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THE NEWS

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AVENGED AT LAST;

Or, a World-Wide Chase.

A STORY OF RETRIBUTION.

BY "AVABASIL"

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CHAPTER XIX.

On the night when Belle Lorimer was overtaken by Percy Lovel she was on her way to perform her nightly duties at the theater and as soon as she reached her dressing-room she sat down and penned a hasty note which she folded in a sweet-scented envelope and gave to a boy who stood waiting. "Run with this to the Foreign Club, and if the gentleman to whom it is addressed is not there wait until he comes if you have to wait till midnight. Anyhow, deliver it to him with your own hands."

The note was addressed to "Colonel Brandon" and it read as follows:

"Several years ago I was on the full tide of prosperity in London and half the society men of that city lent the knee to me. At that time you came and asked me to assist you out of a financial dilemma. I did so and you promised to return the favor whenever the opportunity presented itself. I noticed your name on the recent list of distinguished medals in this city and now have a small favor to ask. Please call at my rooms to-morrow at eleven o'clock a. m. and hear it. BELLE LORIMER."

The boy delivered the note within an hour and at the appointed time next day the Colonel, who was a man of his word, presented himself at the somewhat humble apartments of the actress.

She lost no time, but immediately entered into the purpose of the interview, giving him a brief history of the occurrences of the past few months, so far as Mr. Emerick Percy, and herself were concerned. She proceeded: "All that I have to ask you is that you will do your utmost to secure this gentleman's identity at the American Consulate and at the Hotel. That accomplished I shall consider your obligation towards me entirely cancelled."

"So far as I am able, I will help you in every way," responded the officer. They had reached this point in the conversation when Percy was announced. He was still a pitiable-looking object, but his countryman easily discovered that he was a gentleman and offered him every assistance. It was arranged that Percy should go to the Colonel's room and, after having a bath and his toilet attended to, don a suit of the Colonel's clothes, after which the worthy officer, proposed to exert his influence among the city and diplomatic magnates to procure for Percy his baggage and personal effects, which had been left at the hotel, as well as his balance in the River Plate Bank.

Before Percy left with Colonel Brandon, Belle Lorimer drew him aside and asked in earnest tones: "What is the secret of Mr. Emerick's life? I am sure there is one. Can you aid me to discover what it is?"

"I have my own supposition," answered Percy, "but it may be wide of the mark."

"Whatever your supposition is, follow it up to the last thread. The man is as bad as mortal man can be. His very touch would behold a sensorium, and there is no crime which he could not commit and smile over. I am convinced that there is a dreadful secret in his life and shall expose it the day ever arrives when it can be unearthed. In a few weeks I leave here for London, and should you ever have a communication to make to me concerning that smooth-faced hypocrite of a woman's virtue, you can address me at Martineau's Dramatic Agency." Then drawing from her pocket a fancy little purse she whispered to Percy: "I have somehow formed the opinion that Emerick was not his real name, but the only clue which I have to any other is contained in this little package." Here she drew something carefully wrapped in tissue paper from her purse and handed it to Percy. "Do not examine it now," she said. "Look at it some other time." Percy slipped it into his pocket. In a few minutes he left the house and stepped into a carriage with the Colonel.

About two hours later one would not have recognized in the Mr. Huntly, who walked toward the custom-house building, the dirty, ragged-looking tramp who was so rudely thrust from the hotel. The change of dress, together with a neatly-trimmed beard, made all the difference in the world, and Percy Lovel was once more Mr. Huntly. Under these conditions it was not difficult for Percy to make himself known, and with the assistance of his newly-found friend, Colonel Brandon, he was soon in possession of his own clothing, and was able once more to jingle the nimble and necessary dollar in his pocket.

Everybody was of course surprised, but no one seemed sufficiently interested in him to demand a complete history of his adventure. Buenos Ayres is happily free from the inquisitorial pests which so often defeat the ends of justice by their ill-timed "interviews." Consequently Percy left the city without a word being sent to the outer world to announce his reappearance in the land of the living. It was a fortunate thing that such was the case, for it gave him the chance to follow up the trail with greater certainty of overtaking the man for whom he was searching.

