## THE AUCTION BLOCK

A Novel of New York Life

By REX BEACH

CHAPTER XIX-Continued. -12-

Bob acquiesced, glad to escape even metherly candor.

what we can."

"Was Mr. Wharton very angry?" -I'm almost ready to give up. But at ing right, after all.

"I don't." Bob?" she gasped. "Not-now."

seem to care what-"

"I do mean to." The mother's lips parted, closed, parted again-she seemed to taste she exclaimed. something unspeakably bitter. "My dear! Why, my dear! He hasn't a cent. It's absurd. The marriage was

in the sight of God than-" deceney."

"You've lost your mind! You've changed completely."

wife until yesterday-until Bob and I confessed miserably: had an understanding. I've had a susand they were."

"Fiddle-de-dee! You're hysterical. to love that man."

"I don't say I love him." Mrs. Knight snorted her triumph such a relationship is-well, think it ing."

out for yourself." her own sake as for her mother's. "I've learned that marriage is more than I considered it, mother. It's an obliga- ly. "You must fight it out where I can tion. I intend to live up to my part help." just as long as Bob lives up to his. If Bob smiled gratefully. "You're a

creasing anger by a harsh outburst. "I never thought you could be so silly, after the way you were raised. Didn't we give up everything for you? Didn't Peter sacrifice his life's work to give you an opportunity?"

"I'll keep on sharing my salary with

"Salary!" Mrs. Knight spat out the word. "After all our pains! Salary!" "You're probably just as honest in your ideas as I am in mine," Lorelei awake. told her. "I sha'n't allow you to want

tor\_" "I should hope not, since you're to know you are! If you hadn't wanted n career he'd still be in Vale, a strong. healthy man instead of a cripple."

"I didn't want a career." Lorelei denied with heat. "And father almost passion in his endearments now. bad to leave Vale."

"Nothing of the sort. He was a big man there 'Had to leave Vale' eh? So you've turned against your own blood, and disparage your father- Anyhow. he was hurt while be was working to give you a start, and now he's helpless. Ten thousand dollars right now would save his life. Think that over, when your own father is dead and gone.

White with anger, sick with disappointment, Mrs. Knight whisked herself out of the apartment.

Strangely enough, the news of Bob Wharton's marriage had not leaked into the papers up to this time, and Lorelei, having regard for the feelings of his parents, insisted that he help her to keep the matter secret as long as possible. Bob rebelled at first, for he adored publicity. He rejoiced in his newest exploit and desired his world to hear, of it, while the prospect of further mortifying his father was so agreeable that it required much persuasion to make him relinquish it. With her own family Lorelei had less difficulty, for they were by no means eager to advertise their bad bargain and had withdrawn behind a stiff restraint, leaving the couple to their own devices. This attitude spared the bride much unpleasant notoriety, enabling her to pursue her work at the theater without comment.

Bob's society proved in some ways a welcome change from the sordid drabness of her own relatives, for he was colorful, versatile, and nearly always "Death Valley Has Nothing on This good humored. Misfortune aroused in him a wild hilarity; cares excited mirth. Lorelei realized before long whole arrangement tried her patience to their happiness. The man lived en-He refused to frequent the theater, ostensibly because of their secret, in reality because of his shame at allow- came. It was terribly hot in the city: ing her to work. As Lorelei came to the nights were breathless, the days balance, Bob?" know him better and to understand the were giaring, and this heat was especonflicting forces within him, she be- cially trying to one in Bob's condition. gan to wonder how long he could hold In his periods of gayety he showered the way home just to prove it; and I

himself true to his bargain. During the first week of their married life his system struggled to throw off the effects of his recent dissipations, and in consequence it craved and irritable. only rest. Greatly encouraged by this

tended to agree with him.

