

What has happened so far:

LONGFELLOW DEEDS was beginning to think that, by getting killed, his uncle, Mr. Victor Semple, had played him a dirty trick. Back in Mandrake Falls, Longfellow was content to be the town's only poet. But in New York, as a wealthy bachelor, life was miserable for him. If his uncle had left him only the giant fortune things might have been simpler, but there was also the controlling interest in the Continental Opera Company.

Longfellow had been accustomed to running a wool, hides, and fertilizer business on a paying basis. Therefore, it was somewhat of a shock to him to learn that he was expected to make up the opera's annual deficit. Not even Mr. Cedar, his lawyer, could satisfactorily explain why.

"Opera is an institution," he was told. "The public demands that you keep it alive."

"They can't demand it very hard," retorted Longfellow, "or they would buy more tickets to it. I've got to look into it."

And look into it he did. But several verbal combats with Madame Pomponi, a temperamental and voluble soprano of the opera company, and Signor Visconti, the musical director, who spoke no English and had to talk through an interpreter, left Longfellow weak and exhausted. Simonetta Petersen, secretary for Madame Pomponi, was the only breath of fresh air in the entire company. He immediately dated her for a movie show, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Garrison, a society leader, was doing her level best to make him her eligible daughter's dinner partner for the same evening.

Then, as if he didn't have enough troubles, along came a lawyer named Granzi who told Longfellow that Mr. Semple was a man of dual personality and had suffered from a weakness of moral fiber—for ladies. That there were living a Mrs. Victor Semple and a daughter eleven years old, by common-law marriage. And he, Granzi, had been retained by Mrs. Semple to claim the estate.

It is no wonder that Longfellow fled from his house and the weak sympathies of his inherited secretary, Roger Bengold, to seek refuge in Le Lapin Rouge, frequented by poets and literary lights. To an acquaintance of the moment, a Mr. Dide, he confided his problems.

"What you need is to go on a binge," declared Dide, and out into the night the two went.

Longfellow's further adventures follow. . . .



Opera Hat

By
**CLARENCE BUDINGTON
KELLAND**

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ILLUSTRATED BY
GEORGE HOWE

"Mott! Signorina Mott! In there!" the wardrobe woman quavered. The men stared in horror through the open door

LONGFELLOW DEEDS awoke on the morning following his expedition into the realm of *belles lettres* with a head that gave him some annoyance, and vague memories of epic performances and heroic companions. He rang for his breakfast.

"Morgan," he said to the servant who responded, "I came home kind of late, didn't I?"

"Yes, sir," said Morgan. "I let you in, sir."

"Did you—I mean, Morgan, was there—?"

"A trifle, sir."

"Would you say I had a binge?"

"It might be called that, sir."

"Mr. Dide said I would have one. Was he with me?"

"A very large man? Yes, sir. It was he who held me while you searched me."

"Searched you?"

"Yes, sir. You informed me you had been looking everywhere for a rhyme to McGonigle, and insisted I must have one on my person."

"Ah," said Longfellow.

"Then the large gentleman took his departure in search of a policeman. It was his idea, sir, which I sought to dis-

courage, to find one and bite the buttons off his uniform. You favored it, sir, and gave him your necktie as a guerdon, which he tied about his arm and, as one might say, sallied forth to carry on his knight errantry."

"I must have had a very nice time," said Longfellow, striving vainly to recall and enjoy it.

"A milk punch is very soothing next morning, sir."

"Morgan," said Longfellow, "literary celebrities are not exactly as I thought they would be."

AFTER a milk punch, a shower, and some breakfast, Longfellow felt much better; equal, in fact, to grappling with a problem. So he telephoned Mr. Cedar, who was not yet back from Washington. Therefore, having accustomed himself to regular, daily composition, he set to work on a collection of sample poems to be submitted to the Universal Telegraph Company. He would have done so in any event, but the visit of Mr. Granzi, with its threat to the security of his position as Victor Semple's heir, made this labor seem essential to him. It would not do to burn his bridges; he

must retain his contacts and be able to resume his accustomed position in Mandrake Falls should this common-law-wife business turn out to be something more than a plot by sharpers.

The day passed in a very frenzy of composition, the gem of which was an eight-line verse to be wired as Poem No. 34 by a gentleman on the occasion of being notified, while absent on a business trip, that he had become the father of a son. It ran:

My darling, you can't realize
How you have filled me with surprise.
You've taken me all unaware
By giving me a son and heir.

So went the first four lines; the second quatrain was more tender, intimate, and congratulatory. Longfellow felt he had covered the matter adequately from all angles, and that the new mother who received such a message over the wire would consider her achievement had not been without reward.

HE SCRUBBED the ink off his fingers and was inducted by his valet into a new suit of evening clothes, which, when he looked in the pier glass, gave him a respect for his person which he had never before experienced. He liked it. He looked like pictures he had seen in advertisements, depicting gentlemanly elegance, and it gave him a certain sensation of confidence. That mirrored image made him realize as nothing else had done the reality of his new position. It was quite believable that a young man who looked like that could be the master of millions.

At seven o'clock he prepared to leave the house, and was driven in his town car to the Cortillon, where a uniformed doorman opened the door for him to alight and bade him a hopeful good evening.

"How do you do?" replied Longfellow, pleased at this unexpected friendliness. "I ask for her at the desk, don't I?"

"Yes, sir, at the desk," said the doorman.

"I guess maybe I'm a little early," Longfellow hazarded.

"It's after seven, sir."

"Then I guess she'll be ready. Right in this way?"

"And turn to the right, sir."

He found the desk and asked for Miss Simonetta Petersen, who was informed that Mr. Deeds was calling, and responded that she would be down instantly.

She alighted from the elevator, but for an instant he did not recognize her. She wore a dress which made her seem smaller, slenderer than he remembered, and much more regal. She did not look at all like a secretary-accompanist, but like something very choice and fragile and rare and precious. He had not been aware that one of the things which at-

tracted him to her was her beauty, because, until she dressed deliberately to display her loveliness, she was so individual, so vivid of speech and manner, that one did not think about her appearance at first. She was lithe and graciously formed, and golden; there was something vastly different from the Mandrake Falls girls, even when they dressed up for an occasion. It was a manner, a poise, a sureness.

Longfellow was a little alarmed and very dubious, as one might be who thinks he has bought an apple and suddenly finds it turned into an intricate and ornate French pastry. He did not know exactly what to do about the pastry.

"How do you do?" she said directly, and extended her hand. "I wasn't sure you would appear."

"I always keep engagements," said Longfellow. He held her hand quite unconsciously and continued to stare at her.

"Absent-minded?" she asked, looking down at her imprisoned fingers. "Or is it your rheumatism?"

"I—well, the truth of the matter is, I didn't have any idea."

"I find most gentlemen have a definite idea. But just what idea didn't you have?"

"That you—I mean that you looked like what you look like."

"I do grow on people," she admitted. "I take it you are stunned. You are knocked for a loop." She made a little face. "It's a good line even if it isn't exactly original."

"YOU'RE always talking about a line or something," he complained. "But I'm talking about what happened. Yes'm, I am."

