



# VERA, THE MEDIUM

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY FREDERIC DORR STEELE

## PART II



THE home of the Vances was in Thirty-fifth Street, nearly opposite the Garrick Theatre. It was one of a row of old-fashioned brick houses with high steps. As the seeker after truth entered the front hall, he saw before him the stairs to the second story; on his right, the folding doors of the "front parlor," and at the far end of the hall, a single door that led to what was, in the old days, before this row of houses had been converted into offices, the family dining-room. To Vera, the Vances had given the use of this room, as a "reception parlor." The visitor first entered the room on his right, from it passed through another pair of folding doors to the reception parlor, and then, when his audience was at an end, departed by the single door to the hall, and so, to the street.

The reception parlor bore but little likeness to a cave of mystery. There were no shaded lights, no stuffed alligator, no Indian draperies, no black cat. On a table, in the centre, under a heavy and hideous chandelier with bronze gas jets, was a green velvet cushion. On this nestled an innocent ball of crystal. Beside it lay the ivory knit-

ting needle with which Vera pointed out, in the hand of the visitor, those lines that showed he would be twice married, was of an ambitious temperament, and would make a success upon the stage. In a corner stood a wooden cabinet that resembled a sentry box on wheels. It was from this, on certain evenings, before a select circle of spiritualists that Vera projected the ghosts of the departed. Hanging inside the cabinet was a silver-gilt crown and a cloak of black velvet, lined with purple silk and covered in gold thread, with signs of the zodiac.

Except for these stage properties, save that they illustrated the taste of Mabel Vance, the room was of no interest. It held a rubber plant, a red velvet rocking chair, across the back of which Mrs. Vance had draped a Neapolitan scarf, an upright piano, upon which Emmanuel Day, or, as he was known to the cross roads of Broadway and Forty-second Street, "Mannie" Day, provoked the most marvellous rag-time, an enlarged photograph in crayon, of Professor Vance, in a frock coat and lawn tie, a china bull-dog coquettishly decorated with a blue bow and, on the mantel-piece, two tall beer steins, and a hand telephone. From the

long windows one obtained a view of the iron shutters of the new department store in Thirty-fourth Street; and of a garden, just large enough to contain a sumach tree, a refrigerator, and the packing case in which the piano had arrived.

After leaving Winthrop, without waiting for Vance, Vera had returned directly to the house in Thirty-fifth Street, and locked herself in her room. And although the hour for receiving visitors had arrived, and already "Mannie" Day had ushered two into the front room, Vera had not yet come downstairs. In consequence, Mabel Vance was in possession of the reception parlor.

Mrs. Vance was a plump, pink-and-blond young person; credulous and vulgar, but at all times of the utmost good-humor. Her admiration for Vera was equalled only by her awe of her. On this particular afternoon, although it already was after five o'clock, Mrs. Vance still wore a short dressing sack, open at the throat, and heavy with somewhat soiled lace. But her blonde hair was freshly "marcelled," and her nails pink and shining. In the absence of Vera, she was making a surreptitious and guilty use of the telephone. From the fact that in her left hand she held the *Morning Telegraph* open at the "previous performances" of the horses, and that the page had been cruelly lacerated by a hat pin, it was fair to suppose that whoever was at the other end of the wire, was tempting her with the closing odds at the races.

In her speculations, she was interrupted by "Mannie" Day, who entered softly through the door from the hall.

"Mannie" Day was a youth of twenty-four. It was his heart's desire to be a "Broadwayard." He wanted to know all of those, and to be known only by those, who moved between the giant pillars that New York threw into the sky to mark her progress North.

He knew the soiled White Way as the oldest inhabitant knows the single street of the village. He knew it from the Rathskellers underground, to the roof gardens in the sky; in his firmament the stars were the electric advertisements over Long Acre Square, his mother earth was asphalt, the breath of his nostrils gasoline, the *Telegraph* was his Bible. His grief was that no one in the Tenderloin would take him

seriously; would believe him wicked, wise, predatory. They might love him, they might laugh with him, they might clamor for his company; in no flat that could boast a piano, was he not, on his entrance, greeted with a shout; but the real Knights of the Highway treated him always as the questioning, wide-eyed child. In spite of his after-midnight pallor, in spite of his honorable scars of dissipation, it was his misfortune to be cursed with a smile that was a perpetual plea of "not guilty."

"What can you expect?" an outspoken friend, who made a living as a wireless wire-tapper, had once pointed out to him. "That smile of yours could open a safe. It could make a show girl give up money! It's an alibi for everything from overspeeding to murder."

Mannie, as he listened, flushed with mortification. From that moment he determined that his life should be devoted to giving the lie to that smile, to that outward and visible sign of kindness, good-will, and innate innocence. As yet, he had not succeeded.

He interrupted Mabel at the telephone to enquire the whereabouts of Vera. "There's two girls in there, now," he said; "waiting to have their fortunes doped."

"Let 'em wait!" exclaimed Mabel. "Vera's upstairs dressing." In her eyes was the baleful glare of the plunger. "What was that you give me in the third race?"

The interest Mannie may have felt for the impatient visitors, at the first touch of the ruling passion, vanished.

"Not in the third," he corrected briskly. "Keene entry win the third."

Mabel appealed breathlessly to the telephone. "What price the Keene entry in the third?" She turned to Mannie with reproachful eyes. "Even money!" she complained.

"That's what I told you," retorted Mannie. He lowered his voice, and gazed apprehensively toward the front parlor. "If you want a really good thing," he whispered hoarsely, "ask Joe what Pompadour is in the fifth!"

Mabel laughed scornfully, disappointedly.

"Pompadour!" she mocked.

"That's right!" cried the expert. "That's the one daily hint from Paris to-day. Joe will give you thirty to one."

Upon the defenceless woman he turned the full force of his accursed smile. "Put five on for me, Mabel?" he begged.

With unexpected determination of character Mabel declared sharply that she would do nothing of the sort.

"Two, then?" entreated the boy.

"Where," demanded Mabel, unfeelingly, "is the twenty you owe me now?"

The abruptness of this unsportsman-like blow below the belt, caused Mannie to wince.

"How do I know where it is?" he protested. "As long as you haven't got it, why do you care where it is?" He heard the door from the hall open, and turning, saw Vera. He appealed to her. "Vera," he cried, "you'll loan me two dollars? I stand to win sixty. I'll give you thirty."

Vera looked enquiringly at Mabel. "What is it, Mabel," she asked; "a hand book?"

Mrs. Vance nodded guiltily.

"Mannie!" exclaimed Vera, gently but reproachfully, "I told you I wouldn't loan you any more money till you paid Mabel what you've borrowed."

"How can I pay Mabel what I borrowed," demanded Mannie, "if I can't borrow the money from you to pay her? Only two dollars, Vera!"

Vera nodded to Mabel.

Mabel, at the phone, called, "Two dollars on Pompadour—to win—for Mannie Day," and rang off.

"That makes thirty for you," exclaimed Mannie, enthusiastically, "and twenty I owe to Mabel, and that leaves me ten."

Mrs. Vance, no longer occupied in the whirlpool of speculation, for the first time observed that Vera had changed her matronly robe of black lace for a short white skirt, and a white shirt waist. She noted, also, that there was a change in Vera's face and manner. She gave an impression of nervous eagerness, of unrest. Her smile seemed more appealing, wistful, girlish. She looked like a child of fourteen.

