SYNOPSIS.

Peter Knight, defeated for political office in his town, decides to venture New York in order that the family fortunes might benefit by the expected rise of his charming daughter, Lorelei. A well-known critic interviews Lorelei Knight, now stage beauty with Bergman's Revue, for a special article. Her coin-hunting mother outlines Lorelei's ambitions, but Slosson, the press agent, later adds his information. Lorelei attends Millionaire Hammon's gorgeous entertainment. She meets Merkle, a wealthy dyspeptic. Bob Wharton comes uninvited. Lorelei discovers a blackmail plot against Hammon in which her brother is involved. Merkle and Lorelei have an auto wreck. The blackmailers besmirch her good name. Lorelei learns her mother is an unscru-Lorelel learns her mother is an unscrupulous plotter. She finds in Adoree Demorest a real friend, and finds Bob Wharton is likable. Lorelel leaves her family and goes to live alone. Lorelel and drunken Bob Wharton are tricked into mar-

Wondering how she can possibly escape the drunken caresses of her new husband the first night of their marriage, Lorelei finds the problem suddenly solved for her-but in a ghastly manner. The demons of blackmall and intrigue which 3 have followed her give way to devils of bloodshed and murder. How she acts in a tragic crisis is told in Rex Beach's best style in this installment.

Bob Wharton and his bride and interrupted, quickly. Lilas and Jimmy Knight are in Lllas' are quarreling.

CHAPTER XIV-Continued.

During this angry scene Lilas had not risen nor spoken. Her eyes were very black and very brilliant against her pallor, and she was smiling derisively.

"Wait!" she interposed, "I'm not going to stay here with this old-fool." Hammon grew purple; he ground his teeth.

"You shall stay. We're going to have a talk and settle things once for all."

Lilas rose swiftly with a complete change of manner; she was smiling no longer; her face was sinister.

"Very well," she agreed. "Tonight. Why not? But I want Lorelei to stay and-hear. Yes.'

"No, I don't want her." "I do." Lilas' bad temper flared up

promptly from the hot coals of spiteful, drunken stubbornness, "She'll stay till you go, or else I'll put you out | name meant nothing. too. I don't trust you." She laughed disagreeably.

"Then have your way. It's you I from the room, and the outer door ber?" closed behind them.

Lorelei had little desire to remain even a sordid lovers' quarrel was pref- came swift and shrill. erable to the caresses of a sodden | Hammon started; a frown drew pite.

"Now come with me, if you please." to light a clgarette with a studied in- himdifference that added fuel to his rage. Lorelei seated herself at the disordered | he burst forth. dining table and stared miserably at

"Weil?" said Hammon, when he and Lilas were alone. "Is this how you live up to your promises?"

"How did you know I went out tonight?" she inquired in her turn.

"I had you watched. After whit happened last night I was suspiced.

ath



"Are You Just Drunk?" He Said.

I've been waiting for hours-while you were out with that grafter, drinking,

carousing-" He bent toward her, white with fury, but she blew the smoke from her bimself, staring at her strangely. She dened with rage. had seated herself upon the edge of the reading table, one foot swinging idly. She watched him with a brooding, insolent amusement."

certainly, "or-have you completely lost your senses?'

"Yes, I'm drunk. What are you go-

ing to do about it?" "I-why you mustn't talk dive that; ters? You were very indiscreet-sud-

THE SOLVER OF NEW YORK LIFE Author of

SUREX BEACH TO THE PARKER

Author of "The Iron Trail" "The Spoilers" "The Silver Horde" Etc. Copyright, By Harper & Brothers

his eyes over the luxurious little room; daughters-" he wiped his face with a shaky hand, When I asked you to marry me I never dreamed-

She eyed him silently with an expression he could not fathom, then asked, "Tell me, do you really care for me?"

Jarvis Hammon was a virile, head- her. strong man; his world had come suddenly, inexplicably to an end. His voice was hoarse, as he answered:

of myself if I hadn't? Do you think | mean?" I'd have ruined myself?"

"Have you ruined yourself?" she

"Not quite, perhaps; but what I've apartment celebrating the wedding lost, what I've sacrificed, would have when Hammon enters. He and Lilas ruined most men. My home is gone. and my family-as you know-yes, and a good many other things you don't know about. Financially I'm not done for-"

"That's too bad."

"Eh? I don't understand. What ire you getting at?"

"I'll tell you. I never intended to marry you, Jarvis."

