## THE ANOVEL OF NEW YORK LIFE Author of Author of GYREX BEACH \* \* "The Iron Trail" "The Spoilers" "The Silver Horde" Etc. Coppright, By Harper & Brothers

## CHAPTER XXV-Continued. -15-

taken it and after other drinks had Bob's mind the pity of it grew as the gone the way of the first, he met a time crept on. number of people whom he liked and to whom he was inspired to show his ful. Despite her inexperience, she was liking, and, strange to say, the more calm, capable, sympathetic, and, best he drank the more of such friends he of all, her normality afforded a supdiscovered. By late afternoon he was port upon which both the husband and in a fantastically jubilant mood, and, the wife could rest. When she finally seizing Kurtz, he bore him across the made herself ready for the street Bob way to Delmonico's.

Now, Kurtz was worldly and therefore tolerant. He had grown to like and to understand his young associate very well indeed, and something about Bob's riotous disposition to gladness awoke a response in the little tailor.

It was that expansive and expensive hour of the afternoon when business worries are dropped and before social cares are shouldered. It was cocktail time along the avenue, the hour when sprees are born and engagements broken, and as it lengthened Wharton celebrated it as in days gone by. His last regret had vanished; he was having a splendid time, when a page called him to a telephone booth.

Adoree's voice greeted him; she was Adoree shook her head so violently that speaking from his own home, and her the barbaric beaded festoon beneath first words almost sobered him. Some- her chin clicked and rattled. -thing was wrong; Bob was needed quickly; Lorelei was asking for him. For more than an hour they had been but-it seems to me if you've got a bit vainly trying to locate him. They had succeeded in reaching the doctor, and he was there-with a nurse. Adoree's voice broke-Lorelei was frightened and so was the speaker. Bob had better waste no time.

When Bob lurched out of the booth he was white; the noisy group he had left rose in alarm at sight of his stricken face. His legs led him a crooked course out of the cafe, bringing him into collision with chairs and tables and causing him to realize for the first time how far he had allowed himself to go. In a shaking voice he called for a taxicab, meanwhile allowing the raw air of the street to cool his head.

The terror of the unknown was upon him. But regrets were unavailing. "Something had gone wrong, and Lorelei needed him. She was calling for him and he was drunk. He would reel up to her bed of pain with bleared eyes. with poisoned lips. How could he kiss her? How could he explain?

The cab swung into the curb, and

in ignorance of the truth, and now, therefore, the girl had no one to lean bal shook his head. "Not more than of stale tobacco smoke, and the ash He did struggle half-heartedly upon except an unpractical stage I thought. I knew he had it in him; receiver at his elbow was piled high against his first drink, but after he had woman-and a drunken husband. In you were the one-" "No. no! We both doubted. Perhaps

this girl read him." But Adoree Demorest was wonder-"Sure she read him!" snorted the

father. "She read his bank book. But I fooled her."

"Do you remember when Bob was born? The doctors thought-"Of course I remember!" her hus-

band broke in. "Those doctors said you'd never come through it."

"Yes: I wasn't strong."

"But you did. I was with you. "I must. It's nearly theater-time," fought for you. I wouldn't let you die. she told him. "It's one of the penal-Remember it?" The speaker moistened ties of this business that nothing must his lips. "Why, I never forgot." hold the curtain; but I'll be back the "Bob is experiencing something like

that tonight."

Hannibal started, then he fumbled Adoree nodded; her eyes met Bob's uncertainly for a cigar. When he had squarely, and he saw that they were It lighted he said, gruffly, "Well, it deeper breath, then burst out: wet. Her face was tender, and she made a man of me; I hope it'll help appeared very simple and womanly at Bob.' this moment. Her absurd theatrical-

Still staring out across the glowing music is a sort of-prayer; anyhow, it's lights and the mysterious, inky blots that lay below her, Mrs. Wharton went | music is divine language. In my own on: "You are thinking only of Bob, but I'm thinking of her, too. She is offering her life for the life of a little child, just as I offered mine."