But Mabel was concerned more especially with the robe of virgin white.

For the month, which was July, the costume was appropriate, but, in the opinion of Mabel, in no way suited to the priestess of the occult and the mysterious.

"Why, Vera!" exclaimed Mrs. Vance, "whatever have you got on? Ain't you

going to receive visitors? There's ten dollars waiting in there now."

In sudden apprehension, Vera looked down at her spotless garments.

"Don't I look nice?" she begged.

"Of course you look nice, dearie," Mabel assured her, "but you don't look like no fortune-teller."

"If you want to know what you look like," said Mannie sternly, "you look like one of the waiter girls at Childs's, that's what you look like."

"And your crown!" exclaimed Mabel, "and your kimono. Ain't you going to wear your kimono?"

She hastened to the cabinet and produced the cloak of black velvet and spangles, and the silver-gilt crown.

"No, I am *not*!" declared Vera. She wore the frightened look of a mutinous child. "I—I look so—foolish in them!"

Such heresy caused Mannie to gasp aloud:

"You look grand in them," he protested; "don't she, Mabel?"

"Sure she does," assented that lady.

"And your junk?" demanded Mannie, referring to the jade necklace and the gold-plated bracelets. His eyes opened in sympathy. "You haven't pawned them, have you?"

"Pawned them?" laughed Vera; "I couldn't get anything on them!" As the only masculine point of view available, she appealed to Mannie, wistfully. "Don't you like me better this way, Mannie?" she begged.

But that critic protested violently.

"Not a bit like it" he cried. "Now, in the gold tiara and the spangled opera cloak," he differentiated, "you look like a picture postal card! You got Lotta Faust's blue skirt back to Levey's. But not in the white goods!" He shook his head sadly, firmly. "You look, now, like you was made up for a May-day picnic in the Bronx, and they'd picked on you to be Queen of the May."

Mabel carried the much-admired opera cloak to Vera, and held it out, tempting her.

"You'll wear it, just to please me and Mannie, won't you, dearie?" she begged. Vera retreated before it as though it held the germs of contagion.

"I will not," she rebelled. "I hate it! When I have that on, I feel—mean. I feel

as mean as though I were picking pennies out of a blind man's hat." Mannie roared with delight.

"Gee!" he shouted; "but that's a hot one."

"Besides," said Vera, consciously, "I'm—I'm expecting some one."

The manner more than the words thrilled Mabel with the most joyful expectations.

She exclaimed excitedly. "A gentleman friend, Vera?" she asked.

That Vera shunned all young men had been to Mabel a source of wonder and of pride. Even when the young men were the friends of her husband and of herself, the preoccupied manner with which Vera received them did not provoke in Mabel any resentment. It rather increased her approbation. Although horrified at the recklessness of the girl, she had approved even when Vera rejected an offer of marriage from a wine agent.

Secretly, for a proper alliance for her, Mabel read the society columns, in search of eligible, rich young men. Finding that they invariably married eligible, rich young women, she had lately determined that Vera's destiny must be an English duke.

Still, if, as she hoped, Vera had chosen for herself, Mabel felt assured that the man would prove worthy, and a good match. A good match meant one who owned not only a runabout, but a touring car.

"It's a man from home," said Vera.

"Home?" queried Mannie.

"From up the State," explained Vera; "from Geneva. It's—Mr. Winthrop."

With an exclamation of alarm, Mannie started upright. "Winthrop!" he cried, then with a laugh of relief he sank back. "Gee! you give me a scare," he cried. "I thought you meant the district-attorney."

Mabel laughed sympathetically.

"I thought so, too," she admitted.

"I *do* mean the district-attorney," said the girl.

"Vera!" cried Mabel.

"Winthrop—coming *here*?" demanded Mannie.

"I met him at Mr. Hallowell's this morning," said Vera. "Didn't Paul tell you?"

"Paul ain't back yet," said Mannie. "I wish he was!" His lower jaw dropped in dazed bewilderment. "Winthrop—com-

ing *here*?" he repeated. "And they're all coming *here*!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "Paul just phoned me. They've taken Gaylor in with them, and we're all working together now on some game for to-night. And Winthrop's coming *here*!" he shook his head decidedly, importantly. As the only man of the family present, he felt he must meet this crisis. "Paul won't stand for it!" he declared.

"Well, Paul will just have to stand for it!" retorted Mrs. Vance.

With a murmur of sympathy she crossed to Vera. "I'm not going to see our Vera disappointed," she announced. "She never sees no company. Vera, if Mr. Winthrop comes when that bunch is here, I'll show him into the front parlor."

Vera sat down in front of the piano, and let her fingers drop upon the keys. The look of eagerness and anticipation had left her eyes.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, "that I want to see him—now."

With complete misunderstanding, Mannie demanded truculently, "Why not?" His loyalty to Vera gave him courage, in her behalf, to face even a district-attorney. "He doesn't think he's coming here to make trouble for you, does he?"

Vera shook her head, and bending over the piano, struck a few detached chords.

"Oh, no," she said, consciously; "just to see me—professionally—like everybody else."

Mabel could no longer withhold her indignation at the obtuseness of the masculine intellect.

"My gracious, Mannie!" she exclaimed, "can't you understand he's coming here to make a call on Vera—like a gentleman—not like no district-attorney."

Mannie precipitately retreated from his position as champion.

"Sure, I understand," he protested.

With the joy that a match-making mother takes in the hunt, Mabel sank into the plush rocking-chair, and rocking violently, turned upon Vera an eager and excited smile.

"Think of our Vera knowing Mr. Winthrop, socially!" she exclaimed. "It's grand! And they say his sisters are elegant ladies. Last winter I read about them at the opera, and it always printed what they had on. Why didn't you tell me you

known him, Vera?" she cried reproachfully, "I tell *you* everything!"

"I don't know him," protested the girl. "I used to see him when he lived in the same town."

Mabel, inviting further confidences, ceased rocking and nodded encouragingly. "Up in Geneva?" she prompted.

"Yes," said Vera; "I used to see him every afternoon then, when he played ball on the college nine——"

"Who?" demanded Mannie, incredulously.

"Winthrop," said Vera.

"Did he?" exclaimed Mannie. His tone suggested that he might still be persuaded that there was good in the man.

"What'd he play?" he demanded suspiciously.

"First," said Vera.

"Did he!" exclaimed Mannie. His tone now was of open approbation.

Vera had raised her eyes, and turned them toward the windows. Beyond the soot-stained sumach tree, the fire-escapes of the department store, she saw the sun-drenched campus, the buttressed chapel, the ancient, drooping elms; and on a canvas bag, poised like a winged Mercury, a tall straight figure in gray, dusty flannels.

"He was awfully good-looking," murmured the girl, "and awfully tall. He could stop a ball as high as—*that!*" She raised her arm in the air; and then, suddenly conscious, flushed, and turned to the piano.

"Go on, tell us," urged Mabel. "So you first met him in Geneva, did you?"

"No," corrected Vera; "*saw* him there. I—I only *met* him once."

Mannie interrupted hilariously.

"I only saw him once, too," he cried; "that was enough for me."

Vera swiftly spun the piano stool, so that she faced him. Her eyes were filled with concern.

"You, Mannie!" she demanded anxiously. "What had you done?"

"Done!" exclaimed Mannie indignantly; "nothing! What'd you think I'd done? Did you think I was a crook?"

