

What has happened so far:

LONGFELLOW DEEDS was the sole literary personage of Mandrake Falls. He wrote poetry. In fact, he wrote the touching and inspirational verses which appear on Christmas cards, Mother's Day cards, and telegrams. He also played the tuba, was vaguely interested in his deceased father's wool, hide, and fertilizer business, and was completely pleased with life—until a Mr. Cedar, member of the law firm of Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle appeared with the startling news that Victor Semple, an almost forgotten uncle of Longfellow's, had been killed in an accident, together with his son, and Longfellow was the heir. His inheritance included several million dollars, a New York house, a Long Island home, a Palm Beach house, and (most disturbing of all) the controlling interest in the Continental Opera Company, which had never made money and was not at any time expected to.

Longfellow and Mr. Cedar left for New York, where Longfellow was to

meet an amazing and diverse set of his fellow men—and women. On the train to the city there was Madame Pomponi, temperamental and voluble star of the opera company. Madame was accompanied by her secretary, Simonetta Petersen, who at first was nothing more to Longfellow than a cool, distinct voice raised in the midst of Pomponi's dramatics. Upon reaching New York, he discovered that he also had a secretary, inherited from his uncle and named Roger Bengold. A succession of callers included Mrs. Garrison, a society leader who wished him to marry her daughter Theresa; and Signor Visconti, musical director of the opera company. Visconti spoke no English, had to talk through an interpreter, and had plenty to say—principally concerning the renewal of his contract.

Poor Longfellow, harried by his secretary and valet, weighed down by his white elephant opera house, began to feel that his uncle, by getting killed, had played him a dirty trick.

Let's go on with Longfellow to the opera company's directors' meeting. . . .

ROGER BENGOLD stepped to the door of the library and paused. Longfellow Deeds sat at his desk, his hair rumpled, his coat lying on the floor beside him, and the rug covered with discarded pieces of manuscript paper. He was in the throes of composition. Mr. Bengold coughed. Longfellow looked up and frowned.

"I must remind you," said Bengold, "that the meeting of the directors of the Opera is held this noon at twelve o'clock."

"Shucks," said Longfellow. "Can't they postpone it?"

"I'm afraid not. It is important. There is the matter of your election as president to succeed Mr. Semple—and other imperative matters."

"It just means I'll have to work tonight. This is a rush order."

"A rush order?"

"Yes," said Longfellow. "They need a new Mother's Day poem, and it must be in the mail tomorrow."

"Mother's Day poem! Ah—I mean to say—I don't think I understand."

"I am a poet," said Longfellow

simply. "I see on post Mandrake down. The years and I out."

Bengold. "Why must"

"Well, I twenty-five"

"Twenty"

"Yes." pride. "I they have."

"You n poems for"

"It pays"

"But y dollars. It —I mean"

# Opera Hat

BY CLARENCE  
BUDINGTON  
KELLAND



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simply. "I write most of the poems you  
see on postal cards. This order went to  
Mandrake Falls and was forwarded  
down. They've used the last poem three  
years and it's what you might call worn  
out."

Bengold appeared a trifle bewildered.  
"Why must you write it?" he asked.

"Well, for a poem this length I get  
twenty-five dollars," said Longfellow.

"Twenty-five dollars!"  
"Yes," said Longfellow with some  
pride. "I'm the highest-priced poet  
they have."

"You mean—you mean you write  
poems for postal cards for money?"

"It pays very well," said Longfellow.

"But you don't need twenty-five  
dollars. It is an insignificant sum. You  
—I mean to say—it is absurd."

"Why?" asked Longfellow, with some  
surprise.

"Because, Mr. Deeds, you are several  
times a millionaire and—"

"Twenty-five dollars is always twenty-  
five dollars," said Longfellow practi-  
cally.

BENGOLD pondered this, and while  
he was pondering Longfellow thought  
about what could be done with that much  
money.

"It will pay the wages of my valet  
for a week," he said.

"But, Mr. Deeds, you ought not to do  
it. Consider your position. Consider  
your dignity. What will people think if  
you go around writing poems for postal  
cards?"

"In Mandrake Falls," said Long-

fellow, "they thought it was pretty re-  
markable. Yes, sir. The town was  
proud of me. When visitors came to  
town my house was often pointed out to  
them, and several times I was asked for  
my autograph. I don't want you to  
think I'm vain, Bengold, but my poems  
meant a lot to Mandrake Falls."

"This is New York," said Bengold  
dryly.

"Doesn't New York like poets? I  
thought it did. They entertained Mase-  
field and made quite a fuss about him,  
and Noyes, and different ones."

"They didn't write poems for postal  
cards," said Bengold.

"I know," said Longfellow. "It's a  
kind of a knack. Not everybody can do  
it."

"But you can't! You mustn't! It's  
so—so undignified. Poems  
for twenty-five dollars."

"When," asked Longfel-  
low, "did earning twenty-  
five dollars get to be  
undignified?"

Bengold was unable to an-  
swer that one. "I shall  
speak about the matter  
to Mrs. Garrison," he said  
firmly. "She will remon-  
strate with you."

LONGFELLOW shook his  
head. "I don't think it  
is any of her business," he  
said. "I really don't. I've  
spent all my life learning  
how to be a poet, and I like  
being one. It is a good kind  
of work, and it pays. I  
could lose all this money  
Mr. Semple left me, but I  
couldn't lose the ability to  
write poems. And, besides,  
it doesn't matter how much  
money you have, there's no  
law against making a little  
more, is there? I seem to  
spend a great deal."

"Only common people  
buy postal cards," said  
Bengold.

"I guess common people  
aren't so bad," said Long-  
fellow. "If they were, there  
wouldn't be so many of  
them. I mean they would  
do something about it in  
Washington. I know a  
good many common people,  
and, for all I can see, the  
government had just as  
soon be paid taxes by them  
as to be paid taxes by un-  
common people." He  
warmed to his subject.  
"What's wrong with com-  
mon people? That's what  
I'd like to know."

"They are vulgar," said  
Mr. Bengold.

To this the only apt reply



*Dide socked the stranger with such vigor  
that the man sprawled on the sidewalk*

Longfellow could think of at the moment was to say, "So is your old man," but he did not feel he knew his secretary well enough to make so flippant a rejoinder, so he kept silent.

"And postal cards are vulgar," said Mr. Bengold.

"How," asked Longfellow, "did Mr. Semple make all his money?"

"He first arose to affluence," said Bengold, "through the manufacture of overalls."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Longfellow. "I don't know who would buy overalls except common people. And overalls aren't so polite, either. I guess just as good people buy postal cards as overalls, and I think poems are a lot more elite than blue jeans. That's what I think."

