

AVENGED AT LAST; Or, a World-Wide Chase.

A STORY OF RETRIBUTION.

BY "VARASIL"

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The slippery villain had once more gained his ends, and ere the sun set on the following day he was speeding northward, carrying with him an assignment of the proceeds of the whole of Mrs. Bregy's recently acquired wealth to himself.

He did not go to Havre, however, for three days later he was seeking for Eugene in the modern Babylon.

That young man was flitting around the great city in a strangely eccentric manner and it was several days before his father found him. When he did at length discover him he heard with pleasure that Mr. Blodger had just received a letter from Bournemouth, stating that Mrs. Deloro and Armida would be in London on the day following.

"Truly, London are working into my hands in a lucky manner," he thought, "but I must not let this girl and her mother see me. Eugene can work better without my presence being made known."

On the journey to London he had stopped over at Paris for a few hours and in that short space of time the whole of Mrs. Bregy's fortune was transferred to the name Julius Emerick. This part of his scheme accomplished, he was eager to perfect his plans.

He only needed to keep the simple woman at Nice from suspecting his movements for a few weeks longer, and once more he would be in possession of sufficient wealth to keep him in luxury during the remainder of his natural life, to enjoy which he would retire to some comfortable place on the Continent.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Had the designing Emerick known what had transpired in the Argentine Republic during the time since he left there his easy, happy feeling would have been changed to one of bitter chagrin. The plucky Englishman whom we left lying in the bottom of a bullock cart, a few months before, had not yet become food for the fishes.

During the whole of the day on which the meeting for the duel took place he lay in the bottom of the cart covered with sacks. Twice he was permitted a little fresh air and twice the gags were taken from his mouth in order that he might drink a little filthy water which was given to him by the peons who had charge of him. On these occasions he was too weak to shout and had he shouted his voice would have spent itself unheard, for he was too far from any living soul (except his captors) to secure help.

When the shades of night fell he was conscious that the stopping place for rest had been reached. He knew that the bullocks were being taken from the cart, for he recognized the cries of the peons as they urged the tired beasts to move. Then they took the gags from his mouth and spoke to him in their jargon which he did not understand, and as they could not speak English they had to resort to dumb motions to make each other understand. Percy made a motion to the effect that he wanted drink and they passed a black bottle to him. It contained a vile, cheap liquor which the natives drank with relish, and as it touched his lips he made such a wry face that the two peons could hardly control themselves for laughter. After enjoying his discomfort for a few moments they mercifully relented and gave him some water to drink, after which they dragged him, still bound, from the cart and laid him on the ground.

They then proceeded to prepare their camp for the night. Lighting a fire, they spread out some coarse blankets to lie upon. As soon as the fire had burnt up they took a long strip of beef from their supplies and cut off pieces in the manner common in that country (where a piece of beef is cut up when required in much the same way that Europeans or Americans might cut up a loaf of bread) and toasted it over the fire. This, together with some coarse bread washed down with the vile liquor which they carried, constituted supper. A supper which Percy's delicate stomach was not in a very fit state to receive. Still he felt compelled to eat to keep up his strength, so did his best to swallow the food they gave him, moistening it with some very brackish water, which was the best that could be found.

Soon after eating Percy felt that his sleep, and so sound was it that his keepers, who had intended to watch him in turn during the night, resolved to sleep also, trusting that their captive would be perfectly safe as he was still tightly bound about the legs.

After taking their fill of food and liquor they made fast Percy's hands without awakening him, and laid down to rest themselves. The next three days were only a repetition of the first, and Percy never had a sight of the country which they were passing through until nightfall.

On the fourth day they came to their destination. The cart had stopped, and as Percy still lay in the bottom bound hand and foot, his nostrils were offended with the vilest of stenches.

From this he at once thought he must be near to a corral, and when the howling of the angry beasts confined therein reached his ears he knew that his miseries were correct.

Pretty soon he heard a medley of voices, and he was immediately taken from the cart and carried into one of the three mud huts, which appeared to be the abiding place that his captors had designated for him. Now, for the first time in five days, his bonds were removed, though his captors still kept a careful watch over him. This, however, was quite unnecessary, for had they left him with the door wide open he could not have escaped. He was too

badly cramped after his long, rough ride in the cart to make a move, and it would take many hours of rest to loosen his limbs.

Never was a rest more welcome to him, and, notwithstanding that he lay in a dirty, miserable hovel, surrounded with filth and squalor in its worst form, he enjoyed his sleep as well as though he had been in his comfortable room in New York.

He was carefully watched through the night and no chance was given for him to escape in the event of his awakening. His watchers were the vilest-looking men it would be possible to meet even in South America, and a look at them would have been sufficient to drive sleep from most people. Still Percy had not heeded them, but slept as soundly as a man dog-tired could sleep. It was a rude awakening for him, however, for the early morning brought all the hands on the farm who could spare the time to take a peep at him. But he heeded them not and longed for but one thing, and that was some one to speak to in English. Yet no one came. At last a burly Hollander, who had charge of the farm (or estancia as it is called in the language of that country), came in.