Vera bowed her shoulders, and shivered as though the boy had cursed at her. She shook her head vehemently, and again swung back to the piano. Stumbling awk-

wardly, her fingers ran over the keys in a swift clatter of broken chords. "No," she whispered, "no, Mannie, no."

With a laugh of delighted recollection, Mannie turned to Mabel.

"He raided a pool room I was working at," he explained. "He picked me out as a sheet writer, because I had my coat off, see? I told him I had it off because it was too hot for me, and he says, 'Young man, if you lie to me, I'll make it a damn sight hotter!'" Mannie threw back his head and shouted uproariously. "He's all right, Winthrop!" he declared.

Mabel, having already married Winthrop to Vera in Grace Church, with herself in the front pew, in a blue silk dress, received this unexpected evidence of his rare wit with delight. In ecstasy of appreciation she slapped her knees.

"Did he say that, Mannie," she cried. "Wasn't that quick of him! Did you hear what he said to Mannie, Vera?" she demanded.

Their mirth was interrupted by the opening and closing of the front door, and in the hall, the murmur of men's voices.

Vance opened the door from the hall and entered, followed by Judge Gaylor and Rainey. With evident pride in her appearance, Vance introduced the two men to his wife, and then sent her and Mannie from the room; the latter with orders to dismiss the visitors in the front parlor and to admit no others.

At the door, Mrs. Vance turned to Vera and nodded mysteriously.

"If that party calls," she said with significance, "I'll put him in the front parlor." With a look of dismay, Vera vehemently shook her head, but to forestall any opposition, Mrs. Vance hastily slammed the door behind her.

In his most courteous manner Judge Gaylor offered the chair at the head of the centre table to Vera, and at the same table seated himself. Vance took a place on the piano stool; Rainey stood with his back to the mantel-piece.

"Miss Vera," Gaylor began, impressively, "I desire to apologize for my language this morning. As Rainey no doubt has told you, I have opposed you and Professor Vance. But I—I know when I'm beaten. Your influence with Mr. Hallowell to-day—is greater than mine. It is



paramount. I congratulate you." He smiled ingratiatingly. "And now," he added, "we are all working in unison."

"You've given up your idea of sending me to jail," said Vera.

"Vera!" exclaimed Vance reprovingly. "Judge Gaylor has apologized. We're all in harmony now."

"Is that door locked?" asked Gaylor. Vance told him, save Mrs. Vance, Mannie and themselves, there was none in the house; and that he might speak freely.

"Miss Vera," began the Judge, "we left Mr. Hallowell very much impressed with the message you gave him this morning. The message from his dead sister. He wants another message from her. He wants her to decide how he shall dispose of a very large sum of money—his entire fortune."

"His entire fortune!" exclaimed Vera. "Do you imagine," she asked, "that Mr. Hallowell will take advice from the spirit world about *that*? I don't!"

"I do," Gaylor answered stoutly; "I know *I* would."

"You?" asked Vera incredulously.

"If I could believe my sister came from the dead to tell me what to do," said the lawyer, "of course, I'd do it. I'd be afraid not to. But I don't believe. *He* does. And he believes you can bring his sister herself before him. He insists that to-night you hold a séance in his house, and that you materialize the spirit of his dead sister. So that he can see his sister, and talk with his sister. Vance says you can do that. Can you?"

From Vera's face the look of girlishness, of happy anticipation had already disappeared.

"It is my business to do that," the girl answered. She turned to Vance, and in a matter-of-fact voice enquired, "What does his sister look like—that photograph we used this morning?"

"No," Vance answered. "I've a better one, Rainey gave me. Taken when she was older. Has white hair and a cap and a kerchief crossed—so." He drew his hands across his shoulders. "Rainey, show Miss Vera that picture."

"Not now," Gaylor commanded. "The important thing *now* is that Miss Vera understands the message Mr. Hallowell is to receive from his sister."

The two other men nodded quickly in assent. Gaylor turned to Vera. He spoke slowly, earnestly.

"Miss Vera," he said, "Mr. Hallowell's present will leaves his fortune to his niece. He has made *another* will, which he has not signed, leaving his fortune to the Hallowell Institute. He will ask his sister, to *which* of these he should leave his money. You will tell him—" he corrected himself instantly, "she will tell him to give it where it will be of the greatest good to the most people—to the Institute." There was a pause. "Do you understand?" he asked.

"To the Institute. Not to the niece," Vera answered. Gaylor nodded gravely.

"What," asked Vera, "are the fewest words in which that message could be delivered? I mean—should she say, 'You are to endow the Hallowell Institute,' or 'Brother, you are to give—' 'Sign the new will'?" With satisfaction the girl gave a sharp shake of her head, and nodded to Vance. "'Destroy the old will. Sign the new will.' That is the best," she said.

"That's it exactly," Gaylor exclaimed eagerly, "that's excellent!" Then his face clouded. "I think," he said, in a troubled voice, "we should warn Miss Vera, that to guard himself from any trickery, Mr. Hallowell insists on subjecting her to the most severe tests, he——"

"That will be all right," said the girl. She turned to Vance, and, in a lower tone, but without interest, asked, "What, for instance?" Vance merely laughed and shrugged his shoulders. The girl smiled. Nettled, and alarmed at what appeared to be their over-confidence, Gaylor objected warmly.

"That's all very well," he cried, "but 'for instance,' he insists that the entire time you are in the cabinet, you hold a handful of flour in one hand, and of shot in the other—" He illustrated with clenched fists—"Which makes it impossible," he protested, "for you to use your hands."

The face of the girl showed complete indifference.

"Not necessarily," she said.

"But you are to be tied hand and foot," cried the Judge. "And on top of that," he burst forth indignantly, pointing aggrievedly at Vance, "he himself, proposed this flour-and-shot test. It was silly, senseless bravado!"

"Not necessarily," repeated the girl. "He knew that I invented it." Rainey laughed. Gaylor gave an exclamation of enlightenment.

"If it will be of any comfort to you, Judge," said Vance, "I'll tell you one thing; every test that ever was put to a medium—was invented by a medium."

Vera rose. "If there is nothing more," she said, "I will go and get the things ready for this evening." "Destroy the old will. Sign the new will," she repeated. She turned suddenly to Vance, her brow drawn in consideration. "I suppose by this new will," she asked, "the girl gets nothing?"

"Not at all!" exclaimed Gaylor, emphatically. "We don't want her to *fight* the will. She gets a million."

"A million dollars?" demanded Vera. For an instant as though trying to grasp the possibilities of such a sum, she stood staring ahead of her. With doubt in her eyes, and shaking her head, she turned to Vance:

"How can one woman spend a million dollars?" she protested.

"Well, you see, we don't intend to starve her," exclaimed Gaylor eagerly, "and at the same time, the Institute will be benefiting all humanity. Doing good to——"

Vera interrupted him with a sharp, peremptory movement of the hand.

"We won't go into that, please," she begged.

The Judge inclined his head. "I only meant to point out," he said stiffly, "that you are giving Mr. Hallowell the best advice, and doing great good."

For a moment, the girl looked at him steadily. On her lips was a faint smile of disdain, but whether for him or for herself, the Judge could not determine.

"I don't know that," the girl said finally. "I don't ask." She turned to Rainey. "Have you that photograph?" He gave her a photograph and after, for an instant, studying it in silence, she returned it to him.

"It will be quite easy," she said to Vance. She walked to the door, and instinctively the two men, who were seated, rose.