"MR. DEEDS, the trouble is that you are deficient in social sensitivity. Due to your background. Mrs. Garrison will remedy it."

"I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't," said Longfellow. "And there's another side to the matter. My firm depends on me. They have always paid promptly and well, and I have never disappointed them in filling an order. I couldn't walk out on them now—not just because I came into money. It's an obligation on my part. I got to be loyal to them."

"Nonsense, Mr. Deeds."

"And, besides, I like to write poems. And I'll tell you something else, Bengold—there are a lot of people would like to write them and make as much money as I can make. So you needn't bother Mrs. Garrison or anybody, because I am going to go right on writing just as many as I want to; and that's that. I will go to this directors' meeting, but I will come home afterwards and write my Mother's Day poem. I'm having a little trouble with it, though it starts out pretty good. Listen."

He cleared his throat and read:

"Whose hand, though wearied with the ladle,  
Would pause to rock my infant cradle?  
My Mother's!"

Longfellow looked up at his secretary. "That's as far as I've got, but you see the idea of it. . . . Is it time to go?"

"Immediately," said Mr. Bengold.

"Where is the meeting?"

"In Mr. Cedar's office. It has always been the custom to hold the meetings there."

"Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle. I wish I could find something to rhyme with McGonigle."

They were driven to one of those monstrous buildings on lower Broadway which are incredibly filled with lawyers and with elevators which make no stop

below the twentieth floor, and whose lobbies are thronged by people who look as if they had neither legal affairs nor a desire to ride up and down, but who seem to be using the great corridors as a short cut from some negligible spot to another one equally unimportant.

They were catapulted to the thirty-second floor and at the end of a hallway discovered double mahogany doors, upon one of which was lettered minutely the name of Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle. Through these they entered a sumptuous mahogany waiting-room, where an odd-looking girl answered the telephone, counted petty cash, and whispered to the office boy that she saw McGonigle's son in a night club with something that looked as if it came out of a gold mine bearing a pickax.

"Mr. Lathrop Cedar," said Bengold.

"See fee zin," said the girl. "Name?"

"Mr. Deeds," said Bengold.

"Misser Deeds see Misser Lathrop Cedar," said the girl into her instrument. She looked up and nodded brightly. "Youcun go ritin," she said mysteriously.

"You come," said Longfellow.

"It would be improper," said Bengold. "I will await you here."

Mr. Cedar appeared in the door—a signal honor—and conducted Longfellow into a vast legal library, down the middle of which ran a huge mahogany table around which were a dozen large mahogany chairs. The bookcases were mahogany and the room was paneled in mahogany, and expensive bronzes of persons riding active horses were scattered all about. Gentlemen occupied the mahogany chairs, and to these Mr. Cedar introduced his client. Longfellow, being in a state of embarrassment, caught none of their names, except that he thought one fat, pink, bald, onion-

eyed gentleman was called Gullible. Which was, of course, impossible. Upon subsequent investigation it appeared that the name of this director was Gullible. Saturn Graves Gullible!

LONGFELLOW shook hands diffidently and flushed a little, and wished someone would tell him where he was supposed to sit down. Mr. Cedar emitted a hearty, artificial chuckle, calculated to put everybody at his ease and to interject a note of humor.

"The first business before this meeting," he said, "is the election of a new president. I therefore propose Mr. Deeds for that office, so he may imme-



"Hello," said Simonetta Petersen, greeting him with a smile and a curt nod. "How do you like being a millionaire?"

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"I haven't really gotten into it yet," Longfellow answered, "but it seems to me I had more fun in Mandrake Falls"

diately be seated in the president's chair."

"Second," said Mr. Gullible.

"All in favor?" said Mr. Cedar.

"Aye," said everybody, and Longfellow felt himself being propelled to the chair at the head of the table. He sank into it and sat very stiff and erect.

"The order of business calls for the secretary's report," prompted Mr. Cedar.

"Move we dispense with it," said Mr. Gullible.

"I think we may do so," said Mr. Cedar. "Next, Mr. President, is the treasurer's report."

"Move we dispense with it," said Mr. Gullible.

"I think we may do so," said Mr.

Cedar. "The next—"

Longfellow moved his hand in a bewildered gesture of protest.

"What does the president do?" he asked.

"He presides at meetings—" commenced Mr. Cedar.

"Then," said Longfellow, "I better get in practice. Don't you think I better get in practice? I guess I would kind of like to hear the treasurer's report. I—I guess I would kind of like to know how the business is getting along. I mean how much money it made, and all."

THERE was a silence of peculiar acuteness. Various directors looked at one another and Mr. Gullible cleared his throat explosively.

"I know about parliamentary law," said Longfellow in the awkward pause. "I was president of our debating club. Everybody thought it was a good idea to be familiar with parliamentary law, so I learned Roberts' Rules of Order almost by heart. We will proceed with the treasurer's report."

"The treasurer," said a tall, spare man in an afternoon coat and an abundant mustache, "reports a deficit of one hundred thirty-eight thousand dollars and eighty-seven cents."

"You mean we lost that much? Actually

lost it! My goodness!"

"I think I should explain to you, Mr. President," said Mr. Cedar, "that the Opera is not conducted for profit."

"It isn't? What is it conducted for, then?"

"Art," said a small, pink, closely shaved, and dapper director. Longfellow reflected that pinkishness was a dominant color in the complexions of the directors.

"It is an Institution!" said Mr. Gullible.

"Exactly," said Mr. Cedar.

"We own an opera house, don't we?" asked Longfellow.

"We do."

"And give shows?"

"We provide opera," said Mr. Gullible.

"But you charge. I mean you sell tickets."

"In effect," said Mr. Cedar.

"But it doesn't pay?"

"That would be impossible," said Mr. Cedar.

"Why?"

THIS seemed to be a very disconcerting question, for nobody made haste to answer, so Longfellow made effort to find an answer himself. "We must give the wrong kind of shows," he said.

"Opera is Opera," said an elderly director didactically.

"I should think if it can't be made to pay you'd change," said Longfellow. "You just can't stay in business if you keep losing money. It stands to reason."

"Opera is an Institution," repeated Mr. Gullible. "It is our duty to the public to keep it alive."

"Why?" asked Longfellow, in an honest effort to solve the problem.

"The public demands it," said Mr. Gullible.

"They can't demand it very hard," said Longfellow, "or they would buy more tickets to it. I guess I don't understand."

"Would you, Mr. Deeds, deprive the people of an opportunity to hear the work of the great composers? Would you deprive them of a chance to listen to the world's sublime voices?"