There was a silence, then Hannibal looked up to find his wife standing over him, with face strangely humble. Her eyes were appealing, her frail figure was shaking wretchedly.

"My dear!" he cried, rising.

"I can't keep it up, Hannibal. I can't pretend any longer. It's Bob's baby and it's ours-" Disregarding his denial, she ran on, swiftly: "You can't understand, but I'm lonely, Hannibal, terribly lonely and sad. Bob grew up and went away, and all we had left was money. The dollars piled up; year by year they grew heavier and heavier until they squeezed our lives dry and crowded out everything. They even crowded out our son andspolled him. They made you into a stone man; they came between me and the people and the things I loved; they walled me off from the world. My life is empty-empty. I want to mother something."

Hannibal inquired, hoarsely: "Not this baby, surely? Not that woman's child?"

"It's Bob's baby and ours." He looked down at her queerly for a

moment. "The breed is rotten. If he had married a decent girl-"

"More than we thought?" Hannl- was blue and reeking with the odor

with burnt offerings. that the attendant, who had some im-Pope rose at Adoree's entrance, eying possible number of babies of his own her anxiously. "Is everything all right?" and might therefore be considered an

he cried. "Is what all right?" "The-er-Lorelle."

"Oh, yes! What are you doing here?" "I suppose I must apologize. You see, I came here to wait and-and

help." "You decided to-help?" Adoree eyed the disheveled musician queerly. 'You've helped to break my leaseants of neighboring apartments began I'll be thrown out of this house sure." to clamor for a sight of it, and Bob Pope stammered, guiltily, "I was was only too eager to gratify them. playing for Bob and Lorelei."

With one glove half off. Adoree slowly seated herself, showing in her face checked him as he was going out. an amazement that increased the man's embarrassment. Pope took a est shadow of a smile. "I don't think

it's good for him to go out so often. "Oh, I have a sixty-horse power Why don't you ask your father and imagination, and it seems to me that mother to come up?" Wharton flushed, then he stamthe only way I know of praying. Good mered, "I-what makes you-erthink-" way I was sort of praying for those "Why, I guessed it the very first two children. Foolish, isn't it? I'm day." Lorelel's smile saddened. "They sorry I told you. It sounds nutty to needn't see me, you know." me when I stop to consider it." Pope Bob laid the child back in its bed. stirred uneasily under Adoree's gravely But that's just what they want. They speculative eyes. "Lorelei's all right?" want to see you, only I wouldn't let Adoree nodded. "It's a boy." There you be bothered. They're perfectly was a moment of silence. "Did you foolish over the kid; mother cries, and

ever see a brand-new baby?" "Murder, no!"

Miss Demorest's gaze remained bent turned with his parents. upon Pope, but it was focused upon great distances; her voice when she spoke was hushed and awe-stricken. to Lorelei and, bending over her chair, Neither did I until this one. I held it! placed a kiss upon her lips. "There," I held it in my arms. Oh-I was frightsaid she. "When you are stronger I'm ened, and yet I seemed to know just going to apologize for the way we've what to do and-and everything. It treated you. We're old people. We're was strange. It hurt me terribly, for, selfish and suspicious and unreasonyou see, I didn't know what babies able, but we're not entirely inhuman. meant until tonight. Now I know." You won't be too hard on us, will

Pope saw the shining eyes suddenly you?" fill and threaten to overflow; instead The old lady's eyes were shining, the of the grotesquely overdressed and arpalms which were clasped over Loretificial stage favorite he beheld only lel's hand were hot and tremulous. The a yearning woman whose face was soflook of hungry yearning that greeted tened and glorified as by a vision. the elder woman's words was ample

"I didn't know you cared for chilanswer, and with a little choking cry dren."