"I will see you to-night at Mr. Hallowell's," she said, and, with a nod, left them.

"Well," exclaimed Rainey, "you didn't tell her!"

"I know," Vance answered. "I decided we'd be wiser to take advice from my wife. She understands Vera better than I do." He opened the door to the hall, and called, "Mannie! tell Mabel—oh, Mabel," he corrected, "come here a minute." He returned to his seat on the piano stool. "She can tell us," he said.

In expectation of the arrival of Winthrop, Mrs. Vance had arrayed herself in a light-blue frock, and as though she had just come in from the street, in such a hat as she considered would do credit not only to Vera, but to herself.

"Mabel," her husband began, "we're up against a hard proposition. Hallowell insists that Winthrop and Miss Coates must come to the séance to-night."

"Winthrop and Miss Coates!" cried Mabel. In astonishment she glanced from her husband to Rainey and Gaylor. "Then, it's all off!" she exclaimed.

"That's what I say," growled Rainey.

"We want you to tell us," continued Vance, unmoved, "whether Vera should know that now, or wait until to-night?"

"Paul Vance!" almost shrieked his wife, "Do you mean to tell me you're thinking of giving a materialization in front of the district-attorney! You're crazy!"

"That's what I tell them," chorused Rainey.

Gaylor raised his hand for silence.

"No, Mrs. Vance," he said wearily. "We are not crazy, but," he added, bitterly, "we can't help ourselves. You mediums have got Mr. Hallowell in such a state that he'll only do what his sister's spirit tells him. He says, if he's robbing his niece, his sister will tell him so; if he's to give the money to the Institute, his sister will tell him that. He says, if Vance is fair and above-board, he shouldn't be afraid to have his niece and any friends of hers present. We can't help ourselves."

"I helped a little," said Vance, "by insisting on having our own friends there—told him the spirit could not materialize unless there were believers present."

"Did he stand for that?" asked Mabel.

"Glad to have them," her husband assured her. "They like to think there are others as foolish as they are. And I'm going to place Mr. District-Attorney," he broke out suddenly and fiercely, "between two mediums. They'll hold his hands!"

Already frightened by the possible results of the plot, Rainey with a vehemence born of fear, retorted sharply: "Hold his hands! How're you going to make him hold his tongue, afterward?"

Gaylor turned upon him savagely.

"My God, man!" he cried, "we're not trying to persuade the district-attorney that he's seen a ghost. If your friends can persuade Stephen Hollowell that *he's* seen one, the district-attorney can go to the devil!"

"Well, he won't!" returned Rainey; "he'll go to law!"

"Let him!" cried Gaylor defiantly. "Get Hollowell to sign that will, and I'll go into court with him."

His bravado was suddenly attacked from an unexpected source.

"You'll go into court with him, all right," declared Mrs. Vance, "all of you! And if you don't want him to catch you," she cried, "you'll clear out, now! He's coming here any minute."

"Who's coming here?" demanded her husband.

"Winthrop," returned his wife, "to see Vera."

"To see Vera!" cried Vance, eagerly.

"What about? About this morning?"

"No," protested Mabel, "to call on her. He's an old friend——"

In alarm Rainey pushed into the group of now thoroughly excited people. "Don't you believe it!" he cried. "If he's coming here, he's coming to give her the third degree——"

The door from the hall suddenly opened, was as suddenly closed, and Mannie slipped into the room. One hand he held up for silence; with the other he pointed at the folding doors.

"Hush!" he warned them. "He's in there! He says, he's come to call on Vera. She says, he's come professionally, and I must bring him in here. I've shut the door into the parlor, and you can slip upstairs, without his seeing you."

"Upstairs!" gasped Rainey, "not for me!" He appealed to Gaylor in accents of real alarm. "We must get away from this house," he declared. "If he finds *us* here——" with a gesture of dismay he tossed his hands in the air. Gaylor nodded. In silence, all, save Mannie, moved into the hall, and halted between the outer and inner doors of the vestibule. Gaylor

turned to Vance. "Are you going to tell her," he asked, "that he is to be there to-night?"

"He'll tell her himself, now!"

"No," corrected Rainey; "he doesn't know yet there's to be a séance. Hollowell was writing the note when he left."

"Then," instructed Gaylor, "do not let her know until she arrives, until it will be too late for her to back out."

Vance nodded, and waiting until, from the back room he heard the voices of Mannie and Winthrop, he opened the front door and the two men ran down the steps into the street.

While the conspirators were hidden in the vestibule, Mannie had opened the folding doors, and invited Winthrop to enter the reception parlor.

"Miss Vera will be down in a minute," he said. "If you want your hand read," he added, pointing, "you sit over there."

As Winthrop approached the centre table, Mannie backed against the piano. The presence of the district-attorney at such short range, aroused in him many emotions. Alternately he was torn with alarm, with admiration, with curiosity. He regarded him apprehensively with a nervous and unhappy smile.

About the smile there was something that Winthrop found familiar, and, with one almost as attractive, he answered it.

"I think we've met before, haven't we?" he asked pleasantly.

Mannie nodded. "Yes, sir," he answered promptly. "At Sam Hepner's old place, on West Forty-fourth Street."

"Why, of course!" exclaimed the district-attorney.

"Don't you—don't you remember?" stammered Mannie eagerly. He was deeply concerned lest the distinguished cross-examiner should think, that from him, of his lurid past he could withhold anything. "I had my coat off—and *you* said you'd make it hot for me."

"Did I?" asked Winthrop with an effort at recollection.

"No, you didn't!" Mannie hastened to reassure him. "I mean, you didn't make it hot for me."

Winthrop laughed, and seated himself comfortably beside the centre table. "Well I'm glad of that," he said. "So our relations are still pleasant, then?" he asked.





*Drawn by Frederic Dorr Steele.*

"I will not," she rebelled. "I hate it!"—Page 535.

"Sure!" exclaimed Mannie heartily. "I mean—yes, sir."

Winthrop mechanically reached for his cigarette case, and then, recollecting, withdrew his hand.

"And how are the ponies running?" he asked.

The interview was filling Mannie with excitement and delight. He chuckled with pleasure. His fear of the great man was rapidly departing. Could this, he asked himself, be the "terror to evil-doers," the man whose cruel questions drove witnesses to tears, whose "third degree," sent veterans of the under-world staggering from his confessional box, limp and gasping?

"Oh, pretty well," said the boy; "seems as if I couldn't keep away from them. I got a good thing for to-day—Pompadour—in the fifth. I put all the money on her I could get together," he announced importantly, and then added frankly, with a laugh, "two dollars!" The laugh was contagious, and the district-attorney laughed with him.

"Pompadour," Winthrop objected, "she's one of those winter-track favorites."

"I know, but to-day," declared Mannie, "she win, sure!" Carried away by his enthusiasm, and by the sympathy of his audience, he rushed, unheeding, to his fate. "If you'd like to put a little on," he said, "I can tell you where you can do it."

The district-attorney stared and laughed. "You mustn't tell *me* where you can do it," he said.

Mannie gave a terrified gasp, and, for an instant, clapped his hands over his lips. "That's right," he cried. "Gee, that's right! I'm such a crank on all kinds of sport, that I clean forgot!"

He gazed at the much-dreaded district-attorney with the awe of the new-born hero-worshipper. "I guess you are, too, hey?" he protested admiringly. "Vera was telling me you used to be a great ball tosser."