"The way it looks to me," said Longfellow, "is that you wouldn't be depriving the public. I mean, they don't come, anyhow. You can't deprive somebody who won't come to the opera by not having any opera, because, if you do have it, it doesn't make any difference so long as they don't come."

This seemed a bit involved, even to Longfellow, but he felt there was a kernel of meaning in it some place.

"Who gets any good out of it?" he asked.

"The cultured music lovers of America," said the director with the mustache.

"Well, here's how it looks to me," said Longfellow. "It looks as if there weren't enough of these cultured music lovers. Now, take a grocery store—in Mandrake Falls, say. In all the town there's just one family that eats this Roquefort cheese, but there's a hundred families that eat rattrap cheese. So the grocer would be foolish if he stocked a lot of Roquefort and didn't stock any rattrap. His Roquefort would spoil on him, and he'd lose all the profit he'd make if he sold the other. That's common sense."

"But Opera is not a matter of common sense," said Mr. Gullible. "It is Art. It is the (Continued on page 148)

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running crowded week-end excursions. A subsidiary of Pan American Airways was running daily planes from Miami. And in the streets were cars from Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Illinois, and elsewhere.

Nothing so burns up a Key Wester, now, as to see automobilists arriving in town with large reserve supplies of water, gasoline, and food, and saying, "We heard you didn't have any of these things down here."

I found the town and the arrangements delightful. Possibly I am prejudiced by my admiration for the spirit, gumption, ingenuity, and courage shown by all concerned. I swam, bicycled, hung around, talked with everybody, and fell in love with the climate and the people.

Key West is not, in fact, a "tropical paradise." There are days in winter when the thermometer falls into the fifties. The summer, though Key Westers swear by it, is sometimes oppressive to a Northerner.

But it is well on its way to becoming what it wants to be.

The maid problem was quite a serious one at first. The colored women of Key West were not generally accustomed to such work. So the FERA took the colored girls who were on relief and gave them a training course in housework.

But even this wasn't enough. A girl has to work in a real home to get the fine points. So the ladies who have maids volunteered to take the raw recruits into their homes, let them work with their own maids, and finish their training. About a third of the trainees made excellent maids, another third are at least some help around the house, and the last third "just can't git

the hang of it" and are back on relief.

The town is by no means out of the woods. It still has an abnormally high percentage on relief, even though it may be constructive work-relief. Stone has even spent money beyond his mere relief allotments, but the excess is in an investment that is already paying back.

And when the overseas highway is completed, cutting out the present ferry rides along the road from Miami, Key West's new tourist industry ought to take another big upward jump.

**MURMURS** have been heard of "government competition with the private tourist business," but not from anyone acquainted with the desperate human plight of Key West twelve months ago.

If anyone were entitled to complain it would be Miami, but that city has been most generous and its newspapers strong in praise. After all, Key West is near enough to be a kind of added Miami attraction; it is not after the heavy Miami trade; and, developed, it could be one of Miami's best markets.

I can't attempt to peer into the future. Prosperity may turn Key West's head; there are already alarming whispers of a boom in the air; it may become a hot-cha, roaring whoopee town. If so, all luck to them—certainly that's better than the desolation of 1934.

For my part I like the present. I like the fight they have made. I like the dream of 1935, and the distant music, the faint, joyous singing of children, which I hear through my window as I write these lines.

## Opera Hat

(Continued from page 21)

preservation of a Great Art. It is sacred. You mustn't think of it in terms of profit and loss."

"Does nobody in Opera think of money? I mean, take Signor Visconti there, the director. Doesn't he think about money? Does he lose money directing? Because, if he doesn't think about money, why is he worrying about renewing his contract? And I hear a lot about opera singers making an awful lot . . ."

**THE** Signore Visconti leaped to his feet bellowing. He waved his arms, he hammered upon the table, he seemed about to tear himself to bits. Then he stopped suddenly—as if he had been shut off—and turned to his shadowy little interpreter.

"E say," said the little man, "w'y you make-a thees attack upon heem. 'E say thees is a conspiracy. 'E say eet is the evul, ungrateful, malicious pig of a Gam-

binosi who 'ave done thees theeng. 'E say Gambinosi weel 'ave him assassinate'. 'E go in fear of hees life. 'E say Gambinosi is not able to direct the show of Punch and Judy at the street fair. 'E say all Americans are cows and sheeps and ignoramuses of music. 'E say he make hees resign and go 'ome to Milano."

"What," asked Longfellow, "has this Gambinosi to do with it? Who is he?"

"No matter," said Mr. Cedar. "He doesn't like Gambinosi."

"I gathered that," said Longfellow, and sighed. "I guess I'll have to study into this subject some. But, to get down to brass tacks—there's a deficit of a hundred and thirty-odd thousand dollars. What about that? How do we make it up?"

"Why," said Mr. Gullible suavely, "for years it has been the custom of Mr. Semple to make up whatever deficit remained."

"You mean he dug down into his own pocket? And you—you directors—expect me to pungle up all that money? My goodness! What for? Why should I?"

"To keep Opera alive for the people." "I am quite sure," said Mr. Cedar, "that the late Mr. Semple would desire you to continue his custom."

"There's quite a lot of directors," said Longfellow. "Doesn't anybody else help to put up the money?"

"We are all subscribers," said Mr. Gullible.

"I'll have to think it over some," said Longfellow. "It doesn't add up and make

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sense so far. I won't say yes and I won't  
say no, so I think we'd better adjourn."

"We must," said the mustached direc-  
tor, "provide a minimum of fourteen  
weeks of opera."

"With another deficit?" asked Long-  
fellow.

"Deficit or no deficit."

"It just isn't good business," Long-  
fellow said. He stood up. "The meeting  
is adjourned. I've got to look into it." . . .

The idea that a poet necessarily is im-  
practical is one which is as common as it is  
incorrect. Poets have some quite sound  
and practical notions. Longfellow Deeds  
belonged to the more efficient school of  
poets. While his work was sweetly roman-  
tic and dealt largely with the Mother,  
Home, and Heaven motif, he invariably  
placed the proceeds of his labor in a savings  
bank.

So now, being in some doubt as to the  
compelling necessity for the continued  
existence of that art form known as Grand  
Opera—at a cost to his newly found for-  
tune of some hundreds of thousands of  
dollars a year—he determined to find out  
about it. Not by questioning interested  
parties; not by reading books; but by  
actual, first-hand investigation. He had  
never heard an opera. Therefore, he deter-  
mined to attend the theater of which he  
was president, and to attend it alone.