"Am what?"

"Kind of stunned," he said simply. "It's like this: I could meet society people, because Mrs. Garrison wants me to. And I've met her daughter, who looked like she came out of a world I didn't understand about, and that I wouldn't know what to talk to her about. But you looked like someone that would be just natural and friendly, and so I wanted to see you. And then," he finished rather lamely, "there you are."

"I hate to admit it, but you puzzle me," she said, "but I don't know as I care to stand the rest of the evening in front of an elevator discussing it. Were we going some place to eat, or was it your idea to stay right here in the lobby and see life?"

"I would like," he said, "to take you to a nice place—where there aren't any literary people."

"Why the yen against the high-brows?"

"They make fun of a person," he said. "Where shall we go?"

"I'm all dressed up," she said, "and naturally I want to give people a treat. I won't be selfish and go to a small place where only a dozen or so can see me. By

the way, you're not so foul yourself. That suit seems to have been made on purpose for you."

"I hoped you'd like it," he said, blushing with pleasure and embarrassment. "It was made to order."

"How about the Japanese Gardens at the Malcolm?" she asked.

"If you would like to go there," he said.

THEY entered his car and were driven to the Malcolm, where they were seated at a table just over the fence from a little stone pagoda. Simonetta perked her head and hummed an air.

"That's a pretty tune," Longfellow said. "What is it?"

"From *Madame Butterfly*," she answered.

"Oh, sure; one of those operas. I guess we better order; the man's waiting."

So they ordered, and while they did so Longfellow studied his companion covertly.

"I was wondering," he said, "how anybody gets to be a secretary to a prima donna? It's a funny kind of a job."

"It isn't so darn' much funnier than writing poems for postal cards," she retorted.

"Now, you listen," he said, "I'm getting sick and tired of everybody in New York making fun of that. It's honest, isn't it? And it pays. Now, I asked around some, and everybody tells me that poets who write other kinds of poems don't make a living at it. Maybe their poems are better than mine. I guess they must be. But I write the best poems I can. I can't write a poem like Milton or Shelley. But they didn't try any harder to write good ones than I do. They just happen to be a different kind. But when a fellow writes the only kind he can write, and makes a living at it and does the best he can, then I don't see why it is so comical."

"Put out your hand," said Simonetta.

He obeyed and she touched it. "You are real," she said, with a mock sigh of relief. "And score one for your side," she went on. "I never took a spanking before, but this one was kind of fun."

"Well," he said, "this isn't all fun for me. In the first place, you just wake up and find you are rich. I don't know anything about taking care of a lot of money. Then there's my valet. I—well, I can't get used to him hanging onto

the ends of my pants when I put them on. And there's the Opera, and what I ought to do about it. And, of course, there's this business about maybe I'm not the real heir, after all."

"What? What's that? Not the real heir?"

"There was a man, a lawyer," said Longfellow, "and he came to the house and said Mr. Semple had a kind of a wife—"

"What do you mean—kind of a wife?"

"Not married by a minister or even a justice of the peace, but they just told each other they were married and wrote it in letters to each other, and there was a baby, and he wanted two million dollars."

"He said old Semple had a wife and a child?"

"Yes."

"And what did you do?"

"WELL, I said to him that it might be true, but it sounded funny to me. But if it was true why would he take two million dollars instead of all of it? And why didn't he say something about it when Mr. Semple died and they were looking for an heir? And I told him if it was a shenanigan he'd better look out, because people got in jail for trying things like that."

"Oh. . . . And did he mention the lady's name?"

"She is a dancer at the Opera, and her name is Nina Motti."

"Motti! Oh, my goodness! And she



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claims to be Mr. Semple's widow. I'll bet somebody thought that up for her, because the idea of being a wife, mor- ganatic or otherwise, just wouldn't enter that lady's head."

"You mean she was an immoral per- son?"

SIMONETTA caught her breath. He was impossible, incredible. What did one say or do to such a young man? "Not immoral," she said. "No, indeed! Just lavish. And what are you going to do about it?"

"I always liked it in Mandrake Falls," he said.

"You don't mean you're going to take it lying down?"

"Oh, no. They've got to prove it. I didn't like the looks of this Lawyer Granzi, and I told him he looked like a man who would hatch a plot. So I said if this woman was entitled to anything she was entitled to all—or else to go to jail. And if the money is mine it is all mine, and I wouldn't stand for being gouged out of any of it."

"So what?"

"So I won't do anything, and see what comes of it."

He halted suddenly and stared.

"Goodness gracious, what's that?" he asked in a low voice.

Simonetta turned, to see entering the place a procession which, if it was not eccentric, was nonexistent. At the head of this parade walked a small man with sharp, but somehow charming, features, with bushy, iron-gray hair, on top of

which sat a derby hat apparently several sizes too small for him. It seemed to sit and rock on the very top of his head. In spite of the warmth of the evening he wore a coat with heavy fur collar and cuffs, and he carried an enormous cane. Behind him waddled a girl of perhaps fifteen, who was taller than her father and greatly broader; behind her waddled a second girl of about twelve years; then came a third of ten, a fourth of eight, a fifth of six. Each was a replica on smaller lines of the one who marched ahead. And in the rear billowed and ballooned one of the most enormous women Longfellow had ever surveyed—not tall, but of an amazing amplitude. This was, patently, the mother of the family, because each of the five daughters would, with the years, become a counterpart of this puffing, waddling, smiling rear-guard.

"Taglioni!" said Simonetta.

"Who is he?"

"Don't let him hear you ask that. Taglioni! The conductor. The most famous conductor in the world. He is so great he almost overshadows Visconti."

"I—I guess I'm getting kind of used to it," said Longfellow. "Everybody in the Opera is pretty peculiar, it seems as though. I never saw anything else like it."

"That," said Simonetta, "is because nothing else is like it."

"And I'm president of it!" He shook his head dolefully. "Tell me, Miss Petersen, how did you happen to get mixed up with this—this menagerie?"

"I wanted to sing," she said. "The

nearest I ever got to it has been thump- ing a typewriter. Like all saps I tried to get an audition. They wouldn't bother with me. But I did finagle a hearing from Pomponi." She made a delicious little face. "She listened to me and let off a snort and said I had a nasty, squeaking, unmitigated, unspeakable, foul voice and I ought to be a stenog- rapher. So I said I didn't agree with her, but that I could play the piano just as well as I could a writing machine, and why in blazes didn't she give me a job. She had just fired her current secretary and I've been with her ever since. She fires me, but I just don't quit. I stick around. Maybe some day I'll get a break."

"Can you sing?" he asked.

"Like a bloomin' canary," she said modestly.

"I'm not especially musical," said Longfellow. "Of course, I play the tuba."

"You haven't got it with you!" she said in alarm.

HE DID not reply to this manifest impertinence, but nodded his head two or three times. "When I get used to that dress," he said, "I still like you. I mean, the dress doesn't make much difference, really. I've been thinking about it. If you'd worn it the first time I saw you I would have been fooled. I wouldn't have wanted to know you bet- ter and take you to dinners and all like that. You hadn't ought to jump to con- clusions about folks on account of how they dress. Maybe I've been wrong about that Gar- rison girl."

