

# The AUCTION BLOCK

A NOVEL OF NEW YORK LIFE  
 By REX BEACH  
 ILLUSTRATIONS by F. PARKER

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 "The Iron Trail"  
 "The Spoilers"  
 "The Silver Horde" Etc.

CHAPTER XXI—Continued.

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 snipped 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 cause. In Bob's case the cause approached, all unheralded, in the person of Mr. Richard Cady, a youth whose magnificent vacuity of purpose was the envy of his friends. Comelike, 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.

"Have you 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 heat of season in the miasmatic jungles of the Amazon.

"Just ran down from Newport," Cady volunteered. "I'm sailing today. Better join me for a trip. I know—"

Bob cut Bob's refusal short—"Travel's an awful nuisance; 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. Post-five-y-not! So I'm joining away. I'll wait 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 blasé, but he had a heart; his sympathies were slow, but he was not insensible to misfortune. Accordingly he 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 toll."

"I'll bet you starve," brightly predicted Mr. Cady, in an effort at encouragement. "I'll lay you five thousand that you make a fiver of anything you try."

"I've quit gambling, 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As they shook hands Cady grunted: "My invitation to globe-trot is withdrawn.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 Yinz peered out from his hiding place at the passing throng, exposing a tiny, limp, pink-ribbon tongue. If Kurtz armed only with a pair of shears and a foolish tape, had won to affluence, why couldn't another? Stock broking was no longer profitable, and old Hannah's opposition evidently forced a change of occupation.

The prospect of such a change was annoying, but scarcely alarming to an ingrained optimist, and Bob took comfort in reflecting that the best-selling literature of the day was replete with instances of disinherited sons, impov-

ered society men, ruined bankers, or mere idlers, who by lightning strokes of genius had 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 patenting rat-traps or shoe buttons. One young man had discovered a way to keep worms out of railroad ties and had promptly bludgeoned the railroad companies out of fabulous royalties.

Over the stock-market idea Bob would work up an enthusiasm—he knew too much about it—and, inas-

much as horse racing was no longer fashionable, opportunities for a Pittsburgh Phil future seemed limited. Moreover, he had never saved a jockey's life nor a jockey's mother from eviction, hence feedbox tips were not likely. Nor did he know a single soul in the business of inventing rat-traps or shoe buttons. As for going west, he was clearly of the opinion that a search for abandoned gold mines or forgotten waterfalls was in his line; and the secret of cross-tinting railroad ties, now that he came to think of it, was still locked up in the breast of its affluent discoverer. Besides, as the whole episode had occurred in the second act of the play, the safety of building upon it was doubtful at best. Bob's wrinkled brow smoothed itself, and he nodded. His path was plain; it led toward the nearest corner to his tailor's door.

Mr. Kurtz's greeting was warm as Bob strolled into the stately showroom with its high-backed Flemish-oak chairs, its great carved tables, its paneled walls with their antlered decorations. This, it may be said, was not a shop, not a store where clothes were sold, 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. "I 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 conducted 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 salesman."

"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 like me."

"Fresh customers" is right," laughed Kurtz, then sobered quickly. "You're joking, 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 poitice 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 commercial sense.

"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—twenty-five and twenty. Now watch me grab adolescent offshoots of our famous Four Hundred." Bob took a bus 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 spite 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 little urging. When they had gone in to be measured Kurtz said guardedly:

"Whew! That's more stuff than I've sold in two weeks!"

"A mere trifle," Bob grinned, happily. "Say, Kurtz, this is the life! This is the job for me—panhandling juvenile plutocrats—no office hours, no heavy lifting, and Thursdays off. I'm going to make you famous."

"You'll break me with another run like this. You don't think they're blufing?"

"Why should they bluff? They'll never discover how many suits they have. Now figure it up and tell the bad news."

Mr. Kurtz did as directed, announcing: "Fifty-five hundred and five dollars."

"Fikers!" exclaimed the new salesman; then he began laboriously to compute 25 per cent of the sum, using as a pad a bolt of expensive white silk vest material. "Thirteen hundred and seventy-six dollars and twenty-five cents is my blackball, Kurtz. That's what I call a safe and sane Fourth."

Not bad for dull times, and yet it might be better. Anyhow, it's the hardest thirteen hundred and seventy-six dollars I ever earned."

"Hard!" The merchant's lips twitched, oscillating his cigar violently.

"Hard! I'll bet those fellows even bought your lunch. I suppose you mean it's the first money you ever—earned."

He seemed to choke over the last word. "Well, it's worth something to get men 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. How much will you have to 'earn' to cover your living expenses for six months?"

"Ah, there we journey in the realm of purest speculation." Bob favored him with a sunny smile. "As well ask me how much my living expenses must be in order to cover my earnings. Whatever one is, the other will be approximately ditto—or perhaps slightly in excess thereof. Anyhow, nothing but rigid economy—bane of my life—will make the one fit into the other. But 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 sake."