He eluded Mr. Bengold; he eluded vari-  
ous servants, including his chauffeur, and  
was driven in a common taxicab to the  
rather unappetizing building where the  
indispensable art-form flourished. Adver-  
tising before the doors informed him that  
he was to hear the opera *Lakme*. There  
were no electric lights over the portals, as  
in the better motion picture houses. The  
whole effect of the entrance was drab and  
uninviting. Apparently no effort was  
made to lure into the theater the passer-by  
in search of amusement. He made a mental  
note to speak of this point, for he was a  
believer in advertising.

He approached the window at which  
waited a dwindling queue and asked for a  
seat. He was informed he might enter for  
the insignificant sum of five dollars and  
fifty cents, including tax, for he had asked  
for the best seat at the matinée. He  
frowned. Five-fifty. Gosh, you ought to  
make money charging folks that much to  
see the show! It was more money than he  
ever had paid to enter a theater, and when  
he was once inside he thought it a very  
peculiar theater, indeed.

**B**UT before he could find an usher he saw  
coming from a door at his left a young  
woman whose face was familiar to him, and  
who recognized him with a smile and a  
curt nod. It was Miss Simonetta Peter-  
sen, secretary to Madame Pomponi.

"Where's the entourage?" she asked  
briskly.

"The what?"

"The chorus of sycophants yodeling yes.  
The late Mr. Semple never entered the  
place without being surrounded by a pla-  
toon of the Staff in striped trousers. The  
secretary, the treasurer, the *direttore*, and  
so on, hanging on his every word."

"I just came in. I wanted to see what  
Opera was like."

"Coming back?" she asked.

"Back where?"

"Backstage, of course. Pomponi is  
singing *Lakme* this afternoon. If she hears

you are here and didn't come back to pay  
your respects, there'll be didos. Come  
along; I'll show you."

"Thank you," he said. "I want to see  
the show. I want to see it as an ordinary  
spectator."

"Not occupying your box?"

He displayed his coupon. "I'm sitting  
in a five-dollar-and-fifty-cent seat."

"You mean you *bought* one!"

"Why, yes. And I'd rather you didn't  
mention to anyone that I'm here. I want  
to try to find out why Opera is necessary  
to—er—to the American People. I'm one  
of them—don't you see?—and I never saw  
any Opera and I want to find out if it is  
necessary to me."

"You picked a good one to test yourself,"  
she said.

"Is it a good show?" he asked.

"It depends," she said, "upon what you  
call a show. How do you like being a mil-  
lionaire?"

**H**E CONSIDERED for a moment before  
replying. "I haven't really got into it  
yet, I guess," he said, "but it seems to me I  
had more fun in Mandrake Falls. It seems  
like everything I want to do there's a reason  
for not doing."

"Why," she asked, "don't you have a  
try at doing what you darn' please? It's  
your money. Who's to stop you?"

"I don't want to do what's not right  
and—and dignified," he said. "And I  
don't know what to do. I mean, in Man-  
drake Falls I had friends, and things hap-  
pened that I liked, and I went places and  
had a good time. But here it's kind of  
lonesome."

"New York," she said, "is practically  
populated with people who would be  
tickled to death to help you cure that."

"But I don't know any."

"Wait," she said, "until mammas with  
lovely daughters commence to bay on  
your trail! And, from all accounts, your  
ancestor, or whatever he was—Mr.  
Semple—did pretty well for himself."

"He made lots of money," said Long-  
fellow.

"That," she said, "was just a side line."

He looked puzzled, but she did not en-  
lighten him further. It was not until time  
had passed that she realized the depths of  
his inexperience of the world and his more  
than girlish modesty.

"Do you know," he said, "this is the  
first time since I came to New York that  
I've just talked to somebody. I mean  
talked back and forth just for fun, as if  
you were somebody from back home that I  
know."

Simonetta peered sidewise at him under  
lowered lids, a wise, humorous, appraising  
sort of glance. If she was new to his ex-  
perience he was amazingly new to hers.

"Would that," she asked, "by any  
chance be a Mandrake Falls line of ap-  
proach? You wouldn't be making an  
oblique pass at a young lady, would you?"

"I heard a traveling man say that," he  
answered simply; "I mean, something  
about making a pass at a girl. He was the  
kind of a man who stands in the hotel win-  
dow and if he don't look out somebody'll  
punch his nose."

"Slapped down!" she exclaimed, feeling  
an implied rebuke. "Are all men noble and  
all women virtuous in Mandrake Falls?"

"We don't call saying something pleas-  
ant to a girl making a pass," he said. "Not

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even asking her to go to the movies."

"But you didn't ask me to go to the movies," she said.

"I'd like to," he said diffidently. "Would it be all right?"

"I'd probably lose my job with Madame Pomponi," she said brightly. "Millionaire patrons of art don't take secretary-accompanists to the movies unless they have ideas. If there are any invitations from millionaires flitting around, Madame wants them."

"Goodness gracious," said Longfellow, aghast. "I wouldn't go to the movies with her for anything in the world. Or anywhere. She's so—so conspicuous!"

"It's a labor of love with her," said Simonetta. "She takes pains over it. She'd rather be conspicuous than president. . . . I've got to get back. Are you asking me to go to the movies with perfectly gentlemanly motives, or not?"

"Would you?"

"I'll try anything once."

"When?"

"Well, King Cophetua, it isn't for the beggar maid to say. But Pomponi's going to a dinner at the Garrisons' tomorrow night, so I'll have the evening free."

"Would—I mean, would it be all right if we went to dinner first? To a hotel or some place?"

"Some place, by preference," she said. . . . "Gosh, I got to skeddaddle! If you are on the up-and-up about it, the Cortillon at seven-thirty."

"At seven-thirty," said Longfellow, as she flitted away toward the stage.

He handed his stub to an usher and was shown to his seat. It was a vast auditorium, and unlike any he had ever visited. He stared covertly at the tiers of boxes and the dingy embellishments and took note that the orchestra was bigger even than that in the big movie house in Boston. That was something. It was the first sign of get-up-and-get he had seen.

Then, after considerable music, the stage was revealed, and it was a ruin in a jungle, and an old Hindu was so discontented about something as to be almost savage. Just what his complaint was Longfellow did not understand—but it was clear he was disgruntled. Also, there was a Hindu lady who turned out to be Madame Pomponi, and Longfellow wondered if she were the old Hindu's wife and the reason for his bad disposition. They sang duets, and then a British officer who came almost up to Pomponi's shoulder, but was of equal weight, burst through a fence of rather dubious bamboo and started right in to make what Simonetta had called passes at Madame Pomponi, and almost instantly kindled a passion in all of her bosom. Then he went away, and the old Hindu came back and was very angry.