He started as if she had struck him. "That's what I said," she reaffirmed. and I'll tell you why. Look at me-

He did as she directed, but saw nothing, his mind being in chaos. It had been her intention to call Lorelei to witness this dramatic disclosure and thus enhance its effect, but in the excitement of the moment she forgot. 'Look at me," she repeated. "I'm Lily Levinski."

"Levinski. A Jew?" he exclaimed, in naive surprise.

"Yes. I'm Joe Levinski's girl. Do you remember?"

"A Jew!" It was plain that the

She slid down from her perch and approached him, crying roughly, "Don't you remember Joe Levinski?" want to talk with, anyhow, drunk as | Hammon shook his head. "He worked you are. Now, Bob-will you say for you in the Bessemer plant of the goodnight?" He waved the two men old Kingman mill. Don't you remem-

"There were four thousand men-"He was killed when the converter as the witness to a distressing scene, dumped. You were rushing the work. but she seized upon the delay, for Do you remember now?" Her words

bridegroom. But daylight seemed a brows together. His mind groped back long way off-she feared Bob would through the years, and memory faintly not fall asleep during this brief res- stirred, but she gave him no leisure to speak.

"I was waiting outside with his din-Hammon turned in the direction of the ner bucket, along with the other womlibrary, and Lilas followed, pausing en. I saw him go. I saw you kill

"Lilas! Good God, are you crazy?"

"It was murder."

"Murder?

"It was. You did it. You killed him." She had dropped her cigarette, and it burned a black scar into the rug at their feet. Hammon retreated a step, the girl followed with blazing eves and words that were hot with hate. "You spilled that melted steel on him, and I saw it all. When I grew up I prayed for a chance to get even, for his sake and for the sake of the other hunkles you killed. You killed een my mother, too, Jarvis Hammon, and peo "hade me a-a-"
"Be quiet!" he commanded, roughly.

Sf "The thing's incredible-absurd. Youki the daughter of one of my workmen-

and a Jew!" "Yes. Levinski-Lily Levinski. And you wanted to marry me," she gibed. "But I fooled you."

"I guess I-must be-out of my head. I never knew the man-there were thousands of them; accidents were common. But-you say-" He gathered his whirling thoughts, and, strangely enough, grew calm. "You say you prayed for a chance to get even- So, then, you've been humbugging- By God, I don't believe it!"

"It's true. It's true. It's true," shrilled the girl so hysterically that her voice roused Lorelei, witting vacanteyed in the room down the hall, and brought her to her feet with ears suddenly strained. Lorelei could hear only a part of the words that followed, but the tones of the two voices drew her from her retreat and toward the front of the apartment.

"I knew you," Lilas was saying. "I figured it all out, and-you were easy. You were a bigger fool than I dreamed."

support you!" cried Hammon, in bitter ccusation

everything that has happened to you, ven that blackmall." "Blackmail!" he shouted. Did youwas that your-?" He grew suddenly

cigarette into his face, and he checked apoplectic; his eyes distended and red-His dismay delighted her.

"Certainly," she smiled. "Half the noney is in my bank at this minutebesides all the rest you've given me. "Are you just drunk," he said, un. Oh, I've got enough to live on without marrying you. Who do you think put your wife wise and gave her the evidence for her divorce, eh? Think

it over. Do you remember those let-

He ran Your wife will read them and your voice inside, raised in the best of hu-perb, something terrible about his un-

Jarvis Hammon roused himself at feeling that it was he who had lost last. Surprise, incredulity, dismay his senses. "The wine is talking, gave place to fury, and, as in all primitive natures, his wrath took shape as an impulse to destroy.

> "You'll-do that-eh?" His tone, in. his bearing were threatening. He advanced as if to seize her in his great her. hands, and only her quickness saved

"Don't touch me!" Her voice ended in a little shrick as she evaded a second effort to grasp her, and placed the "Do you think I'd have made a fool table between them, "What do you-

> But it seemed that she had done her work too well, for his answer was like



Its Report Echoed Loudly.

the growl of a hungry beast. His eyes roved over the table for a weapon, and, reading his insane purpose, she cried again:

"Don't do that. I warn you-The nearest object chanced to be a crystal globe in which was set a tiny French clock-one of those library ornaments serving as timeplece and paperweight-over this his hand closed;

he moved toward her. "Put that down," she cried. He did not pause. "Put it-" She wrenched at the table drawer and fumbled for something. Hammon uttered a bellow and leaped at her.

It was a tlny revolver, small enough to fit into a man's vest pocket or a woman's purse, but its report echoed loudly. The noise came like a cannon shot to the girl in the hall outside, and brought a cry to her lips. Lorelel flung herself against the library door.

