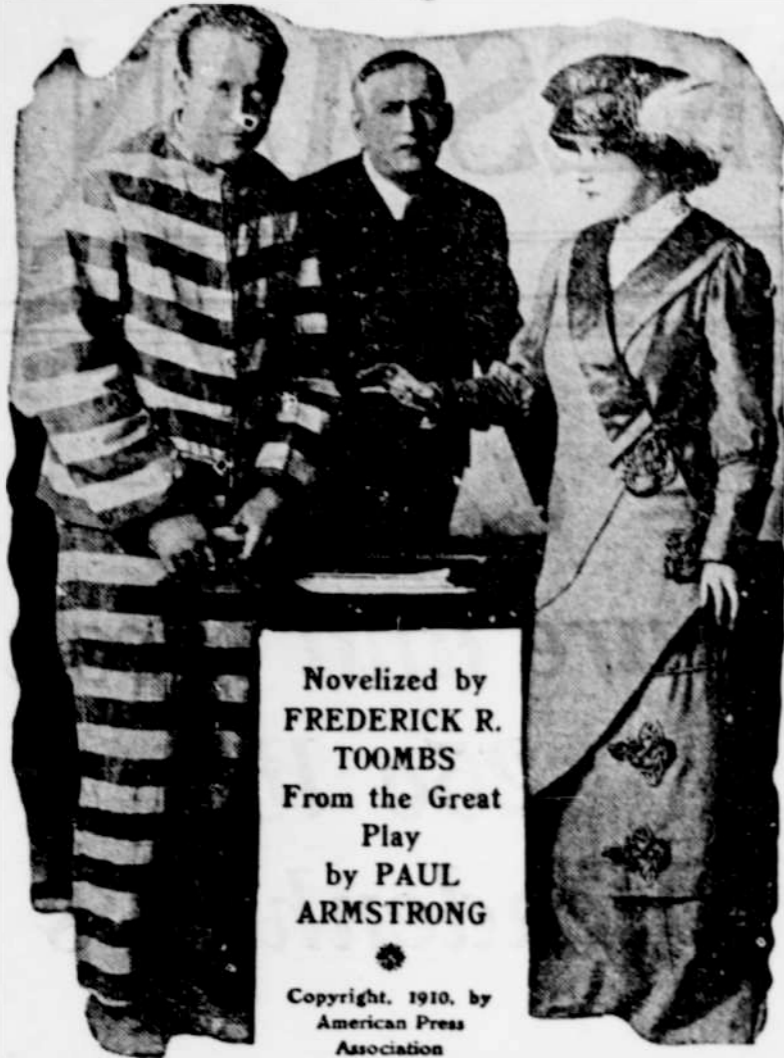


"Alias Jimmy Valentine"



Novelized by
**FREDERICK R.
TOOMBS**
From the Great
Play
by **PAUL
ARMSTRONG**

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JIMMY VALENTINE, WARDEN HANDLER AND ROSE LANE.

PROLOGUE.

You're not so sure about Jimmy Valentine as you might be—until the very last chapter, when he "finds himself" in a scene that is as cleverly conceived as anything ever presented in American fiction or drama. What you are sure of as you read—very, very sure, in fact—is that you are following the story of a most interesting character, one whose doings on the stage have held the interest of many thousands. Jimmy Valentine becomes a "crook," with most of the failings and weaknesses of a man who doesn't recognize the difference between mine and thine, but he winds up as a well, read the story and find out for yourself how he winds up. It will be worth your while, for this absorbing, thrilling romance of both the underworld and the upper world as well proves that a man has never sunk so low but that he may again regain the honor he has thrust aside when the true spirit of manhood throbs within him.

[The Armstrong drama, of which the following is the novelized version, is based on O. Henry's story, "A Retrieved Reformation."]

CHAPTER I.

THE warden's office in Sing Sing prison is not a pleasant spot in which to linger, whether you may be innocent or whether guilty of a crime. And no more reassuring could be termed the abrupt, dominating personage who presided over the dismal destinies of the office and institution when occurred the events chronicled in this narrative.

That a man fated by his choice of occupation to daily associate intimately with criminals of high and low degree and to come constantly in personal contact with all the misery and depravity going to form the life of a state prison—that a man so fated should find exquisite enjoyment in accentuating these depressing conditions is surely a contradiction of what ordinarily would be expected. Humans of normal mold are generally occupied in ameliorating the evils and annoyances of their surroundings. That is nature's way. Not so with Warden Handler. That which is bad can be made to be worse. Innocence can be shown to be guilt—with the aid of trained witnesses. Repentance is always insincere, and if it is not it can be made so. A murderer should be made to remember always his ignominy. A thief should be reminded of his amateurish clumsiness which led him into the clutches of the central office men. That was Handler's philosophy. That was Handler's way.

