

DOINGS OF THE VAN LOONS



Mother's china is a very perishable article

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 pulse.

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—A well-known critic interviews Lorelei Knight, now stage beauty with Bergman's Revue, for a special article. Her calculating mother outlines Lorelei's ambitions, but Blossom, the press agent, later adds his information. CHAPTER III—Lorelei attends Millionaire Hammon's gorgeous entertainment. She meets Merkle, wealthy dyspeptic, who seems fond of scandal.

CHAPTER IV—Bob Wharton breaks into the hall in a novel way and wins a thousand dollars from his father. Merkle asks Lorelei to be his detective in an affair which he fears. The intoxicated Bob Wharton insults Lorelei and then jumps in the fountain.

CHAPTER V—Jim Knight's doing disgusts Lorelei and arouses her suspicion. Her dressing room door is broken into and 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 Lias Lynn.

CHAPTER VIII—Lorelei goes shopping and meets Mike Demore, victorious dancer, who takes her home to tea. Lorelei learns that the dancer is not what is said of her.

CHAPTER IX—Lias 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 their table. He pours out his apologies to Lorelei and tells her that her brother arranged the meeting for money. Lorelei signs a check on Hammon 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. Lias Lynn tells of her past.

CHAPTER XII—Bergman forces Lorelei to dinner and promptly loses control of his conduct. Bob Wharton proves a friend in need, as well as dancing instructor to Bergman.

CHAPTER XIII—Jim Knight and Merkle, with the help of Lias Lynn, force a proposal of marriage from Bob Wharton to Lorelei. Too dazed to resist the onslaughts of the trio, Lorelei surrenders to an immediate marriage to the drunken Wharton.

CHAPTER XIV—Hammon surprises Lias at her apartment and while enraged she tells him she has meant to ruin him in revenge for her father's death. She also tells him she is responsible for his troubles and that she never intended to marry him. Hammon attacks Lias; she shoots him as he advances toward her.

the cab roiled and bounced over the cobblestones, rocking the wounded man pitifully. To John Merkle the ride was terrible, with a drunkard at the reins and in his arms a perhaps fatally injured man, who, despite the tortures of that bumping carriage, interspersed his groans with cries of "Hurry, hurry!" When he felt the grateful smoothness of Fifth avenue beneath the wheels he leaned forth a second time and warned Bob. "Be careful of the watchman in the block."

"The figure in Bob was dying; he bent downward to inquire, "Is he all right?" Merkle nodded, then withdrew his head.

The Hammon residence had changed owners of late, but many people recalled its tragic associations and continue to point it out with interest. It is a massive pile of gray stone, standing just east of Fifth avenue, and its bronze doors open upon an exclusive, well-kept side street. At the farther corner, dimly discernible beneath the radiance of a street light, Bob made out the watchman, now at the end of his patrol. The moment was propitious; there could be no further delay.

Bob reined in and leaped from his box. Merkle had the cab door open and was hoisting Hammon from his

in the tiny living room. "Will he live?" "Oh, yes. He says he's not badly hurt, and Merkle agrees. Lord! We'd never left him alone if we'd thought—" "I'm glad. When you rang I thought—it was the police."

"There, there," he said, comfortingly, seeing her tremble. "I won't let anything hurt you. I was terribly drunk—things are swimming yet—but all the way across town I couldn't think of anything, anybody except you and what it would mean to you if it got out."

"It will get out, I'm sure. Such things always do."

He eyed her gravely, kindly, with an expression she had never seen upon his face.

"Then—we'll face it together," he said.

After a moment her glance drooped, a faint color tinged her cheeks. "I— I wouldn't dare face it alone. I couldn't, but you're tired—sick." He nodded. "You must lie down and sleep, and get to be yourself again— We can't tell what may happen now at any moment."

"It's the reaction, I suppose. I'm all in. And you?" She shook her head. "I couldn't sleep if I tried. I feel as if I'd never be able to sleep again. I—I'll sit and watch and—wait."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ROMANCE NOT DEAD: HERE'S A CINDERELLA.

New York. — Who says romance is dead or never shows itself in big cities? Miss Minerva Menke of New York insists that it is not. Five months ago she lost a pump—size No. 2—as she lights was alighting from a trolley car. The footwarer caught in the step. The motorcar drove on, and a passenger, Jack Wolfson, found it. He advertised for the fair owner. She answered. He called her—then called often. Soon Miss Menke will be Mrs. Wolfson.

"You got me here, didn't you?" he whispered, as he took in his surroundings. "Now go—everything is all right."

"We're not going to leave you," Merkle said, positively.

"No," echoed Bob. "I'll wake up Orson while John telephones the doctor."

But Hammon forbade Bob's movement with a frown. It was plain that despite his weakness his mind remained clear.

"Listen to me," he ordered. "Prop me up—put me in that chair. I'm choking." They did as he directed. "That's better. Now, you mustn't be seen here—either of you. We can't explain." He choked Merkle. "I know best. Go home; it's only two blocks—I'll telephone."

"You'll ring for Orson quick?" Hammon nodded.

"Rotten way to leave a man," Bob mumbled. "I'd rather stick it out and face the music."

"Go, go! You're wasting time." Hammon's brow was wrinkled with pain and anger. "You've been good; now hurry."

Merkle's thin face was marked with deep feeling. "Yes," he agreed. "There's nothing else for us to do; but tell Orson to 'phone me quick. I'll be back here in five minutes." Then he and Bob stole out of the house as quickly as they had stolen in.

They got into the cab and drove away without exciting suspicion. Merkle alighted two blocks up the avenue and sped to his own house; Bob turned his jaded nag westward through the sunken road that led toward the Elegancia and Lorelei.

The owner of the equipage was waiting patiently, and there still lacked something of the allotted hour when the exchanged garments had been transferred to their respective owners. Bob walked toward the Elegancia with a feeling of extreme fatigue in his limbs, for the effort to conquer his intoxication had left him weak; he dimly realized also that he was still far from sober.

There was no answer when he rang at Lias Lynn's apartment; the hall-boy volunteered the information that the occupant had just gone out with a gentleman, Miss Knight? Yes, she was upstairs, he supposed. Bob was surprised at his wife's apparent self-control when she let him in. Except for the slim hand pressed to her bosom and the anxiety lurking in her deep blue eyes, she might have just come from the theater. Those eyes, he noted, were very dark, almost black, under this emotional stress; they questioned him, mutely.

"We got him home all right," he told her, when they stood facing each other

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