

"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.

"So, secretary?" both the ladies cried simultaneously.
"I hold that honored position now," resumed Mrs. Moore, "but were you



THERE STOOD JIMMY VALENTINE.

willing to accept it we would pay a salary. We agree that your knowledge of the—"

"The inside," suggested Valentine. "Exactly—would be a great help to us."

"Doubtless."
"Then you accept, Mr. Valentine?"
"No, ladies," decisively.
"You refuse the position?"
"Yes, ladies. In fact, I decline all your positions."

The Gate of Hope representatives rose and assumed expressions of extreme indignation at the unexpected repulse and refusal of their well meant but ill advised offers.

"Ingratitude!" they exclaimed.
Valentine, who had deprecated their advances because of their evident mistrust of him in spite of his pardon, as shown by the nature of the position they had offered him, resolved on a course of action that would, he thought, dispose of them and at the same time afford him a long craved amusement.

"No, please do not say that," he protested elaborately. "No, no. I refuse the positions you offer me because I fear the world would misunderstand."

"What do you mean?" asked one of the ladies.
"Oh, you see," went on Valentine whimsically, "if I accepted help from you ladies the world might say that

you—er—you were in love with me!"
"Oh-h-h!" ejaculated the astonished ladies.

"Let the world say what it dare!" proclaimed the pedantic little Mrs. Moore, lifting her chin defiantly.

"And so goodbye, my dear ladies," said Valentine, bowing almost to the floor.

With anger in their glance and their walk, chins and noses pointing almost toward the ceiling, the two members of the Gate of Hope society stalked out of the hotel parlor.

Jimmy Valentine, chuckling in his amusement, sank into a chair to await the return of Miss Lane and her father, Miss Lane—Rose Lane—the girl who had saved him from the horrors of that "bit of ten" at Sing Sing. How beautiful she was, he murmured. She had a heart. And she cared something for No. 1289; that was apparent. Just how much did she care? Just what did she care? If a man lived straight he might in time win such a girl for his own. Yes; that was life. And Jimmy Valentine now had his chance to "go straight," he reasoned. Stranger things had happened. The girl had revealed already had she not, that she knew a prison sentence could not kill the good in a man if a single germ of it yet lingered in him? The old life was behind him now. The future gleamed bright and beckoned him on. Never again would he—

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" A harsh whisper hissed its way into his ears.

Jimmy Valentine started up in amaze. That voice, that whisper! He had not heard it since the night the "bulls" had broken up that midnight surprise party in the vaults of the Fifth National bank.

Hardly believing his ears, hardly daring to turn, yet he did turn, and he saw, crouching half behind one of the red velvet portieres of one of the hotel parlor entrances, the figure of Red—the face and the brick red hair of Red Flanagan, his old time coworker.

CHAPTER VII.

JIMMY VALENTINE slowly recovered from the shock he experienced at beholding before him the man who had in the old days been his accomplice in many questionable adventures. No; he had concluded wrongly. No; he was not yet free from all the associations of the years past—those years which he was endeavoring to forget.

"Hello, Red," he finally addressed Flanagan. "Come out from behind the curtain. The coast is clear for you. How did you know I was here?" Red came forth. "Oh, leave it to me, Jimmy, to keep track of an old pal." He held out his hand, which Valentine listlessly shook.

Red could not understand his former companion's indifferent manner. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing."
"Aw, cut it out. Somethin's got you guessin', an' so don't try to kid me."

The released convict looked meditatively at Red. Then he spoke.

"Red, did you ever do a bit?"
"Sure—Joliet."

"And you have been in one of those rotten holes and still think it's a good game?"

"You've weakened—eh?" sneered Red.
"I've turned square."

"You're crazy."
"No; it's only the man who thinks he can beat the law who's crazy," said Valentine.

"You'd a won out if it hadn't been for that Cotton, who blew on you because you beat him out of a dame."

Valentine turned and clutched him by the arm.

"You rat, don't you ever speak of her again or I'll murder you." He threw Red roughly away from him.

"Now, get out of here and forget you know me."

"Good God, Jimmy!" exclaimed the other. "I wouldn't say anything to hurt your feelings. Why, I'd do anything for you; I'd a done your bit if I could have. Why, I'd go to b—i for you."

"Will you turn square with me? That's all I want of you now. Let's you and I start now and from this minute on go square. If we starve in the streets, will you do that, Red?" Valentine spoke in intense earnestness.

Red hesitated. "One job to get a stake and I'll go you," he said eagerly.

Valentine appreciated the character little unwillingness of Red to leave his lifelong vocation—that of riding strong boxes and safes deemed by their manufacturers to be "fire and burglar proof." True, the dames were sometimes fooled by the thicknesses of metal and asbestos, but rarely had Red Flanagan been fooled by mere inanimate metal or time locks—rarely, indeed, when accompanied by No. 1289, the man who, as Warden Handler described him, opened safes solely by the sense of touch. Valentine knew the hold that the unlawful life action, had followed invariably secured on its votaries, and he was not surprised when Red hesitated to leave it for the dubious rewards of "going straight."

"No," answered Valentine; "nothing for me but work from now on—work, honest work, hard manual labor if necessary. I've quit the old game for keeps, Red."

Red, plainly nonplused at this revolutionary change of heart in his former "pal," stood speechless for a moment. Jimmy Valentine, the best man in the country in his line, had "turned square." Merciful saints! Was the world coming to an end? At last he recovered his ability to talk.

He had an inspiration that he thought might win Valentine over, might make him come to his senses.

"What about the coppers?" suggested Red. "Are you dippy enough to think they'd let you turn square?"

"Yes. Why not?" retorted Valentine like a flash. "What have they got to do with honest men?"

Again did Red find cause to actually doubt the sanity of his ex-confederate, for here he was overlooking entirely in his childish reasoning the remorseless, dismal certainty that the detectives would force him to "peach" on his old pals or any one else in the underworld of whom he could obtain information desired by the police. In short, Valentine had overlooked the "stool pigeon game," the despair of every crook who had ever tried to "go straight."

"Aw, don't kid yourself," warned Red. "The copper'll let you be square if you're a stool pigeon. If you tip off old pals. No other way."

"Absurd! How, for instance, could they do me?"

"Absurd, eh? What about Kid Steele? He turned square, but he wouldn't squeal, and job after job they threw him out of till he was hungry in the street. Then a copper offered to stake him to a feed if he'd turn up an old pal. And he murdered the cop on the spot, and now he's doing life. Turn square, eh? That means be a stool or a bum in our game."

Red raised his hands protestingly and turned his face away from Valentine.

"Beat the coppers," insisted the other. "Get away where they can't find you. We can do that."

"Yes, we can," Red again faced his friend. "Why, Doyle is in town to see you now."

"Doyle here?" in alarm.

"Yes. I met him when he got off the 'rattler.' He's going to give you your orders, and you'll have to do as he tells you if you turn square. He knows you beat it. He was laying for Avery when he came out and told him to report once a month. And what about Avery? You sent him to me, and we've been at work on something."

"Where is Avery?" asked Valentine quickly.

"Want to see him?"

"Yes; I can explain better." Valentine crossed the parlor and peered through the portieres.

Red went to the opposite doorway and softly called, "Oh, Bill!"

Avery, dressed in a roughly cut ready made suit of clothes and looking in much better health than he did on the day he defied Detective Doyle and finished his term in Sing Sing, came slowly into the hotel parlor.

"Hello, Bill! You're taking a chance," greeted Valentine, "and you are, too, Red."

(To be Continued)

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