She did not deceive herself, however. Mrs. Knight addressed Lorelei with Bob's vagrant disposition was not price. enough; that in order to keep his new "He's a pleasant fellow, of course, self alive she must also be his sweetand he's crazy about you; but don't heart, his chum, and his partner. If let's be sentimental. If there's no she falled in any one of these roles dis-"Was he?" Mrs. Knight rolled her emptiness, and a disappointment that it with derisive enjoyment, predicting eves in mingled rage and despair. "I'm her life had been so crookedly fash- certain failure. After Hannibal Whar- said. "I changed my mind during the positively sick over the things he said | ioned; sometimes she even felt de- ton's insult Jim was all for a prompt night." Everybody seems to be against us, and graded, and wondered if she were do revenge, but he could not determine

least that old crank will surely stretch | In the course of a fortnight Bob behis offer to keep his name off the bill- gan to grow restless. One evening sidered the advisability of enlisting the boards. Fifteen or twenty thousand is when he came for her she saw that he aid of Max Melcher; but, not liking the better than-" Noting the shadow of a was nervous; a strained, tired look had thought of dividing the loot, be decided years to repair it." smile upon her daughter's lips, she crept into his eyes, and she thought provisionally to engineer a separation checked her rush of words. "You don't she understood. Nevertheless his spir- between Bob and Lorelei, its were ebullient. When they reached home he ushered her into the apart- only a slight degree from resentment did you get this dope?" Mrs. Knight's face twisted into an ment with a flourish, and Lorelei was -Jim's method of making a living had expression of pained incredulity, amazed to find their table set with long since dulled the edge of feeling ing to a doctor, too. You see, I wanted "Surely you don't mean to live with strange linen, silver and china and the -it was merely the first step in a com- to help." dining room decorated as if for a prehensive scheme. With Bob and

"Who's coming? What on earth?"

"A little surprise. A supper for just you and me, my dear."

It was one of his whims. During only a form. You're no more his wife the meal he made elaborate speeches larger scheme of extortion, based on in the names of his friends. His the Hammon murder. "Let's not talk about God," cried imaginary guests congratulated him: One evening after Lorelei had gone ten years." conquest of the demon rum. But when | go out. all traces of the feast had disappeared "Yes, I have. You see, I wasn't a he swooped down out of the clouds and

"I thought I could kid myself, but I picion that my old ideas were wrong, can't. I want a drink. I-want-adrink! God! how I want it!"

Lorelei went swiftly to him. "The You can't make me believe you learned fight is just beginning, Bob. You're doing nobly."

"It isn't thirst," he explained, and she saw that same strained uneasiness loudly. "Then you mustn't live with in his bright eyes. "I'm not thirstyhim another moment. My dear child, I'm shaky inside. I get tired of fight-

Lorelei nodded sympathetically. Lorelei saw the futility of argument. "That's why it's so hard to reform; but certain thoughts demanded expres- one's conscience tires, but temptation sion, and she voiced them, as much for is always fresh. You must keep busy." "I'm going to work."

"No, no! Not yet," she cried, quick-

ticed on him I'd be willing to leave have your way, and you shall. Even him: but he doesn't—so the matter is if we lose the patient it will be a dandy out of our hands."

If we lose the patient it will be a dandy in doubt.

The doesn't—so the matter is if we lose the patient it will be a dandy in doubt.

"Of course." operation."

Mrs. Knight relieved her steadily in-For the first time in her life Lorelei really worked, and worked not for herself, but for another. Although the experience was interesting in its novelty, the result remained unsatisfactory, for not only did love fail to respond to these sacrifices, but she could see no improvement in Bob's condition. The thing she fought was impalpable yet enormous; it was weak, yet strong; it seemed to sleep, yet it was ever

Of necessity the two lived in the closest intimacy, than which nothing is ordinarily more fatal to domestic hapblame for Peter's condition- Oh, you piness. But Bob was unique; he did as a sick man leans upon his nurse. and to worship her as a man worships his sweetheart. There was more than

But it was discouraging to the girl who gained no strength from her penance and derived no satisfaction whatever in service for service's sake. The



Place," He Mourned.

that this very jocundity of his, since it desperately; she was weary in mind but no harm done, none whatever, fed upon constant change and excite- and body, and looked back with regret ment, constituted the gravest menace upon her former easy life. There was no time now for recreation-Bob had count the cost of every purchase.

> So spring went and midsummer his wife with attentions and squandered every dollar he could borrow in Why, you ought to see Jim. They had work was coarse, but I fell for it." To buy his wife a dog. presents for her; in his hours of depression he was everything strange, morose

Without her knowledge he applied to

with the same result, but succeeded in a load."