Adoree shrugged; the beads at her arms and thrilled as she felt the amber throat clicked barbarously. "Neither head upon her breast.

did I, but I suppose every woman does Hannibal trumpeted into his handif she only knew it. Tonight I began kerchief, then cleared his throat preto understand what this ache inside of monitorily, but Bob forestalled him me means." Her gaze came back and with a happy laugh. "Don't hold any

Now, strange to say, this novel ar- self occasionally. You see, drinking is rangement was extremely agreeable to mostly a matter of temperament, after the deposed ruler. Bob took a shame- all. But he is doing splendidly, and less delight in doing menial service; some day perhaps-" to fetch and to carry for all hands filled They nodded understandingly. him with Joy. But once outside of the "You'll try to like us, won't you, for premises he reasserted himself, and his Bob's sake?" pleaded the old lady,

wasteth our noondays."

show it to the hallman downstairs. He

"Bob, dear," she said, with the faint-

Hannibal Wharton was deeply em-

importance grew as gas expands. Be timidly, fore long his intimate friends began to "I intend to love you both very dearavoid him like a plague. It was his 19," shyly returned the girl, and, noting partner, Kurtz, who finally dubbed the light in Lorelei's face, Bob Wharhim "The pestilence that talketh in ton was satisfied,

darkness and the destruction that Restraint vanished swiftly under the old couple's evident determination to One day, after Bob had acquired suf- make amends, buj after they had gone ficient confidence in himself and in the Lorelei became so pensive that Bob baby to handle it without anxiety to said, anxiously, "I hope you weren't the nurse, he begged permission to polite to them merely for my sake."

Lorelei shook her head, "No. I was returned greatly elated, explaining only thinking- Do you realize that none of my own people have been to see me? That I haven't had a single word from any of them ?"

authority, declared this one to be the Bob stirred uncomfortably: he startfinest he had ever beheld. Oddly ed to speak, then checked himself as enough, this praise delighted Bob out she went on, not without some effort: of all reason. He remained in a state "I'm going to say something unpleasof suppressed excitement all that day, ant, but I think you ought to know it. and on the following afternoon he When they learn that your parents again kidnaped the child for a second have taken me in and made up with us exhibition. It seemed that the infant's | they're going to ask me for money. It's fame spread rapidly, for soon the teaa terrible thing to say, but it's true."

"Do you want to see them? Do you want them to see the baby?"

"N-no!" Lorelei was pale as she Every afternoon he took his son downmade answer. "Not after all that has stairs with him, until finally Lorelei passed."

Bob heaved a grateful sigh. "I'm glad. They wor't trouble you any more."

"Why? What-"

"I've been wai ing until you were strong to tell yo1. I've noticed how their silence hur you, but-it's my fault that they haven't been here. I sent them away."

"You sent them away?"

"Yes. I fixed them with money and -they're happy at last. There's considerable to tell. Jim got into trouble with the police and finally sent for me. He told me everything and-it wasn't pretty; I'd rather not repeat all he said, but it opened my eyes and showed me father-but just wait." He rushed out why they brought you here, how they of the room, and in a few moments reput you on the au tion block, and how they cried for bidy. He told me things you know nothing about and could barrassed, but his wife went straight never guess. When he had finished I thanked God that they had flung you into my arms instead of-some other man's. It's a miracle that you weren't sacrificed utterly."

"Where is Jlm now?"

"Somewhere in the boundless West, He gave me his p omise to reform."

"He never will.

"Of course not, and I don't expect it of him. You see, | know how hard it s to reform."

"But mother and father?"

"I'm coming to hem. My dad came around the day after our baby was born and shook hands. He wanted to she gathered the weak figure into her stamp right in he e and tell you what a fool he had made of himself, but I wouldn't stand for it. Finally, when he saw the kid, he blew up entirely. and right away proposed breaking ground for a japer palace for the ester. He wanted to build it in igh where he could run in, gofrom business. Mother was olish, too. Well, when I had. ttle understanding with Jim ed the whole truth about your ized that no matter where y would be a constant ur happiness unless they for. It struck me that a game fight for happipuldn't stand for anyat the last minute. I and told her the facts. to understand as well unt fer in spite of all so we shook down the r'an e do /ment."



cried piteously:

minute the show is over.