AFTER a while there came an end of the act. In the second act Longfellow recognized the old Hindu in the rags of a beggar, and Madame was with him, and he had a dagger which, apparently, he was simply perishing to use. And Madame stood up and sang a song that had a lot of runs and trills and things in it. Longfellow enjoyed it and thought Madame could do wonderful tricks with her voice, and paid her the sincere compliment of thinking she would do very well with a piece like that in vaudeville. It was, of course, the *Bell Song*. The English officer apparently recog-

nized Madame, as who would not, her ensemble being of a character to thwart disguise, and the old Hindu recognized the officer as the one who broke down his fence, though just what Sherlockian methods were employed one would be unable to say. So he stabbed the officer and became quite cheerful for the first time.

As the performance continued obscurely, Madame Pomponi nursed the officer in a hut in the forest, but the wound was not of sufficient severity to interfere with his singing voice, which remained hale and hearty, so he and Madame sang at each other. Then Madame went out for a drink or something, and another Britisher came in, and he and the first one argued in cadenzas, as one might say, but what about was never apparent to Longfellow. Then Madame came back and apparently something got caught crosswise, so she ate a flower, which even Longfellow could see presently was very bad for her, because she died, and for the second time the old Hindu was in a good humor about things. And that was that. There had been a great deal of applause in spots, but this seemed to come from men standing around behind, who kept at it quite industriously when the seated audience appeared ready to subside into lethargy. On the whole, he decided, it was not the kind of show to draw in a great many people.

He walked down the aisle, and as he reached the back he saw Bengold, his secretary, moving as a man moves who has a definite objective, toward the part of the house from which Longfellow guessed one reached the stage. He wondered a little about this, but forgot it as he reached the street and walked northward to look for a drugstore where he might get a soda.

LONGFELLOW found his soda, enjoyed it thoroughly, and strolled up Broadway to look in the windows. It is to be understood that he was not altogether frittering away his time, because as he walked and gazed he was working on a poem suitable for decennial home-comings such as villages throughout the country have each summer. It was going quite well:

Though for years the world I'll roam,  
Every ten I'll come back home.  
Under childhood's maple trees,  
Free of care I'll take my ease.

Before he knew it he was at his own front door, to which he discovered he had no key. It was locked, even in the daytime, so he was compelled to ring the bell. The servant who answered said to him as he entered, "A gentleman is waiting to see you, sir."

"Where?"

"In the reception-room, sir."

He turned to the small formal room at the left, where sat a youngish man, rather handsome in a flamboyant sort of way, and quite evidently of Italian parentage. Someone from the Opera, thought Longfellow. He bowed.

"Mr. Deeds?" asked the stranger.

Again Longfellow bowed. The stranger presented a card, upon which was engraved:

Mario Granzi  
Attorney and Counselor at Law

"How do you do, Mr. Granzi?" said Longfellow courteously.

"Very well, indeed. Very well. I have

called, Mr. Deeds, client. The matter great importance, by myself. May I suggest privacy can be assured? "Why, I guess anywhere," said Granzi. "Why will be all about the Opera?" "Only incidents"

THEY walked and entered the fellow motioned found a chair.

"Were you," ask with the habits an Victor Semple?"

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at Law rranzi?" said well. I have

called, Mr. Deeds, in the interests of a client. The matter is confidential and of great importance, both to my client and to myself. May I suggest that we talk where privacy can be assured?"

"Why, I guess we can be private almost anywhere," said Longfellow. "The library will be all right. Is it something about the Opera?"

"Only incidentally," said Mr. Granzi.

THEY walked up the broad staircase and entered the library, where Longfellow motioned to a seat and himself found a chair.

"Were you," asked Mr. Granzi, "familiar with the habits and personality of the late Victor Semple?"

"Not to speak of," said Longfellow.

"He was, if I may use the term, a man of dual personality. As a business man he deserves nothing but admiration; as a man of culture and taste he deserves nothing but praise; but, I regret to say, Mr. Deeds, he suffered from a weakness of character, of moral fiber."

"Is that so? I never heard about it. What was this weakness?"

"Ladies," said Mr. Granzi succinctly.

"Oh," said Longfellow.

"But it is in only one lady that I am interested. It is only one I represent. It may be you will hear from others. I cannot say, I, myself, represent Mrs. Victor Semple."

"Eh? You mean Mrs. Victor Semple?"

"Precisely. Mr. Victor Semple's wife and the mother of his daughter. A child of some eleven years."

"Well, my goodness, I never knew he had married again."

"It was known to very few persons," said Granzi. "As a matter of fact, it was not exactly a marriage in the commonly accepted meaning of that term. It was a common-law marriage."

"What's that?" asked Longfellow.

"It is a marriage not solemnized before priest, minister, or official empowered to marry. It is a marriage entered into by the consent of the parties and made binding by affirmation. Such marriages are recognized in law, and are as binding as if solemnized by a bishop."

"I never heard of such a thing," said Longfellow. "It doesn't seem right. How does anyone prove they are married that way?"

"A pertinent point. The pertinent point. It may be proved by letters. It may be proved by the testimony of individuals. It may be proved by facts which prove the parties lived as man and wife and considered themselves to be such."

"Kind of a careless way, I should think," said Longfellow. "I don't know as I'd take much stock in it. I mean, anybody could claim she was married to anybody if she doesn't have to show any certificate. And anybody could just up and claim he wasn't married at all if the lady didn't have a certificate to prove he was. Like that."

"In this instance," said Mr. Granzi, "ample proof exists. Ample."

"Well, that's good. I mean for her sake, but she was taking an awful chance."

"Doubtless there were sufficient reasons," said Mr. Granzi. "Business and social reasons. But, fortunately, our proofs are conclusive."

"I wouldn't get married that way myself," said Longfellow firmly. "A girl ought not to have to run around to get proof she's married. It isn't fair to her."

"I'm pleased you look at it in that light, Mr. Deeds. It will make our negotiations a simple matter."

"What negotiations?"

"For possession of the estate of the late Victor Semple," said Mr. Granzi.

Longfellow's first emotion was one of embarrassment. Mr. Granzi must think him very dumb not to have seen that point at once—that if Mr. Semple had a wife and daughter then he—a rather distant relation—could not be the heir. In that case all these millions would not belong to him, but to Mrs. Semple and her child! It would put him right back where he was before Mr. Cedar had informed him of his good fortune.

"If," he said presently, "Mrs. Semple is really Mrs. Semple—and there is a child—then there do not have to be any negotiations, do there? I mean it is all hers. She would just take it?"

"Undoubtedly—in the end," said Mr. Granzi. "But you are in possession. The law has recognized you as the heir. It has seemed wiser, therefore, to resort to negotiation rather than to the courts—in the beginning. If we can reach a satisfactory arrangement we need never appeal to the courts."