"Don't you like to have a girl look nice when you take her out?"

"Why, yes," he said, "but I think a girl ought to let a fellow get acquainted with her first, before she fixes herself up so elegant. Then he would know she was her- self all the time, only dressed up. But if she's rigged out when he first sees her, why, he gets the idea that is the sort of person she is."

"You've a set of noble ideas," she said.

"For instance," he said, "if you are going to marry a girl it stands to reason she won't be dressed up and her nails painted red and her eyebrows almost all pulled out while she is around the house most of the time. She will be plain and sen- sible and fixed up to look after the housework. That's how he will see her nine tenths of the time, so that is how he ought to get ac- quainted with her. It is nice (Continued on page 166)



They had danced in big places and small. They had seen floor shows. Longfellow's education had begun

would simply have offered her more money."

"You're a brutal devil, Jim!" he said curtly. "Don't get it into your head that I'm feeling sentimental. It's an instinct in a man with property to perpetuate his blood. It's egotism. It's—survival. Claire," he added grimly, "seems to be the one loyalty my money has bought."

"You don't look for loyalty, Joel," I retorted. "You buy obedience."

The silence was abruptly rent by the distant bangs and rattles of an ancient car.

"Jeff," Joel said. "He thinks he's eloping."

They were ludicrous sounds in that twilight, expensive landscape.

"Great Scott!" Joel said, shuddering. "He bought that old car from one of the gardeners for thirty dollars. A girl like that!" He reached for the telephone.

Joel's life has made him direct. Power has made him indifferent to any opinion when his mind has chosen its groove. Without even a glance in my direction he

called up a steamship company and booked a last-minute passage on a boat headed for France. He sailed at midnight.

He said, "Jim, you can't leave me tonight. Somebody will have to make my apologies for me and sweep up the house party." . . .

WELL, that was 1930. I am still in charge of Joel's affairs. Jeff is in China with the boss who took him to Quebec. In 1932 Mary's son was born in an engineering camp. Jeff's letter, is still in Joel's desk, neatly folded:

Dear Joel:

Tramp II anchored in Mary's life and mine at daybreak this morning. Mother and son swell. Father still wobbly.

I've just been up on the carpet trying to make the boss understand why the whole darned company walked me up and down while my son was signaling his advent. The truth of it was I had to have moral support or curl up and die. The boss thinks I just naturally kick up commotions, because the men started cheering at daybreak and woke him up. If I don't get

them back on the job on time, he'll be sore. How are you, Joel? JEFF

How are you, Joel? Jeff, holding out his hand. Jeff, too generous to remember what it's best to forget.

A few minutes ago, the knob of the office door in the town house slightly rattled, and something made an irreverent blowing sound in the general direction of the keyhole and giggled. My mind filled in behind the knob a small, disorderly boy with skinned knees, rumpled hair, and fine blue eyes.

He urged in a wheedling voice:

"Pop, lemme in. It's Joey."

That's the nearest he can come yet to pronouncing his name. It's "Joel."

"That kid," Joel said, scowling at me as if in some subtle sense some of the fault is mine, "is getting to be a nuisance. He comes in here and upsets ink all over my papers. He's exactly like Jeff."

"Don't let him in," I said.

"You're a cold-blooded devil, Jim," he said tranquilly.

He opened the door.



(Continued from page 67)

to know she can deck herself out so she will look useless and kind of insipid and beautiful for parties. But it's how she looks every day that really counts."

"Am I to understand by this that you are thinking about marrying me?" she asked.

"Not exactly," he said earnestly, "but when a fellow sees a girl he likes he wonders about it. He wonders how it would be if he was to marry her."

"Well, how do you feel? Am I to have hopes? Can I grab a crumb of encouragement?"

"I WISH," he said, "you wouldn't all the time be making fun of me." Then he frowned. "I wonder," he said, "if I just came to town and met you, and I wasn't a millionaire and president of the Opera and such things, but just a poet from Mandrake Falls, if you would go out to dinner with me."

"Probably not," she said. "I'm snooty and I'm mercenary."

"I wouldn't be surprised," he said rather unexpectedly. "Since I came to town I haven't met but one person who seemed to have any interest at all in me—I mean me, as a human being."

"Who was that?"

"A fellow by the name of Dide. He's an author." He changed the subject abruptly: "Do you think I ought to give a

lot of money to the Opera to keep it going?"

"If you've got it to spare I'd say yes."

"Why?"

"I don't want to talk about Opera or anything serious," she said. "I want to have some fun. I want to go some place and dance. I want to be entertained. Let's eat and then go places."

He looked at her gravely. "You're lonesome, too, aren't you?" he asked. "You are kind of low in your mind, like I am. I guess it can't be much fun working for Madame Pomponi. But you'll have to show me how to have a good time in New York. I just don't know how."

"Mr. Deeds," she said, "prepare yourself for a liberal education."

So it was that he arrived with Simonetta at her hotel at two o'clock in the morning. They had danced in big places and small. Longfellow was tired. As they waited for the elevator he leaned wearily against the wall.

"So that's what you call having a good time?" he asked, not ironically, but with a desire to know.

She stared at him, and suddenly her eyes filled. "No, you sap. If you must know, I don't."

"You poor kid," he said softly.

"If you make me cry," she said, "I'll belt you."

"Do you know," he said, "I think I like you more than I thought I was going to."

"Now I can go to bed happy," she said sharply.

"It never does anybody any harm to know that somebody likes them," he said, "even if it is a policeman or a tramp or even a dog. There's no reason for you to get snippy about it."

"I'll be as snippy as I like, when I like, and to whom I like."

"Good night," said Longfellow, "and thank you for coming with me."

He turned away, but before he had gone half a dozen steps she spoke his

name. "Mr. Deeds," she said in a very low voice, "I am glad you like me. Honestly. And will you take me to dinner again?"

He beamed. "You bet," he said delightedly. "Lots of times. Good night." . . .

"Now, you look here," said Longfellow helplessly, in his room at home; "I want at least to get into my bed alone. I want to take off my pants without you grabbing the cuffs of them. I get embarrassed with a complete stranger watching every move I make."

"I am not a complete stranger, sir; I am your valet."

"All right. I s'pose it's got to be a habit with you. But if you can't get to sleep without pulling off somebody's pants, go and—and pull off the butler's."

"He has retired, sir."

"Then," said Longfellow, "get him up again. He works for me—doesn't he?—and he has to do what I tell him—within reason. And if I want to pay him wages for having my valet pull off his pants I've got a right to ask it."

"If you will pardon me, sir, your proposition is absurd, sir."

AS AIKES finished this observation there came a knock upon the door, and Longfellow said, "Come in." A footman stood upon the threshold.

"Two gentlemen calling, sir. Mr. Percival Dide and Mr. Angelo Piazza."

"At this hour!"

"The callers, sir, are in a condition which makes them indifferent to the hour."