In the face of the district-attorney there came a sudden interest. His eyes lightened.

"How did she——"

"She used to watch you in Geneva," said Mannie; "playing with the college lads. I—I" he added consciously, "was a ball player myself once. Used to pitch for the Interstate League." He stopped abruptly.

"Interstate?" said Winthrop encouragingly. "You must have been good."

The enthusiasm had departed from the face of the boy. "Yes," he said, "but—" he smiled shame-facedly, "but I got taking coke, and they—" he finished with a dramatic gesture of the hand as of a man tossing away a cigarette.

"Cocaine?" said the district-attorney.

The boy nodded; and for an instant, the two men eyed each other, the boy smiling ruefully. The district-attorney shook his head. "My young friend," he said, "you can never beat *that* game!"

Mannie stared at him, his eyes filled with surprise.

"Don't you suppose," he said, simply, "that I know that better than you do?" With a boy's pride in his own incorrigibility he went on, boastfully; "Oh, yes," he said, "I used to be awful bad! Cocaine and all kinds of dope, and cigarettes, and whiskey—I was nearly all in—with morphine, it was then—till she took hold of me, and stopped me."

"She?" said Winthrop.

"Vera," said Mannie. "*She* made me stop. I *had* to stop. She started taking it herself."

"What!" cried Winthrop.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mannie, hastily, "I don't mean what you mean—I mean she started taking it to make *me* stop. She says to me, 'Mannie, you're killing yourself, and you got to quit it; and if you don't, every time you take a grain, I'll take two.' And she did! I'd come home, and she'd see what I'd been doing, and she'd up with her sleeves, and—" In horrible pantomime, the boy lifted the cuff of his shirt, and pressed his right thumb against the wrist of his other arm. At the memory of it, he gave a shiver, and with a blow, roughly struck the cuff into place. "God!" he muttered. "I couldn't stand it. I begged, and begged her not. I cried. I used to get down, in this room, on my knees. And each time she'd get whiter, and black under the eyes. And—and I *had* to stop. Didn't I?"

Winthrop moved his head.

"And now," cried the boy with a happy laugh, "I'm all right!" He appealed to the older man eagerly, wistfully. "Don't you think I'm looking better than I did that last time you saw me?"





*Drawn by Frederic Dorr Steele.*

Suddenly they saw each other with a new and wonderful sympathy.—Page 548.

Again, without venturing to speak, Winthrop nodded.

Mannie smiled with pride. "Everybody tells me so," he said. "Well, *she* did it. That's what she did for me. And, I can tell you," he said simply, sincerely, "there ain't anything I wouldn't do for her. I guess that's right, hey?" he added.

The eyes of the cruel cross-examiner, veiled under half-closed lids, were regarding the boy with so curious an expression that under their scrutiny, Mannie in embarrassment, moved uneasily. "I guess that's right," he repeated.

To his surprise, the district-attorney rose from his comfortable position and, leaning across the table, held out his hand. Mannie took it awkwardly.

"That's all right," he said.

"Sure, it's all right," said the district-attorney.

From the hall there was the sound of light, quick steps; and Mannie, happy to escape from a situation he did not understand, ran to the door.

"She's coming," he said. He opened the door, and as Vera entered, he slipped past her and closed it behind him.

Vera walked directly to the chair at the top of the centre table. She was nervous, and she was conscious that that fact was evident. To avoid shaking hands with her visitor, she carried her own clasped in front of her, with the fingers interlaced. She tried to speak in her usual suave, professional tone. "How do you do," she said.

But Winthrop would not be denied. With a smile that showed his pleasure at again seeing her, he advanced eagerly, with his hand outstretched. "How are *you*?" he exclaimed. "Aren't you going to shake hands with me?" he demanded. "With an old friend?"

Vera gave him her hand quickly, and then, seating herself at the table, picked up the ivory pointer.

"I didn't know you were coming as an old friend," she murmured embarrassedly. "You said, you were coming to consult Vera, the medium."

"But *you* said, that was the only way I could come," protested Winthrop. "Don't you remember, you said——"

Vera interrupted him. She spoke dis-

tantly, formally. "What kind of a reading do you want?" she asked. "A hand reading, or a crystal reading?"

Winthrop leaned forward in his chair, frankly smiling at her. He made no attempt to conceal the pleasure the sight of her gave him. His manner was that of a very old and dear friend, who, for the first time, had met her after a separation of years.

"Don't want any kind of a reading," he declared. "I want a talking. You don't seem to understand," he objected, "that I am making an afternoon call." His good-humor was unassailable. Looking up with a perplexed frown, Vera met his eyes and saw that he was laughing at her. She threw the ivory pointer down, and leaning back in her chair, smiled at him.

"I don't believe," she said doubtfully, "that I know much about afternoon calls. What would I do, if we were on Fifth Avenue? Would I give you tea?" she asked, "because," she added hastily, "there isn't any tea."

"In that case, it is not etiquette to offer any," said Winthrop gravely.

"Then," said Vera, "I'm doing it right, so far?"

They both laughed; Vera because she still was in awe of him, and Winthrop because he was happy.

"You're doing it charmingly," Winthrop assured her.

"Good!" exclaimed Vera. "Well, now," she enquired, "now we talk, don't we?"

"Yes," assented Winthrop promptly, "we talk about you."

"No, I—I don't think we do," declared Vera, in haste. "I think we talk about—Geneva." She turned to him with real interest. "Is the town much changed?" she asked.

As though preparing for a long talk, Winthrop dropped his hat to the floor and settled himself comfortably. "Well, it is, and it isn't," he answered. "Haven't you been back lately?" he asked.

Vera looked quickly away from him.

"I have never been back!" she answered. There was a pause and when she again turned her eyes to his, she was smiling. "But I always take the *Geneva Times*," she said, "and I often read that you've been there. You're a great man in Geneva."

Winthrop nodded gravely.

"Whenever I want to be a great man," he said, "I go to Geneva."

"Why, yes," exclaimed Vera. "Last June you delivered the oration to the graduating class," she laughed, "on 'The College Man in Politics.' Such an original subject! And did you point to yourself?" she asked mockingly, "as the—the bright example?"

"No," protested Winthrop, "I knew they'd see that."

Much to her relief, Vera found that of Winthrop she was no longer afraid.

"Oh!" she protested, "didn't you say, 'twelve years ago, a humble boy played ball for Hobart College. That boy now stands before you?' Didn't you say that?"

"Something like that," assented the district-attorney. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "that young man who showed me in here; your confederate, or fellow-conspirator, or look-out man, or whatever he is—told me, you used to be a regular attendant at those games."

"I never missed one!" Vera cried. She leaned forward, her eyes shining, her brows knit with the effort of recollection.

"I used to tell aunt," she said, "I had to drive in for the mail. But that was only an excuse. Aunt had an old buggy, and an old white horse, called Roscoe Conkling. I called him 'Rocks.' He was blind in one eye, and he would walk on the wrong side of the road; you had to drive him on one rein." The girl was speaking rapidly, eagerly. She had lost all fear of her visitor. With satisfaction Winthrop recognized this; and unconsciously he was now frankly regarding the face of the girl with a smile of pleasure and admiration.

"And I used to tie him to the fence just opposite first base," Vera went on, excitedly, "and shout—for you!"

"Don't tell me," interrupted Winthrop, in burlesque excitement, "that you were that very pretty little girl, with short dresses and long legs; who used to sit on the top rail, and kick, and cheer."