"Lorelel needs you."

fected young woman.

"You're not going to leave us?"

ism was gone; she was a natural, unaf-

"I wish I could do something to

"She knows you're close by; that's

help," wearily continued Bob, but

he scrambled out, then stumbled blindly up the steps and into the building where he lived.

Adoree met him at his own door. Wharton's impression was vague; he saw little more than the tragic widening of the girl's eyes as she recognized his condition.

"Am I as bad as that?" he stammered. "Do you, hink she'll notice it?" "Oh, Bob!" Adoree cried, in a strick-

en voice. "How could you-at this "time?" "You said she wanted me. I couldn't

take time-"

"Yes! She has been calling for you, but I'm sorry I found you."

A silent-footed figure in a nurse's uniform emerged from the dining room, and her first expression of relief at sight of Bob changed swiftly to a stare of startled wonderment. Bob was not too drunk to read the half-spoken protest on her lips. Then he heard his wife calling him, and realized that somehow she knew of his coming. At the sound of her voice, strangely throaty and hoarse from pain, the strength ran out of his body. The doctor heard him fumbling at the bedroom door and admitted him; then a low, aching cry of disappointment her head upon her arms.

perate.

"She sent me away," he whispered. she saw you. I wonder if you realize-"

"Oh, yes," he nodded, slowly. "I don't get drunk all over, like most men. I'm afraid I'll never forget that cry." He was trembling, and his terror was so pitiful that Adoree laid a compassionate hand upon his shoulder.

"Don't let go, Bob. Hold your thoughts steady and sober up. must all 'help."

Darkness found Bob huddled in his thought that his own comfort should spoke musingly, as a man speaks to be considered of consequence made himself. him refuse to touch it.

bearable, and, feeling the desperate Wharton were in the city, but, recallregret that his mother was not here to himself." comfort Lorelei in the first great crisis lei's wish that her own mother be kept | mother.



"She Sent Me Away," He Whispered.

of real manhood in you, Bob, you'll never drink again. The shock of seeing you like this-when she needed you-didn't help her any."

"I know! I know!" The words were wrung from him like a groan. "But the thing is bigger and stronger than I am. It takes both of us together to fight it. If she should-leave me, I'd never pull through and-I wouldn't want to."

Never until she left Lorelei's house and turned toward the white lights of Broadway did Adoree Demorest fully realize whither her theatrical career had carried her. Adoree knew herself to be pure. But the world considered her evil, and evil in its eyes she would remain. At this moment she would gladly have changed places with that other girl whose life hung in the scales.

. . . . . . .

John Merkle had never lost interest sounded, and Adoree Demorest bowed in Lorelei, nor forgotten her refusal of his well-meant offer of assistance. When Bob groped his way back into It pleased him to read into her charthe living room his look was ghastly; acter beauties and nobilities of which his face was damp; his eyes were des- she was utterly unconscious if not actually devoid. Soon after his talk with Bob he telephoned Hannibal Wharton, "Poor thing!" He winced at Ado- making known the situation in the ree's tone. "God! I heard her when most disagreeable and biting manner of which he was capable. Strange to say, Wharton heard him through, then

thanked him before ringing off. When Hannibal had repeated the news to his wife, she moved slowly to a window and stood there staring down into the glittering chasm of Fifth avenue. Bob's mother was a frall, erect, impassive woman, wearied and sad-We dened with the weight of her husband's millions. There had been a time when society knew her, but of late years chair, fighting for his senses, but as she saw few people, and her name was the liquor died in him terrible fancies seldom mentioned except in connection came to life. A frightened maid began with her benefactions. Hannibal Wharpreparations for his dinner, but he ton was serenely conscious of her comordered her away. Then when she plete accord with his every action, and brought him a tray, anger at the in reporting Merkle's conversation he