And underlying all his petty oppression and gross inhumanity was a cause, deep rooted in a system of his own and of a race of jail keepers that went before him. Exposure? Removal? Bah! He had considered all that. And, if worse came to worse, had he not friends in the state senate? Was there not a governor who would need his assistance in the state convention when it came to a question of delegates? Clearly the possibility of removal was the least of his worries. Warden Handler sat at his polished oak desk in the middle of his office. At his left was another desk used by Smith, his secretary. At his back the

barred windows looked out into the prison yard, where at prescribed intervals gangs of convicts were allowed to take a brief outing to breathe in the air from the bills that mocked them, thus to prolong the lives of those who hoped to live as well as of those who hoped to die, thus to strengthen the nerves of the unfortunate whom justice had decreed must some day at sunrise go to a shadowy



"CHICAGO WHITEY" HAD ESCAPED.

little stone room to sit in a sinister wooden chair equipped with stout straps and electric wires.

The warden was in his customary pessimistic mood. Good reason for it this time, too, for "Chicago Whitey," a trusty, doing a "bit" of seven years, had got through the guards and dropped over the wall on to the top of a car of an "up bound" freight train the evening before. Not a trace of him yet. Handler's pride in his record as a pen master was at stake, and he blamed himself and the whole universe for the official explanations which must soon be forthcoming. His dark eyes gleamed venomously; his short cropped black hair fairly bristled with the rage that surged in the thick skull beneath it; his strong, square jaws were grimly set, though now and again his upper lip would curl slightly back as he gritted his teeth, revealing a row of tobacco stained incisors. Yes, Warden Handler was disturbed.

He fingered a glistening letter opener impatiently, and his lips seemed to move.

"Serves me right for makin' a 'trusty' out of a bloomin' yegg," he muttered. "Might have known one of them wouldn't stay put in one place any length of time, not even in a coffin."

The door at Handler's right opened. He half turned and glowered at a trusty who shuffled in, carrying a bottle of drinking water.

"It's pretty soft for you around here, eh?" grunted the warden.

The convict hastened to place the bottle in the holder at the sound of the official's voice. He then hurried toward the door, mumbling a faint "Yes, sir," as he went.

"Suppose he'll be tryin' the west wall next," commented Handler, pounding his fist on the desk. "But I'll trim 'em all yet. I'll!"

"A visitor for you," announced his secretary, Smith, entering. "His name is like a roll call in the German navy." He handed Handler a card.

The warden took the pasteboard. "Blück-en-dol-fen-bach," he read slowly. "A man with a name like that has no right on the outside of a prison. What's his graft?"

"He has a letter from the state board

of prisons. He has invented a lock, I believe, that—"

"Let's have him." The secretary ushered in an earnest looking man with long, wavy black hair. He was short and thin.

"I am Gustave Blückerdolfenbach, the great inventor," said the visitor to the warden. "I have a lock for you to take the prisoners mit." He bowed to the warden and rubbed his hands complacently.

"So I hear. Your lock can't be picked, eh?"

The inventor raised his hands in horror at the suggestion.

"Picked! Picked!" he ejaculated. "My lock picked? The whole world it haff tried it—Germany, France, England—and even the cleverest thieves in Naples. The whole wide world it all it haff not open without they the key haff."

"So I've heard, but still it might be picked at that."

"It is maybe I don't understand picked—you mean open mit not my key?"

"Yes; with a wire or—"

"A wire!" exclaimed the inventor. "My lock open—that I haff spend fourteen years to perfect? Nein. It is laughter, yas, but—"

Handler was growing impatient.

"It will be accepted only on the condition that it cannot be opened without a key," he pronounced.

The inventor drew himself up proudly. "Yaw, and I challenge the world," he cried confidently.

"Well, all the world's champions are in America, you know," answered the warden, "and when it comes to genius in mechanics most of them are in jail. We'll have it tried before noon."

The visitor took his precious lock from his pocket and laid it on the table in front of the warden, saying: "I keep the key. Now the world cannot my lock open."

"It looks good," commented Handler. "If you care to wait I'll have it tested."

"I wait. I lofe to see the expert frown and smile and give it up. It is my joy."

As the inventor went out to await the test George Doyle, a detective credited with a long list of important captures, entered the office and saluted Handler.

"Isn't Bill Avery to be let loose today?" queried the newcomer.

"Don't know. Is he?" returned the warden indifferently.

Doyle gazed at the other significantly.

"Yes," he said. "I hear he's very friendly with Jimmy Valentine. The way Valentine's lawyer is going after a new trial makes things look dangerous."

"What about the man you had make friends with Valentine in order to get him to talk about himself—to give himself away?" the warden asked shrewdly.

Doyle shrugged.

"Nothing to it. Valentine wouldn't get confidential with him, but if I could get Avery on my staff to work for me and squeal on Valentine I'd get him. I'd be able to keep him from getting a new trial."

Thus did the detective describe in his conversation a small part of the system which his fellow man hunters find of utility in serving their particular ends, whatever they may be—the "stool pigeon" system, which consists of forcing or persuading released criminals to spy on their companions and to convey to the police the information they procure.