"You mean if I would just step out and let you have it?"

"Or, let us say, if you would spare my client the embarrassment of flaunting her private affairs before the public—and if you wished to spare the memory of Mr. Semple—if you were to turn over to my client a substantial share of the estate."

"Why," asked Longfellow, "would she take a share when she is entitled to all?"

"It is always wise to avoid litigation," said Mr. Granzi. "And scandal."

ANOTHER point occurred to Longfellow: "Why didn't she say something about this before? I mean right after Mr. Semple died?"

"Unfortunately she was not represented by counsel at that time. She did not know what to do. My client is an impractical person—an artist."

"Opera?" asked Longfellow.

"A ballerina," said Granzi.

"That's a dancer?"

"Yes. Mrs. Semple is a dancer," said Granzi.

"If I were doing it," said Longfellow, "I don't think I would do any compromising. I would say that the estate was mine fair and square, and I wanted it. I would say right out that I was Mrs. Semple, and not just a woman that had lost her honor."

"But she is sensitive. She is an artist."

"Well, what is this lady's idea? I mean, if she doesn't want all of the estate, what does she want?"

"She will be content," said Granzi, "with two million dollars."

"Well," said Longfellow, "she isn't so very impractical after all, is she?"

Granzi opened a brief-case. "You will naturally wish to see some of the proofs upon which our case rests," he said.

"I suppose I might as well," Longfellow said. "I don't know very much about law and proofs. Almost always there are letters, aren't there? It is funny how men write to people they ought not to write to

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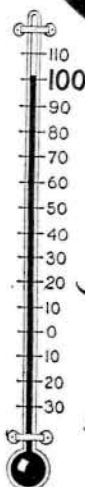
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and always say things that sound funny when they are read to juries."

"It is human nature," said Granzi. "When a man is in love with a woman he wishes to tell her so."

"Maybe," said Longfellow, "but I should think he could wait till he saw her. What is this lady's name?"

"Mrs. Semple, you mean?"

"I guess I won't call her Mrs. Semple yet," said Longfellow.

"Her maiden name," said Granzi, "was Nina Motti."

Longfellow did not want to talk to Mr. Granzi any more. He wanted to think it over by himself.

"I'll tell you how it is," he said. "This is a kind of a surprise. It wants thinking about. I don't want to do anything off-hand. I was doing pretty well before I got all this money, and I haven't got used to it yet. Maybe I'll like it better when I do. But, anyhow, if it is mine I shall keep it. On the other hand, if it isn't mine, I don't know whether I would feel very bad or not. I don't know. So you just leave these proofs you claim you have so I can look at them, and go away."

"But I haven't stated our case."

"You don't need to—not to me. You've come out with the main facts. I don't mind telling you they look fishy to me. And if I was a jury I would look at you, Mr. Granzi, and I would ask myself if a man that looked like you do would be apt to put up a job on anybody. Lots of times you can tell just by looking at a person. And you look to me like a man that would put up a job. You look kind of sleek."

"Young man," said Granzi ominously, "you are doing yourself no good by being insulting."

"Oh, I didn't mean to be insulting," said Longfellow. "I was just thinking out loud. Now, maybe this lady is all you say and just happened to pick a lawyer like you. If she is, it's too bad. So I won't make up my mind about whether your claim is all right. I'll just say that on account of you it is apt to be skulduggery. That's fair, isn't it?"

GRANZI leaped to his feet furiously and assumed a mien calculated to cow Longfellow, but the young man seemed quite unconscious of it.

"Anyhow," he said, "I've got some lawyers that cost an awful lot whether they work or not. Their name is Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle. And I'll put them to work on this. But, Mr. Granzi, I'll tell you what. You better think it over, too, because if this is a put-up job you're apt to get into trouble."

"Your attorneys," said Granzi, "will advise settlement."

"Maybe. But," said Longfellow firmly, "the law doesn't say I got to take their advice. I've been in business. And my father used to say not to take anybody's advice if it went against your better judgment. So, even if Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle advised me to settle, and I thought this was what the papers call a confidence game or something, I would not settle at all. I would tell you to go ahead if you weren't afraid to."

"Surely you wouldn't want to wash all this dirty linen before the public."

Longfellow regarded him gravely. "I don't see why not," he said. "I didn't get any of it dirty." He stood up and rang a

bell. "This," he said, "is one nice thing about being rich. I mean, you can ring bells and things happen. Servants come to ask what you want. It is very handy. When this servant comes I am going to tell him to show you the door."

"You will live to regret this day," said Granzi.

"There's this about it," said Longfellow, "I can't be any worse off than I was a month ago. But you can be in prison. Er—Wilson, show Mr. Granzi where the door is."

"Yes, sir. . . Mrs. Garrison is calling."

"Here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ask her to come right in," said Longfellow. "Good-bye, Mr. Granzi."

Granzi, scowling, followed the servant from the room.

MRS. GARRISON appeared in the door.

"My dear Longfellow!" she exclaimed. "I have not been neglecting you. Indeed not! Far, far from it!" Her conversation was in exclamation points. "But one has so much to do. It's much more friendly than telephoning, don't you think? Tomorrow evening at eight."

"Yes, ma'am," said Longfellow. He did not know exactly what sentence of her series of exclamations he was answering, and, realizing this suddenly, considered it wise to ask, "Tomorrow evening at eight—what?"

"Dinner," said Mrs. Garrison. "Just a cozy little dinner of sixteen! People you must know."

"You mean you want me to come to your house to dinner tomorrow night?"

"At eight," said Mrs. Garrison. "I've got to run. At eight."

"But—" said Longfellow.

"White tie," said Mrs. Garrison cryptically.

Longfellow felt of his neckwear. It was not white; it was red and blue striped. "I can't," he said.

She paused and stared. "You can't what?" she asked in astonishment.

"Come to your house to dinner tomorrow night."

"And why not, pray?"

"Because I've got a date. I mean I have a previous engagement."

"With whom?" she asked indignantly. Longfellow batted his eyes. It did not seem to him that she had a right to ask him such a question, but he was unacquainted with the usages of New York society, and it might be eminently correct to do so. "With Miss Petersen," he said.

"I know no Miss Petersen. Call her up and tell her you can't come. She can't matter. At eight o'clock." Again she turned to take her departure.

"I can't," said Longfellow.

"And why not, I should like to know?"

"I promised. I'm—I'm meeting her at the Cortillon. I said I'd be there."

"May I ask where you met this Miss Petersen? May I ask who she is?"

"She is Madame Pomponi's secretary and accompanist."

"Ah," said Mrs. Garrison, studying him with saturnine eye. "Ah. Well, it seems to me you can carry on that sort of affair on an evening when I am not giving a dinner. Is she pretty?"

