

DOINGS OF THE VAN LOONS



Even the most careful will fall

The AUCTION BLOCK BY REX BEACH

Here we have the tale of a young woman who is thrust by her greedy and lazy family into a world of human vultures to win a fortune with her personal charms. But she surprises them all with her fine traits of character. Her struggles and constant danger are frightening, but she brings help and happiness to men and women who need it much. This is a story with strong guise.

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Peter Knight, defeated for political office in his town, decides to venture New York in order that the family fortunes might benefit by the expected rise of his charming daughter, Lorelei. CHAPTER II—Lorelei, now stage beauty with Bergman's Review, for a special article. Her gold-hunting mother outlines Lorelei's ambitions, but Slosson, the press agent, later adds his information. CHAPTER III—Lorelei attends Millionaire Hammon's gorgeous entertainment. She meets Merkle, a wealthy dyspeptic, who seems fond of her. CHAPTER IV—Bob Wharton breaks in to the ball in a novel way and wins a thousand dollars from his father. Merkle asks Lorelei to be his defective in an affair which he fears. The intoxicated Bob Wharton insults Lorelei and then jumps in the fountain. CHAPTER V—Jim Knight's doings disgust Lorelei and arouse her suspicion. Her dressing room partner turns out as a central figure in the blackmail scheme against Hammon. Mrs. Croft, the dresser, tells what she heard. CHAPTER VI—Lorelei meets Merkle to warn him of the proposed trap for Hammon. They go for a long auto ride in the night. CHAPTER VII—The auto is wrecked; Merkle and Lorelei are forced to walk to the Chateau. Arriving, they meet Jim Knight and suspicious companions who leave suddenly. Hammon appears from within and tells of being tricked in company with Lila Lynn. CHAPTER VIII—Lorelei goes shopping and meets Mrs. Demorest, notorious dancer, who takes her home to tea. Lorelei learns that the dancer is not what is said of her. CHAPTER IX—Lila Lynn confesses to Lorelei her intentions as to Hammon. Jim Knight and his mother prepare to force money from Merkle, using Lorelei's ride with him as a weapon. CHAPTER X—Jim takes Lorelei to supper to avoid Bob Wharton, who, however, unexpectedly appears at the table. He pours out his apologies to Lorelei and tells her that her brother arranged the meeting for money. Lorelei saves the drunken Wharton from Jim and his gang. CHAPTER XI—Merkle calls on Lorelei at the theater and tells her of her mother's attempt to extract blackmail from him. Lorelei decides to leave home. Lila Lynn tells of her past.

CHAPTER XII.

Lorelei exploded her bomb at breakfast Sunday morning, and the effect was all she had dreaded. Fortunately Jim had gone out. The girl's humiliation at Merkle's disclosure and, her merciless accusations left little to be said in self-defense. Of course, the usual tears followed, likewise repetitions of the time-worn plea that it had all been done for Lorelei's own good and had been prompted by unselfish love for her. "I'm beginning to doubt that," Lorelei said, slowly. "I think you all look upon me as a piece of property to do with as you please. Perhaps I'm disloyal and ungrateful, but—I can't help it. And I can't forgive you yet. When I can I'll come home again, but it's impossible for me to live here now, feeling as I do. I want to love you—so I'm going to run away." Tragically, through her tears, Mrs. Knight inquired: "What will become of us? We can't live—Jim never does anything for us." In Peter's watery stare was abject fright. "Lorelei wouldn't let us suffer," he ventured, tremulously. "I'm sick, I may die any time, so the doctor says." It was indeed a changed man; that easy good-humor that had been his most likable trait had been lost in habitual peevishness. "I'll keep the house running as before," his daughter assured him, "and I'll manage to get along on what's left. But you mustn't be quite so extravagant, that's all. I shouldn't—and you wouldn't force me to do anything I'd regret, I'm sure." She choked down her pity at the sight of the invalid's pasty face and flabby form, then turned to the window. Her emotion prevented her from observing the relief that greeted her words.