Sometimes the detective uses the knowledge so gained for the purpose



DETECTIVE GEORGE DOYLE ENTERED THE OFFICE.

of arresting a fugitive, again for securing a division of ill gotten spoils, again for the purpose of obtaining witnesses who will find it policy to commit perjury at a trial, and so the underworld grows suspicious of its neighbors and finds danger lurking where friendship's smile is sought. The warden resumed the conversation.

"I don't know about Avery's release," he said. "Oh, Smith," turning to his assistant, "where's the list?"

"On your desk."

"Oh, yes. Avery here?"

"He's waiting outside."

"Let's have him."

"He's a tough old boy, this Avery," commented Doyle, "but he's my one best chance in trying to get the goods on Valentine."

The secretary brought in Bill Avery, whose gray hair, ashen face and stooping figure indicated that prison fare was not rejuvenating, although there was a strange sharpness in his eyes. In his glance, that a long career of furtive watchfulness had developed.

"You're finally out, eh?" greeted the prison master. "You've done nice?"

"Eight years ten months, sir."

"Treated pretty well, weren't you?"

Avery gazed intently at Smith, then he replied to his questioner:

"You've never heard me complain, have you?"

"No, and it wouldn't have got you much."

"I saw that the first day in."

"Well, now what? Going to turn square?" Handler sneered as he spoke.

The released convict looked the warden squarely in the eyes.

"You know I am, sir."

Handler laughed uproariously.

"I know; they all say so. Oh, here's an old friend of yours, Avery." The speaker pointed to Doyle.

"I don't remember him," replied the old man after a searching suspicious inspection of the detective.

"You don't remember me—eh, Bill?" Doyle laughed.

Avery suddenly exclaimed:

"I got you now. You're Doyle—still a copper?"

"Still a copper, Bill."

"You ain't got anything on me to hold over me when I get out."

"That's true, Bill. Anyway, this time I'm your friend," said the detective in earnest manner.

Avery threw his head back.

"My friend?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

The warden could barely suppress a grin.

"Yes; I think I know where I can get you a pretty good job," went on Doyle engagingly.

"Nobody wants me," said Avery dejectedly.

"I think I can arrange it."

"A job in a laundry, eh?" snapped the ex-prisoner. "I've been a wash-woman here."

"There are lots of jobs where you don't have to know a trade. Can't Bill sit down, warden?"

"Why, certainly," responded Handler.

Avery, voicing his thanks, seated himself at the warden's table.

Doyle came close to the old man.

"There's one thing you want to do, Bill, above everything else—keep out of bad company," he warned.

Avery hesitated. He glanced from the detective across to the warden.

"I'm getting out of bad company today," he replied briefly.

Doyle started forward.

"Yes, and it's a good thing you are, for you're getting away from Valentine."

"Valentine?"

"Yes," insisted Doyle. "It doesn't do you any good to know a man like that. I suppose you know he killed Cotton so he wouldn't have to divide the swag with him." The other shook his head decisively.

"I don't know anything about it."

The detective now spoke sharply.

"And what's he got against you? He sent out word that—the questioner suddenly shifted—"what message did he give you to take out to—to?"

Avery drew back involuntarily.

"He didn't give me any message," he cried out in positive tones.

Then both the officials noticed that the ex-convict's eyes slowly drooped and became directed to the floor.

"I could do you a good turn—if you trailed along with me," suggested the detective.

The released criminal brushed aside the invitation. He rose stiffly from his chair.

"I'm on to you, Doyle. If you're to be my friend I know that I've got to be a stool pigeon, eh? Well, I'm old, and I don't know where I'm goin' when I leave here. But I'll take the river out there," pointing over his shoulder with his thumb, "for mine before I play that game. I tell you"—the old man's voice rose to an indignant pitch—"it's only fly guys like you, Doyle, that's too lazy or too ignorant to do their work themselves that has to have stool pigeons on your staff to do your work for you. Why, you couldn't nab a twelve-year-old 'dip' if you didn't have some poor nerve broken sucker of a 'stool' to go out ahead and make the job easy for you."

Both Doyle and the warden, enraged at the old man, lunged viciously at him to wreak vengeance upon him for his denunciation.

CHAPTER II.

WITH an agility surprisingly in contrast with his former decrepit attitude, the intended victim seized his chair and raised it threateningly over his head. The two officers halted. Doyle, regaining a calm demeanor, through the excellent self control which had become one of his valuable assets in his business, spoke easily.

"So you don't want a friend, old fellow?"

Avery lowered the chair.

"No," he snorted, "not any friends that are coppers. Thieves are bad enough."

The point of the reply did not escape Doyle.

"Well," he responded angrily, "you have got me for an enemy all the rest

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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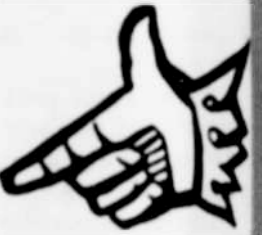
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