"She is very nice-looking."

"It seems Mrs. Garrison an old roué!"

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"It seems to run in the blood," said Mrs. Garrison tartly. "Victor Semple was a roué!"

"I am not a roué!" said Longfellow. "I have the highest respect for Miss Peter-

Mrs. Garrison raised her brows. But she contented herself by repeating, "Eight o'clock."

"No, ma'am," said Longfellow. "But at another time."

THEN he remembered Granzi and the situation in which he now found himself—a man with his inheritance threatened. It might turn out that he was not a millionaire at all, but only a poet, and that would make a difference. It might make a big difference with Mrs. Garrison.

"Now, I tell you what, Mrs. Garrison," he said, "maybe you better wait. Maybe you better not invite me to dinner till we see how it turns out. Maybe you wouldn't want to bother to invite me to dinner or anything. You better wait and see."

"Wait and see what?"

"Oh, there's a thing that has come up—a kind of a thing that might make a difference."

"You're not going to marry this Peter-son person?"

"Goodness, no."

Then it can't make any difference. Boys will be boys—and my experience is that men will be men. But I hope you use more brains than Victor Semple did. His women cost him plenty. He never used any judgment."

"Yes'm," said Longfellow.

"You're adamant?"

"I got to be," said Longfellow.

"Well, I hope it doesn't cost you much."

She was gone, and Longfellow picked up the telephone to speak to Mr. Cedar, but Mr. Cedar was in Washington and would not return for twenty-four hours.

"I'll wait till he gets back," Longfellow said. "I guess nothing will happen till then."

He picked up a newspaper and glanced at the first page. Then he turned to another page, where there was a column which told Where One Should Dine. He read this and learned that at Le Lapin Rouge one was likely to meet the élite of the literary and intellectual world. One might sit at a table and hear poets and authors and composers and essayists and manufacturers of *belles lettres* clinking their knives and forks. This aroused his keen interest. He looked at his watch and found it to be seven-thirty o'clock. And then a servant appeared in the door and announced that dinner was served.

Longfellow stood up; then he sat down again. He wanted to dine at Le Lapin Rouge. Of a sudden he determined he would dine at Le Lapin Rouge, come what might. He fixed the servant with a determined look.

"I'm going out some place to eat," he said firmly.

"Yes, sir," said the servant.

It was as easy as that! He arose, descended the stairs, procured his hat, opened the front door, and stepped out into the street. He strolled down the Avenue to Sixty-second Street, where he turned toward the east, and presently found himself under an orange canopy upon which was painted the name of the literary restaurant which was his objective. He entered.

Longfellow was somewhat disappointed. Somehow, the place did not have what he considered a literary atmosphere. He found himself in a long, narrow room which resembled remotely a Pullman car with little tables in compartments where the berths should be. A waiter conducted him to a seat. The waiter placed a card before him, but Longfellow did not give it his attention.

"Good evening," said Longfellow.

"Good evening," said the waiter.

"I read in the paper," Longfellow said confidentially, "that a good many poets and authors and people like that came to this place. So I thought I would come. I am a poet myself," he said diffidently, "and that is why I am interested. I live in New York now. I would be very much obliged to you if you would kind of point out some famous people and tell me who they are. It would be a great favor."

"We get 'em all," said the waiter.

"Sure, I'll point 'em out."

"I'm not the kind of poet that has them printed in bound volumes nor in magazines," Longfellow said confidentially. "I write most of the ones you see on post cards."

"Is zat so!" exclaimed the waiter admiringly. "What you going to have?"

"I think I shall have some lamb chops and potatoes, and some coffee. Are there any famous people here now?"

"The place is crawlin' with 'em," said the waiter. "See that big lummo across there? Well, that's Percival Dide, and the skirt with him just won some kind of a prize with a book. Her name's Zinzer."

"Goodness! I've read Mr. Dide's stories in the magazines, but I never thought he looked like that. And—and Miss Zinzer just won the Pulitzer Prize. Goodness! Are there any poets?"

"We don't get many. I figger they don't eat much. Them two in the next stall is the editor of a magazine and a funny man that writes pieces for him. Name's Ted Santer. . . . Say, I seen your picture in the paper. I didn't make you at first. You're Mr. Deeds, ain't you?"

"Why, yes," said Longfellow.

"It was your mentionin' them post-card poems that made me spot you," the waiter said. Then he went away to fill Longfellow's order.

He appeared from the kitchen and paused at Dide's table and said something. Dide and his companion glanced across at Longfellow. The waiter passed on to Santer's table, and, after a word, Santer and his friend turned and stared. Longfellow, unconscious of the interest he generated, sat back and sharpened his ears in the hope of catching some fragments of the conversation of these dwellers upon Olympus.

THEN, suddenly, astoundingly, the great Percival Dide arose and walked to Longfellow's table; his enormous heavy face was solemn, but his little, shrewd eyes were trying to conceal hopeful laughter.

"Mr. Deeds, isn't it?" he asked. "My name is Dide. We're all friendly and informal here. Know each other pretty well. Why don't you uproot yourself and come across and put on the nose bag with Miss Zinzer and me?"

Longfellow beamed. He had not dreamed of meeting such neighborliness in New



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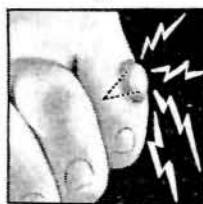
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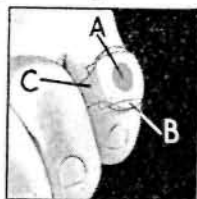
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York, and especially from an Immortal. He flushed with embarrassment.

"Why—why, I'd like to awfully well," he said. "I—when I came it was just to—you know—to look at people—famous people like you. I didn't have any idea of speaking to you."

"I speak to policemen," said Dide solemnly, "and milkmen. Democratic—that's me."

"Thank you—very much," said Longfellow, and he got up and accompanied the hugeness of the author to the table where Miss Zinzer sat. He was presented, but before he could sit down Santer's head appeared over the partition.

"I want in," he said plaintively. "Bill and I want in."

"Go peddle your tripe," said Dide. "This is a literary table."

"Come on, Bill," Santer said. "They want us." He fixed Longfellow with a sad eye. "My name's Santer. I can write swell obituaries. I know half a dozen I could turn out masterpieces with if they would only die. This is Bill. He picks my brains."

"Must use a jeweler's microscope," said Miss Zinzer tartly.

"She was just a publicity woman and a wisecracker until she assembled all the bright things she'd heard me say and put them in a novel."