Longfellow sighed. He was tired. He wanted to get into bed and to think about the evening just past, for it had been a pleasant one; but his brief acquaintance with Mr. Dide convinced him that it might be best to receive his friend and have done with it.

"Show them up," he said.

Presently the huge Mr. Dide appeared and greeted Longfellow joyously.

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"I knew it was a good idea," he said. "I knew I'd find you chipper and up to your larynx in valets. Something told me you would be eager to see me, so, true friend that I am, I come in your hour of need."

"I am glad to see you," said Longfellow rather primly.

"People always are. I'm weary. Brain fog. The effort of creation, which you, a fellow craftsman, will understand. It's not the actual writing, Hank. I almost forgot I was going to call you Hank. It's the collecting of material, the research. Meet Mr. Piazza. I'm studying his habits."

"How do you do, Mr. Piazza?" said Longfellow politely.

"Business," said Piazza, "ain't so good since Repeal."

"Ah," said Longfellow.

"ANGELO," said Dide negligently, "is a gunman. First-class. Notches in his gun. I'm thinking of writing a novel which shall picture the pitiful decline of the gangster from his once high estate. One of those heart-rending human documents. So I go around with Angelo and watch him decline."

"Very interesting, I'm sure."

"I want to flop," said Angelo. "Let's scam."

"But, child of nature, we're staying here the night. Aren't we, Hank?"

"Why—why, certainly, if you wish."

"He's simple and direct," said Mr. Dide, "but housebroken."

Angelo grunted, jerked a thumb at Dide, and observed, "He's blowed his top."

"Why was it," Dide asked his companion, "that we decided to spend the night with Hank?"

"I don't care so long's we start spendin' it."

A servant arrived with some refreshments, which Dide consumed enthusiastically and Mr. Piazza somewhat glumly.

"I want to flop," repeated Mr. Piazza.

Longfellow was a bit bewildered but he arose to the occasion nobly. "Show these gentlemen to their rooms," he said, with a spurious air of nonchalance.

"He's screwy," Angelo said in an explanatory manner, "but it's all right wit' me."

"Good night," said Longfellow.

"A very interesting character," said Mr. Dide. "We will study him together. Just like a baby. Is the sandman coming, Angelo?"

"Nerts," said the big Italian.

"Good night," repeated Longfellow.

The incursion might have seemed more eccentric to one acquainted with the ways of the city, with the habits of famous romantic authors and gunmen in their decline. Longfellow accepted it with equanimity and was thankful Dide had not insisted upon a further foray into the night life of the town. In a twinkling he was in bed, and, almost before his head touched the pillow, he was asleep.

Bengold awakened him in the morning.

"Mr. Cedar is on the telephone," said the secretary.

"Ask him if he will come up at once," directed Longfellow. "Something pretty important has come up that he ought to know about."

"Very well. Anything else, sir?"

"There are a couple of guests sleeping here. Are they up?"

"Mr. Dide is up and gone," said Ben-

gold, "but the other—gentleman seems to be still asleep."

It was a half-hour before Mr. Cedar was announced. By this time Longfellow was dressed and had breakfasted.

"While you were gone," said Longfellow, "something came up. It is about Mr. Semple's wife and child. I mean the lady who claims she is Mr. Semple's wife. She sent a lawyer by the name of Granzi—"

"Granzi!" exclaimed Mr. Cedar with evident distaste.

"And he claims she is his common-law wife and she wants to settle for two million dollars."

"If I follow you," said Mr. Cedar, "this is very serious."

"It looked kind of that way to me. So I guess you'd better talk to him, and see the letters and all. But I think it is a plot, for a couple of reasons, and if it is I will not give them two million dollars."

"I regret to say," said Mr. Cedar, "that splendid as Mr. Semple was as a man of business, he was regrettably susceptible to women of a certain type. I am alarmed. In the case of a man of Mr. Semple's habits, anything can happen."

"From what I hear," said Longfellow, "he might have got shot, or he might have been blackmailed, but he wasn't very apt to get married."

"That must be determined," said Mr. Cedar gravely. "In any event our correct procedure in the matter will be to await their move. Doubtless this Granzi will communicate with me. By the way," Mr. Cedar continued, "did he mention the woman's name?"

"Nina Motti," said Longfellow.

"Oh, dear! That woman. Well, what can't be cured must be endured. I will have the matter in hand, be assured. It will be handled with discretion."

"It doesn't seem to me," said Longfellow, "to be discretion we need most."

"Indeed. I think you may safely leave the conduct of the matter to Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle."

"Anyhow," said Longfellow, "I'll try you. I'm paying you, so I'd better see what you can do."

"Good morning," said Mr. Cedar, and made a very dignified exit from the library.

LONGFELLOW sighed. He had work to do, a poem to produce, but never had he wooed the muse in more trying circumstances. Writing poetry required a free mind and an untrammelled imagination. It required a measure of placidity and a minimum of turmoil. He sighed again and sharpened a pencil.

No ideas occurred to him for some time. Then, through the window, came the screech of the siren of a fire engine on its mission of mercy. It shrieked and passed. Longfellow closed his eyes.

Of the wail of that engine was born what is possibly Longfellow Deeds's masterpiece. Not only was it an idea from the artistic standpoint, but it was commercial. It was, in short, a valentine to be sent by lonely, waiting sweethearts to members of the fire department who kept, in their engine houses, a strictly masculine vigil over the incendiary potentialities of a great city. His pencil commenced to move.

He wrote swiftly, for the thing appeared in his mind as an entity, a perfect whole. It was necessary only to refine and to make

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Fast Ones

By W. E. FARBSTEIN



DRAWING BY WAYNE HALL

"If the government would only realize that the people of this country have brains!"
—JAMES A. REED, former Senator from Missouri.

The total brain weight of the adult people of this country is about 111,000 tons.

★ ★

"Spinach is all right—if you like it."—MISS GRACE ABBOTT, former chief of the Children's Bureau in Washington.

Americans like spinach well enough to eat 5,000,000 pounds of it a week.

★ ★

"We live in an age of small men."—REV. DR. WILLIAM J. BARNES, of Easton, Pa.

A scientist at the American Museum of Natural History reports that man is getting taller all the time and will reach giant size in 500,000 years.

★ ★

"Every man is an Atlas carrying the world."—G. K. CHESTERTON, English wit and essayist.

The world's weight is about 65 trillion times as great as the combined weight of all the people who inhabit it.

★ ★

"I don't see how there could be a crime problem in a community with so much music as Honolulu."—DR. LEO T. STANLEY, physician of San Quentin Prison.

An investigator for the League of Nations listed jazz music as one of the five major causes of juvenile crime in the United States.

★ ★

"Beauty demands an adequate nose and a rather full mouth."—HAYDEN HAYDEN, noted portraitist.

The Statue of Liberty's nose is 4 feet 6 inches long; her mouth is 3 feet wide.

"Too many people think that praying is like sending notes to Santa Claus."—REV. MORGAN PHELPS NOYES, of the Central Presbyterian Church at Montclair, N. J.

Every Christmas, 1,000,000 people send mail to Santa Claus (Ind.) for remailing with a Santa Claus postmark.