Bob's remarkable stroke of fortune called for a celebration, and his four

upon him with envy; 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 expected 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 difficult 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 Fennelcourt, 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 anticipation.

Fennelcourt is one of the show places of the Wheatley Hills section. Bert Hayman drove the Whartons out from the city, and Lorelei's first glimpse of Fennelcourt was such that she forgot her vague dislike of Hayman 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 artificial laugh and a pair of sober, heavy-lidded eyes. That he possessed a keen appreciation of feminine beauty he showed by surrendering unconditionally to Lorelei's charms.

As Hayman's car rolled up the driveway and the beauties of Fennelcourt 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. Fennel, the hostess, a plain-faced, dumpy young matron, welcomed the newcomers, then made Lorelei known. As for Bob, he needed no introductions; a noisy outburst greeted him, and Lorelei'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 coat and bonnet she exclaimed, 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 wash-ladies' parade. I knew you would."

"You said this was the younger set—but 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, too, if she feels like it."

"Won't you have anything to say about it?"

"What could I say? Alice does just as she likes. So does everybody else, for that matter. I've never gone in for this sort of thing very much."

After a moment Lorelei 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 conspicuous by refusing everything; I don't want to look like a zebra in a henyard—and a cocktail before dinner wouldn't hurt anybody." Noting his wife's expression, he kissed her lightly. "Now don't spoil your first party by worrying over me. Just forget you're married and have a good time."

Music greeted them as they descended the stairs, and they found some of the guests dancing to the strains of a giant orchestra built into the music 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 huge tiled terrace began to resemble a Broadway the danst.

There was more freedom, more vivacity than Lorelei was accustomed to, even in the gayest downtown resorts; the fun was swift and hilarious, there 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 fled to the billiard room.

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

Lorelei confessed, "I'm sick of the kind I've met; the men are indecent and the women are vulgar. I've always wanted to know the other kind."

Bob was delighted; his fancy took fire, and already he was far along toward prosperity. "You'll make a hit with the younger set; you'll be a perfect rave. Bert Hayman told me today that his married sister is entertaining a lot, and since the drama will be tottering on its way to destruction without you in a few days, I'll tell him that we're invited out to Loug Island for a week-end."

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 clothes, and in quarters where he was well known his method of winning the wager was deemed not only characteristic but ingenious. His exploits were famous; and his friends, rejoicing in one more display of eccentricity, and relishing any mild misfortune to Dick Cady, in the majority of cases changed tailors.

Business at Kurtz' increased so substantially that Bob was treated with a reverential amazement by everyone in the shop. The other salesmen gazed

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 Lorelei.

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

"I'm afraid—"

"Say! You can't help sneezing when you have a cold. What's a fellow going to do in a crowd like this? But don't worry. I know when to quit."

In truth he did seem better able to take care of himself than most of the men Lorelei had seen, so she said no more.

As he throttled himself with his evening tie Bob gasped: "Having a good time?"

"Yes—" Lorelei 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 do."

"Is all society like this?" she inquired.

"Um-m, yes and no! Society is like a layer cake—"

"Because 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 Fennelcourt 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 Fennel 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 high-backed 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 made love openly, violently now, and it added to her general disgust to see that Bob had again fallen into the clutches of Miss Wyeth, who made no secret of her fondness for him.

Lorelei was not the only one to take special note of the blonde girl's infatuation. Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire was equally observant and at length made her disapproval patent by a remark that set the table laughing and drove the blood from Lorelei's face. Some time later Lorelei heard her explain to the man on her right:

"We weren't surprised in the least. . . . Bob's always doing some crazy thing when he's drunk. . . . His latest fancy . . . pretty, of course, but . . . 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 biting sarcastic to Lorelei, she was offensively patronizing."

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 pleasant. 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.

ATTIC A THING OF THE PAST

Treasure House of Family Relics Has Completely Disappeared in These Modern Days.

A very modern indictment against the architects and builders of this town has been returned by a young married couple who have spent considerable time looking for a home. They report the incredible fact that there are no attics in the better class of houses, or very few. Where the attic ought to be there are finished rooms with regular floors, papered walls and lighting fixtures.

To the philosopher mind this is a state of affairs of the gravest moment, for in the swift moving tide of American life that has swept away so many of the moorings of the home and family the attic was about all that was left to tie to, remarks a writer in the Indianapolis News. Not everybody can have ancestors, portraits, family skeletons, and the other things that go with lineage, but everybody can have an attic if they will make a stand for it and not allow a mere style in houses to deprive them of their rights. An attic is the nearest substitute for a family tree that has been discovered. It takes only a few generations to furnish it with memories that constitute a complete genealogical history of the occupants of the house. And these are the things—like portraits and skeletons—that go to preserve family pride.

