Opera Hat

LONGFELLOW DEEDS was not only the most distinguished, but the sole, literary personage in Mandrake Falls. During the period preceding his entry into that village his mother had read *Evangeline* from cover to cover, and had imbibed a reverence for poets and poetry which had a decisive effect upon the life of the new baby.

Mr. Deeds, naturally, wished his son to grow up in the traditions of the wool, hides, and fertilizer business; but Mrs. Deeds so persistently labored at his plastic years that little Longfellow came to abhor a sheep, and, as for hides and fertilizer, the very contemplation of them, much less actual contact, made him positively ill.

Almost at once Mrs. Deeds made it known to the neighbors that her son was destined to write poetry. At a very early age she equipped him with pencils and paper, and it was her amiable and hopeful custom to address him in rhyme, so that his little ears might grow accustomed to that curious and dangerous attribute of words which one notes in the similarity in the sound of *love* and *dove*.

For instance, in the morning she would say to him:

"Darling, clean your little teeth
Up-above and underneath."

So, at an astonishingly tender age, having thus been subjected to temptations which no child can well withstand, he was already acquainted with the charming and habit-forming noise which results from the rhyming of *ring* with *spring*, or *dear* with *drear*. It is true he did not become aware of iambic pentameter, or dactyls, or triolets, or sonnets, or the intricacies of mathematical versification, because Mrs. Deeds herself was happily ignorant of the existence of such things. Indeed, until his career as a poet came to its termination, Longfellow was quite hazy as to these unimportant details. Whatever his verses lacked in unimpeded gait they made up in sentiment and apt rhyme.

Also, he grew to have a certain comprehension of poetic license and to understand that everything did not mean exactly what it said. His mother would say to him:

"Son, run down to the grocery store

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE HOWE

Madame Pomponi bristled, but before she could continue Longfellow stopped her: "Even ladies ought to have good manners, and yours are awful bad"

By Clarence Budington Kelland

and get me a pound of sugar or more."

After a couple of tries he came to perceive that what was wanted was an actual, specific pound of sugar, and the "or more" was added for the purpose of enhancing the command, of embellishing it, of elevating it to the realm of literature.

THIS condition of affairs also modified the life of Mr. Deeds, who discovered, to his dismay, that rhyming is as contagious as the mumps. The night when he found himself doing it is historic in the Deeds family, for it marked the commencement of Mr. Deeds's erudition.

It seems that Mr. Deeds was reading the personals in the Mandrake Falls weekly paper at a moment when Longfellow was expressing himself—as the childish pastime of making yourself a nuisance has come to be called by people too lazy to spank. The little future poet was uttering a series of noises in a loud voice. He was shouting, "Mum, dum, gum, sum, bum, lum, fum, hum," and so on, until Mr. Deeds quite lost track of the doings of his neighbors and felt a spasm coming on. He laid down his paper quietly, arose to his full height of five feet and four inches, and said in an impressive and determined voice:

"Just cut up one more noisy trick
And the seat of your pants'll get a lick."

Almost instantaneously realization came; he knew what he had done!

"By darn!" he exclaimed, stunned. "If you ain't got me doin' it, too!"

With that he walked out of the room, seized Volume One of an encyclopedia, thrust it under his arm, marched upstairs to his bedroom, and commenced to read at A. He found, to his intelligent interest, that this letter has stood at the head of the alphabet during the whole period that it can be traced historically—and so embarked upon that career which only terminated with his death, twelve years later. At which time he had continuously and in order read through all the volumes to that point in Number 21, or Sord to Text, which treats of The Origin of the Mishnah.

He read slowly, spending his evenings alone, and safe from the influence of rhyming, until he knew everything from A to Sord, and practically nothing from Tal to the end of the alphabet.

LONGFELLOW'S education manifested peculiarities. The multiplication table, for instance, presented oddities. He could remember that six times six are thirty-six because of its sound. But eight times eight are sixty-four simply refused to linger in his memory. Nevertheless, he managed to pass through the

local grammar and high schools, when, urged by Mrs. Deeds, he took up seriously the profession of a poet.

So ambitiously and diligently did he pursue this profession that, at the age of twenty-five (being by this time an orphan) he wrote, if not practically all, at least a considerable portion of the poetry of America. Not only wrote but had it printed and was paid for it. This poetry did not appear in bound volumes, nor in literary magazines. It appeared where it would do some good, where it would add utility to beauty. In short, Longfellow Deeds was the most prolific of the poets who write the poems which appear on fancy post cards, greeting cards, Christmas cards, birthday cards, and the like. And, at the moment of the Great Change, he was in negotiation with Universal Telegraph upon the subject of supplying an exhaustive set of verses, covering every human emotion and emergency which could be wired economically, as follows:

Miss Jane Boody,
Poots' Corners, Iowa.
Poem Number Sixty-seven.
LUTHER JENKS

Whereupon, to Miss Boody's address would be delivered quite lengthy and very telling verses upon the horrors of separation and the sweet joys of reunion, with incidental tributes to the receiver's beauties of person, heart, and mind.

POETRY was not the sole esthetic preoccupation of Longfellow Deeds; he was also musical. Every so often a brass band would be organized in Mandrake Falls, and in these Longfellow played the tuba. He had not chosen the tuba deliberately; he had not carefully considered the various instruments which may be played in a band, and then selected that one which offered the greatest charms. Quite the contrary: He was a tuba player by inheritance. His grandfather had been a master of that instrument, and it remained in the Deeds attic as a major asset of Grandfather's estate when the old gentleman was translated to that realm where harps are played almost exclusively.