"John loves to be caustic; he likes At length his inactivity became un- to vocalize his dyspepsia," the old man muttered. Mrs. Wharton did not stir; need of same counsel, he telephoned there was something uncompromising and dull with fatigue, paused outside then the nurse, an awesome person-a John Merkle. Bob was too deeply agi- in the rigid lines of her back and in tated to more than note the banker's her stiffly poised head. "People of her time lacked perhaps an hour of dawn, who ruled in the name and stead of the statement that Mr. and Mrs. Hannibal kind always have children," he con- the street outside and the building new heir. Lorelei herself occupied no the father. tinued, "and that's what I told Bob. I ing it later, he experienced a stab of told him he was laying up trouble for

of her womanhood. It had been Lore- thought," irrelevantly murmured the ened and hair on end, seated at the in- not so Bob. Somewhere at the foot of but it's hard to stop eatirely, an

"John Merkle says she is splendid. "How do you know?"

"I have talked with him. I have learned whatever I could about her, wherever I could, and it's all good. After all, Bob loves her, and isn't that enough?"

"But she doesn't love him," stormed the father. "She said she didn't, She wants his money, and she thinks she'll get it this way."

"Do you think money can pay her for what she is enduring at this minute? She's frightened, just as I was frightened when Bob was born. She's sick and suffering. But do you think all our dollars could buy that child from her? Money has made us hard, Hannibal: let's-be different."

"I'm afraid we have put it off too long," he answered, slowly. "She won't forgive us, and I'm not sure I want her to."

"Bob's in trouble. Won't you go to him?"

Hannibal Wharton opened his lips, closed them; then, taking his hat and coat, he left the room.

But as the old man went uptown his nerve failed him. He was fixed in his ways, he had a blind faith in his own infallIbility. Twice he rode up in the elevator to his son's door, twice he rode down again. Hannibal settled himself to wait.

During the chill, still hours after the city had gone to rest an automobile drew up to the apartment house; when its expected passenger emerged from the building a grim-faced stranger in a greatcoat accosted him. One glance challenged the physician's attention, and he answered:

"Yes, it's all over. A boy."

"And-Mrs. Wharton, the mother?" she has everything to live for. She is doing as well as could be expected. You're a relative, I presume?"

The old man hesitated, then his months." voice came boldly. "Yes, I'm her father."

When the doctor had driven away Hannibal strode into the building and telephoned to the Waldorf, but now his words were short and oddly broken. gladness to the eyes of the woman who | usurped by another. Heretofore he had had waited all these hours.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Adoree Demorest, still in her glittering, hybrid costume, but heavy-limbed her own door early that morning. The sort of oracle and regent combined- used to do." itself was silent, yet from Adoree's mean station in the new scheme, for at parlor issued the sound of light fingers least she shared the confidence of the upon piano keys. Adoree entered, to murse and the doctor, and ranked "Bob had more to him than we find Campbell Pope, with collar loos- above the cook and the housemaid, but strument. The air within the room the list he found his own true place.

frightened and panic-stricken. "I've everything you intend to say." sacrificed my right to children."

"How can you say--'

way strange to Pope's experience.

"The thing that counts is what you are, not what you seem to be. I know the truth."

Now there was nothing sufficiently significant about these words to bring a light of wonderment and gladness to the girl's face, but her tears ceased as abruntly as they had commenced, and noting the slowly growing radiance of her expression, Campbell was stricken dumb with fright at the possible consequences of temerity. The knowledge of his shortcomings robbed him of confidence and helped to confuse him.

Adoree rose. For a moment she stood looking at him with a peculiar, tender smile, then took him by the lapels of his shapeless coat and drew his thin face down to hers.