## CHAPTER XX.

means easy. Always she felt a great | ment. On the contrary, they watched | found her unexpectedly mild. just how to use his dangerous knowledge to the best advantage. He con-

> Lorelei estranged, a divorce would fol- It can't be done." low, and divorces were profitable. A divorce, moreover, would open the such thing as reformation. If you're went out whistling. As it was nearly skirts clear Jim could proceed with a inherit the taste."

Lerelei. "That ceremony was scarce- in empty glasses they toasted the bride, to the theater Jim appeared at the ly legal, not to speak of religion or they extolled her beauty, they praised apartment and found Bob in a mood so his own gallantry, and vaunted his restless and irritable that he dared not isn't!"

"I had a hunch you were lonesome," the caller began, "so I came up to whittle and spit at the stove."

Now Jim could be agreeable when he chose; his parasitic life had devel- pieces quick if you quit now." oped in him a certain worldly goodfellowship; he was frankly unregenerate, and he had sufficient tact never to Lorelei told him, gently, "but we're gohe kept Bob entertained.

A few nights later he returned with a fund of new stories, and during the evening he confessed to a consuming

place," he mourned. Bob explained apologetically, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing in the house

wetter than Croton water." "I understand! Will you object if I I'd-" sweeten a glass of it with some Scottish rites? I'm afraid of germs, and if water rots leather think what it clear the atmosphere." he complained of the fraud we praction to leave thoroughbred. I promised to let you human stomach?" Jim drew a flask continued, "I suppose you feel you human stomach?" Jim drew a flask

> "Don't mind me," Bob assured him, hastily. "I'm strapped in the driver's But he looked on with eager Seeing her hesitate, he insisted, "Isn't appreciation as his brother-in-law filled | there any love at all?" a long glass and sipped it.

Bob had never been a whisky-drinker, yet the faint odor of the liquor tandrink he stirred.

"Kind of itchy, eh? Let's whip across the street and have a game of glad to escape from the room.

An agreeable hour followed; but Bob played badly, and found that his eye had lost its sureness. His hand was uncertain, too, and this lack of co-ordination disgusted him. He was sure that with a steadying drink he could beat Jim, and eventually he proved it: but, mindful of his resolution, he compromised on beer, which, Jim agreed. could not reasonably be called an intoxicant.

On his way to the theater Bob hewed cinnamon bark, and when he kissed Lorelei he held his breath.

This was the first of several pool matches, and after a while Bob was gratified to find that beer in moderation left no disagreeable effect whatever upon him. He rejoiced in his power of restraint. There came a night when he failed

to meet his wife. After waiting nearly half an hour Lorelei went home, only to find the apartment deserted. She nibbled at a lonely lunch, trying to assure herself that nothing was seriously miss; but she could not make up her mind to go to bed. She tried to read. and failed. An hour passed, then another; a thousand apprehensions crowden in upon her.

Bob, when he did arrive entered with elaborate caution. He paused in the little ball, then tossed his hat into the living room, where his wife was waiting. After a moment his head ame slowly into view, and he said: "When the hat stays in, go in; when it comes out, beat it."

Lorelei saw that he was quite drunk "I just came from the theater." he explained, "but it was dark. Has the show failed, dearie?" He tried to kiss her, but she turned her face away. "Come! Must have my little kiss." he insisted as she rose and moved away. leaving him swaying in his tracks.

Studying Lorelei's unsmiling face his tone altered. "Oh, I know! I ture insisted, and I yielded gracefully; Life is a series of compromises. Moderation is the thing. Live and let live."

Lorelei nodded. "Exactly! We shall her disgust burst its control, and she demanded, bitterly, "Haven't you any ning, James," he cried. "Feel like tak-strength whatever? Haven't you any ing your beating here?" | fall upon jewelry when Lorelei need-ed practical things?

He grinned at her cheerfully. "I

to carry him." "Jim? Was-Jim with you?"

tle was already won, and Lorelei pre- | was refused. He appealed to Merkle | nice boy, but weak; he falters beneath | Mr. Armistead was of the emotional | excite the admiration of any woman;

down beside him and stared into the difficulty in breathing. Lorelei's family continued to smart darkness through many wakeful hours.

"If you're sorry, that's all I ask," she upraised palm.

ly. "I thought I had cured myself."