What she saw reassured ber momentarily, for, although Lilas was at bay against a bookcase, Hammon was rooted in his tracks. A strange, almost ludicrous expression of surprise was on his face; he was staring down at his breast; the revolver lay on the floor between him and Lilas.

Lorelei gasped an incoherent question, but neither of the two who faced each other appeared to hear it or to notice her presence in the room.

"I told you to keep off," Lilas chattered. Her eyes were fixed upon Hammon, but her outflung arms - were pressed against the support at her back as if she felt herself growing weak. 'You did it-yourself. I warned you.'

The man merely remained motioness, staring. But there was something shocking in the paralysis that held him and fixed his face in that distorted mold of speechless amazement. Finally did it myself. It was an-accident." he stirred; one hand crept inside his walstcoat, then came away red; he turned, walked to a chair, and half fell upon it. Then he saw Lorelei's face, and her agonized question took shape out of the whirling chaos of his mind.

"Where's Bob?" he said, faintly. 'Call him, please.'

"You're-hurt. I'll telephone for a doctor; there's one in the house, andand the police, too." Lorelei voiced her first impulse, then shrilly appealed have Lilas involved-we've been a "You took my money-you let me to Lilas to do something. But Lilas re- great deal to each other. Tonight-I mained petrified in her attitude of retreat; from the pallor that was whiten-"Oh, I did more than that, I planned | ing her cheeks now it might have been she who was in danger of death.

"Don't telephone," said Hammon, huskily. "You must do just as I say, understand? This mustn't get out, do you hear? I'm not-hurt. I'm all and Orson is all right-the women are right, but-fetch Bob. Don't let him call a doctor, either, until 1-get home. Now hurry-please.'

Lorelel rushed to the outside door, restraining with difficulty a wild impulse to run screaming through the the sufferer. hall. With skirts gathered high and

mor. Evidently he was telephoning, changing grimness. "Yes. Two hours ago, I tell you. With book, bell and candle.'

Jim's footsteps sounded, his hand to his sister's support as she staggered

"Sis! What-" he cried at sight of

"Something-dreadful."

Bob continued his cheerful colloquy over the wire. "Say! Here she is now. We'll expect a marble clock with gilt cupids from you, Merkle- Want to say hello?" He lurched aside from the telephone as Lorelei snatched the receiver from his hand.

"Mr. Merkle," she cried. "Hello! Yes. Is that you?" came Merkle's steady voice.

"Come quick-quick." "What's wrong?" he demanded, with sharp change of tone. "Has Bob-?" "No, no. It's Mr. Hammon. He's downstairs with-Lilas, and he's hurtshot. I-1'm frightened."

She turned to find Bob and Jim staring at her. "Come," she gasped. "I think he's-

dving." She led the way swiftly, and they followed.

CHAPTER XV.

Merkle found his chauffeur just closing the garage door, and three minutes later his car was sweeping westward through the park like the shadow of some flying bird. The vagueness, the brevity of the message that had come | ing as if expecting a blow. to him out of the night made it terribly alarming. Jarvis Hammon's financial interests were in no condition to withstand a shock; for a long time many of them had been under fire. He had committed his associates to a program of commercial expansion, never too secure even under favorable conditions, and one, moreover, which had provoked a tremendous assault from rival steel manufacturers. Now, with Hammon himself stricken at the crisis of the struggle, there was no telling what results might follow.

But Merkle's apprehensions were by no means purely selfish. Hammon and he had been friends for many years; they shared a mutual respect and affection, and, although Merkle was eminently practical and unemotional, he prayed now as best he could that Hammon might not be grievously in-

As the machine drew up to the Elegancia, Jimmy Knight leaped to the cunning board and said hurriedly:

"Send your driver away." Merkle did as he was directed, realizng his worst fears. When he and Jim stood alone on the walk he inquired weakly, "Is he-dead?"

Jim shook his head, and Merkle saw that he was deeply agitated. "No. But he's got a bullet in his chest."

Together the men entered the building and at the first ring were admitted to Apartment No. 1 by Lorelei herself. She led them straight into the library.

Perhaps a quarter of an hour had was breathing quietly. Bob Wharton stood beside him.

"John!" The fronmaster smiled pallidly as his friend came and knelt beside him. "You got here quickly." "Are you badly hurt, Jarvis?" "The thing is in here somewhere."

Hammon took his hand away from his breast, and Merkle saw that the fingers were bloody. "Can you get me out of here quietly?"