He lost no time preparing to shake the dust of Buenos Ayres from off his feet, and in a few days he was bound for New York over precisely the same route which the object of his pursuit had taken a few months before.

In an inside vest pocket of his traveling suit he had placed the little package which Belle Lorimer had given him, but it never occurred to him to examine it. There it lay and did not see daylight during the whole of the voyage.

Upon arriving at New York he proceeded at once to the house in Gramercy Park, but was surprised, on applying for admission, to find that his friends were no longer living there. He inquired whither they had gone and was told that they had left for Europe.

Again he found himself aimlessly walking the streets of a great city, but this time he was better prepared for an emergency and walked only to get an opportunity for thought and not from

"DO NOT EXAMINE IT NOW—LOOK AT IT SOME OTHER TIME."

compulsion. After strolling nearly a mile, in a slow and dejected manner, he took a car down-town, and visited Emerick & Company's office on Pearl street. What he might have done, had Mr. Emerick been there, we will not presume to guess, but on reaching the floor upon which the office was formerly located he walked to the glass door and noticed that another name was painted upon it. Inquiry from the janitor elicited the information that the firm of Emerick & Co. was no longer in existence. Percy was now utterly at his wits' end and baffled. He knew not how to move and could form no definite plan of action. Every thing seemed to be working against him. The Delaros and Mr. Wilcox (it must be remembered he knew nothing of his old friend's death) in Europe; Emerick, he knew not where; himself wandering alone in New York, what should he do? He retraced his steps up-town, engaged rooms at a hotel and sat down to consider.

"What is the use of going to Europe?" he thought. "I might never find them; and yet I can not stay here alone." Why he did not at once repair to Mr. Wilcox's lawyers he could never afterwards explain, but he did not do so. After many hours of consideration he resolved to take the first steamer to Europe.

It a few days he was passing Sandy Hook, and a week later he was anxiously expecting to see the Fastnet Light.

During the voyage he had not mingled much with the company on board. He was too much engrossed in his own thoughts to care to investigate those of others. So he kept himself aloof. One day when in mid-Atlantic he bethought him of the little package which Belle Lorimer had given him and resolved to open it. Retiring to his stateroom and taking from his valise the vest, in the pocket of which he had placed the package, he drew out what he would have valued as a precious treasure, had he known what it was. Carefully unwrapping it, he found that it contained an insignificant Portuguese silver coin with a small hole bored through it. The small width of silver between the hole and the edge of the coin had worn away, indicating that the coin had doubtless fallen from, whatever it had originally suspended from—probably Mr. Emerick's watch chain. Inclosed with the coin was a little note, which read: "Examine the edge of this coin all round."

Percy did so, and noticed that in one part the milling had been filed or ground flat, and on the smooth edge was a monogram executed in so minute a manner that without a microscope it would be impossible to distinguish the letters.

Not having a microscope in his possession Lovel borrowed one from an officer of the ship and again retired to his state-room to further examine the curiosity. Applying the microscope, he gazed intently for a moment and, dropping the instrument, said to himself: "I thought there was no mistake. Those are his initials—'L. V.'—and Belle Lorimer was right. This supposed Mr. Emerick does possess a secret, but it is not his alone. There is at least one other who shares the knowledge of it, and it shall not be long before it becomes public property. I must and will find the villain yet."

These and similar thoughts crowded Percy's brain as they sailed through the heavy mist hanging over the Mersey to the Liverpool docks. Resting in the great sea-port but a few hours, he went direct to London. One might have supposed that he would have sought the home of his childhood; but that had long lost all charm for him. He had but one present purpose to fulfill; and in importance it seemed to him paramount to all others.

He arrived in London about two days after Mr. Emerick; yet, although at times they were not much more than arm's length apart, they never confronted each other in the crowded streams of human life which surged up and down the city's streets.