"I'm not going to let you back out," she declared, firmly. "You asked me, didn't you?"

"Adoree! No, no! Think what you are doing," he cried, sharply. But she continued to smile up into his eyes with a gladness that intoxi-

cated him. She suuggled closer to him, murmuring, cozily: "I don't want to think-"Youth is a wonderful thing, and we'll have plenty of time to think when we're too old to talk. Now, I just want to love you as hard as you have been loving me for the last six

. . . . .

certain readjustment of values. To Bob, who had always led a selfish, thoughtless existence, it was at first bewildering to discover that his place ing: "She is beautiful, and she is Nevertheless they brought a light of at the head of his household had been good, too. Anybody can see that. We always been of supreme domestic im- for you, if for nothing else." portance, but now the order of things was completely reversed, if not hopelessly jumbled. First in consequence tyrannical because of its helplessness.

centered upon his face, but it was post-mortems, dad. Lorelei knows "I'm blamed if she does." rumbled,

the old man, "because I don't know "Oh, you know it as well as I do!" myself. I'm not much ou apologies: I A flush wavered in the speaker's can take 'em, but I can't make 'em." cheeks, then fled, leaving her white and His voice rose sternly: "Young lady, weary. "You, of all men, must under- the night that baby was born I stood stand. I'm notorious. I'm a painted outside this house for hours because woman, a wicked woman-the wicked- was afraid to come in. And my fee est woman in the land-and that repu- hurt like the devil, too. I wouldn't tation will live in spite of anything I lose that much sleep for the whole steel can do." She began to cry now in a trust; but I didn't dare go back to the hotel, for mother was waiting, and I Pope's habitual restraint all at once was afraid of her, too. I don't intend gave way. "Nonsense!" he exploded. to go through another night like that."



"You Won't Be Too Hard on Us, Will

Bob's mother turned to her son, saycould love her for what she has done

"Well, I should say so," proudly vaunted the son. "She took a chance when she didn't care for me, and she came this new person, tiny and vastly made me into a regular fellow. Why, she reformed me from the ground up. I've sworn off every blessed thing I

> "Including drinking?" gruffly queried "Yes."

Lorelei smiled her slow, reluctat smile at the visitors, and her voice gentle as she said: "He thinks he mustn't blame him if he forget

What do you mean?" Lorelet faltered in bewild rme it.

"We asked him for a hundred thousand dollars and jot it."

Lorelel gasped.

"He bellowed ite a bull, he spat oison like a cobr*i*, he writhed like a bucket of eels, but we put it over."

"A hundred the aand dollars!" whispered the wife.

"To a penny. And it's in the bank to your credit. But | didn't stop there." Bob's voice hardered. "I went to your mother and in your name I promised her the income from it so long, and only so long, as she and Peter stayed away from you. The accepted-rather greedly, I thougat-and they have gone back to Vala. They have your old house, and I have their promise never to see you entert upon your invitation. Of course you can go to them whenever you wish, but-they're happy, and I think we will be happier with them in Vale than in New York. I hope you don't object to my arrangement.'

There was a long silence, then Lorelei sighed. "You are a very good man, Bob. It was my dream to do something of this sort but I could never have done it so well."

Her husband bent and kissed her tenderly. "It wasn't all my doings; I had help. And you mustn't feel sad, for something tells me you're going to learn finally the meaning of a real mother's love."

"Yes-yes!" T e answer came dreamily, then as a fretful complaint issued from the colt at her side Lorelei leaned forwar! and swiftly gathered the baby into her arms.

"Is he sick?" Bch questioned, 18 alarm.

"No, silly. He's all hungry."

There in the path ring: dusk Bob Wharton looked in at a signt that never failed to thrill him strangely. In his wife's face was a beautiful conand it seemed to him fitting inhat this country girl who had city is quest of life should this, with a baby at

To all young fathers there comes a You?"