★ ★

"Even golf is mathematics, although we admit it is not pure mathematics."—PROF. CHARLES S. SLICHTER, of the University of Wisconsin.

A hard-hit golf ball, if it continued to travel at its maximum speed, would completely circle the earth in a week.

★ ★

"Ten million new bathtubs could be used in this country today."—IRÉNÉE A. DU PONT, munitions manufacturer.

The Potsdam Palace of ex-Kaiser Wilhelm has 600 rooms—but it has only 2 bathrooms.

★ ★

"If I kept on playing much longer, I'd be tripping over my whiskers."—BABE RUTH.

Europe's champion mustache-grower's whiskers measure 4 feet and 3 inches from wing tip to wing tip.

★ ★

"I spent forty years in learning how to write."—GERTRUDE STEIN, author of unconventional style.

Almost 4,000,000 adults in the United States cannot write in any language what soever.

★ ★

"The only true standard is what is in one's pocketbook."—PERCY H. JOHNSTON, financier, of New York.

George Washington had an \$8 bill in his pocketbook when he crossed the Delaware.

limpidly perfect. At the end of three hours of toil he looked at what he had done and found it good:

Dear, in my heart hot fires spout,
But no one comes to put them out.
I burn for you,
My laddie true,
Why must you seek another blaze
Whilst I sit here with burning gaze?
My third alarm
Is love's sweet charm.
Come sliding down that polished pole
To find a welcome in my soul.

It must not be thought this was the random product of a moment of inspiration. Words had to be compared and weighed and valued, so that only the exact and perfect one should remain and the poem should be given to the world as a work of loving and painstaking art. Longfellow sank back in his chair exhausted but happy.

THEN, of a sudden, he remembered his guest, and called a servant. "Is Mr. Piazza up yet?" he asked.

"I will see, sir."

It was very like Dide, Longfellow thought, to get himself in a state of elation, pick up a strange companion, burst in upon an acquaintance, demand refreshments and bed, and then walk out without a word, leaving his host to gather up the pieces.

The servant returned. "Mr. Piazza has awakened. He will be down directly."

In fifteen minutes the man arrived, staring about him uncomfortably.

"Where's the big boy?" he asked.

"Gone," answered Longfellow.

"He would," said Piazza bitterly.

"Did you sleep well?"

"Yep," said Mr. Piazza, continuing to stare around him. "Some dump!" he exclaimed admiringly.

"So," observed Longfellow encouragingly, "the depression has hit your business?"

"And how! Big shots cut down to boy's size. Listen, it's tough. When the head men was musclin' in on each other you could pick up a payin' job any day—with a cut in. Easy work, too, just trailin' along with some feller to see he didn't get plugged. And I give satisfaction, too. Not a bozo I was bodyguardin' ever got put on the spot."

"Indeed!"

"Yeah, but wit' this here Repeal the big dough is nix. The boys don't go around knockin' each other off. Listen; here I got a profession and it's all I know, but I can't earn nothin' at it."

"That," said Mr. Longfellow, striving hospitably to express his sympathy, "is a condition one must expect with changing times. You must—er—you must readjust yourself to meet the new conditions."

"Adjust, eh? What I got to adjust? I can't bring on no beer wars, can I?"

Longfellow thought the situation over, but no efficient advice occurred to him. Then the word bodyguard recurred in his thoughts.

"You guard people, eh?"

"Mister, I've done jobs of bodyguardin' that was as perty as a picture. I was tops. It's a business you got to study. It's a kind of an art, if you git what I mean."

"A man may justly take pride in his work," said Longfellow. "Have you had any experience with kidnappers?"

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"Me? Mister, knockin' off snatchers was a specialty. I went into it from all angles, that's what I done. I used to set awake nights studyin' about it."

"Ah," said Longfellow.

At that moment a servant entered with a special delivery letter on a small tray. Longfellow opened it, and his jaw dropped. It was a message, printed in lead pencil and signed with a symbol, which, oddly enough, consisted of two intersecting hearts, each with a significant hole punched in its middle. It said, in effect, that one hundred thousand dollars was demanded of him; that he was to get this amount in small bills, appear at Broadway and Forty-second street at eight o'clock Friday and walk south. A red-headed boy would walk directly toward him and stumble as they met. To this boy he was to pass the envelope containing the money. If he obeyed these directions he would not be molested; if he failed to obey them he would be snatched away for a ransom of five times the original sum.

Without a word he handed the message to Piazza.

"Diggity!" exclaimed Mr. Piazza.

"What," asked Longfellow, "are your terms?"

"You mean, to take on the job of guardin' you?"

"Exactly."

"Mister," said Piazza eagerly, "the rates is down. Fifty smackers a day to you, and results guaranteed."

"It's a deal," said Longfellow.

PIAZZA'S unlovely face worked. Longfellow even fancied there was moisture in his eyes. He swallowed. "I can't hardly wait to tell the wife and kiddies," he said huskily, "that their Pa's got work again."

"Are you prepared to start at once?"

"Sooner," said Piazza.

"Excellent. Er—by the way, I must go to the Opera this afternoon. You will not object to accompanying me? I must tell you that my duties require frequent attendance."

"What they singin'?" asked Piazza.

"Aïda," said Longfellow.

Piazza nodded. "D'ye know," he said, "I was always bothered why the old bozo—the feller Verdi—didn't bear down more on them two melodies that come along just after the *Numa Pieta* song. He could 'a' used 'em more, it seems to me. Real Egyptian, if you get what I mean. The one where the priestess you can't see sings to Ptah with a harp. I'll bet the answer is Verdi, bein' a wop like me, didn't have the guts to go tinkerin' with Egyptian music; see? Yeah. Rubinstein got off some of it in *Der Astra*, and them Jewish synagogue songs is full of that there kind of an interval. You know—it goes A flat, B flat, C flat, D, E flat, F flat, G, A flat." He whistled it. "Oriental, what?"

Longfellow made an odd sound in his throat and shook his head like a bewildered bear.

"Now," said Piazza, "There's folks that goes for *Celeste Aïda*. Just fireworks, is what I say. They're the kind of folks that bust out in goose pimples over that hand-organ tune out of *Il Trovatore*. No what d'ye call it—discrimination."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Longfellow.

As Longfellow arrived in the Opera House, coming with a rural promptness well ahead of the parting of the great cur-



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tains, he was met by an official who had been lying in wait for him.

"We have been expecting you, Mr. Deeds, and have prepared a little informal reception on the stage. The company is anxious to meet our new president."

"Why, I guess that would be nice," Longfellow said. "I want to see everything, and it is natural to want to know the people that work for you, isn't it? This is Mr. Piazza—he is a kind of confidential employee, and he knows a great deal about Opera. You would be surprised. You know, the Egyptian tunes in *Aida*, and like that."

"Indeed!" said the immaculate gentleman, eying Mr. Piazza with bewilderment. And then: "If you will follow me."

He led the way through various passages to a door which opened upon confusion and turmoil. The scene bewildered Longfellow. Directly before him on the wall was an agglomeration of electrical apparatus; piled and cluttered everywhere were huge pieces of scenery, thrones, columns, properties for the sets. So crowded were the wings that there seemed no room for the trampling stagehands, or the jostled singers.