No man can go into the attic and see the first copper-toed boots he wore as a boy hanging to the rafters without feeling some sort of a stir within him. He cannot see the remains of his grandmother's hoopskirts without

feeling somehow that there is a connecting link between him and the history of his country. As for the padded silk brocaded vest his grandfather wore on his wedding day, it is a patent of respectability equal to a suit of armor—besides looking a good deal like one.

How German Army Horses Are Dyed.

Because of the shortage of horses in Germany it has been found expedient to dye white and dappled horses a field-gray, as already noted in Popular Mechanics Magazine, thereby giving them the same protective coloring as the soldiers' uniforms and making them available for military purposes. The coloring when first applied gives the horse a violet hue, which later changes into greenish-brown by reason of the chemical action of the sweat retained in the hair. A staff apothecary of the German army has found that the best dye is a 1 per cent solution of permanganate of potassium. This is applied to the head, legs, and upper part of the body with a brush and to the more sensitive parts with a sponge. The coloring is permanent, harmless, and costs about 50 cents per horse.—Popular Mechanics Magazine.

Sickness and Death From Milk.

It is well known that the records of many cities show that dirty milk causes much sickness and death from diarrheal diseases among children one to five years old and that it is in hot weather that dirty milk is most deadly.

A wire hairbrush, such as you can buy for ten cents, is just the thing for keeping the cat's fur in good condition.

Libby's Vienna Sausage and Sliced Dried Beef. Both contain less heat producing properties than heavy meats. Try them for summer luncheons and picnic tidbits. Libby, McNeill & Libby Chicago. Insist on Libby's at your grocer's.

Ask for and Get SKINNER'S THE HIGHEST QUALITY SPAGHETTI. 36 Page Recipe Book Free. SKINNER MFG. CO. OMAHA, U.S.A. THE HIGH QUALITY SEWING MACHINE. NOT SOLD UNDER ANY OTHER NAME. Write for three booklets: "Points to be Considered Before Purchasing a Sewing Machine," "Learn the Facts," "The New Home Sewing Machine Co., Orange, Mass."

For Sale or Trade. 2,000 acre Saskatchewan Farm, with complete equipment. Produced in 1915 over 100,000 bushels. Value \$100,000. Further listings of Canada land desired. FRANK CRAWFORD W. O. W. Building OMAHA, NEBRASKA. NOT LIKE NEW EXPERIENCE. Butcher Had Suffered Before From the Pranks Indulged in by His Frisky Horse.

The eccentricities of Yankee character are innumerable, and they are almost always amusing. In a Maine town a gentleman was standing with some friends on his tennis lawn when the horse of the village butcher—a rather frisky animal—came dashing madly over a terrace from the street, flinging the unfortunate butcher into the tennis net with a shoulder of beef on top of him, and a big block of ice thumped with a good deal of force into his side. The fiery steed completed his work by dragging the wagon to which he was attached over his prostrate master and then flying away to demolish it and the lawn turf together by careening along until stopped by a tree. The butcher was taken up in sensible and pretty badly bruised. As soon as he could be restored to consciousness one of the bystanders pronounced the usual conundrum whether he was hurt. The butcher tried to move, found he could not, gave a sickly smile, and then said, jauntily: "Oh, it's nothing! I don't mind. I'm used to it."

Doubtful Case. The judge's five-year-old son, John, had been naughty when his parents were having company and had been reprimanded. That night when his mother went up to hear John say his prayers she suggested that he ask God to teach his parents how to bring him up properly. John was quite penitent and prayed humbly: "Please, God, teach mother how to make me a good boy." He paused for a moment, then added thoughtfully, "And father, too, if you can do anything with him."

Looking On the Bright Side. "What became of that plan you had to get rich raising chickens?" "It wasn't altogether a success." "Was it any kind of a success?" "It didn't do me much good. But it made a few surviving chickens very happy and comfortable."

Grape-Nuts Gets Attention—First, because of its wonderfully delicious flavor—Then again, because it is ready to eat—fresh and crisp from the package. But the big "get attention" quality is its abundance of well-balanced, easily digestible nourishment. For sound health, every table should have its daily ration of Grape-Nuts—"There's a Reason"



"I Should Like to Know Nice People," Lorelei Confessed.



He Made Love Openly, Violently, Now.



Hayman Reeled Away.

articles, swung it above her head, and brought the weapon down. Hayman reeled away, covering his face with his hands and cursing wildly; then, Lorelei, guided more by instinct than by reason or memory, found Mrs. Fennel's chamber and pounded upon its door with blind fury. She heard a stir from the direction whence she had come, and Hayman's voice, calling something unintelligible; then, Mrs. Fennel's startled face appeared before her. "What's the matter? My dear! You'll wake everybody in the house." (TO BE CONTINUED.)