So, from the time he was sixteen, Longfellow had contributed to local music the oom-pahs which are really the keystone of the arch of any brass band. He played his instrument seriously and diligently, and was able to read in the bass clef if he were given sufficient time for private practice. He was not one of those persons who could pick up a sheet of music and play it right off at sight, but rather one of those who must experiment to discover which notes are eccentrically affected by sharps or flats.

Now, while it is true that Longfellow's cosmos had rhymes sticking out all over it as a hedgehog has quills, he was otherwise a pretty normal fellow. He learned to play a fair game of pool behind the cigar store; he was left-fielder for the village nine; and he was a surprisingly good business man for a poet. He earned a very fair living for Mandrake Falls and put his surplus in the savings bank; and while he was shy above the ordinary, and abysmally unsophisticated, he nevertheless made an excellent fist of it in the company of young women. In short, he was a nice boy.

A visitor to Mandrake Falls said to him, "Why don't you go to New York? With your talent you could maybe get a job running a column on a newspaper."

"I don't want to run a column," said Longfellow.

"Well, then, writing songs and having them in shows."

"I don't want to have them in shows," Longfellow said.

"Well, what *do* you want to do?" the visitor asked.

"What I'm doing," said young Mr. Deeds.

"You mean you're contented here?"

"Of course."

So Longfellow, in perfect contentment, was settled down to live a quiet, comfortable, neighborly life in Mandrake Falls, and at the end of it to be buried in the little cemetery alongside the other Deedses. And he would, undoubtedly, have done so had it not been for a motor accident on the road just outside the city of Milan, which is in Italy and a long way off from Mandrake Falls. This tragedy, which abolished old Victor Semple and his son, Robert, reached across the ocean and the mountains, and seized Longfellow by the collar and rudely jerked him out of a world which suited him into a world to which he was by no means suited. And already word to that effect was on the way to his ears.

THE wool, hides, and fertilizer business—despite his distaste for it—continued to prosper drowsily. Longfellow kept a wary eye on its books but allowed old Jim Mason to conduct the affairs of the concern, as he had largely done before the demise of the elder Deeds. Which, of course, gave to the young man ample time for his versification and for his amusements.

Consequently, if you had searched the country over, you would have found no young man more pleased with life, more satisfied with his place in the world, less ambitious for change, than Longfellow. He even liked Mandrake Falls, which was a lovely village, nestling in the hills, populated by people who had time to stop and talk about politics or prices, crops or cargoes, finance or farming. And, curiously, for a young man

who had known no urban experience except a very rare trip to Boston, he had a keen aversion to city life.

As a poet should be, he was sentimental. He looked upon the ladies with a sort of Galahad eye slightly mixed with Dun or Bradstreet, and not altogether unaffected by Jennie Jenkins' Cook Book.

"Why don't you get married? You can afford it." This important question was asked him by his friend, Leander Grant, son of the hardware store's owner.

"L'ander," said Longfellow, "I can't tell you. It don't seem to get me, if you know just what I mean. Not that there aren't some awful fine girls in Mandrake Falls that a fellow ought to be proud to be the husband of. But it just don't seem to get me." He looked sad and somewhat harassed as he made his next statement. "Maybe I'm the kind of a fellow that can't fall in love. Maybe something is left out of me—you know. Maybe I'm just a cold, hard machine."

L'ANDER contemplated the possibility of such a dreadful condition without a clear understanding of its implications, for he was a practical young man.

"Yeah," he said, "but what's that got to do with marrying?"

"You got to have emotion," said Longfellow.

"What for?" asked L'ander. "It can't cook."

"I never saw a girl I'd go out and fight a duel for," Longfellow said regretfully. "I never saw a girl I felt like I would die if she didn't return my love. You know. If you marry a girl you got to live with her, and there she is. I mean you can't turn around in the house without bumping into her. What's the first thing you see when you wake up in the morning? *Her!* What's the last thing you see when you go to sleep at night? *Her!* And if you ain't awful fond of her I'd like to know how you'd like that kind of a state of affairs. You just couldn't abide it."

"Lots of folks do," said L'ander stubbornly. "I guess maybe you're kind of pernickety on account of being a poet."

"That might be it," Longfellow said lugubriously. "Sometimes I get a feeling it's a kind of a burden."

"It pays, don't it?"

"Yes."

"Then it ain't a burden," said L'ander succinctly.

"Victor Semple is dead," said Mr. Cedar. "After exhaustive scrutiny we find you to be his sole heir"

In making clear the character of young Longfellow Deeds it must also be told that his favorite book was *Ivanhoe*, from which he drew the greater part of his ideals—and, if the truth be told, of his ideas of how the world conducted itself. His favorite poem was the *Rubáiyát*. He believed evil of nobody. In fact, his general notion was that evil was something in the plot of a story invented by a fiction writer to give the thing substance. And, even though his profession was poetry, he had never heard of a rhyming dictionary. He got his own rhymes all out of his head.

TO THIS point Longfellow had developed his character, or his character had been developed, as he walked home from the post office on the day of the Great Change, after having mailed a letter to the Universal Telegraph. He walked along under the splendid maples, whistling softly and putting himself in the place of a lovelorn young man who wished to send poem Number 63 to the lady of his heart. He even commenced the composition of that work of art:

"When distance holds us far
apart
You still possess my aching
heart."

