CHAPTER XX!-Continued -13-

Our daily actions are controlled by a variety of opposing influences which are like threads pulling at us from various directions. When for any reason certain of these threads are snapped and the balance is disturbed we are drawn into strange pathways. and our whole lives may be changed through the operation of what seems a most trivial case. In Bob's case the cause approached, all unheralded, in the person of Mr. Richard Cady, a youth whose magnificent vaculty of purpose was the envy of his friends. Cometlike, he was destined to appear, flash brightly, then disappear below the horizon of this tale. Mr. Cady greeted Bob with listless enthusiasm. teetering the while upon his cane like a Japanese equilibrist.

"Haven't seen you for ages," he began. "Been abroad?"

Bob explained that he was spending the summer in New York, a statement that filled his listener with the same horror he would have felt had he learned that Bob was passing the heated season in the miasmatic jungles of the Amazou.

'Just ran down from Newport." Cady volunteered. "I'm sailing today. Better join me for a trip. I knowhe cut Bob's refusal short-"travel's an awful nulsance; I get seasick myself."

"Then why play at it?"

Cady rolled a mournful eye upon his friend, "Girl!" said he, hollowly, "Show girl! If I stay I'll marry her, and that wouldn't do. Posi-tive-ly not! So I'm running away. I'll walt over if you'll join me.'

"I'm a working man."

"Haw!" Mr. Cady expelled a short laugh.

"True! And I've quit drinking." Now Cady was blase, but he had a heart; his sympathies were slow, but he was not insensible to misfortune Accordingly be responded with a cry of pity, running his eye over his friend to estimate the ravages of temperance.

"Up against it?" Inquired the other. 'So says my heartless father. He has sewed up my pockets and scuttled my drawing account, hence the dinner pail on my arm. I'm in quest of toil." "I'll bet you starve." brightly pre-

dicted Mr. Cady, in an effort at encouragement. "I'll lay you five thousand that you make a flivver of anything you try.'

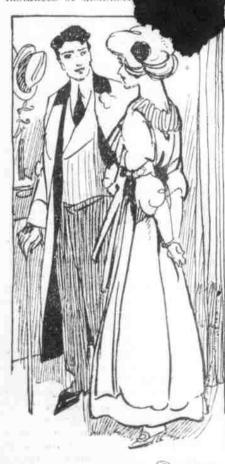
"I've quit sambling, too."

As they shook hands Cady grunted: "My invitation to globe-trot is withdrawn. Fine company you'd be!"

As Bob walked up the avenue he pondered deeply, wondering if he really were so lacking in ability as his friends believed. Money was such a common thing, after all: the silly labor of acquiring it could not be half so interesting as the spending of it. Anybody could make money, but to enjoy it, to circulate it judiciously, one must possess individuality-of a sort. Money seemed to come to some people without effort, and from the strangest sources—Kurtz, for instance, had grown rich out of coats and trousers!

Bob halted, frowning, while Ying peered out from his biding pla the passing throngs, exposing limp, ping-ribbon tongue, armed only with a pair of a a foolish tape, had won to why couldn't another? St was no longer profital Hannibal's opposition ev

a change of occupation, The prospect of such annoying, but scarcely ingrained optimist, and fort in reflecting that literature of the day instances of disinheri



"I Should Like to Know Nice People," Lore'ei Confessed.

erished society men, ruined bankers, or mere idlers, who by lightning strokes of genica and mended their fortunes overnight. Some few, in the earlier days of frenzied fiction, had played the market, others the ponies, still others had gone west and developed abandoned gold mines or obscure water powers. A number, also, had grown disgustingly rich from patent- fing?" ing rat-traps or shoe buttons. One young man had discovered a way to had promptly bludgeoned the railroad

Over the stock-market idea Bob ing. could work up no enthuslaste. knew too much about it

CheAUCTION BLOC A NOVEL OF NEW YORK LIFE Juhor of

GYREX BEACH T T ILLUSTRATIONS BY F PARKER

Author of "The Iron Trail" "The Spoilers" "The Silver Horde" Etc. Cappright, By Harper & Brackers

search for abandoned gold mines or six dollars I ever earned." forgotten waterfalls wasn't in his line: was still locked up in the breast of its Bob's wrinkled brow smoothed itself, and he nodded. His path was plain; it led around the nearest corner to his tailor's door.

with its high-backed Flemish-oak months?" chairs, its great carved tables. Its pansold, but a studio where men's distinctive garments were draped, and the difference was perfectly apparent on the first of each month.