Mrs. Delaro and Armida also returned to London about the same time. Eugene Bregy lost no time in calling on them, and they expressed much delight at seeing him; while he, on his part, was overjoyed beyond measure, and seemed so pleased that he acted almost foolishly. He at once made himself exceedingly familiar and insisted on accompanying the ladies everywhere they went.

Finding that he would have no opportunity of speaking to Armida in private while in the busy, noisy city, amid the incessant din of business, pleasure-seekers and callers, Eugene invited her to take a trip with him as far as Richmond.

This beautiful spot was looking its best. In true English fashion they went to the "Star and Garter," the most fashionable hotel in the place, and partook of tea served in the conventional manner, with cold meats, chickens, salads, watercresses, etc.

Afterwards they walked up the hill to the park, and there, while sitting on the grass in a place where they could obtain a fine view of that exquisite bit of valley scenery, they commenced to talk.

Armida seemed as though she could not take her eyes from the sight which lay before her. It was not rugged or romantic such as Armida had known in her own country—it was purely English—a grassy valley along which flowed the Thames, hemmed in by sloping hillsides covered with parks and ancient forests. She thought it was the most pleasing and entrancing sight she had ever beheld. As far as the eye could reach the waters of the Thames could be seen winding through the valley like a silver ribbon. On the sides of the quiet river the hillsides were covered with luxuriant foliage of the brightest hues, and the surface of the river was dotted with little pleasure crafts, whose gay-colored canopies added to the brightness, if not the grandeur, of the scene. Now and then a few bars of a sprightly catch or glee would be wafted upon the gentle breeze from the pleasure-seekers on the water below. Eugene allowed Armida to revel in the exceptional beauty of the scene for a time and then approached gently the subject nearest his heart. He did it clumsily enough, but with the utmost confidence that he would be successful in his suit.

"Miss Delaro," he said, hesitatingly, "I have brought you here to tell you something."

Armida looked at him quizzingly, and said: "It must be something of a very important nature if you found it necessary to bring me all the way here for the purpose of telling me."

"Yes, it is indeed. I wanted to tell you that—I love you," he said.

These were probably the very last words which Armida would have expected to hear from his lips, and all at once she recognized that she had acted unwisely. In the next few seconds she accused herself of numberless unwise actions to which she had never given thought before. She blamed herself for leading this young man on to such an extent and in a moment bitterly repented that she had not acted with more discretion. All these thoughts were chasing each other with frightful rapidity through her mind, and she was trying to formulate a reply when Eugene spoke again:

"May I ever hope for some return of my passion?" he asked. Still Armida could not answer, though she knew that Eugene would in a few seconds misinterpret her meaning for a silent consent if she did not speak.

At last, with an effort, she gathered her senses and replied: "Eugene, you have made a great mistake; such a thought has never entered my head. I admire you, respect you, but love you—on—never."

"Then your actions have belied you," said Eugene, rudely.

"If they have it has been contrary to my intentions," replied the beautiful girl. "I would not for the world have misled you."

"That is a pretty speech to make now," said Eugene. "You ought to have thought of that in the bygone months and not have deluded me," he continued in a passionate manner, and

"MISS DELARO, I HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING."

told her how she had led him, by her kind and sympathetic actions, to think she must have some greater regard than friendship for him, and assumed the injured air of one who had been greatly wronged. But it made no change in Armida; she admitted the truth of his assertions, but insisted that it could not change her sentiments.

Eugene pleaded, but his strenuous efforts were of no avail, and it was with a heavy heart and a jealous mind that he went back to town. That night as Armida was tearfully relating the occurrences of the evening to her mother, Eugene and his father were closeted together in another part of the city.

"I am convinced it is nothing but my poverty which keeps that girl from loving me; she is as proud as an old Spanish countess, but I will humble her yet. You can count on me to lend all the assistance you require in securing that fortune which lies waiting for an owner, and the sooner we commence the better." So spake Eugene.

Persuasion had failed to destroy the young man's morals, but the green-eyed monster had gained an easy victory over his good intentions.