THE great Visconti pouted and glowered under drooping lids at some electrical gadget which had failed to recognize his importance. He was accompanied by a sheep of a man in spats. This pair advanced upon Longfellow, and Visconti permitted the young man to shake his cold and flabby hand much as the Emperor Barbarossa might have submitted to the touch of some menial. He jabbered in Italian, but as his interpreter was not present, that was all that came of it. He was in a state of excitement, which meant that things were proceeding normally.

It appeared that some little ceremony was to be made of Longfellow's presentation to the company, for he was conducted upon the stage, now nearly set and ready for the curtain, where a great many people were assembled, and the official who accompanied him made a stilted speech of presentation. Then the members of the company filed past him, as at a reception. Name after name was mentioned, and Longfellow gulped and blinked and wondered how he was to remember so many. But one he found no difficulty in remembering—a youngish, very dark woman, not slender but verging upon opulence; a woman of undoubted beauty in a foreign way, of dark eyes, of a curiously disturbing magnetism and a

superabundance of that quality by which Hollywood weighs the value of its lady stars.

"Signorina Nina Motti," said the master of ceremonies.

Longfellow was nonplussed. He did not know what to do. He did not know whether it would be correct or self-respecting to take the hand of the common-law wife of a relative of his own, or whether he should smile affably upon a woman who was scheming to deprive him of a considerable part of his fortune. But Motti solved the problem for him. She seized his hand and glittered at him two splendid rows of white teeth.

"We are relations, eh?" she said in a purring whisper.

"I—I think not," said Longfellow.

"You will change the mind, eh? Oh, you will see! I thenk you come for see me—not? After this performance. We talk, eh? Not so, leetle nephew?"

Pressure compelled her to pass on before he could make reply, and presently the ordeal was over and Longfellow's conductor took him in hand again. First he was taken down into the bowels of the earth to be shown all the intricate mechanism by which sections of the stage floor may be raised and lowered to obtain mysterious and bewildering effects; next he was presented to the chief electrician in his astonishing lair, a slender cave peopled by rows upon rows of handles and wheels and shafting and sprockets and chains and other electrical devices by which the thousands upon thousands of bulbs—of every shade and color, which painted the stage with light—were operated.

Then started a measured clicking, insistent, imperative, which pervaded the

entire space and dominated it. It came from nowhere, but was present everywhere. At the same time music, muffled, indistinct, was wafted from the orchestra pit. "What's the ticking?" Longfellow asked. "The telegraph. It gives the time as beaten by the conductor. A sort of metronome arrangement."

"I declare!" admired Longfellow. "The show's going to start, isn't it? Hadn't we better go and see?"

"Possibly. Will you return after the first act?"

"Why, maybe," said Longfellow. "It is very interesting."

He halted and looked about him. "Where's Piazza?" he asked. But they did not find him until they stepped out of the elevator on the stage floor—and there he stood waiting for them phlegmatically.

AS THEY entered Longfellow's box the curtains parted, and Radamès and Ramfis commenced a discussion of military affairs in the hall of the royal palace. Piazza volunteered to keep Longfellow en rapport with proceedings.

"This here Radamès," he said, "that's warblin' now, is a soldier, and the other guy's a high priest. He's rumbled that the Ethiopians has started shootin'. Radamès figures to use his pull and get made head man of the war. Now, feller, cock your ear. Here comes the *Celeste Aida* that Radamès is goin' to gargle. It's the McCoy!"

The thing seized upon Longfellow; the scene, the costumes, the volume and splendor of the orchestra, the gorgeous, moving voice of the greatest tenor of his day as he sang his love for *Aida*—a song exquisite, exalted, romantic, moving. In that moment Longfellow almost understood why

Opera existed; almost perceived why it was an Institution.

The act came to an end.

"Now," said Piazza, the mentor, "it would be the cat's whiskers if you was to slide back to Madame Ponzi's dressin'-room and give her the season's greetin's. She'll lap it up."

"Is it the correct thing to do?" asked Longfellow.

"Right off the top of the bottle," said Piazza.

So, once more, the pair found their way to the stage. As they entered the wing Longfellow flinched, for, standing majestically, a look of scorn and fury on her face, was Madame Pomponi. She fixed him with baleful eye. Simonetta Petersen, at her employer's side, maintained a grave face, but her eyes twinkled hopefully.

"Well!" exclaimed Madame. "What are

you doing back here? I—I just came. To congratulate you, Madame. Oh, Longfellow, how correct, Ha! Who put me here? I was here before. Sent you to the Opera, back to the caterwauling. You in the house? Yes, Madame. Did you con- siderately I sang? Deliberately. I never sang it before. Come back to the screeching Aida. But, Madame. Don't speak contract. I will say! The opera unmannered, too. I—I didn't the other day." "You wouldn't now. You're Where is that un-

AT THIS moment, expecting, st- dame flew at him grown to vast proportions. The liquid and purr and shrieked. Lids and uttered was magnificence midst of it a intervened.

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you doing back here, Mr. Deeds?"

"I—I just came back," said Longfellow.

"To congratulate that limp rag, I suppose," Madame said ominously. The limp rag, Longfellow guessed with remarkable correctness, was Madame Ponzi. "Ha! Who put you up to it? Visconti? Knew I was here and sent you back to insult me. Sent you—you—the president of the Opera, back here to pat that alley cat for caterwauling. And tell me this—were you in the house when I sang *Lakme*?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Did you come to tell me how magnificently I sang? No. You affronted me. Deliberately. I—I sang *Lakme* as nobody ever sang it before, and you, ignoramus—come back to congratulate this tin whistle for screeching *Aida*!"

"But, Madame—"

"Don't speak to me. I go to tear up my contract. I will sing in vaudeville. Opera—bah! The opera is in the hands of nasty, unmannered, tone-deaf puppies."

"I—I didn't know how to come back the other day," said Longfellow.

"You wouldn't have come back anyhow. You're Visconti's slinking tool. Where is that unwashed camel? I'll slap—"

AT THIS moment Visconti, all unsuspecting, stepped into view, and Madame flew at him like some pituitary terrier grown to vast proportions and decorated for a pageant. The Italian language, usually liquid and purring, snapped and cracked and shrieked. Visconti raised his drooping lids and uttered a short and ugly word. It was magnificent, and it was war. In the midst of it a calm, slightly ironic voice intervened.

"Madame," said Simonetta, "your underslip is hanging."

Madame halted as if she had encountered an invisible wire strung across her path. She gasped as if someone had thrown a pail of cold water over her. She snatched up her skirt to look. In the interlude thus managed, two strong men led Visconti away, and by the time Madame assured herself that her slip actually did dangle there was no one left with whom to do battle. For Longfellow had taken advantage of the opportunity to vanish.

"Goodness," he said.

"Don't mean nothin'," said Piazza coolly. "Hey, you slave, where's Ponzi's dressin'-room?"

They were ushered to the dressing-room through a whirlwind of charging stage hands and hurtling scenery. Longfellow was in a state of mind.