"Kurtz." began Bob, abruptly, " just bet Dick Cady five thousand dollars that I can make my own living for six months." This falsehood troubled him vaguely until he remembered that high finance must be often con ducted behind a veil.

Mr. Kurtz, genial, shrewd, gray, raised admiring eyes and said:

"I'll take another five thousand," But Bob declined. "No, I'm going

to work." This announcement interested the tailor deeply. "Who's going to hire

you?" he asked. "You are." Kurtz blinked. "Maybe you'd like

to bet on that, too," he ventured. "I'll give you odds." "Work is one of the few things I

haven't tried. You need a good sales-"No, I don't. I have seven already." "Say, wouldn't you like the trade of

the whole younger set? I can bring you a lot of fresh customers-fellows "'Fresh customers' is right," laughed

Kurtz, then sobered quickly. "You're oking, of course?"

"I'm so serious I could cry. How much is it worth to you to make clothes for my crowd?"

"Well-" the tailor considered. 'Quite a bit."

"The boys like to see Dick trimmed -it's a matter of principle with them never to let him win a bet-and they'd do anything for me. You're the best tailor in the city, but too conservative. Now I'm going to bring you fifty new accounts, every one good for better than two thousand a year. That's a hundred thousand dollars. How much am I offered? Going! Going!-"

"Wait a minute! Would you stick to me for six months if I took you on?" "My dear Kurtz, I'll poultice myself upon you for life. I'll guarantee myself not to slide, slip, wrinkle or skid. Thirty years hence, when you come hobbling down to business, you'll find me here."

Mr. Kurtz dealt in novelties, and the idea of a society salesman was sufficiently new to appeal to his commer-

"I'll pay you twenty per cent." he offered, "for all the new names you put on my books."

"Make it twenty-five on first orders and twenty on repeaters. I'll bring my own luncheon and pay my car fare." "There wouldn't be any profit left,"

demurred Kurtz. "Good! Then it's a bargain-twentyfive and twenty. Now watch me grab Four Hundred." Bob took a bus up enough to pay up." the avenue to the College club for

luncheon. At three o'clock he returned, accompanied by four flushed young men whose names gave Kurtz a thrill. In spile of their modish appearance they declared themselves indecently shabby, and allowed Bob to order for them-a favor which he performed with a rajah's lofty disregard of expense. He sat upon one of the carved tables, selecting samples as if for a quartet of bridegrooms. Being bosom cronies of Mr. Cady, the four youths needed

sold in two weeks!"

heavy lifting, and Thursdays off. I'm going to make you famous,"

like this. You don't think they're bluf-

"Why should they bluff? They'll never discover how many suits they keep worms out of railroad ties and have. Now figure it up and tell the kind I've met; the men are indecent bad news." companies out of fabulous royalties.

Mr. Kurtz did as directed, announc-"Fifty-five hundred and five dol-

in the business of inventing rat-traps Not bad for dull times, and yet it for a week-end," or shoe buttons. As for going west, might be better. Anyhow, it's the he was clearly of the opinion that a hardest thirteen hundred and seventy-

"Hard!" The merchant's lips and the secret of creosoting railroad twitched, oscillating his cigar violently. ties, now that he came to think of it. "Hard! I'll bet those fellows even bought your lunch, I suppose you mean affluent discoverer. Besides, as the it's the first money you ever-earned." whole episode had occurred in the sec- He seemed to choke over the last word. ond act of the play, the safety of "Well, it's worth something to get men building upon it was doubtful at best. like these on the books, but-thirteen hundred and seventy-six dollars-" "And twenty-five cents,"

Mr. Kurtz gulped. "In one day! Why, I could buy a farm for that. Mr. Kurtz's greeting was warm as How much will you have to 'earn' to Bob strolled into the stately showroom cover your living expenses for six relishing any mild misfortune to Dick

"Ah, there we journey in the realm | tailors. eled walls with their antiered decora- of purest speculation." Bob favored tions. This, it may be said, was not a him with a sunny smile. "As well ask shop, not a store where clothes were me how much my living expenses must



Made Love Openly, Violently, Nov

be in order to cover my earnings. Whatever one is, the other will be apin excess thereof. Anyhow, nothing but rigid economy-bane of my lifewill make the one fit into the other. But i I have a thought. Something tells me these boys need white flannels, so get out your stock, Kurtz. If they can't play tennis they must learn, for my

Bob's remarkable stroke of fortune called for a celebration, and his four customers clamored that he squander his first profits forthwith. Ordinarily such a course would have been just to his liking; but now he was dying to tell Lorelei of his triumph, and, fearing to trust himself with even one drink, he escaped from his friends as soon as possible. Thus it chanced that he arrived home sober.