John Merkle rose to his full height, his lips writhed back from his teeth. Harshly he inquired: "Where is that woman?"

"She's back yonder in her room," Bob told him. "She's ill."

Merkle turned, but, reading his intent, Hammon checked him, crying in a strong voice: "None of that, John. I "I don't believe it."

cuser; the two stared at each other steadily for a moment. The other occupants of the room had

Hammon's eyes met those of his ac-

listened breathlessly; now Lorelei stirred and Merkle read more than better than to hire them, so he waited mere bewilderment in her face. He as patiently as he could while those opened his lips, but the wounded man did not wait for him to speak.

"You must believe me!" he said, earnestly. "It's the truth, and I won't accused her wrongfully. It was all my "ault-I'm to blame for everything." There was a pause. "Now get me out of here as quietly and quickly as you can. I'm really not hurt much. Come, come! There's nobody home except Orson and some of the kitchen help. gone, you know. He'll get a doctor. It's a-bad business, of course, but I've thought it all out, and you must do exactly as I say."

The effort of this long speech told on

Sweat beaded his face; nevertheless, breath sobbing in her throat, the girl his jaws remained firmly set; his fled up the stair to her own door, where glance was purposeful, his big hands the cabman. she clung, ringing the bell frantically, were gripped tightly over the arms of She could hear 'Gob's her husband's the chair. There was something su- it back.'

"Is your car outside, John?" he Merkle shook his head. He was

of ened the door, then his arm flew out thinking swiftly. "I wouldn't dare risk that, anyhow. The driver is a new man."

"Get a cab," Jim offered, in a panic. "The cab driver would be sure to-

"I'll drive," Bob volunteered. "I'm frunk, but I've done it before when I was drunker. It's an old trick of mine-sort of a joke, see? Give me for money at this time o' night."

Merkle eyed the speaker in momentary doubt, then handed him a roll of bank-notes. "It's a serious business, Bob, but Jarvis can't stay here. There's somebody else to consider besides us and-Miss Lynn. I'm thinking about Mrs. Hammon and the girls." He followed Bob to the door and let him out, stepped swiftly down the hall, then, without knocking, opened the door to Lilas Lynn's bedroom and entered.

Lilas was busied at her dressing. At his entrance she uttered a frightened cry and a silver spoon slipped from her nerveless fingers. Merkle saw a little open box, a glass of water, the cap of a pearl-and-gold fountain pen, but took scant notice of them, being too deeply stirred and too much surprised at her appearance. She was no longer the vital, dashing girl he had known, but a pallid, cringing wreck of a woman. She shrank back at sight of him, babbling unintelligible words and cower-

"Did you shoot him?" he asked, grimly.

Shivering, choking, speechless, Lilas stared at him. A repetition of his question brought no reply. Seizing her roughly, he shook her,

muttering savagely: "If I were sure, by God, I'd strangle

She remained limp; her expressionless stare did not change. Merkle heard a stir behind him and found Jimmy Knight's blanched face peering in at him. Even fright could

not entirely rob the younger man's features of their sly inquisitiveness. "Mr. Hammon's calling you," said Jim, then blinked at the wretchedly pitifully, disheveled woman.

"Here!" Merkle beckoned him with country if we can "

Jim's quick eyes took in the articles on the dressing table. "Ha! Dope," he exclaimed. "She's a coker-she's filled herself up. But, say-you don't really think she-did it, do you?" "I don't know what to think. It's

just as bad, either way. Hammon's wife and daughters must never know. Now, quick. See what you can do with her.

Merkle returned to the library, sent Lorelei in to her brother's assistance, then scanned his friend's face anxelapsed since the shooting, but Jarvis lously. But Hammon had not moved; Hammon still sat in the big chair. He | the sweat still stood upon his lips and forehead, his jaws were still set like

Several months before, Bob Wharton, during one of his hilarious moments, had conceived the brilliant notion of hiring a four-wheeler and driving a convivial party of friends from place to place. The success of his exploit had been so gratifying that he had repeated the performance, but he was in a far different mood now as he left the Elegancia. The shock of Lorelei's announcement, the sight of his stricken friend, had sobered him considerably, yet he was not himself by any means. At one moment he saw and reasoned clearly, at the next his intoxication benumbed his senses and distorted his mental vision. For once in his life he wished himself sober.

Broadway, that pulsating artery of New York life, was still flowing a thin stream of traffic despite the lateness of the hour, and Bob's mind had become clearer by the time he reached it Several taxicabs whirled past, both north and south bound, but he knew billows of intoxication continued to ebb and flow through his brain, robbing him of that careful judgment which he fought to retain.