"Gosh," he said, "I hope I say the right thing. I wonder if this Madame Ponzi has a disposition like Pomponi's. Gosh, I don't know what to say."

"Listen, boss," said Piazza, "it's easy. Work in about singin' like an angel and that the cherubim around the throne loses their appetites every time they hear her warble. Sop it on with a broom."

Their guide rapped upon Ponzi's door and they were bidden to enter. The diva was fuming. She was in the act of cuffing her maid's ear, but at sight of Longfellow she became all adipose winsomeness.

"Oh, Mr. Deeds," she exclaimed—but the effort to be gracious was more than she could stand. "That squawking parrot!" she said harshly. "She snorted."

"Baby," interjected Piazza, "she wasn't snortin'. She was bitin' her tongue. I bet

she goes out and snaps her cookie—the way you sung."

Madame beamed. "Really?" she asked. "She was greener'n pea soup," said Piazza.

"Was she, Mr. Deeds? Did you notice? Was she jealous?"

"Madame," Longfellow replied, experimenting with Piazza's advice, "the angels standing around the throne were jealous."

"You sweet boy! It is wonderful to have someone connected with this Opera who understands, who has an ear."

She advanced upon him with overt oscillatory intentions and he made ready to defend himself to the last ditch. But defense was not necessary, for, as her large and threatening arms stretched out to enfold him, a scream, quivering with horror and terror, ghastly, chilling to the blood, cut its way through the open door. The scream repeated itself. In an instant Piazza was outside, crouching, ready. Longfellow, Madame, the maid stumbled after him. The continuing screams came from a door a few feet away—and then a wardrobe woman staggered into sight.

"Motti! Signorina Motti! In there! In there!" she quavered.

They peered in the open door. There, upon the floor, prone, was the opulence of Nina Motti. Piazza bent over her.

"Sick wit' a bullet," he said.

"Dead?" asked Longfellow.

"As mack'el," said Piazza. . . .

LONGFELLOW was talking with Mrs. Garrison, who had dropped in for tea.

"You were going to teach me a lot of things," he said, "but the thing I want to learn about right now is Opera. Yes'm. The directors say that there won't be any more Opera if I don't give a great deal of money." He paused and frowned. "It's all right to give money when you have so much, but I would like to give it for something that amounts to something. I mean, Opera is supposed to be an amusement. If people don't pay enough money to keep it going, why is it worth keeping going?"

"Oh, it must continue," said Mrs. Garrison. "Where would one have a box?"

"A box?"

"Quite," said Mrs. Garrison. "The people who matter have boxes at the Opera."

"But if they didn't?" asked Longfellow.

"If they didn't," said Mrs. Garrison, "how could one invite people to drop in at one's box? You meet people at the Opera. You are seen there. It is a custom."

"But the music."

Mrs. Garrison raised her fine brows. "It doesn't disturb one," she said.

"It is difficult," said Longfellow, "to find out just why Opera is so important."

"I did not come," said Mrs. Garrison, "to discuss Opera. I came to have a talk with you about your position. And about your friends. And about your conduct. And about what is expected of you."

"Yes'm," said Longfellow meekly.

"You have inherited a great fortune," said Mrs. Garrison, "which entails responsibilities. Social responsibilities."

"Yes'm."

"To your class," said Mrs. Garrison. "You seem, since your arrival, to have made only queer friends. An opera singer, an author, and a girl who is a mixture of secretary and accompanist. You may

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think, for instance, that Madame Pomponi is important. Or that this Mr. Dide, who writes books, is important. People like that are of no importance whatever."

Because Longfellow could think of nothing to reply to this he maintained silence.

"They are not society," said Mrs. Garrison. "Authors and singers and painters and odd persons like that are distinctly not society. And this secretary girl! Gentlemen in your position don't make friends with secretaries. Nor," added Mrs. Garrison severely, "do they marry them."

"I haven't," said Longfellow.

"You never can tell what will happen when a smart girl makes up her mind. But I shall protect you. No, your social life must be lived among persons of your own class, and, naturally, you must marry a girl who will be acceptable."

"I am pretty busy with a lot of things just now," said Longfellow, "and I wasn't thinking about getting married at all."

"You must," said Mrs. Garrison. "Everybody else is thinking about it. You are the catch of the year."

"You mean people will be wanting to marry me?"

"Certainly."

"Wouldn't they even bother to be in love with me?" he asked.

"You are so naïve," said Mrs. Garrison.

"I wouldn't marry unless I was in love," said Longfellow. "I don't see how a person could. I know kings and people like that have to on account of reasons of state, and then they are very unhappy."

Mrs. Garrison was patient. She waited as Longfellow continued: "Now, for instance, you would not want your daughter to marry a man she didn't love just because he had a lot of money and was important."

"Theresa has been properly raised and educated," said Mrs. Garrison.

LONGFELLOW cogitated upon this. "You—you don't mean you want me to marry your daughter?"

"Naturally," said Mrs. Garrison calmly, "it would please me."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Longfellow. "This is almost a proposal, isn't it? I mean it amounts to that." He paused and frowned. "I don't think it is so very romantic."

"Civilized persons," said Mrs. Garrison, "deal with such matters logically."

"I guess we weren't so very civilized in Mandrake Falls," said Longfellow. "But I think more folks do the way we do there than as you do here. I think your way is pretty dangerous. I mean, people do fall in love. And if they marry without it, then they are very apt to do it some time, and look at all the trouble that makes. We don't have a great many divorces in Mandrake Falls."

It was at this embarrassing moment that Bengold appeared in the door and saved Longfellow the necessity of rejecting or accepting what seemed to him like a proposal of marriage.

"Mr. Cedar to see you, Mr. Deeds."

"Then I'll just run along," said Mrs. Garrison.

She arose as Mr. Cedar entered and gave him her hand. "I've just been giving Mr. Deeds some excellent advice," she said.

"I am sure he will appreciate it, Mrs. Garrison. . . . Er—good morning."

MRS. GARRISON, very stately, very calm, took her departure, and Mr. Cedar placed his brief-case on the desk.

"Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle," said he, "have been considering the evidence in the case of Motti against Deeds. Mr. Granzi has placed in our hands photo-

as 'wife.' There are five such letters. Their tenor is very similar to the letters in the case of Lithgow against Jones—a somewhat celebrated trial which was decided in favor of the lady. The sensational press made much of that case because of the eminence of the individuals involved. The letters were printed and read by the nation with great gusto."

Longfellow narrowed his eyes and thought. "Could it be," he asked, "that these letters are forgeries?"

"We called in experts immediately. The letters are typewritten. It was the custom of Mr. Semple to write his own more personal and private letters upon a machine he kept in his bedroom. The signatures are more or less scrawls, but characteristic. We have had the typescript compared with letters in our files which we know were written by Mr. Semple."

"Yes."

"An expert can determine if type-writing is produced by a particular machine. Each is individual. There is no question that these letters were written upon Mr. Semple's typewriter."

"You are sure about that?"