"Now you are talking sense, my boy. We will get to business at once. I have a man ready to go to New York and I know he will act fair and square and divide with us when the time comes. So the sooner you get that handwriting the better. If you have any smartness at all about you you can easily do it, and we must have the writing to carry the thing through." These were the words which Eugene's answer elicited. He listened attentively and asked:

"Well, what do you propose to do?"

"The first step will have to be taken by you," said Emerick, "but I will make a suggestion. The man who is to personate Percy Lovel is an expert penman and can easily learn to sign his name like the Englishman, but you must get the copy; and the best means I know will be this: you had better maintain your pleasant relations with the Delaros and tell Armida that you made a great mistake which need not sever your friendship. You will then be speedily reinstated in your former position with the family. Then some afternoon—the sooner the better—try and persuade that fat old Blodger, whom you say is with them, to take Armida and his fat boy to the exhibition, or anywhere out of the way, and you can stay to keep Mrs. Delaro company. If you do not make an opportunity during that time to get one of that Englishman's letters you are not quite as active and smart as I think you are."

"Yes," replied Eugene. "That appears to be a feasible plan, and the least we can do is to give it a trial."

So they parted on this understanding, little thinking under what auspices their next meeting would take place.

CHAPTER XX.

When Eugene next called on Armida he did as his father had suggested. He told her that he had made a great mistake and asked her permission to remain on friendly terms so that he might continue to improve himself under her tuition and guidance.

Armida gladly consented and he was once more welcomed to the Delaro circle.

He did not again see his father for several days, and was therefore unable to report, but fortune favored his plans and one afternoon when Eugene was forgoing hard study with Armida, Mr. Blodger came bouncing into the room and announced that he was going to see the matinee performance at the Wild West show and invited them all to accompany him. Armida at once accepted the invitation and so did her mother, but Eugene made the excuse that his head ached.

"All the more reason why you should go," said Blodger. "It will drive your headache away."

Still Eugene would not be persuaded and Armida put it down to sulkiness.

The excursion was not to be spoiled, however, by his refusal. Mrs. Delaro suggested that he should stay at home and "keep house," as she playfully termed it. This was exactly what Eugene wanted, and nothing could have suited him better. So he readily consented, and the party went out leaving him to act as he pleased.

Mr. Blodger was in his element. He took the little party through the American Exhibition, pointed out those things in which he was especially interested, and finally they reached the Wild West show and entered a private box which Mr. Blodger had already engaged. The performance, so familiar to most Americans, commenced. Every thing went along pleasantly, and everybody was delighted, until the show came to a close. After it was over the originator of it, Hon. Buffalo Bill, held one of his celebrated receptions, while the visitors interested themselves in examining the tents of the Indians, the lounging benches and all the paraphernalia of the Wild West.

At last when every thing had been seen Mr. Blodger and his party turned to go. As they did so a disturbance suddenly took place near where they stood and two men could be seen struggling on the ground. The one seemed many years younger than the other and he was evidently holding on to the older man with an embrace which he intended should be lasting. With true English instinct the crowd gathered around the two men to see the fight, but when they noticed the disparity in age they murmured: "Shame! Shame!" Still nobody tried to part them until a burly policeman pushed his way through the crowd and endeavored to part the combatants.

With the help of a bystander he raised the struggling men to their feet, but still the younger man held on and would not loosen his hold.

"I will not let him go," he cried.

The people thought him crazy. At first it seemed to be only a drunken squabble, but the onlookers soon noticed that each of the men were well dressed and then they knew that something more serious than a momentary quarrel must be the cause of the disturbance. The younger man who cried out so loudly was flushed and hot; his cheeks and neck were red as fast flowing blood could make them; but the older man was pallid with the sickly hue of death.

This was only the commencement of the trouble, however. The crowd had a delectable treat in store for them. Mrs. Delaro was about to retreat from the spot when she heard and recognized a voice she knew well. She at once turned and raising her veil looked toward where the burly policeman stood holding his two prisoners. There she beheld a sight which made her heart leap for joy. Without a word to her companions she ran towards the policeman and allowing her way through the crowd grasped the young man's arm and cried out:

"Percy Lovel! You alive? In Heaven's name, what is the matter?"

