SYNOPSIS. -11-

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 wellknown critic interviews Lorelei. A wellknown stage beauty with Bergman's Revue,
for a special article. Her coin-hunting
mother outlines Lorelei's ambitions, but
Blosson, 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 mother is involved. Merkle
and Lorelei have an auto wreck. The
blackmailers besmirch her good name.
Lorelei learns her mother is an unscrupulous plotter. She finds in Adoree Demorest a real friend, and finds Bob Wharton is likable. Lorelei leaves her family
and goes to live alone. Lorelei and drunken Bob Wharton are tricked into marriage. Lilas shoots and wounds Hammon seriously. Adoree Demorest meets
Campbell Pope. Hammon dies. Old man
Wharton seeks to divorce his son and
Lorelei, but they refuse to separate even
under pain of disinheritance.

At last Lorelei shows her fine character to those who would use her as a dupe and to those who misjudge the girl. In a dilemma that would have nonplused most thoughtful women, young Bob Wharton's wife masters a situation in a manner to make him proud of her. And she chooses to stick by Bob. How very powerful agents tried to wreck their honeymoon and how Lorelei set about to build a foundation of permanent happiness in marriage is told in this installment.

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...................... Old Man Wharton is accusing Lore-

lel and trying to persuade his son to leave her.

CHAPTER XVII-Continued.

Lorelei was standing very white and still; now she said, "Don't you think you'd better go?"

The elder man laid aside his hat and gloves, then spoke with snarling deliberation. "I'll go when I choose. No high and mighty airs with me, if you please." After a curious scrutiny of them both he asked his son: "You don't really imagine that she married you for anything except your money, do you?"

"I flattered myself-" Bob began, stiffly.

"Bah! You're drunk."

"Moderately, perhaps-or let us say that I am in an unnaturally argumentative mood. I take issue with you. You see, dad, I've been crazy about Lorelei ever since I first saw her, and-"

"To be sure, that's quite natural. But why in hell did you marry her? That wasn't necessary, was it?"

Lorelei uttered a sharp cry. Bob rose; his eyes were bright and hard. Mr. Wharton merely arched his shaggy brows, inquiring quickly of the bride: "What's the matter? I state the case correctly, do I not?"

"No!" gasped Lorelei. "Let's talk plainly-"

"That's a hit too plain even from you, dad," Bob cried, angrily.

"It's time for plain speaking. You got drunk, and she trapped you. I'm here to get you out of the trap." Addressing himself to Lorelei, he said: "Ten thousand dollars will buy a lot of clothes. I believe that's the amount Merkle offered you, isn't it?"

"Merkle? What are you talk about?" Bob demanded.

"Did Mr. Merkle tell you how why he came to make that asked Lorelei, indignantly. "No. But he offered it, dld h

"Yes, and I refused it. why?"

"We don't seem to be getti very well," Bob interposed. my wife and your daugh What's more, I love her; that ends the Reno chatt



"That's a Lie!"

her with his arm. "There's no price- knows what you are." tag on this marriage, dad, and you'll

regret what you've said." "You tell him, miss; maybe he'll be-

lieve you."

"Tell him what?" asked Lorelei.

The AUCTION BLOCK

A NOVEL OF NEW YORK LIFE GYREX BEACH * * ILLUSTRATIONS BY F PARKER

Girl'-

"There's nothing dishonest in that." "Just a minute. I won't have my daughter's face grinning at me every time I get into a street car. I'd be legitimate, perhaps, but it's altogether too damned colorful for me."

"Is that all you have against her?" "Not by any means. She's notori-

"Newspaper talk!"

bleeding men, by taking gifts and might have been inferred from a disrenting herself out the way she did at Hammon's supper. Men don't support show girls from chivalrous motives. I had her family looked up, and it didn't take two hours. Listen to this report." "No!" Lorelei gulped.

"'No police record as yet'-'Broker living at the Charlevoix apartments'-'Injured by a taxicab while intoxicated." quoted Wharton, "Scandal, blackmail, graft. It's all here, Bob. The report was made by one of our own men, and it's incomplete, but I can have it elaborated. What do you say, Mrs. Wharton? Is it true?"

Lorelei dropped her head. "Most of it, I dare say."

"Did you try to blackmail Merkle?"