It was a happy home-coming. Bob was in a state of exaltation. He had no desire to bind himself to Kurtz' service for six months or for any other period; nor had he the least thought of living up to his agreement until Lorelei began to treat the matter seriously. Then he objected blankly:

"Why, it was all right as a joke, but I don't want to be a tailor. There's no romance in woolen goods."

"How much do you owe?" she asked. "Really, I've no idea. It's something you don't have to remembersomebody always reminds you in plenadolescent offshoots of our famous ty of time, and then you borrow

> "Let's forget the romance and pay up without borrowing. Remember you have two families to support." Noting that the idea of permanent employment galled him, she added, craftlly, "Of course you'll never sell another lot of clothes like this, but-"

"Why not? It's like selling candy to child."

"You can't go with that crowd without drinking."

"Is that so? Now you sit tight and hold your hat on. I can make that business pay if I try, and still stay little urging. When they had gone in in the Rainmakers' union. There's big to be measured Kurtz said guardedly: money in it-enough so we can live "Whew! That's more stuff than I've the way we want to. I'm sick of this telephone booth, anyhow; we'll present "A mere triffe," Bob grinned, hap- it to some nice newsboy and rent an pily. "Say, Kurtz, this is the life! apartment with a closet. This one's This is the job for me-panhandling so small I don't dare to let my troujuvenile plutocrats-no office hours, no sers bug. Besides, we've been under for that matter. I've never gone in for cover long enough, and I want you to meet the people I know. We can af-"You'll break me with another run ford the expense-now that I'm making thirteen hundred and seventy-six dollars and twenty-five cents a day."

"I should like to know nice people, Lorelei confessed. "I'm sick of the and the women are vulgar. I've al-

much as horse racing was no longer man; then he began laboriously to com- hit with the younger set; you'll be a "Now don't spoil your first party by fashionable, opportunities for a Pitts. pute 25 per cent of the sum, using as perfect rave. Bert Hayman told me worrying over me. Just forget you're ourgh Phil future seemed limited, a pad a boit of expensive white silk today that his married sister is enter- married and have a good time. Moreover, he had never saved a jock- vest material, "Thirteen hundred and taining a lot, and, since the drama will ey's life nor a jockey's mother from seventy-six dollars and twenty-five be tottering on its way to destruction ed the stairs, and they found some of eviction, hence feedbox tips were not cents is my blackmail, Kurtz. That's without you in a few days, I'll tell him the guests dancing to the strains of likely. Nor did he know a single soul what I call 'a safe and sane Fourth.' that we're invited out to Long Island a giant orchestrion built into the mu-

CHAPTER XXII.

Under Lorelei's encouragement Bob put in the next two weeks to good advantage. In fact, so obsessed was he with his new employment that it was not long before his imaginary bet with Cady assumed reality in his mind. Moreover, it became gossip around his well known his method of winning the wager was deemed not only characteristic but ingenious. His exploits were famous; and his friends, rejdicing in one more display of eccentricity, and Cady, in the majority of cases changed

Business at Kurtz' increased so substantially that Bob was treated with a fled to the billiard room. reverential amazement by everyone in the shop. The other salesmen gazed upon him with envi: Kurtz' bearing changed in a way that was extremely gratifying to one who had been universally accounted a failure. And Bob expanded under success; he began to feel more than mere amusement in his experiment.

His marriage had become public, but the affair was too old to be of much news value. Now that he had escaped the disagreeable notoriety he had expected and was possessed of larger means, Bob-inordinately proud of his wife's beauty and boyishly eager to display it-undertook to win social recognition for her. It was no disticult task for one with his wide acquaintance to make a beginning. Lorelei was surprised and delighted one day to receive an invitation for her and her husband to spend a week-end at Fennellcourt, the country home of Bert Hayman's sister. She had not been sorry to give up her theatrical work. and the prospect of meeting nice people, of leaving for good and all the sordid, unhealthy atmosphere of Broadway, bathed her in a glow of anticipa-

Fennellcourt is one of the show places of the Wheatley Hills section. Bert Hayman drove the Whartons out from the city, and Loreleis glimpse of Fennellcourt was such that she forgot her vague dislike of Hayproximately ditto-or perhaps slightly man himself. Bert, who had met her and Bob for luncheon, had turned out to be, instead of a polished man of the world, a glib youth with an artificia! laugh and a pair of sober, heavy-lidded eyes. That he possessed a keen appreciation of feminine beauty be showed by surrendering unconditionally to Lorelei's charms.

