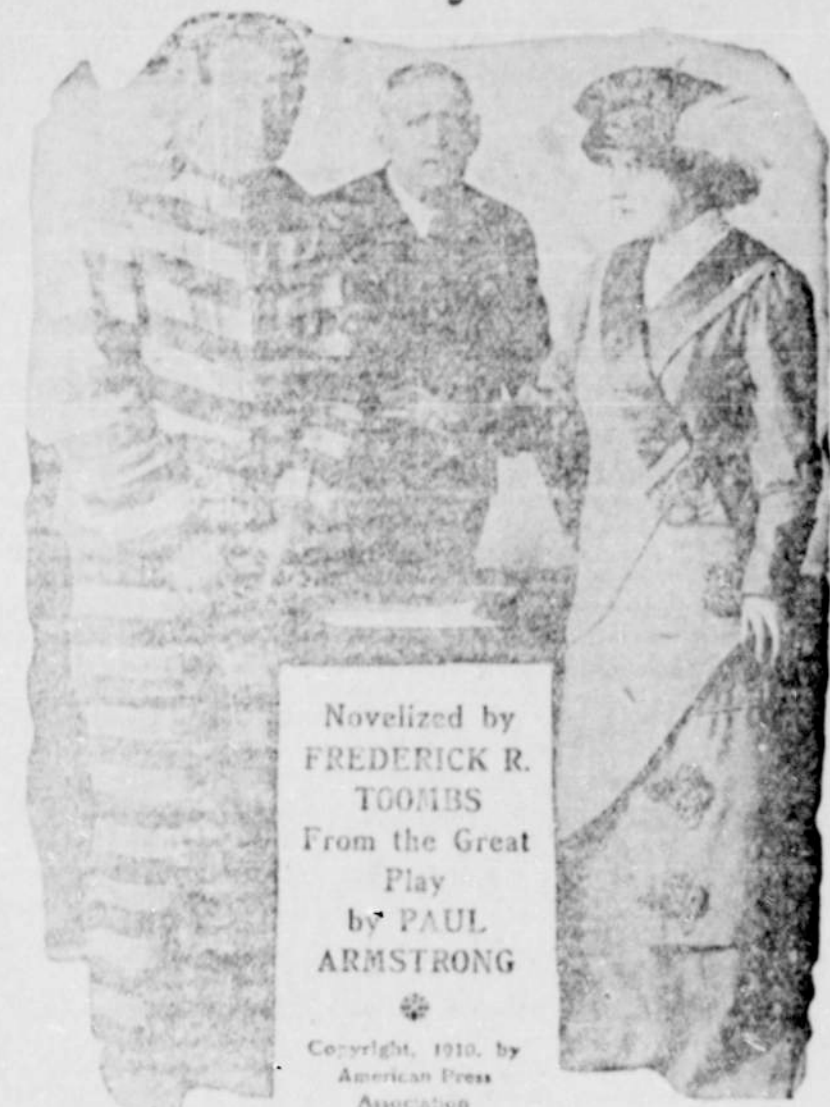


"Alias Jimmy Valentine"



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

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JIMMY VALENTINE, WARDEN HANDLER AND ROSE LANE.

"Well, you better get me out of here, I'm going to have hell for my both hands in a minute." He reached for his hat and stick.

"No, you're not," put in Valentine. "Come on, Red," he said, waiting to the vault door. "I'm going to prove to Bill that he's honest. He's going to watch that money till we come back."

Avery cried out in protest, but Red followed his superior, and the three went off. The man who had confessed to his friends the weakness that he well knew yet lurked within him, was left alone in the banking office before a tray containing \$25,000 in cash. With a catch was the door leading into the open hallway through which it was but a few seconds' dash to the busy street, where a man would immediately be lost to view in the passing throng.

"It's a dirty trick," muttered the old man, starting after the others. "A shift of yellow light reflected from one of the golden coins caught his eye, drove him like a very flash, into the thin red blood that oozed through his hand, where it lay. He stopped. He turned full around and slowly, with hands evenly outstretched, thrust back to the table bearing the precious burden. His hands narrowed down over its pile gray even, his fingers, long talons in their curved, fleshless, began to quiver and twitch. Then Avery jerked himself away from the table. He straightened himself up and started toward the vault door, but he did so with a glance roved back to the alighting tray. He was again to it as the nervous rabbit that succumbed to the lullaby charm of the oscillating head of the binary jetton.

He stepped to the tray. He solved two hundred of hundred dollar bills, thrust them into his pockets, then clutched two more. The fever had him. He even shone with the fire of some days and some nights. His poisoned blood sang through his veins. Then he stopped once more. He raised his head.

"And have the experts after me again," he murmured thoughtfully. He laid down a package. "And double cross a job that put me straight. Not too bad now." He replaced the remainder of the money. "And could that corpse crouched over was any good?" Avery stood before the tray of money. Now he looked at the beautiful fortune with the same knowledge that he had conquered—that he had faced his greatest test and had not been found wanting.

The thought of how narrowly he had escaped committing the meanest crime of his career came over him, and he realized that he had been on the verge of plunging himself into the death-dealing life from which Valentine had rescued him. Unconsciously, he pressed him at his innermost into the self that he had cast from him. He swung his fist at the most sacred altar of gold pieces.