"Your mother and your brother did." She was silent. "They tried to scare him into marry-

ing you, did they not?" 'Hammon said something about

that," ejaculated Bob, "but I don't believe-Lorelei checked him. "It's quite

"Merkle said you had nothing to do with it personally," conscientiously explained Mr. Wharton, "and I'm willing to take his word. But that's neither here nor there." There was a moment of silence during which he folded and replaced the report; then he shook his head, exclaiming, "Second-hand goods,

my boy!" "That's a lie!" Lorelei's voice was like a whip.

Mr. Wharton eyed her grimly. play of rage. He made a final appeal I'd care to have in my family-pardon my bluntness."

She met his eyes fairly. At no time had she flinched before him, although inwardly she had cringed and her flesh had quivered at his merciless atttack.

"You have told Bob the truth," she began, slowly, "in the worst possible way; you have put me in the most unfavorable light. I dare say I never would have had the courage to tell him myself, although he deserves to know. I've been pretty-commercialbecause I had to be, but I never sold nyself, and I sha'n't begin now. Bob isn't a child; he's nearly thirty years old-old enough to make up his own mind-and he must make this decision. not I."

Bob opened his llps, but his father

forestalled him. 'What do you mean by that?"

"I have no price. If he's sick of the match we'll end it, and it won't cost you a cent."

Bob looked inscrutable; his father smiled for the first time during the in-

"That's very decent of you," he said, "but of course I sha'n't put the good tains, and rivers dry up, and the whole faith of your offer to the test. I don't want something for nothing. I'll take | down, I believe; but dad isn't governed care of you nicely."

Thus far Bob had yielded precedence to his father, but he could no longer restrain himself. "Now let me take or decay, and gravity exerts no power the chair," he commanded, easily. "My mind is made up. You see, I didn't marry 'Peter Knight, residence Vale,' nor 'James Knight, reputation bad,' of it would just about match the darkall the best of the deal."

"Don't be an ass," growled his father.

"I've always been one-I may as well be consistent." Bob felt the slenand smiled down into the troubled blue forgetting. I believe that's usual nowadays."

"Oh, I'm not whitewashing you," crossed to Lorelei's side and encircled | Hannibal snapped, "She probably "I do," agreed Lorelei. "He's a-

could choose for himself." Mr. Wharton smiled sneeringly. "Admirable! I begin to see that you're mistakable self-consciousness; this for a reply, and, receiving none, broke sympathy; it's good business. Now en effort to be serious. He ran on hur- now. I'll quit gambling, too." out wrathfully: "Then I will. She's a he'll think he must act the man. But riedly: "What I mean to convey is

drunkard, and everything that means.

walt until you both get tired. Take my | so." word for it, poverty is the most tiresome thing in the world."

"We can manage," said Lorelei.

"You speak for yourself, but he the laughing-stock of the country. It's can't make a living-unless he has something in him that I never discov- have wound up in the D. T. parlors of ered. I fear you'll find him rather a heavy burden."

ton had kept his temper quite perfect-"Is it? She's made her living by argued a greater fixity of purpose than even than I ever wanted liquor. And



"I Divorce the Demon Rum."

"That's something for Bob to deter- to his son: "Can't you see that it won't mine-I have only the indications to do at all, Bob? I won't stand parago on. I don't blame him for losing his sites, unless they're my own. Either wits-you're very good looking-but have done with the matter and let me the affair must end. You're not a girl pay the charges or-go through to the bitter finish on your own feet. She's supporting three loafers; I dare say she can take care of another, but it isn't quite right to put it upon her-she's sure to weary of it some time. You'll notice I've said nothing about your mother so far, but-she's with me in this. I'll be in the city for several days, and I'd like to have you return to Pittsburgh with me when I go. Mother is expecting you. If you decide to stick it out-" Wharton's face showed more than a trace of feeling, his deep voice lowered a tone-"you may go to hell, with my compliments, and I'll sit on the lid to keep you there."

He rose, took his hat, and stalked out of the apartment without so much as a backward glance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Whew! That was a knockout. But who got licked?" Bob went to the little sideboard and helped himself to a stiff drink.

"Did he mean it?"

"My dear, time wears away mounsolar system is gradually running by any natural laws whatsoever. He's built of reinforced concrete, and time hardens him. He's impervious to rust over him."