That sounded like a good beginning; it held the gist of the matter; it went directly to the root of the situation. Longfellow's poetry was practical as well as emotional.

Longfellow turned in at his own gate, tingling with the delights of creation. He opened the front door, when his pleasant state of mind was invaded by Mrs. Lepper, who had been his (*Continued on page 86*)

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(*Continued from page 15*)

housekeeper ever since his mother's death.

"P-ss-sss-tt!" she said mysteriously.

He halted and stared.

"Strange man in the parlor," she whispered. "Wants to see you."

Probably, thought Longfellow, a representative of the Universal, as he pushed aside the rope portières and entered the formal room of his home—a room gloomy with haircloth and black walnut carved with life-sized bunches of grapes. Little did he realize that he was stepping into another world.

"How do you do?" asked Longfellow, with that courtesy which he felt due the official of a great corporation which might be in the market for assorted poetry.

"Mr. Longfellow Deeds?" asked the visitor.

"Yes, sir. I wrote you—"

The visitor held up a restraining hand. "There are a few questions I must ask you," he said portentously. "May I introduce myself as Lathrop Cedar, senior member of the firm of Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle?"

"Oh!" said Longfellow.

"You actually are the young man named and described as Longfellow Deeds?"

"Yes, sir."

"The identification will have to be substantiated. Your father's name?"

"My father's name was Luther Deeds."

Mr. Cedar nodded with gratification. "And your mother's name?"

"Susan Deeds."

"Did you," asked Mr. Cedar, with the air of a man about to explode a bomb, "ever hear the name of Victor Semple?"

"Why—yes."

"In what connection, young man?" At this point Mr. Cedar was very severe. Here, apparently, was a question that must be answered with circumspection.

"He's a kind of a relative of Ma's," said Longfellow.

"What do you mean by 'a kind of a relative'?"

"I don't know exactly, only Ma used to mention him sometimes and claimed he was a distant kind of an uncle or something."

"Ah, claimed! She claimed relationship with Victor Semple?"

"Like I said."

"Ah. Would you be surprised to hear that Victor Semple is dead?"

"I never thought about him much."

"He is dead," said Mr. Cedar. "His son, Robert, is dead. With consequences to yourself that I can only describe as important."

"Aren't you from the Universal Telegraph Company?" asked Longfellow.

"I am, as I informed you, of the firm of Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle, legal representatives of the late Victor Semple, and present representatives of his intestate estate. I may say that, independently of your answers to my questions, I have become satisfied as to your identity. Which is my reason for being in this place and upon this mission. As I stated, Mr. Victor Semple is dead, his son and direct heir died with him. He was intestate. After exhaustive scrutiny we find you to be his sole living relative, and therefore legal heir to his estate."

"But—but he was rich, wasn't he?" Longfellow propounded this question as if the fact of Semple's richness would be a definite bar to his becoming an heir.

"He was an exceedingly wealthy man—and a highly cultured gentleman," said Mr. Cedar.

"And I get it?" asked Longfellow.

"Without the shadow of a doubt," said Mr. Cedar firmly.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Longfellow.

"CERTAIN legal formalities will have to be complied with," said Mr. Cedar.

"Like probate?" asked Longfellow.

"Of a similar nature," said Mr. Cedar.

"Will I have to have a lawyer?"

"That will be necessary."

"Gosh. I never hired a lawyer."

"Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle have represented your uncle for forty years," suggested Mr. Cedar.

"Yeah, but you never represented me," said Longfellow with some shrewdness. "How do I know you're any good?"

"The firm of Cedar, Cedar—"

"Cedar and McGonigle—yes," said Longfellow.

"—are of a certain prominence in New York. The fact that they represented the vast interests of Victor Semple alone is assurance of our ability and standing."

"Well," said Longfellow, "as long as it was you that found me it kind of entitles you to the job."

"We shall be willing to continue to represent you as we have represented Mr. Semple."

"All four of you?" asked Longfellow.

"All four," said Mr. Cedar, "though I have, in a sense, been Mr. Semple's personal counsel."

"That'll be better," said Longfellow, "because it stands to reason it is cheaper to hire one lawyer than four."

"It will be necessary—"

"How much?" asked Longfellow.

"You refer to the magnitude of the estate?"

"No. How much do you charge?"

"That, Mr. Deeds, depends upon the quantity of work involved."

"When anybody hires me," said Longfellow, "they say how much. When I hire anybody they got to say how much. It stands to reason."

"Cedar, Cedar—"

"Cedar and McGonigle," completed Longfellow. He frowned. "I can't think of a rhyme for McGonigle."

"Why should you?" asked Mr. Cedar.

"I don't know. But I wish I could. When you find a funny word, don't you always kind of poke around to see if you can't find a rhyme for it?"

"No," said Mr. Cedar emphatically.

"I do," said Longfellow, and for a moment the conversation languished.

Then Mr. Cedar returned to his muttons. "Mr. Semple paid our firm an annual retainer of a hundred thousand dollars," he said.

"How much?"

"A hundred thousand dollars per annum."

"Every year?"

"For many years."

"Gosh, is the estate as much as that—as much as a hundred thousand dollars?"

"Young man, you are many times a millionaire."

"So I can afford to pay a lawyer a hundred thousand dollars a year?"

"Yes."

"What do I get for it?" asked Longfellow.

Mr. Cedar sighed. "You are a peculiar young man," he said.