Bob was aghast. "Good heavens! In ten years I'll be too old to drink-I'd His desire to make mischief arose in tremble so that I'd spill it. But where fusion. Tony was leading a charge, Fifth avenue. He was in fine fettle "I've been reading. I've been talk-

Wharton wealth, for with Lorelei's drunkard. I'm hoping that you didn't

"Well, whether it was left to me or whether I bought it, I can't go dry for

"Then our bargain is ended." He looked up sharply. "Oh no, it "Yes."

He extended a shaking hand, and his voice was supplicating as he said: "I can't get along without you, kid. You're a part of me-the vital part. I'd go to

"When we made our agreement I meant to live up to every bit of it," apologize nor to explain. Therefore ing to try again, for this was Jim's fault.' "Jim? Jim was sorry for me. He

Lorelei's smile was bitter. "Jim was never sorry for anybody except him-"Death valley has nothing on this self. My family hate you just as your family hate me, and they'd like to sep-

tried to cheer-"

arate us." "Say, that's pretty rotten!" Bob exclaimed. "If he weren't your brother Lorelei laughed mirthlessly, "Go

ahead! I wish you would. It might

"Just as you feel you must support me. Is it entirely duty in my case?"

"I'm afraid not, Bob." time he saw Jim preparing a second you go under these circumstances, tions as they arose. Well, I'm not the right sort; I'm not big or noble. If Barleycorn brothers

you up. I won't!" "I sha'n't let you pull me down," she told him, soberly.

When Bob reached the financial dis-

He took up the search with a dogged determination that was quite unlike we can't take a chance with you." him. One after another he canvassed his friends for a position, and finally, his fervor, he was successful. It was not much of a job that was offered him. but he snapped at it, and returned home that evening in the best of humor. Already the serious issues of the morning were but a memory; he burst in upon Lorelei like a gale, shouting:

"I'm chalk-boy at Crosset & Meyers, so you can give Bergman your notice tonight."

"What's the salary?" "It isn't a salary; it's a humiliationtwenty-five a week is the total insult." "Why, Bob! That won't keep two and the family-"

"The family!" He quieted himself notice, anyhow. I'll spear the coin for dashed away with a hearty farewell. both establishments somehow. Come! I insist. I want to be able to shave myself without blushing."

was drawing to a close and the show would soon take to the road, she allowed herself to be persuaded.

slipped, but it couldn't be helped. Na. savings in a present for Lorelei, then his wife could be purchased for a pai- the hospitals. What does each one the Barber's shop, in the rear room. his common sense asserted itself. Povtirely outside of himself; he utterly to be amused. Salary day assumed a live as we choose, only, of course, we cards with a pop-eyed youth and a re- reflected; ostentation, on the other sir." tacked the power of self-amusement. new importance, and she began to can't live together after this." Then pellent person with a cauliflower ear.

"Eh? What's the matter?" Jim rose from his chair with a shocked inshould say I had. I walked a fence on tensity of gaze.

"I've come to return your last call. the other occupants of the room he lack of desire, he boasted that the bat- his old firm for a salaried position and hand in hand, then Jim lagged. He's a hand for Jim's collar and found it.

kind; he went to the rescue of his its family tree was taller than that of borrowing a thousand dollars, with She questioned him searchingly and friend; but when Bob's fist buried it- a Spanish nobleman, and its name was in company with his redoubtable broth and a brief experience convinced her which he bought Lorelei a set of black soon learned of Jim's visits, of the self in the spongy region of Mr. Armi- Ying. But here again Bob was handler-in-iaw. When he and Jim had gone that to be merely a wife to one of opals, going into debt for half the flask, of the pool games. When she stead's belt buckle that young man capped by poverty, for sleeve dogs understood it all her eyes were glow- promptly lost all interest in Jimmy are expensive novelties, and the price ing, but she found nothing to say. At Knight's affairs. He sat down heavily, of Ying was seven hundred dollarslast she got Bob to bed, then lay desperately concerned with a strange marked down from one thousand, and

Alert, aggressive, Bob turned to face that price.