"Then I think you'd better make

your choice tonight.' Bob's eyes opened. "I have. Don't nor even 'Mathilda Knight, wife of you understand? I'm going to stand Peter. I married this kid, and the pat—that is, unless"—he hesitated, his books are closed. You say the Knights | smile was a bit uncertain—"unless are a bad lot, and Lorelei's reputation | you're sick of your bargain. I'm afraid is a trifle discolored; maybe you're you haven't come out of the deal very right, but mine has some inky blots on | well. You thought I was rich-and so it, too, and I guess the cleanest part | did I until a moment ago-but I'm not. I've run through a good deal. I don't est that hers can show. I seem to have blame you for considering me a fine catch or for marrying me. You see, I never expected to find a girl who'd take me for anything except my money. so I'm not offended or disappointed or surprised. A bank account looms up succeed, but I'm not sure about you," der form at his side begin to tremble, just as big on Fifth avenue as it does on Amsterdam, and there aren't any eyes upturned to his. "Maybe we'll more love matches over there than elseboth have to do some forgiving and where. I'm not blind to my short-comings, either; there are a lot of bad habits waiting to be acquired by a chap with time and money like me. I can't live without booze; I don't know how to earn a living; I'm a corking spendthrift. That's one side. Balanced against that, I possess-let me see-I

> very even account, is it? For once in his life Bob showed un- You'll have to quit."

she smirks at you out of every catch- pointment. Bob hasn't anything, and | I married you. But it seems that | penny advertisement along Broadway. he won't have until I die, but I'm good | you've heen cheated, and-I'm ready to She's 'The Chewing-Gum Girl' and 'The for thirty years yet. I'm not going to do the square thing. I'll step aside and Petticoat Girl' and 'The Bathtub disinherit him. I'm merely going to give you another chance, if you say

> During this little declaration Lorelei had watched him keenly; she appeared to be seriously weighing his offer.

"I was getting pretty tired things," he added, "and I s'pose I'd some highly exclusive institution or behind a bathroom door with a gas tube Throughout the interview Mr. Whar- in my teeth. But-I met you, and you went to my head. I wanted you worse ly, and his coolness at this moment than I ever wanted anything-worse now I have you. I've had you for one day, and that's something. I suppose it's silly to talk about starting over-I don't want to reform if I don't have to; moderation strikes me as an awful cold proposition; but it looks as if reform were indicated if I'm to keep you. I'm just an album of expensive habits, and-we're broke. Maybe I could-do something with myself if you took a hand. It's a good deal to ask of a girl like you, but"-he regarded her timidly, then averted his eyes-"if you cared to try it we might make it go for a while. And you might get to care for me a little-if I improve." Again he paused hopefully. "I've been as honest as I know how. Now, won't you be the same?"

Lorelei roused herself, and spoke with quiet decision.

"I'll go through to the end, Bob." Bob started and uttered an inarticulate word or two; in his face was a light of gladness that went to the girl's heart. His name had risen freely to her lips; he felt as if she had laid her hand in his with a declaration of absolute trust.

"You mean that?"

She nodded. He took her in his arms and kissed her gently; then, feeling her warm against his breast, he burst the bonds that had restrained him up to this moment and covered her face, her neck, her hair with passionate caresses. For the first time since his delirium of the night before he abandoned himself to ing. the hunger her beauty excited, and she offered him no resistance.

At last she freed herself, and, straightening the disorder of her hair, smiled at him mistily.

"Wait. Please-" "Beautiful!" His eyes were affame. You're my wife. Nothing can change

that." "Nothing except-yourself. Now, you must listen to me." She forced him reluctantly into his chair and seated herself opposite. He leaned forward and kissed her once more, then seized her hand and held it. At intervals he crushed his lips into its pink palm. We must start honestly," she began. 'Do you mind if I hurt you?"

"You can't hurt me so long as you don't-leave me. Your eyes have haunted me every night. I've seen the curve of your neck-your lips. No woman was ever so perfect, so maddening." "Always that. You're not a husband it this moment; you're only a man."

He frowned slightly. "That's what makes this whole matter so difficult," she went on. "Don't

you see?"

He shook his head.

"You don't love me, you're drunk with-something altogether different to love. . . . It's true," she insisted. "You show it. You don't even know the real me."

"Beauty may be only a skin disease," Bob laughed, "but ugliness goes clear to the bone."

"I married you for your money, and you married me because-I seemed physically perfect-because my face and my body roused fires in you. I think we are both pretty rotten at heart, don't you?"

"No. Anyhow, I don't care to think about it. I never won anything by thinking. Kiss me again."