He understood English tolerably well, and asked Percy in the tongue which he so longed to hear if he wanted any thing to eat. Percy told him he was nearly famished, and the Dutchman ordered his wants attended to. These few words were all that Percy heard spoken in English that day, and when the next came he was too sick to listen to any. His head ached and his senses swam. He felt as though some great and severe illness was coming upon him, as, indeed, it was. The privation had been too much for him, and to that, along with his unnatural surroundings of accumulated filth, he finally succumbed. Before another day dawned he was in a delirious fever, and all that his captors could hear him cry was: "Armidal! Armidal!"

For days did he lie in this terrible state, attended only by a Gaucho, who professed a knowledge of medicine, and who was the person always called upon to administer to the sick whenever such were found about the place.

Percy possessed a strong constitution, and, fortunately, pulled through, with the assistance of the Gaucho doctor. But he was a sad wreck of his former self—haggard in appearance and about half his normal weight. Certainly, none of his friends would have known him. It was several weeks after he passed the critical stage of his fever before he was able to walk about, and then his guardians would not permit him to stroll far beyond the door.

A rude bench had been constructed just outside the hut, upon which he would sit for hours at a stretch, pondering over the exciting adventures he was passing through and wondering how it was all going to end. He did not know where he was and could not form the slightest idea. From the number of little islands which lay in the river he saw running through the valley about a mile away he judged it must be Rio de la Plata, or River Plate as it is better known to English speaking people. Still, he could form no definite opinion, but thought that in case he was fortunate enough to make his escape it would probably provide the means of carrying him back to Buenos Ayres. There was not an hour during which a little steamer or craft of some kind did not pass.

Thus did he spend many a weary hour until his strength began to return, and he commenced to display more energy in looking for a means of escape. But before he could find one a cloud was thrown over his prospects by the appearance of the tall Spaniard who had acted as Emerick's second at the duel.

It was early in the afternoon when that unwelcome visitor arrived and he at once came to Percy. In a mocking tone he asked after the health of Mr. Huntley, and said that he regretted to hear that he had been ill. To all his inquiries and remarks Percy paid but little attention and made but brief replies.

After awhile the Spaniard asked Percy what had become of the suit of clothes he wore when he came north, and to this question Percy replied: "These beasts whom you placed in charge of me took them and with them they took all the money and valuables I possess."

"Ah, yes, that is so," said the Spaniard. "We needed that suit to put on another dead Englishman who died a few miles below San Pedro a short time since. According to my contract with your estimable friend, Mr. Emerick, you were to have floated down that river, but I humanely decided to spare your life, and have resolved to make use of you on this farm. You will, no doubt, make yourself handy when you recover, and these handsome gentlemen by whom you are surrounded will take care that you do not escape."

"I would almost rather have floated out to sea, down that river, than be compelled to make my home among such a set of evil-looking villains as there are here. Even my life will never be safe in their hands," said Percy.

"Never fear, they will not hurt you as long as you behave yourself," responded the Spaniard.

"To judge from their looks and actions I should imagine they would as



IN A MOCKING TONE HE ASKED AFTER THE HEALTH OF MR. HUNTLEY.

soon stick one of their long, gleaming knives into me as they would into a bullock," said Percy.

"Oh, no; not one of them dare lay a hand on you unless you attempt to escape, without my orders," was the reply. "Then you propose to force me to spend the rest of my natural life on this farm among these blood-curdling surroundings?"

"Unless you will comply with conditions that I will name, I do most certainly," answered the Spaniard. "And what are your conditions?" asked Percy.

"Few and simple," was the reply. "Get your friends to pay me a ransom of ten thousand American dollars and you are free the day they pay it. But should they make the least attempt to effect your rescue I will kill you with my own hands, if need be, to prevent

"If my friends were asked to pay the ransom they would refuse, knowing that by a determined effort they could release me without doing so. As such an effort would only cost me my life, I shall not ask them to take other means to effect my delivery."

"In a few weeks you may change your mind, so I will give you a little time to think it over. In the meantime you will remain here and do whatever Mr. Van Nepp deems necessary and proper. If you refuse him it will be so much the worse for you." These were the last words the Spaniard uttered as he rode away.

Shortly afterwards Percy was well and strong again. He did not devote his time to uselessly bewailing his fate, but went to work at whatever the Dutchman told him to do and endeavored to do his utmost to please. He had an object in carrying out this course of action and after learning a few words of the Mongrel-Spanish spoken by the hands around the place he grew intimate with them as far as his knowledge of the language would permit. He was thus better capable of entering into their work and sport with a vim and earnestness which made him lots of friends around them. While it might have taken him years to have learned to ride a horse with any thing approaching the ease that a Gaucho did it, he soon became very expert and in brief moments, when his thoughts of fanciful friends left him, he would really seem to enjoy himself.