The moment was painful; Lorelei's eyes were dim, and she hardly saw the



"Money, Money! You Both Worship It!"

dreary prospect of fire escapes, of whitewashed brick, of bare, gaping back yards overhung with clotheslines, like nerves exposed in the process of dissection. "Yes, things will go on just the same," she repeated, then clenched her hands and burst forth miserably: "Oh, I know how badly you need money! I know what the doctor says, and—I'll get it somehow. It seems to me I'd pay any price just to see dad walking around again and to know that you were both provided for. Money, money! You both worship it, and—I'm getting so I can't think of anything else. Nothing else seems worth while."

Two hours later a dray called for her trunks and took them across town. The Elegancia apartments looked down on her with chill disapproval as she entered; the elevator man stared at her with black, hostile eyes until she had made herself known; and even the superintendent—in a less pretentious structure than the Elegancia he would have been the janitor—now that "No. 6" was rented, did not extend even a perfunctory welcome as he delivered the keys. On the contrary, he made known the exclusive character of the house in such a pointed manner as to offend her.

Lila was out, she learned, which probably meant that she was still asleep. Lorelei ascended to her new home in low spirits. Now that she saw the place in strong daylight, she was vaguely disappointed. She was very lonely, very friendless, and very much discouraged. Then she noticed the telephone and sprang toward it. Adoree was at home; her voice answered cheerily, and her interruptions of amazement and delight caused Lorelei's message to spin itself out induly. Without waiting for an invitation Adoree cried:

"Let me come and help. Please! We'll use both the poolies for mops, and I'll be there in ten minutes. . . . You're a perfect dear to say yes, for I know you want to do it all yourself." "Come now—quickly. I'm scared—" Lorelei begged, in fearful tones. "I'll drive right up in my chariot of flame; I was going out, and it's waiting while I kalsomine my face. Are you sure everything is good and dirty? Goody! We'll do it ourselves. Good-by."

nearly hotel, for dinner. Returning, they put the final touches to their task. When Adoree left, late that night, she kissed her friend, saying: "Thank you for the loveliest Sunday I ever had. It was splendid, and I'll come again tomorrow." The theatrical profession is full of women whose lives are flawless; hence it had not been difficult for Lorelei to build up a reputation that insured respect, although her connection with a Bergman show made the task more difficult than it would otherwise have been. During the two years of her stage experience no scandal had attached to her name, and she had therefore begun to feel secure. In that period she had met many men of the usual type that are attracted by foot-light favorites, and they had pressed attentions upon her, but so long as she had been recognized as the Lady In-Obtainable they had not forced their unwelcome advances. Now, however, that a scurrilous newspaper story had associated her name with that of a wealthy man, she began to note a change. Bergman's advances had been only another disquieting symptom of what she had to expect—an indication of the new color her reputation had assumed.

Nobel Bergman's commercial caution steered him wide of the moral woman in his employ, but the other kind, and especially the innocent or the inexperienced, had cause to know and to fear him. In appearance he was slender and foppish; he affected a pronounced waist line in his coats, his eyes were large and dark and brilliant, his mouth was sensual. He never raised his voice, he never appeared to see plain women; such girls as accepted his attentions were sure of advancement, but paid for it in other ways.

On Monday evening Mr. Slosson, the press agent, thrust his head through the dressing-room door and announced to Lorelei: "Bergman says Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire is giving a box party, and she told him to fetch you around for supper. She owns a piece of the estate, and the theater belongs to the show, so you'll just have to go."

"Mercy! Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire, the college boy's giddy godmother," Lila mocked. "I suppose she's out stumping with her kindergarten class." Slosson frowned at this levity. "Will you go?" he inquired. "Yes or no?" "Um—m—I'll have to say 'yes,' it seems."

"Good. I'll phone Bergman." When the press agent had gone Lila regarded her companion with open compassion. "Go! But you're going to have a grand time. That bunch think it's smart to be seen with show people, and of course they'll dance all night." "And I did so want to go straight back to my new home." When she joined her employer after the show she was in no very agreeable frame of mind.

Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire was a vermilion-haired widow with a chest like a blacksmith, who had become famous for her jewels and her social eccentricities. She and her party were established at one of the uptown "Prototoires," when Nobel Bergman and Lorelei arrived. Three examples of blushing boyhood devoted themselves to a languid blonde girl of thirty-five, and the hostess herself was dancing with another tender youth, but she came forward, panting. "So good of you to come, dear," she cried. "This is Miss Wyeth, and these are my boys, Mr.—" She spoke four meaningless names, and four meaningless smiles responded; four wet-combed heads were bowed. She turned to her blonde companion, saying "She is pretty, isn't she, Alice?" "Very," Alice agreed, without removing her eyes from the youth at her left. Bergman invited Lorelei to finish the dance; then he inquired, "What do you think of her?" "Her hair fascinates me; she looks as if she had just burst out of a thicket of henna leaves." Bergman laughed, already. "But why did she invite me?" "I told her to."

"I knew you'd refuse if I asked you." "So? Then I'm really your guest instead of hers." "We'll leave whenever you say." Throughout the rest of the dance Lorelei was silent, offended at Bergman's deception and uncomfortable at her own situation; but the hostess had ordered a supper of the unsatisfactory kind usual in such places; little as she liked the prospect, she could not leave at once.

The meal was interrupted regularly each time the music played, for dancing was more than a fad in this set—it was a serious business with dried venison, powdered it into a paste and pressed it into cakes for winter food.

Bergman, who devoted himself assiduously to his employ, showing more effect from it than the others. As the night wore on he became more and more offensive; he grew coarse in a sly, tentative manner, as if feeling his ground. He changed the nature of his dancing, also, until Lorelei could no longer tolerate him. "Getting tired, my dear?" he queried when she declined to join the whirling throng. "Yes, I want to go." "Still on Amsterdam avenue?" "No, I'm living alone—now." Bergman started, his eyes brightened. "Ah! Then you've come to your senses finally. Merkle fixed it—eh? I can do more for you than Merkle can." "Merkle?" She eyed him coolly. "Oh, play your game with strangers, but don't put me off. Weren't you caught with him at the Chateau? Well, then—" "You needn't flinch. I'm going home now."

He laid a detaining hand upon her arm. "You never learned that speech in one of my shows," he said, "and you're not going to say good night to me. Understand?" He grinned at her with disgusting confidence, and she flung off his touch. The returning dancers offered a welcome diversion. Lorelei dreaded an open clash with the manager, knowing that the place, the hour and the conditions were ill suited to a scene. She had learned to smile and to condescend slyly, to cross the thin ice of an embarrassing situation with light steps. Quickly she turned to Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire, who was bowing effusively to a newcomer.

"My word! What is Bob Wharton doing here?" exclaimed the widow. "Bob Wharton? Where?" Miss Wyeth's language vanished electrically; she wrenched her attention from the wire-haired fraternity man at her side. Lorelei felt a sense of great thanksgiving.

Mrs. Thompson-Bellaire beckoned, and Wharton came forward, his eyes fixed gloomily upon Lorelei. "You recall? So this is how you waste your evening. I am surprised, but now that we've caught you, won't you join us?" Wharton glanced at the four pawns and hesitated. "It's long past nine; I'm afraid the boys will be late for school."

Miss Wyeth tilted; the sophomore with the bristling pompadour uttered a bark of amusement. Meeting Bob's questioning glance, Lorelei seconded the invitation with a nod and a quick look of appeal, whereupon his demeanor changed and he drew a chair between her and Nobel Bergman, forcing the latter to move. His action was pointed, almost rude, but the girl felt a surge of gratitude sweep over her.