She ignored his demand, with her shadowy smile. "I deliberately traded on my looks; I put myself up for a price, and you paid that price regardless of everything except your desires. We muddled things dreadfully and got our deserts. I didn't love you, I don't love you now any more than you love me; but I think we're coming to respect each other, and that is a beginning. You have longings to be some thing different and better; so have I. Let's try together. I have it in me to

"Thanks for the good cheer." "You're afraid you can't make a living for us-I know you can. I'm mere-

ly afraid you won't." 'What do you mean?" he asked. "I don't believe the liquor will let

"Nonsense, Any man can cut down." "'Cutting down' won't do for us. Bob." He thrilled anew at her intimate use of his name. "The chemistry couldn't be temperate in anything.

"All right. I'll quit. I divorce the "The truth, of course." He paused more than a pretty woman. Get his was, so far as Lorelei knew, his maid-demon rum; lovers once, but strangers

Lorelei laughed. "That won't strain

Her listener frowned. "Forget that salary talk," he said, shortly. "D'you think I'd let you-support me? D'you think I'm that kind of a nosegay? When I get so I can't pay the bills I'll walk out. Tomorrow you quit work, and we move to the Ritz-they know me there, and-this delightful, homelike grotto of yours gives me the collywabbles."

Capyright, By Harper & Brethers

Author of

"The Iron Trail"

"The Spoilers"

"The Silver Horde" Etc.

"Who will pay the hotel?" Lorelei smiled.

"Mr. George W. Bridegroom, of course. I'll get the money, never fear. I know everybody, and I've borrowed thousands of dollars when I didn't need it. My rooms at the Charlevoix are full of expensive junk; I'll sell it, and that will help. As soon as we're decently settled I'll look for a salaried job. Then watch my smoke. To quote from the press of a few months hence: "The meteoric rise of Robert Wharton has startled the financial world, surpassing as it does the sensational success of his father. Young Mr. Wharton was seen yesterday at his Wall street office and took time from his many duties to modestly assure our representative that his ability was inherited, and merely illustrates anew the maxim that "a chip of the old block will return after many days,"' That will please dad. He'll relent when attribute my success to him."

"You must quit drinking before you begin work," said Lorelel.

"I have quit."

With a person of such resilient temperament, one who gamboled through life like a fawn, argument was difficult. Bob Wharton was pagan in his joyous inconsequence; his romping spirits could not be damped; he bubbled with the optimism of a Robin Goodfellow. Ahead of him he saw nothing but dancing sunshine, heard nothing but the Pandean pipes. The girl-wife watched him curiously.

"I wonder if you can," she mused Before we begin our new life we're going to make a bargain, binding on both of us. You'll have to stop drinking. I won't live with a drunkard. I'll work until you've mastered the crav-

"No!" Bob declared, firmly. "I'll take the river before I'll let you-keep me. Why, if I-"

Lorelei rose and laid her hand over his lips, saying quietly:

"I'm planning our happiness, don't you understand? and it's a big stake. You must pocket your pride for while. Nobody will know. We've made a botch of things so far, and there is only one way for us to win out."

"A man who'd let his wife-" "A man who wouldn't let his wife have her way at first is a brute." "You shouldn't ask it," he cried, sul-

lenly. "I don't ask it: I insist upon it. If you refuse we can't go on." "Surely you don't mean that?" He

looked up at her with grave, troubled "I do. I'm entirely in earnest. You

haven't strength to go out among your friends and restrain yourself. No man as far gone as you could do it." "I've a simpler way than that," he

told her, after a moment's thought. "There are institutions where they straighten fellows up. I'll go to one of those."

"No." She rejected this suggestion positively. "They only relieve; they don't cure. The appetite comes back. This is something you must do yourself, once and for all. You must fight this out in secret; this city is no place for men with appetites they can't control. Do this for me, Bob, and-and I'll let you do anything after that. I'll let you-beat me." Getting no response from him, she added gravely, "It is that or-nothing."

"I can't let you go," Bob said finally. "Good! We'll keep this apartment and I'll go on working-"

He hid his face in his hands and groaned. "Gee! I'm a rotter."

"You can sell your belongings at the Charlevoix, and we'll use the money. We'll need everything, for I can't plece out my salary the way I've been doing. There can't be any more supper parties and gifts-"

"I should hope not," he growled. "I'll murder the first man who speaks to you."