"Curse you, curse you!" he cried in frenzy. The tray and its contents crashed to the floor and the money scattered in all directions.

Valentine and Red, hearing the noise, came rushing in from the vault room. They saw the floor littered with banknotes and coins. And crouching forlornly in a chair was the figure of old

Bill Avery. His hands were pressed over his eyes, and he sobbed in the agony that gripped the soul which had been restored to him.

CHAPTER XIII

"I TOOK—some of—that money," Avery finally managed to say as he saw his two friends before him. "And you put it back," smiled Valentine. "The minute you touched it you found you couldn't!"

"That's it," put in Avery eagerly as he arose and proceeded to aid Red in restoring the scattered money to its place. "I couldn't take it then. Now I can go out of here and know that I'll never steal again."

"You mustn't go until Doyle comes in, for he might see you on the street," warned Valentine. "When he comes you can go out through the vault room and make your getaway while I stall him here."

In talking with Avery, Jimmy Valentine unconsciously fell into the use of the vernacular of his early vocation. With a parting handshake Avery went out into the vault room, where Red was to exhibit to him the big new safe. The assistant cashier, now that the tray of money had been replaced on the table, picked up the photograph, hung it in the place of another affixed to the wall at the right of his desk and inspected it with pronounced satisfaction.

The hall door opened, and Rose Lane came into the office. The girl was in a peculiar mood that day—there was no denying it. Valentine had always found his benefactor, young though she was, particularly difficult to fathom, and today she was twice as baffling than ever. She talked at length regarding her plans for the children's Christmas celebration, and, standing before his desk, while he stood behind it, she said, "And I want to know what you want for Christmas."

"Is there anything I could want?" he answered in low tones. "Think of what you and two short years have done for me."

"And there's never anything more you want? Don't you ever dream—dreams of, say, two years more?" She turned her eyes to the floor.

"Oh, yes, to go on as I've been going these last two, since your father gave me a position of trust, and make everything good and pile up the money for you."

She drew away from him. "Haven't you ever thought there might be something I want more than money?"

Valentine hesitated. His voice became intensely serious.

"I don't let myself think of you only as your employee," he finally answered.

Rose turned sideways to him, so that he could not see her face as she delivered her next question, although she would have given much to have been able to watch the expression of the assistant cashier—her assistant cashier—as she asked it.

"But," she ventured, "you must have thought that I would marry some day."

Silence, with Valentine fumbling in embarrassment a pencil which lay upon his desk.

"Yes—I," he began, but Rose continued his sentence for him.

"And it hurts you to think of it, doesn't it? Say it."

"Yes."

"Go on."

He could endure the situation no longer. The girl had penetrated his very soul with her questions, had uncovered in Jimmy Valentine the secrets of his new life—the secrets which he had resolved to keep buried forever. But now he must speak. He must tell her the truth about his situation as regarded her—part of the truth, at least.

"And the thought of you brings darkness, desolation," he said, keeping a firm grip on the emotions that threatened to unnerve him. "What is the use? You're all there is to live for—to just see you now and then. You're all there is to life. Men have loved and slaves have loved and animals that have been saved have loved, but never were the three loves fused in one. And you're good, and your life is clean, while mine—but you know all that." He inclined his face from her.

"I have forgotten," she said simply. "You cannot. And any day the shadow of other days may fall. But I want you to know this and believe it as your God—my love for you is a holy thing, sacred and deathless." Valentine was looking earnestly into her eyes now. His hand was resting on the desk. She seized it in hers and drew him toward her.

"Take me in your arms, Lee," she cried fervently. "I love you. I'll love you till—" Her face was upraised to his as she clung to him. He held her



HE KISSED HER AGAIN AND AGAIN.

In his arms and kissed her again and again. "How I have longed for you—years—years!" Her words were smothered in his kisses.

"There is no end to the happiness you bring," murmured Valentine at the first moment he thought he could spare his lips for conversational purposes.

"Oh," exclaimed Rose, drawing away at arm's length temporarily. "I want to tell you something, Lee."

(To be Continued)

The Cure.

"Alas, I am blind!" wailed Love. "Why don't you consult a doctor?" asked Experience. "I know a famous specialist who could cure you."

"What is his name?" asked Love. "Marriage," replied Experience.—Philadelphia Record.

Conjugal Amenities.

She—I was a fool when I married you. He—Aren't you a fool still? She—No, I am not. He—Then you should be thankful to me for reforming you.—London Tit-Bits.

Then He Went Home.

He—I dreamed of you last night. Do you ever dream of me? She (suppressing a yawn)—No, but I'd like to very much.—Detroit Free Press.

Womanlike.

Crawford—How did your wife come to buy you all those suspenders? Crabshaw—I think she wanted the pretty boxes they came in.—Judge.

We must carefully distinguish between the absence of tact and the presence of principle.—John Davidson.

His Vain Regret.

The first parents were leaving the garden together when Eve suddenly stepped behind Adam. "Age before beauty," she remarked, with more truth than modesty.

"Huh!" muttered Adam, with a boastfulness that was surprising. "If that order had been followed when the serpent was interviewed I bet we wouldn't be walking out now!"—Puck.

Queer Old Laws.

France in 1314 passed laws regulating the size of the cloak and robe, the breadth of the trimming and the number of suits possessed by each person; also the diet, including the hour of meals and the number of dishes.

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