IT WAS now a party of five. Santer turned to Longfellow. "What," he asked, "are your views upon the future of Opera in America?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand about Opera very well," Longfellow said simply. "I went to see one this afternoon for the first time. I—the way it struck me was that they won't get many people to come to see that kind of a show. I couldn't make any head or tail to it."

"Maybe you just don't like music," suggested Miss Zinzer.

"Oh, yes. I like music. And I play the tuba in our band."

"What more can you ask!" said Santer. "The Opera is in safe hands. Tell me, Mr. Deeds, you are a poet as well as a musician?"

"A kind of a poet," Longfellow said. "I write poems for post cards."

"For post cards. Think of that!" Santer said admiringly. "You wouldn't have one in your pocket, would you? I mean a card with one of your poems on it. I've got a lot of autographs of famous people, and if I could get you to write your name on one of your own post cards—"

"I have all of them in a scrapbook at home," Longfellow said.

"Um... Now, about the Opera. I gather you have some doubts."

"I just don't understand about it."

"You mean because it is sung in foreign languages?"

"I guess that's part of it. But I guess it would be a good idea if I didn't say anything at all until I've had a chance to study it more."

"Mr. Deeds," said Santer, "I've an idea. I think it is a splendid idea. The Opera certainly needs something. And I think the time is ripe. I think you are the very man to save it; to give it new life—perhaps new form. As I understand it, you are practically in control of the situation."

"I guess I am," said Longfellow.

"Then," said Santer, "why don't you write a new opera? In English. You are a poet. You could bring to the task a wealth of ability and experience. A man who can, as you do, go straight to the throbbing heart of the people with poems on any given subject, should have the ability, the art, the inspiration, to reach straight to the throbbing heart of the nation with a great, ringing, tear-compelling, emotion-stirring opera which even a child on the street could understand and love. Do you get the idea? Something with Home, and Mother, and all the deep and sacred things in it. Do you follow me, Mr. Deeds?"

Longfellow looked at Santer; he regarded Dide and Miss Zinzer and the editor Bill, and his eyes were hurt, as are the eyes of a friendly dog who is kicked when he has reason to expect nothing but a return of his friendliness.

"I guess I get the idea, Mr. Santer. That's your name, isn't it? I guess I follow you. I guess, Mr. Dide, I know why it was you invited me to come over to your table. I guess I understand it, and everything. It was to make fun of me."

"Oh, now—" commenced Santer.

"You will please not say anything more," said Longfellow, "and I will not say much of anything myself, only that it isn't the kind of a thing I would do if I was a celebrated person."

He paused and got to his feet. "Maybe you would be a joke in Mandrake Falls, but I don't believe anybody there would try to make you look ridiculous if you minded your own business and tried to be pleasant to people. We would overlook how funny you were, and we would have good manners enough to treat you decently."

He stopped again. "I never noticed," he said, "that it was comical to write poems for post cards—not until folks here in New York said some things that showed what they thought. But I wrote the best poems I could, and made a pretty good living, and people at home were kind of proud of me. So I'll be going now, and I've learned to keep away from famous people. I am sorry, because I admired you a good deal, and I am disappointed."

THERE was a silence as he turned away and walked toward the door; Dide, his broad face expressionless, craned his bull's neck to watch Longfellow take his hat. Then the big man shoved the table violently from him and surged to his feet.

"To hell with you," he said, "and with me, too."

He ploughed down the aisle, snatched his hat, and wallowed after Longfellow, whom he caught a few yards from the door, and his great ham of a hand dropped on the young man's shoulder.

"Say, you!" he said.

Longfellow turned, not without a certain dignity. Dide pointed to his own chin, which he thrust forward.

"Sock it, kid, if it'll do you any good," he said. "The difference between me and them is I know when I'm a louse. And say, kid, if I ever get in a jam like that I hope I handle myself like you did. You're regular. You're in. You belong. I don't give a damn if you paint portraits on shingles. Come on to a newsstand and I'll eat a peck of post cards raw. I got to get a binge and have a fight with a cop before I'll feel white again. If you're man's size

and don't hold me."

Longfellow's face, even wistful, he said. "I guess I guess—got a binge."

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and don't hold a grudge, come on and help me."

Longfellow's face softened, became boyish, even wistful. "I guess I am comical," he said. "I guess you're a pretty swell person. I guess—I guess—Mr. Dide, I never got a binge."

"You probably won't like it, and my friends call me Mike because my name is Percival. What's yours?"

"Longfellow."

"It's a good name, Hank," said Dide. "We will now look upon life in the raw." He looked over Longfellow's shoulder and turned savage of a sudden. "Say, mug, what's the idea?" he asked of one of two men who seemed to be loitering within earshot. "Whose pet gorilla are you, and why? Never step on the heels of a hippopotamus, and thank you for coming."

VERY unexpectedly, he smacked the stranger with such vigor that the man sprawled on the sidewalk, and his companion took to his heels. Dide dusted off his knuckles and grinned; then he peered with sudden gravity at Longfellow.

"I guess you'd better look out a little bit, Hank. Those lads were tailing you."

"Why?"

"Well," said Dide, "seeing as you're a billionaire it might be they had an idea of inviting you to go for a buggy ride."

"You don't mean kidnapping!"

"It could be," said Dide.

"Gosh," said Longfellow, "I got troubles enough without that."

"Why take a chance?" said Dide. "Now, maybe they just wanted to sneak up and slip a gold watch in your pocket. But, on the other hand— Anyhow, business is closed for the evening. But tomorrow is another day."

"You kind of surprise me," said Longfellow. "I've read your stories and they're—they're kind of romantic and—and tender and lovely. They're like that."

"They are my true self," said Dide solemnly. "It's realizing it that makes it highly essential for me to drown it all in hooch once a week. And tonight's the night."

"Must I get—get a binge?" asked Longfellow.

"Tell me," said Dide, "are you in love?"

"No."

"A good many people are," said Dide.

"Are you?" asked Longfellow.

"No. I fight with policemen. We'll ask this doorman what is his favorite color."

This was a bit bewildering.

"What," asked Dide of the functionary, "is your favorite color?"

The man, evidently accustomed to the vagaries of customers, considered the matter and answered, "Blue."

"Wrong," said Dide. "Meet my friend, Mr. Deeds. We are not coming in."

"Yes, sir," said the doorman.

"Probably," said Dide, "you will see a piece about us in the morning papers. My friend is a Vestal Virgin. He is about to meet Bacchus. I know a street cleaner whose name is Pilch. Want to go to the opera, Hank?"

"No."

"So do I," said Dide.

They passed on down the street unconscious that they were followed by four men who scattered along the block behind them—one with a sore jaw.

(To be continued)



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