Lorelel smiled at him faintly, so did Bob shake his victim. Jim strug- of business. "Cured! It took ten years to work the gled, he\_clawed, he kicked, he yelled; damage-it will probably take ten his arms threshed loosely, like the limber appendages to a stuffed figure. When Bob emerged from the rear

room he found the barber shop in con-



"We Can't Afford to Antagonize the Whole Steel Trust."

strolled toward the Circuit theater, full The man pondered silently. "I sup- of a satisfying contentment with the

pool," suggested Jim; and Bob was I'll take you with me. , I won't give garded as a warm friend, the notice an operation will put back again." of his discharge.

"What's the matter? Didn't I make good?" he demanded.

ment at himself and at the world in epic. Now he shrugged carelessly, saying: "Oh, you made good, I guess; but

"I suppose you're afraid I'll steal some of your chalk. Now tell me, how he will not therefore be expected to as if ill fortune could not withstand did you wet your feet, and whence give an extended notice of this procomes the icy draft?"

"Well, from the direction of Pittsburgh, if you must know. There's a tion is clear and plain, and that the can tied to you, and we can't afford paper appears to be of the best quality to antagonize the whole steel trust." "I see. I'm afraid I'll have to disown that father of mine."

"What's the trouble, anyhow?" At Bob's explanation Crosset whistled. "Funny I didn't bear about it. sorry I can't help you-"

"You can. Lend me five hundred."

"Certainly!" Crosset lunged at his

desk, scribbled a line to the cashier. and handed it to Bob, then, in response with an effort. "Well, you give your to a call from the customers' room, As Bob passed through the outer of. | ment." fice he ran his eye over the opening prices, being half inclined to "scalp" Lorelei's objections were not easily with his sudden wealth; but luck had overcome, but at last, in view of the never run his way, and he reconsidfact that the summer run of the Revue ered. Anyhow, there were more agreeable uses to which he could put this at least, are quite capable of tutoring money; for one thing, he needed sev. their tutors. eral suits, for another, it was high Throughout the next week Bob time he gave Lorelel some little re-Wharton really tried to make good. He | membrance-he hadn't given her a a week or two ago. was enthusiastic; the excitement of present in nearly two weeks, and womactual accomplishment was so novel en set great store by such attentions. that he had not time to think of liquor. He decided to invest the money in When Saturday came and he found Maiden lane and demand credit from himself in possession of honestly his tailor. But a half-hour at a jewearned funds he felt a soul-satisfying elry shop convinced him that nothing go to the wife, one-fifth to his son, oneease. He decided to invest his first suitable to so splendid a creature as eighth to his brother, and the rest to a graver sense of responsibility seized try five hundred dollars, and he was get?" him, and he sent them to Mrs. Knight. upon the point of returning to Crosset Then he set out to find Jim. At Tony | with a request to double the loan when he found his brother-in-law playing erty was odious, but not shameful, he hand, was vulgar. Would it not be in Bob's greeting was hearty. "Eve- bad taste to squander this happy wind-

Bob was cheered by the breadth of scarcely wabbled. Balance! Strength! Alas, James, I am a weak vessel! Your man. No, instead of a jewel he would

At a fashionable uptown kennel he apologized. "I'm sorry to spoil your found exactly what he wanted, in the his two fists. It was a creature to any particular trouble.

evidently the bargain of a lifetime at

chance to make it up with his family aster was bound to follow. But to under a sense of bitter injustice, but In the morning he was not only con- the man with the swollen ear; but Bob hated to haggle, but he showed we must get cut of this mess and save succeed in them all, when there was although they kept aloof they were by trite, but badly frightened, yet when young Sullivan, being a professional that his ability to drive a sharp barno love to strengthen her, was by no no means uninterested in her experi- he undertook to make his peace he fighter, made no capital of amateur af- gain was merely latent, and he finally fairs, and declined the issue with an bore the animal away in triumph. To outgeneral a dog fancier was a tribute It was no difficult matter to chasto his shrewdness; to save two huntise Jim, whose spirit was as wretched dred dollars on a single purchase was "Never again," he promised, feeling- as his strength; as the wind whips a economy of a high order. Much elated, flag, as a man flaps a dusty garment, he set out briskly for his tailor's place