Vera shook her head sternly.

"I was," she said; "but *you* never saw me."

"Oh, yes, we did," protested Winthrop. "We used to call you our mascot."

"No; that was some other little girl," said Vera firmly. "You never looked at *me*, and I—" she laughed, and then frowned at him reproachfully; "I thought you were

—magnificent! I used to have your pictures in base-ball clothes pinned all around my looking-glass. And whenever you made a base hit, I'd shout and shout—and you'd never look at me! And one day—" she stopped, and as though appalled by the memory, clasped her hands—"Oh, it was awful!" she exclaimed; "one day a foul ball hit the fence, and I jumped down and threw it to you, and *you* said, 'Thank you, sis!' And I," she cried, "thought I was a young lady!"

"Oh! I couldn't have said that," protested Winthrop, "maybe I said, 'sister.'"

"No," declared Vera energetically shaking her head, "not 'sister,' 'sis.' And you never *did* look at me; and I used to drive past your house every day. We lived only a mile below you."

"Where?" asked Winthrop.

"On the lake road from Syracuse," said Vera. "Don't you remember the farm a mile below yours—the one with the red barn right on the road? Yes, you do," she insisted, "the cows were always looking over the fence right into the road."

"Of course!" exclaimed Winthrop delightedly. "Was that your house?"

"Oh, no," protested Vera; "ours was the little cottage on the other side——"

"With poplars round it?" demanded Winthrop.

"That's it!" cried Vera triumphantly; "With poplars round it."

"Why, I know that house well. We boys used to call it the haunted house."

"That's the one," assented Vera. She smiled with satisfaction. "Well, that's where I lived until aunt died," she said.

"And then, what?" asked Winthrop.

For a moment the girl did not answer. Her face had grown grave and she sat motionless, staring beyond her. Suddenly, as though casting her thoughts from her, she gave a sharp toss of her head.

"Then," she said, speaking quickly; "I went into the mills, and was ill there, and I wrote Paul and Mabel to ask if I could join them, and they said I could. But I was too ill, and I had no money—nothing. And, then," she raised her eyes to his and regarded him steadily; "then I stole that cloak to get the money to join them, and you—you helped me to get away, and—and——"

Winthrop broke in hastily. He disre-



garded both her manner and the nature of what she had said.

"And how did you come to know the Vances?" he asked.

After a pause of an instant, the girl accepted the cue his manner gave her, and answered as before.

"Through my aunt," she said. "She was a medium too."

"Of course!" cried Winthrop. "I remember now. *That's* why we called it the haunted house."

"My aunt," said the girl, regarding him steadily and, with, in her manner, a certain defiance, "was a *great* medium. All the spiritualists in that part of the State used to meet at our house. I've witnessed some wonderful manifestations in that front parlor." She turned to Winthrop and smiled. "So, you see," she exclaimed, "I was born and brought up in this business. I am the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. My grandmother was a medium, my mother was a medium—she worked with the Fox sisters before they were exposed. But, my aunt," she added thoughtfully, judicially, "was the greatest medium I have ever seen. She did certain things *I* couldn't understand, and I know every trick in the trade—unless," she explained, "you believe the spirits helped her."

Winthrop was observing the girl intently, with a new interest.

"And you don't believe that?" he asked, quietly.

"How can I?" Vera said. "I was brought up with them." She shook her head and smiled. "I used to play around the kitchen stove with Pocahontas and Alexander the Great, and Martin Luther lived in our china closet. You see, the neighbors wouldn't let their children come to our house—so, the only playmates I had—were ghosts." She laughed wistfully. "My!" she exclaimed, "I was a queer, lonely little rat. I used to hear voices and see visions. I do still," she added. With her elbows on the arms of her chair, she clasped her hands under her chin and leaned forward. She turned her eyes to Winthrop and nodded confidentially.

"Do you know," she said, "sometimes I think people from the other world *do* speak to me."

"But you said," Winthrop objected, "you didn't believe."

"I know," returned Vera. "I can't!" Her voice was perplexed, impatient. "Why, I can sit in this chair," she declared earnestly, "and fill this room with spirit voices and rappings, and you sitting right there can't see how I do it. And yet, in *spite* of all the tricks, sometimes I believe there's something in it."

She looked at Winthrop, her eyes open with inquiry. He shook his head.

"Yes," insisted the girl. "When these women come to me for advice, I don't invent what I say to them. It's as though something told me what to say. I have never met them before, but as soon as I pass into the trance state I seem to know all their troubles. And I seem to be half in this world and half in another world—carrying messages between them. Maybe," her voice had sunk to almost a whisper; she continued as though speaking to herself, "I only *think* that. I don't know. I wonder."

There was a long pause.

"I wish," began Winthrop earnestly, "I wish you were younger, or I were older."

"Why?" asked Vera.

"Because," said the young man, "I'd like to talk to you—like a father."

Vera turned and smiled on him, securely, with frank friendliness. "Go ahead," she assented; "talk to me like a father."

Winthrop smiled back at her, and then frowned. "You shouldn't be in this business," he said.

The girl regarded him steadily.

"What's the matter with the business?" she asked.

Winthrop felt she had put him upon the defensive, but he did not hesitate.

"Well," he said, "there *may* be some truth in it. But we don't know that. We do know that there's a lot of fraud and deceit in it. Now," he declared warmly, "there's nothing deceitful about you. You're fine," he cried enthusiastically, "you're big! That boy who was in here told me one story about you, that showed——"

Vera stopped him sharply.

"What do you know of me?" she asked bitterly. "The first time you ever saw me, I was in a police court; and this morning—you heard that man threaten to put me in jail——"

In turn, by abruptly rising from his chair, Winthrop interrupted her. He pushed the

chair out of his way, and, shoving his hands into his trousers' pockets, began pacing with long, quick strides up and down the room. "What do I care for that!" he cried contemptuously. He tossed the words at her over his shoulder. "I put lots of people in jail myself that are better than I am. Only, they won't play the game." He halted, and turned on her. "Now, you're not playing the game. This is a mean business; taking money from silly girls and old men. You're too good for that." He halted at the table and stood facing her. "I've got two sisters uptown," he said. He spoke commandingly, peremptorily. "And to-morrow I am going to take you to see them. And we fellow-townsmen," he smiled at her appealingly, "will talk this over, and we'll make you come back to your own people."

For a moment the two regarded each other. Then the girl answered firmly but with a slight hoarseness in her voice, and in a tone hardly louder than a whisper:

"You know I can't do that!"

"I don't!" blustered Winthrop. "Why not?"

"Because," said the girl steadily, "of what I did in Geneva."

As though the answer was the one he had feared, the man exclaimed sharply, rebelliously.

"Nonsense!" he cried. "You didn't know what you were doing. No decent person would consider that."

"They do," said the girl, "they are the very ones who do. And—it's been in the papers. Everybody in Geneva knows it. And here too. And whenever I try to get away from this—" she stretched out her hands to include the room about her—"some one tells! Five times, now." She leaned forward appealingly, not as though asking pity for herself, but as wishing him to see her point of view. "I didn't choose this business," she protested, "I was sort of born in it, and," she broke out, loyally, "I hate to have you call it a mean business; but I can't get into any other. Whenever I have, some man says, 'That girl in your front office is a thief.' The restraint she put upon herself, the air of disdain which at all times she had found the most convenient defence, fell from her.

