

## MISS VEE THROWS THE DARE 303

and take her home in a taxi. Think you're equal to it, eh?" says he.

"I could make a stab," says I.

"I'll risk that much," says he.

And before there's any chance for a revise I've marched by Piddie with my tongue out and am pikin' towards the North River with a pier pass in one pocket and expense money in another, specially commissioned to meet the very steamer that's bringin' in Miss Vee and her Count. All of which shows how curious things will coincide if you use your bean a little to help 'em along.

Well, you know how it is waitin' in a push of people for a steamer. Everybody's excited and anxious and keyed up, ready to jump at every whistle, and stretchin' their necks for a peek down the river. It's as catchin' as the baseball fever when you're in a mob watchin' the scores posted. I finds myself actin' just as eager as any, and me only doin' messenger work.

Finally the boat shows up; but instead of sailin' in graceful and prompt, she shuts off steam and lays to out in the middle of the river, about as lifeless as a storage warehouse afloat, while a dozen or so dinky tugs begin pushin' and pullin' to get her somewhere near the pier. Then folks start makin' wild guesses as to which is their friends.