"What's peculiar about wanting to know what you get for a hundred thousand dollars?"

Mr. Cedar pondered over this. Certainly it was a point of view. Undoubtedly an individual was entitled to know what he received in return for so much money. Therefore, he launched into a description of the services rendered by his firm to Mr. Semple and the services about to be rendered to Mr. Deeds. As the oration continued Longfellow commenced to feel his knees weaken. Young as he was and inexperienced, he was, from Cedar's discourse, commencing to get some vague idea of what had happened to him—of the magnitude of the thing that had befallen—of the monstrous alteration in his scheme of life which had taken place.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "Gosh! Will I have to move away from here?"

"Oh, unquestionably."

"Where'll I live?"

"Well," said Mr. Cedar, "there is the Fifth Avenue residence—the town house, then there is the estate on Long Island. There is also a house in Palm Beach—"

"Gosh!" Longfellow exclaimed again. "Mrs. Lepper never can look after all of that."

"Mrs. Lepper?"

"My housekeeper."

"Young man, on the Long Island place alone there are employed something like seventy-five servants, gardeners, chauffeurs, and the like."

LONGFELLOW'S knees were very weak now. "It must take a lot to just feed 'em," he said.

"By the way, are you musical?"

"Musical? Me? Sure; I play the tuba. Why?"

"The chief avocation of Mr. Semple," said Mr. Cedar, "was music. He was the head and the chief supporter of opera in this country. He was president and majority stockholder in the Continental Opera Company, which owns the Continental Opera House in New York."

"Where they give plays?"

"Operas," said Mr. Cedar.

"Yeah, operas," said Longfellow, who failed to perceive the distinction.

"It was in pursuance of this avocation that Mr. Semple lost his life," said Mr. Cedar.

"I didn't know it was dangerous," said Longfellow.

"He was," said Mr. Cedar, "killed in a

motor accident in Italy during his annual hunt for tenors."

"Tenors!"

"And sopranos. The musical world," added Mr. Cedar, "will expect you to carry on."

"I can only read in the bass clef," said Longfellow.

"But this is a matter for future discussion. It is imperative that you come to New York as speedily as possible. How soon can you accompany me?"

"Well, I got to hear from the Telegraph Company," said Longfellow, "and there's the wool, hides, and fertilizer business. But Jim Mason can run that, I guess."

"Can you possibly leave tonight?"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Longfellow.

"There is a train down at six-thirty," suggested Mr. Cedar.

"I got to have a chance to say good-by to folks."

"You could come back later."

"No," said Longfellow. "I got to say good-by. I wouldn't run off. They'd think, just because I come into money I didn't think they were good enough for me any more. Oh, I couldn't go off without seeing everybody."

He paused, and the reality of the change came over him suddenly, so that he had to blink his eyes.

"They're my friends," he said. "I'm leaving them, and maybe forever, and I like them, and we had a lot of good times together, and—and—I ain't so crazy about going off amongst strangers and leaving them at all. No, siree; I won't go till I've seen everybody and shook hands and told them it don't make any difference, no matter how rich I am. And that's that."

It was in that instant that Mr. Cedar discovered a liking, not to say the germ of an admiration, for Longfellow Deeds. He was rather surprised and disturbed by it, for it was not his custom, nor the custom of Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle, to be fond of their clients. But there was something appealing about this boy, and underneath his youth and abysmal ignorance a certain foundation that promised ability to support a considerable structure of manhood. So he nodded his head.

LONGFELLOW DEEDS caught the six-thirty train.

It was an hour's run to the junction where it was necessary to change to a main-line train for the journey to New York. A number of branch lines converged at this point and quite a dozen passengers from various localities were waiting for the express. These were commonplace people who would excite no interest or curiosity save for one majestic figure. This was a woman who stood not less than five feet ten in her stocking feet, but who, with the aid of remarkably high heels, assumed proportions verging upon the gigantic. Her abundant and virile hair, whose color was approximately Chinese vermilion, curled and spiraled about her head and seemed to crackle electrically. Upon a bosom which for sheer grandeur surpassed any natural spectacle Longfellow had ever gazed on, rose and fell a magnificent string of pearls. White, gesticulating hands with turquoise fingernails glinted in the declining light with the hard rays of diamonds and rubies; and wrists which a stevedore might envy were concealed by a series of bracelets which would have caused a crowd to assemble before the window of a Fifth Avenue jeweler. And on one powerful finger, pecking querulously at the precious stones, sat a large gray parrot.

"Goodness!" said Longfellow.

But before he could ask a question or call the attention of the distrait Mr. Cedar, the express rolled in, and there was the usual scramble to get aboard.

"Drawing-room A, Car 66," said Mr. Cedar to the porter, and they were disposing their luggage in this apartment when the door was thrust open violently and in it, filling the doorway completely, stood the woman of the station platform.

"My drawing-room, I think," she said stridently.

MR. CEDAR turned, and Longfellow saw him blench. "Madame Pomponi! Ah— How d'ye do? Er— How are you?"

"Don't how-d'ye-do *me*, you worm! Clear out of here, you Man Friday!"

"But, Madame," fluttered Mr. Cedar, "there's some mistake. I have the ticket for this room. See? Here it is."

She struck it from his hand with a superb gesture. "Ticket—hell!" she shouted. "I wired for this room. Clear out of it, and take that puppy with you."

The puppy, indicated by a fierce stab of the hand on which sat the parrot, was Longfellow Deeds.