As Hayman's car rolled up the driveway and the beauties of Fennellcourt displayed themselves, Lorelei found her heart throbbing violently. Was not this the beginning of a glorious adventure? Was not life unfolding at last? Was she not upon the threshold of a new world? The flutter in her breast was answer.

Bert led the way through an impressive hall that bisected the building, then out upon a stately balustraded stone terrace, where, in the grateful shade of gaudy awnings, a dozen people were chatting at tea tables.

Mrs. Fennell, the hostess, a plainfaced, dumpy young matron, welcomed the newcomers, then made Lorelei known. As for Bob, he needed no introductions; a noisy outburst greeted him, and Lorelel's heart warmed at the welcome.

A few moments of chatter, then she and Bob were led into the house again and up to a cool, wide bedroom. As Lorelei removed her motor cont and bonnet she exclarmed, breathlessly: What a gorgeous house! And those people! They weren't the least bit formal."

Bob laughed. 'Formality is about the last thing they're famous for. There's liable to be too much informality. Say! You made those dames look like the Monday morning washladies' parade. I knew you would."

"You said this was the younger setbut that awful Thompson-Bellaire widow is here, and that blonde girl I met with her."

"Alice Wyeth?"

"Yes. I thought she was going to kiss you. Bob grinned. "So did I. She will,

oo, if she feels like it." "Won't you have anything to say about it?"

"What could I say? Alice does just na she likes. So does everybody else. this sort of thing very much." After a moment Lorelel ventured, "I

suppose they're all hard drinkers-"That wasn't spring water you saw in their glasses."

"Are you-going to?" Lorelei eyed

him anxiously. "I can't very well make myself conways wanted to know the other kind." don't want to look like a zebra in a time later Lorelei heard her explain her. Bob was delighted; his fancy took henyard-and a cocktail before dinner to the man on her right; fire, and already he was far along wouldn't hurt anybody." Noting his toward prosperity. "You'll make a wife's expression, he kissed her lightly.

Music greeted them as they descendsic room. Hayman promptly seized upon Lorelei and whirled her away. but not before she saw the Wyeth blonde making for Bob as an eagle makes for its prey.

Guests continued to arrive from time to time; some from Westchester and the Connecticut shore, others from neighboring estates. One couple in riding clothes, out for a gallop, dismounted and stayed for a trot. The clubs; and in quarters where he was huge tiled terrace began to resemble a Broadway the dansant.

There was more freedom, more vivacity than Lorelei was accustomed to, even in the gayest downtown resorts; the fun was swift and hilarious, there some fabulous wager in the billiard was a great deal of drinking. Bob. after a manful struggle against his desires and a frightened resistance to the advances of Miss Wyeth, had

Lorelei became interested in watching Miss Courtenay, the girl in the riding habit, one of the season's debutantes, who, it seemed, was especially susceptible to the influence of liquor.

her room Mrs. Fennell stopped her on the stairs to say:

"My dear, Elizabeth Courtenay was frantically jealous of you."

"Of me? I don't understand."

"She and Bert are great friendsand he's gone perfectly daft over you. Why, he's telling everybody." Lorelei flushed, to the evident amusement of her hostess, who ran on; "Oh, Bert means it! I never heard him rave so. Quite a compliment, my dear!" With a playful pat she went on her way, leaving the young wife weak with dismay. When Bob came in he betrayed an

elation only too familiar. 'You've been drinking!" cried Lore-

"I had to: I ran fifteen three times. My abstinence is the marvel of the whole party."

"I'm afraid-" "Say! You can't help sneezing when ing to do in a crowd like this? But she dismissed the servant. don't worry. I know when to quit."

men Lorelel had seen, so she said no more. As he throttled himself with his eve-

ning tie Bob gasped: "Having a good time?" "Ye-es!" Lorelel could not summon

courage for a negative answer; she could not confess that her dream had turned out wretchedly, and that what Bob seemed to consider simply the usual thing impressed her as abnormal and wanton.

"Well, that's good," he said. "I'm not strong for these week-end slaughters, but it's something you'll have to

"Is all society like-this?" she inquired. "Um-m, yes and no! Society is like

layer cake-"

"Recause it's made of dough?" Bob laughed. "Partly! Anyhow, the upper crust is icy, and while the lower layer is just as rich as those above. it's more indigestible. There's the heavy, soggy layers in between, too, I don't know any of that crowd. They're mostly Dodos-the kind that endow colleges. This younger set keeps the whole cake from getting tasteless."

After a while Lorelei ventured: "I'm still a little nervous. I wish you'd stay close to me this evening."