"It's not fair!" she cried; "it's not fair." To her mortification, the tears of self-pity

sprang to her eyes, and as she fiercely tried to brush them away, to her greater anger, continued to creep down her cheeks. "It was nine years ago," she protested; "I was a child. I've been punished enough." She raised her face frankly to his, speaking swiftly, bitterly.

"Of course, I want to get away!" she cried. "Of course, I want friends. I've never had a friend. I've *always* been alone. I'm tired, tired! I hate this business. I never know how much I hate it until the chance comes to get away—and I can't."

She stopped, but without lowering her head or moving her eyes from his.

"This time," said the man quietly, "you're going to get away from it."

"I can't," repeated the girl. "You can't help me!"

Winthrop smiled at her confidently.

"I'm going to try," he said.

"No, please!" begged the girl. Her voice was still shaken with tears. She motioned with her head toward the room behind her.

"These are my people," she declared defiantly, as though daring him to contradict her. "And they are good people! They've tried to be good friends to me; and they've been true to me."

Winthrop came toward her and stood beside her; so close that he could have placed his hand upon her shoulder. He wondered, whimsically, if she knew how cruel she seemed in appealing with her tears, her helplessness and loveliness to what was generous and chivalric in him; and, at the same time, by her words, treating him as an interloper and an enemy.

"That's all right," he said gently. "But that doesn't prevent my being a good friend to you, too, does it? Or," he added, his voice growing tense and conscious—"my being true to you? My sisters will be here to-morrow," he announced briskly.

Vera had wearily dropped her arms upon the table and lowered her head upon them. From a place down in the depths, she murmured a protest.

"No," contradicted Winthrop cheerfully, "this time you are going to win. You'll have back of you, if I do say it, two of the best women God ever made. Only, now, you must do as I say." There was a pause. "Will you?" he begged.

Vera raised her head slowly, holding her hand across her eyes. There was a longer silence, and then she looked up at him and smiled, pathetically, gratefully, and nodded.

"Good!" cried Winthrop. "No more spooks," he laughed, "no more spirit rappings."

Through her tears Vera smiled up at him a wan, broken smile. She gave a shudder of distaste. "Never!" she whispered, "I promise." Their eyes met; the girl's looking into his shyly, gratefully; the man's searching hers eagerly. And suddenly they saw each other with a new and wonderful sympathy and understanding. Winthrop felt himself bending toward her. He was conscious that the room had grown dark, and that he could see only her eyes. "You must be just yourself," he commanded, but so gently, so tenderly, that, though he did not know it, each word carried with it the touch of a caress, "just your sweet, fine, noble self!"

Something he read in the girl's uplifted eyes made him draw back with a shock of wonder, of delight, with an upbraiding conscience. To pull himself together, he glanced quickly about him. The day had really grown dark. He felt a sudden desire to get away; to go where he could ask himself what had happened, what it was that had filled this unknown, tawdry room with beauty, and given it the happiness of a home.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed nervously, "I had no idea I'd stayed so long. You'll not let me come again. Good-by—until tomorrow." He turned, holding out his hand and found that again the girl had dropped her face upon her arm, and was sobbing quietly, gently.

"Oh, what is it?" cried Winthrop. "What have I said?" The catch in the girl's voice as she tried to check the sobs, wrenched his heart. "Oh, please," he begged; "I've said something wrong? I've hurt you?" With her face still hidden in her arms, the girl shook her head.

"No, no!" she sobbed. Her voice, soft with tears, was a melody of sweet and tender tones. "It's only—that I've been so lonely—and you've made me happy, happy!"

The sobs broke out afresh, but Winthrop, now knowing that they brought to the girl peace, was no longer filled with dismay.

Her head was bent upon her left arm, her right hand lightly clasped the edge of the table. With the intention of saying farewell, Winthrop took her hand in his. The girl did not move. To his presence she seemed utterly oblivious. In the gathering dusk, he could see the bent figure, could hear the soft, irregular breathing as the girl wept gently, happily; like a child sobbing itself to sleep. The hand he held in his, neither repelled nor invited, and for an instant he stood motionless, holding it uncertainly. It was so delicate, so helpless, so appealing, so altogether lovable. It seemed to reach up, and, with warm, clinging fingers, clutch the tendrils of his heart.

Winthrop bent his head suddenly, and lifting the hand, kissed it; and then, without again speaking, walked quickly into the hall and shut the door. In the room the dusk deepened. Through the open windows came the roar of the Sixth Avenue Elevated, the insistent clamor of an electric hansom, the murmur of Broadway at night. The tears had suddenly ceased, but the girl had not moved. At last, slowly, stiffly, she raised her head. Her eyes, filled with wonder, with amazement, were fixed upon her hand. She glanced cautiously about her. Assured she was alone, with her other hand she lifted the one Winthrop had kissed and held it pressed against her lips.

The folding doors were thrown open, letting in a flood of light, and Mabel Vance entering swiftly, knelt at the table and bent her head close to Vera.

"That woman's in the hall," she whispered, "that niece of Hallowell's. Paul and Mannie can't get rid of her. Now, she's got hold of Winthrop. She says she *will* see you. Be careful!"

Vera rose. That Mabel might not see she had been weeping, she walked to the piano, covertly drying her eyes.

"What," she asked dully, "does she want with me?"

"About to-night," answered Mabel. She exclaimed fiercely, "I told them there'd be trouble!"

With Vance upon her heels, Helen Coates came in quickly from the hall. Her face was flushed, her eyes lit with indignation and excitement. In her hand she held an open letter.

As though to protect Vera, both Vance and his wife moved between her and their

visitor, but, disregarding them, Miss Coates at once singled out the girl as her opponent.

"You are the young woman they call Vera, I believe," she said. "I have a note here from Mr. Hollowell telling me you are giving a séance to-night at his house. That you propose to exhibit the spirit of my mother. That is an insult to the memory of my mother, and to me. And I warn you, if you attempt such a thing, I will prevent it."

There was a pause. When Vera spoke it was in the tone of every-day politeness. Her voice was even and steady.

"You have been misinformed," she said. "There will be no séance to-night."

Vance turned to Vera, and, in a voice lower than her own, but sufficiently loud to include Miss Coates, said: "I don't think we told you that Mr. Hollowell himself insists that this lady and her friends be present."

"Her presence makes no difference," said Vera quietly. "There will be no séance to-night. I will tell you about it later, Paul," she added. She started toward the door, but Miss Coates moved as though to intercept her.

"If you think," she cried eagerly, "you can give a séance for Mr. Hollowell without my knowing it, you are mistaken."

Vera paused, and made a slight inclination of her head.

"That was not my idea," she said. She looked appealingly to Vance. "Is that not enough, Paul?" she asked.

"Quite enough!" exclaimed the man. He turned to the visitor and made a curt movement of the hand toward the open door.

"There *will* be a séance to-night," he declared. "At Mr. Hollowell's. If you wish to protest against it, you can do so there. This is my house. If you have finished—" He repeated the gesture toward the open door.

"I have not finished," said Miss Coates sharply; "and if you take my advice, you will follow *her* example." With a nod of the head she signified Vera. "When she sees she's in danger, she knows enough to stop. This is not a question of a few medium's tricks," she cried, contemptuously. "I know *all* that you planned to do, and I intend that to-morrow every one in New York shall know it too."