"What's the trouble here?" asked the conductor's voice from behind Madame. "May I see your tickets?"

"I've no tickets. Why should I have tickets? I, you uniformed popinjay, am Madame Pomponi. I wired expressly for this room. Let me hear no more about it."

"But this gentleman," said the conductor, "has the correct ticket for this room, and you have none. There is no drawing-room left on the train. I can give you a section."

"Section! Section! Who d'ye think you're talking to, you nasty, miserable, unmitigated little swine! A section! The idea! Me travel in a section!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to," said the conductor wearily, "or sit up in the day coach."

Madame shoved him into the background with a powerful elbow.

"Are you going to clear out of here, Cypress or Yew or whatever miserable tree you're named after?"

"But, Madame, please be reasonable. I am returning to New York with Mr. Deeds. We have bought and paid for this drawing-room—"

"Well, take your nasty, crawling, clammy little Mr. Deeds out of here!" she shouted.

Longfellow had shrunk as small as possible and was rather cringing against the wall. Mr. Cedar was completely aghast, and no living soul could be more thoroughly aghast than he when occasion required.

"I'm afraid you don't understand, Madame," he said. "Madame," he declared portentously, "Mr. Deeds has just inherited Victor Semple's fortune. Tomorrow or the day after he will be elected by the directors as president of the Continental Opera Company."

"That?" asked Madame, pointing scornfully.

"Yes, Madame."

"Nerts!" said Madame elegantly. "You can't put that over on me. Hey, porter, clear this baggage out of here and put mine in. Where's my maid? Emma! Where's my secretary? Hey, you dish-faced little runt, what d'ye mean by this? What do I pay you for? What are you doing?"

"I'm in the cyclone cellar—waiting," said a clear, undisturbed voice.

"You're fired. You're discharged."

"And you, Madame," said the unruffled voice, "are on your way to New York to sign a new contract with the Continental. If the gentleman turns out to be the Head Man it might be diplomatic to pipe down."

Madame rumbled, then she stabbed with the parrot at Longfellow.

"Are you?" she demanded.

"I—I don't know," he said feebly.

"Then you aren't," said Madame. "Anybody who was would know it."

"But he is," said Mr. Cedar.

"He can clear out of my drawing-room, anyhow," Madame said.

Mr. Cedar sighed. "This is a very distressing scene," he said. "It is attracting the attention of the passengers. Mr. Deeds, might it not save trouble if—er—if we acceded to Madame's demand?"

Longfellow licked his lips. "A man always ought to oblige a lady—when she's a lady," he said hesitantly. "A man ought to act chivalrous to ladies, but I guess there's a difference between chivalry, like in *Ivanhoe*, and being thrown out on your ear. I mean, right is right, and a body has got to protect his rights, hasn't he? . . . Who was that talking kind of sensible behind this woman?"

MADAME bristled, but, before she could speak, a tightly bobbed head appeared around one of Madame's contours, and a rather large mouth said, "Me; I always talk sensible."

"Well," said Longfellow, "it's like this: If you were ladies in distress it would be something different. Or, maybe, if she had come along and asked pleasant if she could have this drawing-room. But she looks able-bodied to me, and she didn't ask. She just started a rumpus, like she owned the earth. So I don't see any reason why we should be chivalrous."

Mr. Cedar was staring with round eyes; Madame's chin dropped; the young woman with the clear voice chuckled.

"Even ladies ought to have good manners," Longfellow went on, "and it seems to me this Madame's manners are awful bad."

"It's temperament—artistic temperament," said the young lady.

"We don't have any of that in Mandrake Falls," said Longfellow, "so I don't know. But it sounds to me like she was just too big for her boots."

Madame's jaw dropped farther, until it folded upon her bosom. Her throat worked convulsively, but no sound came.

"I'm kind of sorry about you, miss," Longfellow went on. "And if it was you I'd clear out in a minute, because I never rode in a drawing-room and I don't care if I ever do. But you see how it is."

"I think I see," said the young woman.

"I hope she don't fire you out of your job on account of this," he said.

"Oh, no. She fires me a couple of times a day."

"All right, then," said Longfellow; "I tell you what. We'll start all over again. You two go out quiet and close the door. Then, in a minute, you have her come back

and knock. And I'll say, 'Come in.' And then, if she'll say there are two ladies traveling and they can't be comfortable in a berth because a berth isn't big enough, and will we please swap our drawing-room with them—why, then we'll see."

"Why, you infernal, ramshackle—"

Longfellow shook his head wearily. "I guess," he said, "you better shut up. Every time you open your mouth you make matters worse."

The young woman took Madame's powerful arm. "I guess that's that," she said. "Come along, Madame."

Madame retreated in some disorder, muttering. The door slammed. Mr. Cedar dropped into a seat and stared at Longfellow.

"Young man," he said, and drew in his breath, "you surprise me."

"She's just got it in her head she owns the earth," said Longfellow. "And I guess nobody owns it all. Huh. No use settling down, Mr. Cedar. She'll be back."

"You mean to ask pretty? Never."

"Yes, sir. Wait and see."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Cedar.

Presently there came a rap upon the door. "Come in," called Longfellow. Madame stood in the doorway.

"My secretary and I," she said, and paused. "We would be very—we would be much obliged—I mean, young man, that I'm too damn' big for those berths, and I wouldn't sleep a wink. Eh?"