"Then it is a real, binding bargain?" "It is-if you'll bind it with another kiss," he agreed, with a miserable attempt at cheerfulness. "But I sha'n't

look myself in the face." For the first time she came to him willingly.

"Doesn't it seem nice to be honest with yourself and the world?" she sighad, after a time.

"Yes," he laughed. "I'm sorry to cut the governor adrift, but he'll have to get along without our help,"

Despite his jocularity he was deeply moved. As the situation grew clearer to him he saw that this girl was about Wharton senior shrugged wearily. But you taught him to drink before he possess a fair sense of humor. Not a of your body demands the stuff-you to change the whole current of his careless life; her unexpected firmness, her gentle, womanly determination at this crisis was very grateful-he desperately longed to retain its support-and yet the arrangement to which she had forced his consent went sorely against grafter, Bob, and her whole family are that will wear off. And understand this: I have no regrets, no questions your will-power in the least, for half his grain. His struggle had not been grafters. Now, let me inish. She this: You can't graft off me. You and to ask, no reproaches. I got all I ex- my salary goes up Amsterdam avenue, easy. Her surrender to him was as makes her living in any wav she can: your family are due for a great disay pected, and all I was entitled to when and the rest will about run this flat." | complete and as unselfish as his own

acquiescence seemed unmanly and weak. He rose and paced the littleroom to relieve his feelings. Days and weeks of almost constant dissipation had affected his mental poise quite asdisastrously as the strain of the past twenty-four hours had told upon hisphysical control, and he was shaking nervously. He paused at the sideboard finally and poured himself a steadying drink.

Lorelei watched his trembling fingers fill the glass before she spoke.

"You mustn't touch that," she said, positively.

"Eh?" He turned, still frowning absent-mindely. "Oh, this?" He held theglass to the light. "You mean you want me to begin-now? A fellow has to sober up gradually, my dear. I really need a jolt-I'm all unstrung."

"I sealed the bargain." "But, Lorelei-" He set the glass down with a mirthless laugh, "Of course, I won't, if you insist. I intended to taper off-a chap can't turn teetotaler the way he turns a handspring." He eyed the glass with a sudden intensity of longing. "Let's begin tomor-

row. Nobody starts a new life at 2 a.

m. And-it's all poured out." She answered by taking the glass and flinging its contents from the open window. This done, she gathered the bottles from the sideboard-there were not many-and, opening the folding doors that masked the kitchenette, she upended them over the slnk. When the last gurgle had died away she went to her husband and put her arms around his neck.

"You must," she said, gently. "If you'll only let me have my way we'll win. But, Bob, dear, it's going to be a bitter fight."

Lorelel's family spent most of the night in discussing their great good fortune. Even Jim, worn out as he was by his part in the events connected with the marriage, sat until a late hour planning his sister's future, and incidentally his own. After he had gone to bed mother and father remained in a glow of exhilaration that made sleep impossible, and it was nearly dawn when they retired to dreams of hopes achieved and ambitions realized.

About nine-thirty on the following morning, just when the rival Wall street forces were gathering, Hannibal Wharton called up the Knight establishment.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the way to the Elegancia Mrs. Knight recounted to Jim in great detail and with numerous digressions and comments what Hannibal Wharton had said to her. Mrs. Knight herself he had called a blood-sucker, it seemed -the good woman shook with rage at the memory-and he had threatened her with the direct retribution if she persisted in attempting to fasten herself upon him. Bob, he had explained. was a loafer whom he had supported out of a sense of duty; if the idiot was ungrateful he would simply have to suffer the consequences mother felt the disgrace keenly, and on her account Hannibal had expressed himself as willing to ransom the young fool for, say, ten thousand dollars,

"I never was so insulted in my life," stormed Mrs. Knight. "You should have heard him!"

With a show of confidence not entirely real Jim rejoined: "Now, ma, don't heat up. Everybody forgets me, but I'm going to draw cards in this game." The interview that followed their ar-



"You Mustn't Touch That," She Said, Positively.

pleasant. At his first opportunity Bob explained rather briefly: "I offered Lorelei her freedom lass

night when my income was ampotated." "You've had time to think it over," his wife interposed, "Do you still

want me?" "Why, of course. And you?" She shrugged. "I don't change in one night. Now-I wish you and Jim

would leave mother and me-

Do you believe that Lorelei now can shake her bloodsucking relatives for good, and can prove to Old Man Wharton that she is well worth a place in his family circle?

....................... (TO BE CONTINUED)