"Can't be done." Bob declared. "It's a rule at Fennellcourt that husbands must ignore their wives. Betty doesn't invite many married couples, and a wife-lover is considered a pest. When in Rome do as the tourists do."

Lorelei finished dressing in silence. Dinner was quite different to anything Bob's wife had ever experienced, and if the afternoon had been embarrassing to her the evening was a trial. As the cocktails were served, Harden Fennell distinguished himself by losing his balance and falling backward. to the great amusement of his guests. No one went to his assistance; he regained his feet by climbing a highbacked chair, hand over hand, and during the dinner he sat for the most part In a comatose state, his eyes bleared and staring, his tongue unresponsive. Lorelei had little opportunity of watching him, since Bert Hayman monopolized her attention. The latter mede secret of her fondness for him.

Lorelel was not the only one to take special note of the blonde girl's infatuation. Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire was spicuous by refusing everything; I the blood from Lorelei's face. Some-

"We weren't surprised in the least. Bob's always doing some crazy

thing when he's drunk. . . . Mis latest fancy . . . pretty, of course. . . from some western village, I believe . . . can't possibly last. Why should it?" The words were purposely made audible, and during the rest of the meal, when Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire was not bitingly sarcastic to Lorelei, she was offensively patron-

After dinner Lorelei had a better opportunity than during the afternoon of becoming acquainted with the women of the party, but the experience was not preasant. She was made to understand that they regarded her not as Bob's wife in any real sense, but rather as his latest and most fleeting fancy. His marriage they seemed to look upon as a bizarre adventure, such as might happen to any man in their set who was looking for amusement.

There was more dancing during the evening. Miss Wyeth continued to monopolize Bob, and Lorelei was offended to note that his resistance gave signs of weakening. She smothered her feelings, however, and remonstrated gently, only to find that he was in no condition to listen. The dinner had been too much for him.

There were many gayeties to enliven the party, and, although outward decencies were observed after a fashion, Lorelei was sickened by the sheer license that she felt on every hand. She had a wild desire to make her excuses and escape from Fennellcourt, but Bob had disappeared, and she gathered that he and Bert were playing off room. Pleading a headache, she excused herself as soon as she could.

"So sorry," said Mrs. Fennell; then, with a knowing laugh: "There's no likelihood of Bob's annoying you for some time."

Once in her room, Lorelei gave way to the indignation that had been slowly growing in her breast. How dared Bob introduce her to such people! If Lorelei was glad when it came time this was the world in which he had to dress for dinner. As she went to moved before his marriage, he had shown his wife an insult by bringing her into it. Surely people like the Fennells, Bert Hayman, Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire, the Madden woman, were not typical members of New York's exclusive circles! Applied to them, 'smart' was a laughably inadequate term: they were worse than fast; they were frankly vicious. This was more than a gay week-end party; it was an orgy. Lorelel's anger at her betrayal was so keen that she dared not send for Bob immediately for fear of speaking too violently, but she assured herself that she would leave in the morning, even though he chose to remain.

Still in a blazing temper, she disrobed and sat down to calm herself and to wait for her husband. A half-bour passed, then another; at last she sent a maid in quest of him, but the report she received was not reassuring; Bob was scarcely in a condition to come to you have a cold. What's a fellow go- his room. Lorelei's lips were white as

By and by the music ceased. She In truth he did seem better able to heard people passing in the hall, and take care of himself than most of the distinguished Betty Fennell's voice bidding good night to someone. Still she waited.

> When at last the door opened Hayman stood on the threshold, peering at her. She saw that he was considerably drunker than when she had escaped from his attentions, but evidently he knew quite well what he was about.

> "Kindly get out, and close the door after you." she directed, still without raising her voice.

> The intruder took no warning from her crisp tones nor from the fact that her twilight eyes were as dark as a



Hayman Reeled Away.

dressing table and pressed the pearl push-button, holding her finger upon it and staring at Hayman. He moved toward her, but she snatched one of the candlesticks from among her toilet love openly, violently now, and it articles, swung it above her head, and added to her general disgust to see brought the weapon down. Hayman that Bob had again fallen into the reeled away, covering his face with his clutches of Miss Wyeth, who made no hands and cursing wildly; then, Lorelei, guided more by instinct than by reason or memory, found Mrs. Fennell's chamber and pounded upon its door with blind fury. She heard a stir equally observant and at length made from the direction whence she had her disapproval patent by a remark come, and Hayman's voice calling that set the table laughing and drove something unintelligible; then Mrs. l'ennell's startled face appeared before

> "What's the matter? My deari You'll wake everybody in the house,"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)