"Why, certainly, Madame," said Longfellow, speaking as Ivanhoe might have spoken when bestowing the chaplet upon his chosen Queen of Love and Beauty. "It'll be a pleasure."

Fifteen minutes later, Longfellow and Mr. Cedar having settled themselves in a section in the car, the young lady with the distinct voice appeared beside them.

"Madame Pomponi's compliments, gentlemen," said she, "and will you dine with her in her drawing-room?"

This, considered Longfellow, came under the general heading of the *amende honorable.*

"We'll be tickled to death," he said, "providing you'll be there, too."

A pair of quizzical gray eyes looked down at him from a piquant face. "I'll be there—to keep the peace," she said.

"My name is Longfellow Deeds, and this is Mr. Cedar."

"My name," said the young woman, "is Simonetta Petersen."

"Italian?" asked Longfellow.

"Plain Swede," she answered. "Shall we go?"

"I kind of dread it," said Longfellow.

"She's apt to be charming. If somebody doesn't throw soap in the geyser."

She paused and regarded him, and he became aware that her eyes had a slight upward tilt. He gulped.

"I guess so," he said rather inadequately. . . .

LONGFELLOW DEEDS was sitting in the library of his Fifth Avenue home. Across the table from him was Roger Bengold, who had been private secretary to Victor Semple and was retained in the same capacity by Longfellow, though he did not know exactly what to do with him. At the present moment he was using Bengold largely for conversational purposes.

"Do I have to have a valet?" he asked.

"He will come in handy."

"But I'm not used to it. I get embarrassed. I don't like somebody holding up the ends of my pants when I put them on. It don't feel manly."

"You might dispense with the pants-holding," said Bengold.

"All the same, I don't like him fussing around."

A servant appeared in the door, uniformed, with a silver tray in his hand.

"Mrs. Leonidas Garrison and Miss Garrison calling, sir," he said.

Longfellow looked at his secretary helplessly.

"Mrs. Garrison is an old friend of your uncle's," said Bengold. "Very important socially." He turned to the servant. "Show them in here," he said. "By the way, there is a meeting of the Continental directors tomorrow noon. Your first, is it not?"

"Gosh! Directors' meetings all the time. . . . Listen; you stay right here. I don't know what to say to strange women."

"Very well, but you won't need to say much with Mrs. Garrison in the room."

LONGFELLOW rose timorously as the two ladies entered. He saw a tall, slender woman with beautiful white hair and a young face which was lovelier even than in its youth. One saw at once that she was a personage, sensed in her that aristocracy which never needs to assert itself, which is natural. Somehow Longfellow liked Mrs. Garrison, though she awed him. Her daughter was not so tall, but equally slender, and it seemed to Longfellow she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. This, perhaps, was because he never before had seen a beautiful girl who, also, was perfectly gowned, fresh from the expert hands of a supreme hairdresser, and who understood the mysteries of cosmetics. From toe to crown Theresa was perfect.

Mrs. Garrison nodded to Bengold carelessly and advanced across the room with outstretched hand to Longfellow.

"You could," she said, with an appraising glance, "have been quite impossible. But you aren't."

He did not know, but he was to learn, that Mrs. Garrison was one of those terrible people who see no reason for concealing their thoughts.

"Yes, ma'am," said Longfellow.

"This is my daughter, Theresa," said Mrs. Garrison. "I raised her by hand and she didn't come out so well."

"How do you do?" said Longfellow, feeling sorry for Theresa, but perceiving almost at once that his sympathy was wasted.

"Lay off me, Mother. Cheerio, Mr. Deeds. And don't be afraid. Mother's on the spot as the early bird, but I've got another worm in mind."

"Hush your fuss," said Mrs. Garrison. "Ask me to sit down. I live two doors to the north. Antique friend of Victor's, though he ran to opera singers. You're going to need somebody to show you about. He couldn't do better than myself, could he, Mr. Bengold? You've been to Victor's tailor. I can tell by the trousers. Does he know *anything*, Mr. Bengold?"

"I shall let you discover that," said the secretary, while Longfellow blushed furiously.

"Mandrake Falls!" exclaimed Mrs. Garrison. "Now, I ask you if that isn't the devil of a place to come from! Your nose isn't too bad. I suppose a decent nose *can* come from Mandrake Falls. Tell me all about yourself. Everybody is waiting to get a look at you. I don't know what bated breath is, but society is waiting with it. Are you engaged to a farmer's daughter? Because you'll have to break it off. Never do. What's the matter with you? I never saw anybody so reticent."

"The only way you'll ever get to tell her your side of it," said Theresa, "is to write her a letter."

"The very idea! I'm called the best listener in New York," her mother said.

"You ought to get around more," said Theresa. "You'd find out what you're called."

"I'm taking charge of you, and you'll take it and like it," said Mrs. Garrison rising. "Glad you're not impossible, because it would be a sin to have all your millions and be an utter bust. So nice to have seen you. Come along, Theresa."

She was gone, whisking her daughter away with her. Longfellow stood swallowing and trying to find a place to put his hands.

"My goodness!" he said.

"Precisely," agreed Mr. Bengold. "May I say, Mr. Deeds, that it is fortunate she has taken an interest? She is very important. And she is very much of a person."

"Oh, very," said Longfellow. "Oh, very!"

"May I also say, Mr. Deeds, that her experience will be of value to you? You are very wealthy and a bachelor. At the moment you are the most eligible bachelor in America. It is a trying position."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Longfellow. "You mean people will be wanting to marry me on account of my money?"