It was getting to be about time for the tall Spaniard to put in an appearance again when Van Nepp also seemed to be growing friendly to him. In one brief week this friendship had improved and grown to such a degree that he would take Percy with him very often when he drove to the head station, about ten miles further north. It was on one of these occasions that Percy found a welcome opportunity to effect an escape. They were driving home at dusk when, without a warning sign of any kind, one of the wheels came off their vehicle and threw the riders to the ground. Percy turned a summersault and fell on his shoulders, sustaining no further injury than a rough shaking, but his companion was not so fortunate, for he fell on his side and, in falling, broke his arm.

Here was what would have under ordinary circumstances seemed like an unfortunate occurrence, but Percy smiled it with delight. He was not pleased to see the praying old Dutchman in trouble, but he at once saw a means of escape. He was dressed in the garb of a native, but that made no difference, and once on a river steamer he would be safe. He set the broken arm of the Dutchman as best he could with his limited knowledge of surgery and then presumably turned his attention to the repair of the wagon. Finding that the wheel could not be fastened without the assistance of a blacksmith, as the little pin from the axle was lost, Percy proposed that he should ride back to the head station and bring the smith from there. To this, the Dutchman, anxious to get home, consented, and in a few minutes Percy was riding as fast as his horse could carry him to freedom.

How the Dutchman spent the night Level never knew, for himself, he spent most of it in the saddle. In the morning he reached a small town on the banks of the river, where he sold the horse for an insignificant sum, and with it he boarded a river steamer and took the cheapest passage he could purchase down to Buenos Ayres. All this time Percy was full of hope that the villain who had caused his abduction would still be there, and he had made up his mind to make short work of bringing him to justice.

It would be difficult to describe Percy's feelings when he once more came in sight of the blue and white porcelain domes of Buenos Ayres. He fondly imagined that in a few hours he would be able to exchange the rage which covered his body for clothing which would better become his handsome form.

He walked boldly up to the hotel where he had stayed a few months before and introduced himself as the missing Mr. Huntley. In less time than it takes to record it he was being hustled into the street, and as he passed a mirror in the hall-way he at once became aware of the reason which prevented him from being recognized. He could not himself believe that the object of which he caught a momentary glance was Percy Level. His face was brown and dirty-looking, his unkempt hair hung in a disheveled state over his shoulders, and his untrimmed beard helped to make him a most pitiable object such as none would recognize as the genial Englishman whose body was supposed to have been taken from the river weeks before. When he reached the street he wandered aimlessly about and finally decided to go to the American consulate. There he introduced himself, but met with an even worse reception than he experienced at the hotel. The consul was not to be seen, and the young men in charge of the office did "other but sneer and attempt to still

vince that he had seen her before. As he passed her he at once knew that she was the woman whom he had seen leaving the concert hall with Emerick a few nights after he first reached Buenos Ayres.

He did not immediately recognize her, but would have recognized her had he seen her before. As he passed her he at once knew that she was the woman whom he had seen leaving the concert hall with Emerick a few nights after he first reached Buenos Ayres.

The woman appeared aware that she was being followed, and when Percy cautiously approached to speak she stopped suddenly and faced him. Her attitude was one of defiance, but Percy's first words being spoken in clear English, she felt reassured and kindly asked him what she could do for him.

"I am searching for Mr. Emerick," he replied. "Can you tell me any thing of him?"

"Mr. Emerick," she said, in astonished tones. "Why, what have you to do with him?"

Under the shadow of a doorway they drew together, and Percy gave a hurried outline of his recent adventures, winding up by asking her if she could help him in any way.

"I can and I will," was the reply. "I have some influential friends here who will soon restore you to your rights. Come to me at this address to-morrow, and I will see that a gentleman who can render you assistance is there to meet you."

As she spoke she drew a card from her pocket, on one side of which Percy read the words "Belle Lorimer," and on the other her address, written in lead pencil.

Percy spent that night in a miserable lodging house that was scarcely better than the mud hut which had been his shelter during the cold night on the Pampas; but he did not sleep much, his anxiety being too great, and was out on the streets again in the early morn

CHAPTER XIX. On the night when Belle Lorimer was overtaken by Percy Level she was on the 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 bent 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 arrivals 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."

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 gone 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 suspicion," 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 be a sewer-rat, 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 rejoice if 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-tongued despoiler 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 have recognized in the Mr. Huntley, 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 Level was once more Mr. Huntley. 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 juggle 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 adventures. Buenos Ayres is a hotbed of rumormongers and the

rumormongers were soon spreading the

pests which so often defeat the ends of justice by their ill-timed "interventions." 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. Witcox (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. Witcox'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.

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

During the voyage he had not mingled much with the company on board. He was too much enraptured in his own thoughts to care to investigate those of others. So he kept himself aloof. One day when in mid-Atlantic he thought 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 Level borrowed one from an officer of the ship and again retired to his stateroom 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 streets of human life which surged up and down the city's streets.

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, bounded 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 flecked with little pleasure craft, whose gray-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 Deloro," 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 unwelcome 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—no—never."

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

"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 by-gone months and not have deluded me," he continued in a passionate manner, and 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 intimate 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 spoke 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."

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