At last the clop-clop-clop of a horse's hoofs sounded close by, and an unshaven man in an ancient high hat steered a four-wheeler to the curb, barking, "Keb, keb!"

Bob lurched forward and laid a hand upon the driver's knee. "Very man I'm lookin' for." The hiccup that followed was by no means intentional.

But Bob shook his head vigorously and waved a comprehensive gesture toward the west. "Got a party of my wn back yonder-everybody soused but me-understand? I'm the only sober one, so I'm goin' to drive 'em home, see? How much?"

"Yes, sir. Where to, sir?"

"How much for what?" demanded "For the cab-one hour, I'll bring

Notating except Bob's personal appearance prevented the driver from whipping up without more ado. Thenight was old-and these jokers some-

times pay well, the man reflected. "How'd I know you'd bring it back?"

he inquired "Matter of honor with me. I'll beback in no time. Will ten dollars be right? I'll make it fifteen, and you can lend me your coat and hat. We'll exchange-have to, or no joke. Is it B go?"

The offer was tempting, but the driver cannily demanded Wharton's name and address before committing himself. The card that Bob handed him put an end to the parley; he wheeled into the side street and removed his long, nickel-buttoned coat and his battered tile, taking Bob's broadcloth and well-blocked hat in re-

"First one o' these I ever had on," he chuckled. "If you ain't back I'll take these glad rags to Charley Voice's hotel, eh?

"Right! The Charlevoix. But I'll be back." Bob drove away with a partingflourish of his whip.

The elevator was in its place, the some money-a cabby'll do anything hall-man dozing, when Wharton entered the Elegancia and rang the bell of Lilas Lynn's apartment. Once hehad gained admittance little time was wasted. He and Merkle helped Hammon to his feet, then each took an arm: but the exertion told, and Jarvis hung between them like a drunken man, a gray look of death upon his face.

"Watch out for the door-man," Jimmy Knight cautioned for the twentieth time. "Make him think you've got a

"Aren't you coming along?" asked

But Jim recoiled. "Me? No. I'll stay and help Lilas make her getaway."

Merkle nodded agreement. "Don't et her get out of your sight, either, understand? There's a ship sailing in the morning. See that she's aboard." Jarvis Hammon spoke. "I want you

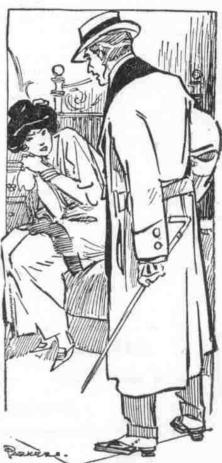
all to know that I'm entirely to blame and that I did this myself. Lilas is a-good girl." The words came laboriously, but his heavy brows were drawn down, his jaw was square. "I was clumsy. I might have killed her. But she's all right, and I'll be all right, too. when I get a doctor. Now put that pistol in my pocket, John. Do as I say. There! Now I'm ready.'

Bob Wharton mounted the box and drove to Central Park West. At Sixtyseventh street he wheeled into the sunken causeway that links the East and West sides. Once in the shadows, Merkle leaned

from the door, crying softly, "Faster! Bob whipped up, the horse cantered,

the cab reeled and bounced over the cobblestones, rocking the wounded man To John Merkle the ride was terrible,

with a drunkard at the reins and in jerk of his head. This girl must get his arms a perhaps fatally injured away from here. She'll ruin everything man, who, despite the tortures of that in her condition. Try to put her in some | bumping carriage, interspersed his kind of shape while Lorelei packs her groans with cries of "Hurry, hurry!" bag. We had better get her out of the When he felt the grateful smoothness of Fifth avenue beneath the wheels he



'Did You Shoot Him?" He Asked Grimly.

leaned forth a second time and warned Bob. "Be careful of the watchman in the block."

The liquor in Bob was dying; he lent downward to inquire, "Is he all right?" Merkle nodded, then withdrew his head.

The Hammon residence has changed owners of late, but many people recall Its tragic associations and continue to point it out with interest. It is a massi se pile of gray stone, standing just east of Fifth avenue, and its bronze doors open upon an exclusive, wellke; t side street. At the farther corner, dla y discernible beneath the radiance of . street light, Bob made out the wat hman, now at the end of his patrol. The moment was propitious; there could be no further delay.

Do you believe Lilas is really guilty-was she justified? And do you think that Jimmy Knight will use this occasion to collect blackmail money?

(ecceptessessessessessessesses) (TO BE CONTINUED.)