

# PRISON DOORS OPEN AS GOLDEN-VOICED SINGER PLEADS FOR RETURN OF YOUTH TO WIFE AND BABY

## Mme. Irene Pavloska, Prima Donna of Chicago Opera Company, Whose Heart Is Reservoir of Sympathy, Comes to Aid of Joseph Vacek When Stern Officials Demanded the Youth Complete Sentence in Jail From Which He Escaped to Marry

Eight Years Ago Vacek While Defending Mother Shot His Father

SENTENCED TO SERVE 25 YEARS

Judge Who Presided at Trial Joined in Appeal for Clemency

PRISON walls, stout as they are, may crumble before the combined assaults of a sympathetic heart, shining eyes and a voice of liquid gold. The love of Romance abounds with stories of good fairies whose wailing magical words bring about almost unbelievable transformations. Who rescue Beauty in distress from the clutches of Evil, and who in general discount the malicious plans of a sometimes mean-promising Fate. It is not often that these good fairies are seen in the blood and flesh of material life, but here is the story of one in the person of Mme. Irene Pavloska, opera star, whose sympathetic appeal brought pardon to a Chicago youth, one year whose married life thereafter the studies of Joliet Penitentiary, from which he had escaped. Moreover, Mrs. Pavloska, like the good fairies of Romance, has taken under her beneficent care not only the youth who in public sentiment had long since expiated the crime for which he had been sentenced, but is caring also for the faithful wife and Tommy, the eight-month-old baby—perhaps the most-talked-of baby in Chicago.

Mrs. Pavloska read about the arrest of Joseph Vacek in the newspapers and, like thousands of others, wept over the tragedy of the hard-working, earnest young husband and father, who under a new name was attempting to forget that for seven years he had roamed within the gray walls of a prison and that an uncompleted term of eighteen years awaited him, were his identity revealed to the police.

She read all the reports that began when Joseph Vacek was sixteen and lived with his parents at 2426 Trumbull avenue, Chicago. His father was a wealthy contractor, but nevertheless Joseph's mother was almost destitute. His father had some one else—he used to dine that at his wife from morning to night. But one time when he said it, he faced a boy suddenly became a white-faced man—a boy who had grown to a man's strength in the foundry where he worked to keep food in the house.

The father got a man to shoot the boy "properly" and in the scuffle that ensued, with a woman woman looked on, the father was shot above the heart.

**Bewildered Boy Confesses to Shooting**  
The boy, possessed with fright at what had happened, fled from the house only to be captured, and to stammer out that he did it, without explaining the extenuating circumstances. Lawyers were produced, but after they got their money they made little attempt to help their client, not even visiting him to learn his story until the day his case came to trial.

He was sentenced and sentenced to twenty-five years. The jury had no choice but to convict him, for he actually defended his own case.

After seven years, during which time he became a trusty at Joliet, Vacek escaped. He returned to Chicago, where under an assumed name he found work. The police lost track of him. They searched in the haunts of the underworld, which those wanted by the law are wont to frequent.

Joseph Vacek was not tame. He was not a criminal nature. He was working two shifts a day—some at the Standard Oil Company plant at Whiting, Ind., for \$400 a day, the other at the Steel and Tube Company for \$5 a night. Between 7 A. M. and 8 A. M. he slept.



Joseph Vacek, youth who killed father to protect mother and who later escaped from prison to which he had been sentenced for twenty-five years.



Mrs. Joseph Vacek and the Vacek baby, for whom a great opera star pleaded successfully with stern officials of Illinois that the husband and father might be restored to his family

### Best of Fathers, Young Wife Declares

"I feel justified in concluding to say that, in view of the fact that Joseph Vacek, Jr., has spent seven years in the penitentiary in view of the fact that he has lived since his escape therefrom, and in view of the fact that he married a woman who was innocent of his previous trouble, and is still anxious to cling to him; in view of the fact that the wife and daughter of the deceased both have visited me and requested that I write to you asking for a pardon; I feel that this is a case wherein clemency will not be injured by your exercising of executive clemency."