Like a cloak Vera's self-possession fell from her. In alarm she moved forward.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I have had you people followed pretty closely," said Miss Coates. Her tone was assured. She was confident that of those before her, she was the master, and that of that fact they were aware.

"I know," she went on, "just how you tried to impose upon my uncle—how you tried to rob *me*, and to-night I have invited the reporters to my house to give them the facts."

With a cry Vera ran to her.

"No!" she begged, "you won't do that. You must not do that!"

"Let her talk!" growled Vance. "Let her talk! She's funny."

"No!" commanded Vera. Her voice rang with the distress. "She cannot do that!" She turned to Miss Coates. "We haven't hurt you," she pleaded; "we haven't taken your money. I promise you," she cried, "we will never see Mr. Hollowell again. I beg of you—"

Vance indignantly caught her by the arm and drew her back. "You don't beg nothing of her!" he cried.

"I do," Vera answered wildly. She caught Vance's hand in both of hers. "I have a chance, Paul," she entreated; "don't force me through it again. I can't stand the shame of it again." Once more she appealed to the visitor. "Don't!" she begged. "Don't shame me."

But the eyes of the older girl, blind to everything save what, as she saw it, was her duty, showed no consideration.

Vera's hands, trembling on his arm, drove Vance to deeper anger. He turned savagely upon Miss Coates.

"You haven't lost anything, yet, have you?" he demanded. "She hasn't hurt you, has she? If it's revenge you want," he cried insolently, "why don't you throw vitriol on the girl?"

"Revenge!" exclaimed Miss Coates indignantly. "It is my duty. My public duty. I'm not alone in this; I am acting with the district-attorney. It is our duty." She turned suddenly and called, "Mr. Winthrop, Mr. Winthrop!"

For the first time Vera saw, under the gas jet, at the farther end of the hall, the figures of Mannie and Winthrop.

"No, no!" she protested; "I beg of you,"

she cried, hysterically; "I've got a chance. If you print this thing to-morrow, I'll never have a chance again. Don't take it away from me." Impulsively her arms reached out in an eager, final appeal. "I'm down," she said simply, "give me a chance to get up."

When Miss Coates came to give battle to the Vances, she foresaw the interview might be unpleasant. It was proving even more unpleasant than she had expected, but her duty seemed none the less obvious.

"You should have thought of that," she said, "before you were found out."

For an instant Vera stood motionless, staring, unconsciously holding the attitude of appeal. But when, by these last words, she recognized that her humiliation could go no further, with an inarticulate exclamation she turned away.

"The public has the right to know," declared Miss Coates, "the sort of people you are. I have the record of each of you——"

From the hall Winthrop had entered quickly, but, disregarding him, Vance broke in upon the speaker, savagely, defiantly.

"Print 'em, then!" he shouted; "Print 'em!"

"I mean to," declared Miss Coates; "yours, and hers, she——"

Winthrop placed himself in front of her, shutting her off from the others. He spoke in an earnest whisper:

"Don't!" he begged. "She has asked for a chance. Give her a chance."

Miss Coates scorned to speak in whispers.

"She has had a chance," she protested loudly. "She's had a chance for nine years; and she's *chosen* to be a charlatan and a cheat, and——" The angry woman

hesitated, and then flung the word—"and a thief!"

In the silence that followed no one turned toward Vera; but as it continued unbroken each raised his eyes and looked at her.

They saw her drawn to her full height; the color flown from her face, her deep, brooding eyes, flashing. She was like one, by some religious fervor, lifted out of herself, exalted. When she spoke her voice was low, tense. It vibrated with tremendous, wondering indignation.

"Do you know *who* I am?" she asked. She spoke like one in a trance. Not as though of her own will, but as though repeating words given her to say. "Do you know *who* you are threatening with your police and your laws? I am a priestess! I am a medium between the souls of this world and the next. I am Vera—the Truth! And, I mean——" the girl cried suddenly, harshly, flinging out her arm, "that you shall hear the truth! To-night, I will bring your mother from the grave to speak it to you!"

With a swift, sweeping gesture, she pointed to the door. "Take those people away!" she cried.

The eyes of Winthrop were filled with pity.

"Vera!" he said, "Vera!"

For an instant, against the tenderness and reproach in his voice the girl held herself motionless; and then, falling upon the shoulder of Mrs. Vance, burst into girlish, heart-broken tears.

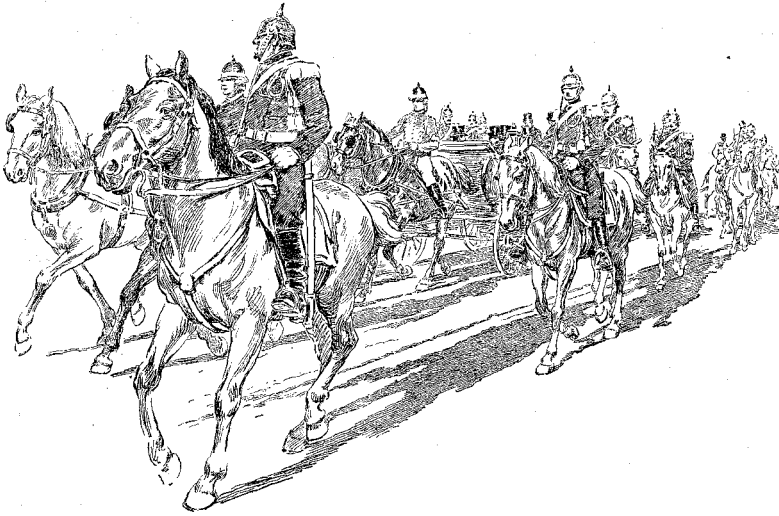
"Take them away," she sobbed; "take them away!"

Mannie Day and Vance closed in upon the visitors, and motioning them before them, drove them from the room.

(To be concluded.)







Guard around Mr. Root on the way to the races, Buenos Aires.

## THE CITY OF GOOD AIRS

BEING IMPRESSIONS OF BUENOS AIRES

By Arthur Ruhl

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY W. J. AYLWARD, VERNON HOWE BAILEY AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



A mounted policeman.

AS we were walking home one night along the Alameda in Santiago, I suggested to the young English engineer, whom I had just met at dinner, that after his six months in the mines it must seem good to get back to town again. He agreed that it did, but added that after all there wasn't much in Santiago for a man like him. He had been buried in a wilderness of snow and rocks, without even a Spanish newspaper to give him a whisper from the world, and he came down from the mountains with emotions not unlike those of a ravening wolf who suddenly finds himself approaching a well-nourished lamb-chop. And he heaved a great sigh and asked if I knew Buenos Aires.

"Buenos Aires!" he repeated, in that fond enthusiasm which overtakes men who have dined pleasantly and are walking home under the stars together, and as this seemed the proper time for that banality, I said that I supposed that it was the Paris of South America.

"Paris!" he cried, "Why, man! There's more life in a minute in Buenos Aires than—why, you talk about Paris—Buenos Aires is Paris given a kick and told to wake up, that's what Buenos Aires is!"

He meant, I suppose, not that Buenos Aires is the second Latin city in the world; not its schools and hospitals and well-kept streets, its convenient trolley-lines and excellent newspapers; not the wheat and cattle that pour thence from the Argentine *pampa* to help feed the European cities—but that it supplied with particular effectiveness the needs of a voracious young Saxon who had been spending six hard months in the frozen Andes, trying to keep a lot of