"Exactly."

"I wouldn't do that," Longfellow said firmly. "I would only marry for love. That's how I feel about it. No, sir. When I marry it will be romantic. I mean, there ought to be difficulties, and maybe danger, and I would only win her after a struggle. It would be better if I could rescue her from something, or something. And then she would come to know my true worth, and we would live happy forever after."

Mr. Bengold stared at his employer. "I advise you, Mr. Deeds, to stick pretty close to Mrs. Garrison, or, with that kind of a state of mind, you'll get picked before you can say mulligatawny soup."

"No, sir. No, siree. Not me!" said Longfellow stubbornly.

AGAIN a servant appeared in the door. "Signor Gian Francesco Visconti," he announced.

"Who's he?" asked Longfellow.

"Signor Visconti," said Bengold, "is the *direttore* of the Continental Opera House. He has been for years."

"What does he do?"

"He," said Bengold," is the artistic head—and very! He is responsible for the excellence of the performances. In the opera house he is a cross between a demi-god, a bull of Bashan, and a naughty boy who needs a spanking."

"Has he—I mean, is he another one with artistic temperament?" asked Longfellow, his mind flying to Madame Pomponi.

Bengold nodded to the servant. "Show

the *Signore* in," he said, and then to Longfellow, "Temperament! Every month or so he has a normal moment."

"Gosh!"

"He'll bring an interpreter."

"Don't he speak English?"

"How could he? He's been here only twenty years."

"Goodness," said Longfellow; and then the apparition appeared in the door—a monstrous man who stood a full six feet two, with a corresponding width. He wore a cutaway coat with braided lapels and a gardenia. On his enormous feet were shining shoes partly covered with pearl-gray spats. His gray hair stood out about his head in a furious, intimidating sort of way, and his spade beard, dyed to the blackness of jet, draped itself downward to the enormity which he wore as a watch chain. His expression was one of lofty gloom quaintly admixed with peevishness.

"Ha!" he said in a sort of explosion.

"How d'you do?" asked Longfellow.

"Ha! I am Visconti."

"Yes, they told me you were," said Longfellow.

"'Ee say w'at?" demanded this mountain of a man of a pathetic figure which lurked at his side, a little man with enormous eyes and a pallid face and impossible ears.

"'Ee say already he have heard of the *Signore*."

VISCONTI plunged into petulant, orotund Italian. The interpreter turned to Longfellow: "'Ee say, eet iss good theeng you 'ave hear of him bicause you weel hear-a of heem more."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Longfellow, and Visconti scowled and barked at his interpreter.

"'Ee say, w'at you mean by this-a 'Gosh!' 'Ee say why you spik-a such word at heem. 'Ee say, w'at-a to hell?"

"Gosh," explained Longfellow apprehensively, "is just a kind of a word. It don't mean much of anything. It is just a kind of a word you say when you're maybe surprised or something."

The translator translated and listened to a responsive rumbling bellow.

"'Ee say, w'en you use-a da word for heem you shall use-a da word that mean sense and 'ave respect."

Longfellow was growing desperate. "For cat's sake," he said, "ask him what he wants."

Presently the interpreter turned rabbit-like. "'Ee is grow mad weeth you. 'Ee say, w'at is this-a for the sake of the cat. You call-a heem a cat? No? Yes? You better not dare for call-a heem a cat."

"I guess I better not talk at all," said Longfellow. "But I've got to find out what he wants, haven't I? Listen to me, you interpreter. Can you ask him what it is he wants in a kind of a way that won't get him excited?"

Without waiting for the interpreter Signor Visconti poured out a gush of Italian:

"'Ee say 'ee is not excite'. 'Ee say 'ee is director of the opera. 'Ee say 'ee is gr-rr-reatest director of all the world and 'ee spit in the eye that say 'ee is not. 'Ee say 'ee have been for twent' year, and by damn 'ee will not be meddle' weeth. 'Ee say, w'ere you come from that you start for raise 'ell weeth his production. 'Ee say you are jealous of heem. 'Ee say 'ee rr-re-

sign and go back-a to Milano, w'ere they beg for heem on the knees. 'Ee say all Americans are pigs. 'Ee say w'en he make the belch—so—there is more art and more of the musical knowledge than in all America. 'Ee say he have collect' the gr-rr-reatest company of all the worl', and he, heem alone by heemself, have make thees opera the one supr-rr-reme civilization spot in thees barbarian country. 'Ee is almos' angry. You better look-a out."

Longfellow turned to Bengold. "Can you think up any way I can find out what he wants?" he asked helplessly.

Another outpouring of Italian:

"'Ee say you w'isper of him behin' his-a back. You make the insult. Ha! 'Ee wash hees hand'. 'Ee go back to Italia. W'at you goin' do about renew hees contrac'?"

"Oh," said Longfellow.

"'Ee say the meeting of these director' is tomorrow. 'Ee say, w'at you theenk. 'Ee say he go on the boat-a for Italia for all thees monkey-business. You mak-a da new contrac', eh? Yes? No?"

"I—honestly I'm awfully sorry—I am. But I don't know a thing about it. I didn't even know he had a contract. I haven't anything to do with it yet. I haven't been elected anything. I just don't know."

VISCONTI stamped a majestic foot and rumbled again:

"'Ee say 'ee go into hees apartement-a. 'Ee wait. 'Ee not ask for thees job. If these director' beg-a him take back thees job and new contrac', might be 'ee consider. Jus' possible. You 'ear any talk the contrac' not renew'?"