The Governor acted quickly and in twenty-four hours the prison doors swung open for Vacek. He found a sympathetic public awaiting him. He found a new job with a better chance of advancement, and a woman high in social and artistic circles ready to stand by him. Mrs. Pavloska, who not only renders moral support, sets forth the plea that Vacek be given the claim that is coming to him.

The formal notice from Governor Small to Secretary of State Emmerson, which freed Vacek, reads:

"Upon the recommendation of the division of pardons and paroles of the Department of Public Welfare, and the reasons therein assigned, I hereby commute the sentence of Joseph Vacek to expire at once."

But the Governor in an interview applied this statement. He said: "My personal concern was to insure that no injury would be done to society by the young man's release. When the whole history of the case was first before me I noticed the trace of insanity in the father and I wanted to make sure that the son was entirely free from the taint before releasing him. That assurance has been given me."

"I have not allowed sentiment to bias me in this matter, but at the same time I have felt that society also owes something to the young wife and mother. Judge McKinley has notified me that she, after an interview with the Judge, has expressed her entire confidence in her husband and wants him back in their home."

"There was a mother of an innocent babe to be taken into consideration, but not, of course, until we were satisfied that Vacek was going straight and seemed to give every indication that he would become a good citizen and would contribute to be a good father and husband."

And thus ends the story of the successful efforts of a warm-hearted opera singer to preserve a little love nest, and to bring happiness into the life of a loyal wife and a courageous husband and of course the wonderful baby.

and some as her husband had told her to do—killed herself, then her boy would have spared all this trouble.

The letter from Judge McKinley, too, did much to persuade the Governor that the boy would not be injured by the young man's release, but that a greater wrong would be done the living, particularly the young wife and the baby, if executive clemency were withheld.

### Governor Small Took Interest in Appeal

Governor Small spent the greater part of a day going over the details of the case with the prison authorities and with other members connected with the case. He carefully read the letters and the formal petitions asking for Vacek's release.

From the information laid before the Governor there was good ground for the conclusion that young Vacek killed his father in defense of his mother in a struggle in which he had not intended to commit the act.

He was only sixteen at the time, the Governor learned. The right that possessed him when he realized what had happened made him rush from the house only to be captured and, in a confused way, to tell it without explaining the extenuating circumstances.

The fact that Vacek's father had been committed to Kankakee Insane Asylum before the fatal struggle with his son raised the question in Governor Small's mind as to whether the young man might have developed symptoms of insanity since his incarceration. The Governor, accordingly, had Dr. Adler, criminologist at Joliet, make a thorough examination of the young man. Letters that the officials furnished the Governor that the young man was mentally sound and disclosed no symptoms of mental weakness under the most trying circumstances.

### Clemency Urged by Pardon Board

The officials concluded their finding in the following language:

"In order that immediate consideration might be given the case, the statutory requirement that notice be given by publication is waived. The members of the division of pardons and paroles, fully familiar with the facts and circumstances, are of the opinion that this is a case in which executive clemency may be properly exercised."

After reviewing the evidence he recommended at the time of the trial, Judge McKinley wrote to the Governor:

"I had the papers here who are interested in the pardon of Joseph Vacek, bring his wife to my court for an interview today. In a rather de-

tained manner I inquired of her consent to bring her life from infancy to the present time.

"I learned she was born in Ireland, where three brothers, one sister and her parents are still living, she coming to New York, where an older sister who was a nun, is living.

"Shortly after the present wife of Joseph Vacek, Jr., she was then a Miss Down, came to Chicago to live with a cousin, she got employment at the Washington Park Hospital as a maid, where she met her now husband."

"I inquired at great length as to the habits of Joseph Vacek, Jr., his number of living since she met him at the Washington Park Hospital some three or four years ago, where he was employed, I think, in the laundry. She stated to me, and I believe honestly and sincerely, that his life has been most

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