Percy turned his eyes towards her and in the same moment gave the man he held a powerful twist which brought his face in contact with Mrs. Delaro's, and shouted: "Do you recognize him?"

Did she? Ah, this was the supreme moment of years of anxiety and pent-up hatred. Throwing her arms back with a tragic air, she exclaimed in joyful accents: "Leon Velasquez! My husband's murderer! Thank Heaven, we meet at last!"

If the words had been magic they could not have had a quicker or stronger influence on the policeman. He was instantly awakened to the seriousness of the situation and in less time than it takes to write it he had manacled the accused man, and was bearing him off towards one of the offices, telling Mrs. Delaro and Percy to follow him.

Mr. Blodger, Armida, and Stephen Blodger, Jr., had immediately followed Mrs. Delaro to ascertain what the extraordinary movement on her part meant, and as Mrs. Delaro followed the policeman, Armida drew near to her and excitedly asked: "Mother, dear, what does all this mean?"

"It means, my child, that we have run him to earth at last—oh, at last, at last!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"Hush child—the man who murdered your dear, dear father many years ago, the man whom he trusted, Leon Velasquez."

Armida had almost forgotten that her father had been murdered, but this was no time for explanations, and Armida did not ask for one, but she did ask: "Who is that man walking on the left of the policeman, mother?"

"Percy Lovel, my dear, whom we have so long mourned as dead."

Then, without any regard to appearances, the impetuous girl rushed after Percy, and shook his hands with a heartiness that gave both him and her mother great pleasure, but which would

"LEON VALASQUEZ! MY HUSBAND'S MURDERER!"

have smothered Eugene's hopes for ever had he witnessed the deep genuineness of her welcome.

A moment later the policeman took his prisoner into the office, and Mrs. Delaro and her party followed. During all the time the prisoner did not utter a word. He was allowed to sit down, and when once he raised his blanched, terror-stricken face, Armida immediately recognized it.

"Mother, that is Mr. Emerick; there must be some mistake."

"No mistake, my child. I know Leon Velasquez's face too well to ever forget it."

Meantime, cabs had been ordered, and the prisoner, accompanied by two policemen, entered one, while the others were occupied by the rest of the party, and they drove away from the immense crowd, which had gathered to the police station. The charge was entered, and Mrs. Delaro and Percy were instructed to appear next day and give their evidence against the prisoner.

The entire party then returned to the hotel together. Mr. Blodger, who was considerably mystified and wished to hear the whole story, decided to accompany the party, and of course he had to take his heavy weight son along with him.

When they were once more seated in one of the elegant suite of rooms which Mrs. Delaro occupied, Armida was the first to speak.

"Where is Mr. Bregy? Did he not say he would wait until we returned?"

"Probably he felt too unwell to remain and went to his hotel," said Percy, but no sooner had she uttered the words than her maid came into the room crying and sobbing: "Oh, Mrs. Delaro, they have taken Mr. Bregy to the police station, and there has been terrible trouble here."

"Taken Mr. Bregy to the police station—why, what do you mean?" asked Mrs. Delaro.

As well as she could, in her excited state, the girl related how one of the porters, in passing the door which was slightly ajar, had seen Mr. Bregy standing over Miss Armida's writing desk before to open it. The man watched him until he had opened it and when Mr. Bregy had hitched on easily to leave he turned in and seized him. The poorer naturally felt pacified in prison, him under arrest as he caught him with a bundle of Bank of England notes in his fingers.

"Oh, there must be some horrible mistake about it all," said Armida.

"There is no mistake at all, miss," said the garrulous girl, "for they have locked him up at the police station, and he will be taken before the magistrate in the morning."

Still Armida could not believe it, and was determined to go and see Eugene, but as she could not go alone, she accepted Mr. Blodger's offer to accompany her.

While she was away on this errand Percy Lovel told Mrs. Delaro his story, from the time he had left New York for South America up to the encounter at the Wild West Show.