## CHAPTER XXI.

It still lacked something of luncheon time when Bob Wharton swung into but he fell back at sight of the flushed | with the certainty of an agreeable hour with his tailor. It was always a pleas-"It was nothing but a little family ure to deal with Kurtz, for in his shop affair," Bob reassured him. "Now, if customers were treated with the most "Let's change doctors. Ten years! you please, I'll borrow a hairbrush." delicate consideration. Salesmen, cut-In front of a mirror be tidied himself, ters, fitters, all were pleasant acquaint-"I'm afraid you're right. There's no settled his scarf with a deft jerk, then ances. Kurtz himself was an artist; he was also a person of generally culway for a second inroad upon the a born alcoholic you'll probably die a closing time for the matinees, he tivated taste and a man about town. His books were open only to those he considered his equals. A stony-faced doorman kept watch and ward in the Gothic hallway to discourage the general public from entering the premises. The fact that Bob owed several hundred dollars dismayed that young man not in the least, for Kurtz never mentioned money matters. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

PROPER EXERCISE IN SUMMER

Common Sense Idea for the Woman Who Is Seeking to Secure or Guard Health.

The woman who all the winter has used only a closed automobile or warm trolley car, now that summer has arrived, joyously starts forth to do all sorts of exercises to remove the flabbiness from her body and improve her digestion. But exercise in summer is a doubtful proposition if started too strenuously.

A horseback ride, a game of tennis or golf, digging in one's flower bedsthese are all joys of the summer time out of doors, and are all excellent exercises, but, oh, the stiffness of joints and the aching back! The stiff joints and sore backs would not be there if the exercise had been begun by derees and if one's muscles had been kept firm by regular set exercises that can be done in one's own room morning and nights.

"Few people realize," says a famous physical culture authority, according to the Southern Woman's Magazine, "the harm of strenuous exercise when pose if I were the right sort," he said, world. Now that he owed it nothing, none at all has been taken for months. talized him. When in the course of at length, with some difficulty, "I'd let he resolved to meet his future obliga- A six-mile walk may work permanent injury to the woman who has been Early on Monday morning Bob re- riding everywhere she went and bendported for work, only to receive from ing over digging for two or three lick me I'll go under. But if I go under Mr. Crosset, whom he had always re- hours may displace organs that only

"Sound" Criticism.

The editor of the Merrytown Mail Crosset was a young man; more than received a complimentary copy of a trict next day and resumed his quest once he and Bob had scandalized musical composition from a friend tho for work he was ablaze with resent- Broadway; some of their exploits were desired a favorable criticism of his work. This is what appeared in the next issue: "As the editor of this journal doesn't

know a demi-semiquaver from a diapason or a bass clef from a 'high C.' duction. We can say, however, that the type used in printing the composiof rag. The design on the front page is most artistic, and the words are as tender as a real spring chicken and as poetic as the song of the meadow lark on a May morning. The melody is sound and all right. The harmony, Married and happy, ch? Well, I'm too, appears to be strictly O. K., with no patent defects or noticeable blemishes. The tonality is clear and resonant, and rests on harmonic relations and melodic elements. This is about all the praise in connection with said composition we are able to evolve from our cabbage-flavored tempera-

Knew Something. Schoolchildren know a great deal more than they used to do. In fact, some of them, in their own opinions,

"Those kiddies I teach are as knowing as an encyclopedia," said a teacher "In what way?" asked his friend.

"Well," replied the scholastic person, "the other day I set a problem in arithmetic-'A rich man dies and leaves a million pounds. One-fifth is to

"Yes?" queried the friend, not very interested. "Back came the reply from the

Wants to Know Why. Why is it that a careless seven-year-

old boy can drop a half-burned match in an alley and burn up all the barns these sentiments; they showed that he in the block, while an abled-bodied was beginning soberly to realize the man has to use up a box of matches to leaden responsibilities of a family get a wood fire started in a heater that has draft enough to draw all the furniture up the stovepipe? - Lebanon

"In spirit, yes; in body—only for a little game of authors, but necessity shape of a Pekingese—a playful, peditime. For a brief while we went gayly, prods me." He extended a muscular greed pocket dog scarcely larger than ries that none of them will cause him

Natural Methods. "How does your husband stand on this suffrage proposition?"

Electric locomotives gradually are replacing steam on the state railways

"Puts his foot down on it."

Earthquakes are frequent in Mexico.

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