"I've heard nothing."

"Ha!" snorted the *Signore*. "Bah!" he exploded. Then he clicked his heels, bowed from the waist, stood silent and gloomy, peering like a disillusioned god from under drooping lids, shook his beard, said "Bah!" again, turned on his heel, and trod superbly from the room.

Longfellow fell back in his chair. "Is that the kind of people I got to be president of?" he asked.

"Quite," said Bengold.

"I guess I'll sell this opera company to somebody."

"That," said Bengold, "would be a slick trick if you could do it."

"You mean I can't?"

"Would you buy a chance to lose a couple of hundred thousand a year and deal with a cageful of assorted tenors and sopranos and Viscontis? Would you?"

"I guess not." He sat silent and doubly contemplative. "I'm not sure but Mr. Semple did me a kind of a dirty trick when he died and left me this money. I bet maybe he did it on purpose. I wouldn't be surprised if it turned out to be suicide."

(To be continued)

Where Accidents Don't Happen

(Continued from page 75)

out the cause of the bad driving, cures were effected. The accident clinic examined and instructed 35 such drivers in the last 18 months. Only one has had a subsequent accident.

From Milwaukee, Kreml borrowed the idea for his school for women drivers, attended by over 200 a year. In the primary grades of the city's schools children are given continual lessons in safety—how to cross streets, how to ride bicycles. In high school, girls and boys are instructed in driving. Illinois has no law requiring drivers' licenses, but safety organizations are trying to get the legislature to pass one. At present, when a child reaches the age of fifteen, he legally can start out alone in a car. Kreml's figures show the most dangerous drivers are those between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four.

From Memphis, Kreml got the idea for his Municipal Testing Station. Drivers must visit this station every six months for a check-up on brakes, steering gear, lights, tires, etc. Police watch for cars with bad brakes and with worn tires that are likely to blow out. Kreml, himself, recently arrested and convicted for reckless driving the driver of a vehicle that was going only 17 miles an hour on a 30-mile-an-hour street. It was a 7½-ton truck with a gross load of 58,000 pounds, and at ten miles an hour could not stop in less than 29 feet.

Kreml's map shows him how to direct his selective enforcement. Every day he checks the bad spots and sends policemen there with definite orders. Between certain hours at one place they may concentrate on arrests for passing lights and stop signs and for failure to give the car on the right the right of way.

Kreml's campaign of education gradually won over the citizens of Evanston. They began to realize he was trying to save lives, not merely to annoy drivers.

In Evanston, traffic policemen give tickets only for minor offenses, such as parking, and an offender does not have to pay a fine until he has received three tickets. But for any offense committed while a vehicle is moving, the driver is taken to the nearest police station.

When an Evanston policeman stops a speeding driver, the policeman does not bark, "Where's the fire?" Nor does he deliver a lecture. He says simply, "You are under arrest for speeding. Will you kindly follow me to the police station?"

Always he says, "Kindly." And listens not at all to the driver's protest: "Why, this old bus couldn't make forty going downhill."

If the driver wants to argue he does it at the station, before witnesses. He is booked, puts up bail of $10 to $25, and later appears for trial.

Kreml's toughest battle was to eliminate ticket-fixing. The politicians, as in every city, liked to do favors for influential voters, and even as late as 1932, in Evanston, 676 cases were "Withdrawn" in one year. Kreml finally convinced politicians and judges that if *nobody* could fix a ticket, everybody would be satisfied.

As a result of Kreml's arguments, only 19 cases were withdrawn in 1933, presumably all for legitimate reasons.

"There's no fixing in Evanston," a motorcycle policeman told me proudly. "Why, just the other day my sister was fined $5 for speeding."

In many cities chauffeurs of private cars are a menace, because they know their bosses, usually influential, can fix any tickets they may get. In Evanston, chauffeurs receive the same firm treatment given to the least influential workman, and take no chances.

To encourage good driving, Safe Drivers Cards are awarded to those who are observed to make an unusual effort toward safety. These cards do not exempt the driver from arrest. They merely certify he is a good driver. Only five or ten are issued each year. They are highly valued by men who earn their living by driving, for a man with one of these cards can be almost sure of a good job in Evanston.

While I was in Evanston one was awarded to a chauffeur who, thinking fast, ran his car on the sidewalk and saved the lives of children who had started to run across an icy street. After he backed his car off the walk he stood in the middle of the street, held up traffic, and escorted the kids safely to the other side.

KREML does not believe in safety "drives." In Evanston there never is a "Clean-your-license-plate week" or a "Be-careful month," during which drivers race around with stickers on their windshields reading, "I Am a Careful Driver." He believes in keeping everlastingly after it.

More accidents occur in the fall, as the days grow shorter, particularly in the week after the change from daylight saving time back to standard time. Overnight, drivers and pedestrians find themselves going home in the dark, and they still try to make the trip as quickly as in daylight. At this time Kreml concentrates his men in the darker areas until people become accustomed to the change in time.

Unfortunately, Evanston, with a minor bow to the taxpayers, made its streets less safe last year. In order to save a few thousand dollars in electric-light bills it cut down the power and turned off some of the lamps in the street-lighting system. Five pedestrians were killed at night last year at spots where the illumination had been reduced. The total number of deaths was 8 and the city's 1934 percentage jumped to 11.1.

In 99 communities out of 100 the police