There was an interlude of life chatter, then the orchestra burst into full clamor once more. Much to the chagrin of her escort, Lorelei rose and danced away with the newcomer. "Way the distress signal?" queried Bob. "Mr. Bergman has—been drifting." "Rum is poison," he told her, with mock indignation. "He must be a low person."

"She's getting unpleasant." "Shall I take him by the nose and run around the block?" "You can do me a favor." He was serious in an instant. "You were able to see the other night. I'm sorry to see you with this fellow." "He forced—he deceived me into coming, and he's taking advantage of conditions to—be nasty."

Bob missed a step, then apologized. His next words were facetious, but his tone was ugly: "Where do you want the remains sent?" "Will you wait and see that mope is safely sent home?" She leaped back, and her troubled twilight eyes besought him. "I'll wait, never fear. I've been looking everywhere for you. I wanted to find you, and I didn't want to. I've been to every cafe in town. How in the world did you fall in with the old bell-cow and her calf?"

When Lorelei had explained, he nodded his complete understanding. "She's just the sort to do a thing like that." (TO BE CONTINUED.)

State Forests. State forests, with a total of over 3,000,000 acres, have been established in thirteen states. Of these New York has the largest forests, which comprise 1,823,000 acres; Pennsylvania is second, with 1,083,000 acres, and Wisconsin third, with 400,000 acres.

Potted Foods. There is much probability in the suggestion that we owe our system of potted foods to the North American Indians, who for many years have dried venison, powdered it into a paste and pressed it into cakes for winter food.

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Battles with Wolves.
Pack Attacks Veterinarian on Lonely Road, and He Shoots.

Crane, Mo.—C. L. Egbert, a veterinarian, of Crane, had an encounter with a pack of wolves near Garber. He was driving along a lonely road in a car when he came upon the wolves which had just attacked and brought down a yearling steer.

Mr. Egbert fired into the pack with his revolver, killing one. The others immediately attacked the horse. The fastest wolf leaped on the car and was shot. Ernie his horse to a gallop. Mr. Egbert drove down the road to a point where he could safely reload his revolver. When he returned to the scene the wolves had fled. He brought the slain wolf home with him.

Wolves have become numerous in the Ozark region again, but this is the first time in a number of years they have attacked a person.

Had No Hills.
"Going to plant potatoes in that five acre lot you've rented in Suburbus?" "Like to, but it's level field and my book on farming says that potatoes should be in hills."—Buffalo Express.

Dr. Naismith Joins Army.
Dr. James J. Naismith, head of the physical training department of the University of Kansas, has been announced a leave of absence from his duties for the duration of the war. Dr. Naismith is chaplain of the First regiment Kansas national guard, and last summer was on the border with the regiment.

Lava is Slow to Cool.
Pensants on the slopes of Mount Aetna can still boil water over the lava that flowed from the volcano during the eruption of 1910. Lava, according to Walter Woodburn Hyde of the University of Pennsylvania, writing in the Geographical Review, often reaches a temperature of 2,000 degrees F.

Even the ancient poets recorded the tenacity with which lava retains its heat, and Barrell, describing the great eruption of 1663, says the lava took eight years to cool. It is related that steam was still rising in 1830 from lava ejected in 1787. And this is not astonishing when we remember that the stream of molten lava which reached the sea at Catania on that occasion was at least 600 yards in breadth, forty feet deep and contained 3,332,000,000 cubic feet. It banked up against the walls of Catania, which were sixty feet high, until it flowed over the top and destroyed a large part of the city. The huge promontory that juts like a breakwater to the harbor is the remnant of that stream of lava that flowed into the sea.

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He-I was late on the 24 day of April. She—Late, as usual.

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Eastbound cars for Marseilles, Seneca, Morris, Minooka, Rockdale, Joliet, Ill., leave Ottawa station in A. M.—5:45, 6:50, 7:50, *8:50, 9:50, *10:50, 11:50.
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b Ladd and intermediate points.
c Princeton and intermediate points.
d Princeton-Ladd and intermediate points.
e De Pue, Ladd and intermediate points.
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