"For the past week," he proceeded, "I have been trying to find you. I have sought you at most hotels and examined the register at the American Exchange, but could not secure any trace of you.

"This afternoon I determined on indulging in a little recreation and attended the Wild West Show. Just as I was coming away, the man whom we were each looking for (though until recently I had no positive grounds for supposing that Julius Emerick and Leon Velasquez were identical) crossed my path, and, as I had previously made up my mind that I would capture him if he ever came within sight of me, I at once grasped him. The rest you know."

Then they fell to talking of the many useless efforts which they had made to capture the villain. "Now," said Mrs. Delaro, "that I know that he is safe in the hands of the law, I feel that I can spend the closing days of my life in rest and peace. You, Percy," she said, "have been my true and devoted friend all through, and will not leave me now. To you we owe every thing, and you are the only friend upon whom we can rely in future."

"But where is our dear old friend, Mr. Wilcox?" asked Percy, who listened with surprise to these words.

"Do you not know?" said Mrs. Delaro, opening her eyes with astonishment.

"No," replied Percy. "I stayed only a short time in New York, and the people at the house said he had accompanied you."

"Poor, dear old man," said Mrs. Delaro, "he has long been laid to rest in the quiet graveyard of his native town in New England." As she spoke these words Percy was silent, and it was many minutes before he could control his voice to speak. When he did his words came choked and husky—"Would to God that he had lived to see this villain brought to justice! So my staunch old friend is gone from us!"

More than an hour elapsed before Armida and Mr. Blodger returned. When they did return Armida was in sorrowful mood, and said that she had seen Eugene. He had admitted her by leaving open the door, but insisted that he did not want the money. What he did desire he would not tell.

"What shall we do, mamma?" she asked. "He must not go to prison. Think of the disgrace."

"We will consult a lawyer in the morning and see what we can do about it," responded her mother.

That night [illegible] Mrs. Delaro and Percy sat for some time and long and steadily did she talk with Percy

"I AM NOT YOUR HUSBAND, AND NEVER HAVE BEEN."

about all that had transpired during his long absence, while Leon Velasquez and his dupe languished in prison.

In due course the accused man was brought up for an examination. Mrs. Delaro in a firm voice related the history of the murder and swore to the identity of the prisoner. So positive and straightforward did her evidence seem that it appeared hardly necessary to call Percy Lovel. Still he was placed in the witness box and gave an account of his adventure in South America. He also told about the final clew of the silver charm which had satisfied him as to the identity of the prisoner, and in a few moments the presiding magistrate committed Velasquez to jail to await the arrival of his extradition papers.

The same day Eugene Bregy was brought up at another London police court and, despite the efforts of the lawyer employed to defend him, he was sent to jail for a short time.

All this time his anxious mother was expecting news of him at Nice, where she at last grew tired of waiting and came to London. The first place she went to was the address which Armida had given her. While Armida gladly welcomed the poor woman, it was with a sorrowful heart that they told her the story of the last few days. "But Mr. Emerick is in New York," she said. "He told me he was going there."

"Then he did it to mislead you," said Armida, "for he is now in jail awaiting removal to America to be tried on a charge of murder."

"What! my husband a murderer?" cried the poor woman.

"Why, you surely said he was not your husband?" said Mrs. Delaro.

"But he is. He told me so, and he has got all my money," said the now distracted woman.

Mrs. Delaro was immediately struck with an idea. "Ah, he has deluded you into believing it in order to rob you of your fortune," she said.

"No, no!" cried Mrs. Bregy. "He *is* my husband, my Alphonse, and I must go and see him."

To pacify the woman a carriage was procured and she was taken to the jail where Leon Velasquez was confined.

He was brought into the cage to see her and she at once approached him—"Alphonse, they say you are not my husband. But it is not true, is it?"

"I am not your husband, and never have been," he said, in almost indistinct tones.

"Then why did you say you were?" she said.

"I wanted your money," was the cool rejoinder. He knew his end was near and he mercifully set the poor woman's mind at rest. But she had to be carried out of the room in a swoon.

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