"Absolutely. Now, as to the signatures, they are characteristic scrawls. The handwriting expert cannot guarantee to determine if a scrawl is forgery or not. It is very difficult. But the signatures are, as I say, characteristic. We have hundreds of identical scrawls in our files. Take this, together with the fact that the machine can be proven to be Mr. Semple's, and I have no doubt of a jury's conclusion."

"What was the name of this other case?" asked Longfellow.

"Lithgow vs. Jones."

"It was in all the papers?"

"Very much so."

"When?"

"Late in 1932," said Mr. Cedar.

LONGFELLOW nodded. "I've got a feeling about this case," he said. "It doesn't look right to me. Now, Mr. Cedar, there can't be any hurry about settling, can there? I mean, they can't get this case decided next week or anything like that?"

"It would require a year or more."

"So we don't have to jump right now?"

"If we wish to avoid scandal and publicity."

"To Mr. Semple?"

"Yes."

Longfellow thought about that, and then made a reply which rather startled Mr. Cedar. "He's dead," said the young man. "Scandal can't hurt dead people."

"In a way that is true. But there is yourself," suggested Mr. Cedar.

"I didn't do anything," said Longfellow. "I never even saw Mr. Semple. Anything



"Here, you can take one more look at Henrietta and then I'm gonna put her in the oven"

Reamer Keller

static copies of certain letters—together with other pertinent facts which he believes he will be able to place before a jury. The situation is alarming."

"You mean the wife business?" asked Longfellow.

"Precisely. The situation has, of course, been confused by the death of Nina Motti, but, on the whole, I should say the case had been strengthened against you. It will be continued in the name of the child, for whom, of course, a guardian ad litem will be appointed."

"You mean it looks as if she was really Mr. Semple's common-law wife?"

"Very much so, Mr. Deeds."

"On the facts as laid before me, I should advise making a settlement, if that can still be done."

"But, if these people have such a good case, why will they settle at all? I can't understand. When they can get everything, why will they take a part of it?"

"Litigation is very expensive and very uncertain," said Mr. Cedar. "Now, these letters. They refer plainly to a marital relation. They address the Motti woman

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anybody says about him won't hurt me." Mr. Cedar blinked. He was not accustomed to have his clients look upon scandal in exactly this light. A scandal was something to be covered up from vulgar eyes, even if it had happened to one's great-grandfather.

"So," said Longfellow, "I think we do not need to hurry about settling. And if they were sure of winning they would not offer to settle. And I guess we had better take our time and be kind of careful."

"In any event," said Mr. Cedar, "there would have to be negotiations."

"Stretch them out," said Longfellow. "Anyhow, like I've said, if this money isn't mine I don't want it. I wouldn't ever feel comfortable with it. But what I've been thinking is this: that if these letters aren't real, but are forgeries, then they must have been done by somebody who was around this house and could get into Mr. Semple's room, where the typewriter was kept. It looks like that. There was somebody near to Mr. Semple that he couldn't trust."

"True," said Mr. Cedar.

"SO YOU go ahead and negotiate, and I'll kind of think things over. Anyhow, this thing doesn't bother me as much as possibly being accused of murdering Nina Motti. Now, take her. She could have been killed because of something in this case, or she could have been killed for some other reason altogether." He drummed on the desk with his fingers. "Offhand I would say she was killed for some other reason, wouldn't you?"

"Why?" asked Mr. Cedar.

"Well," said Longfellow, "if it was a plot between her and somebody else, then it would be easy to divide up any money they got. But when she is dead then the child gets it, and the court would appoint a guardian, and it would be hard to divide the money with whoever else was in the scheme. If some man in this plot killed her, then he just as good as threw away his share of the money."

Mr. Cedar stared. "You are a surprisingly logical young man," he said.

"You have to be, in the poetry business," said Longfellow.

"Ah," said Mr. Cedar.

"I wish you would leave those photographs of the letters with me. I would like to look at them pretty carefully," said Longfellow.

"Very well," said Mr. Cedar, and got to his feet. "Nevertheless," he said, "I feel very strongly that we should endeavor to make a settlement."

"You just go ahead and negotiate slowly," said Longfellow. "You won't stay to lunch?"

"Sorry."

When Mr. Cedar was gone Longfellow lifted the telephone and called the Cortillon. "Madame Pomponi's apartment," he said, and then, when a voice answered, "I would like to speak to Miss Petersen."

"This is she."

"This is Longfellow Deeds. I want to talk to you. I don't want to talk to anybody else. Can you go to lunch with me? Can you? I mean, I'm pretty anxious to see you."

"Well, the Diva has gone to Long Island, so I'm as free as a hummingbird," said Simonetta.

"Right away?"

What age is best?

IF YOU could choose an age at which to live a thousand years, what age would you select?

A California scientist has succeeded in restoring life to animals a few moments after their hearts stopped beating. Miracles in life-saving have been performed with the pulmotor, with adrenalin, and with surgery. Medical science has already added decades to the life of the average man, and, year by year, is adding more. Is it too fantastic to imagine that science will eventually enable us to live a thousand years or more?

The study of the glands, in which scores of research scientists are engaged, may result in a race of Methuselahs. Some day, perhaps, each of us will report at a clinic once a year to receive a chemical dosage of some kind that will keep us in *status quo* for another twelve months. Year after year our failing bodies will be renewed and we shall go on . . . and on . . .

This fantasy suggests a difficulty. When the wonderful elixir is discovered, some of us will be ten years old, some twenty-one, some forty, some seventy-five or eighty. Perhaps the elixir will simply keep us as we are . . . preserve us at one age, year after year.

How about the cute four-year-old child? Would his mother keep him forever at the age of four?

"It's a shame," she has said so often, "that he has to grow up."

Would sweet sixteen want to remain sweet sixteen forever? Would a young athlete wish to be a young athlete for a thousand years? Would the young wait a while before taking the elixir? Would the old refuse it, rather than go on for a thousand years at the age of ninety?

Not long ago we asked several of our friends at what age they would like to be—always. Two of them, men in their early thirties, said they would like to wait a few years before deciding. We assured them there was plenty of time. Another, who was nearing forty, said he would like to be twenty-two.

"It was the golden age of my life," he said.

How old would you like to be—always? Were you happiest and healthiest at ten? Or have you become so wise and tolerant at sixty that you would be no other age? Or would you prefer to experience every age in the mortal span?



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"I'll be ready," she said.

Longfellow hurried into coat and hat; as he stepped from the front door he saw Piazza loitering. "Gosh," he said, "I forgot you. Now, listen; I'm going to lunch with a young lady. You do your body-guarding quite a ways off. Understand?"

"Kayo, boss."

The door of the car stood open and he was about to enter, when a taxi stopped, and Mr. Granzi alighted. He walked swiftly to Longfellow's side. "Just in time," he said with oily satisfaction.

"For what?" asked Longfellow.

"For a word with you in private."

"You," said Longfellow, "can go and talk to Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle."

"But I think you will want me to speak to you alone about this." He lowered his voice. "I wanted to say a few words about—murder."

"Gracious sakes!"

"I think we can be private in your car."

"Be pretty brief," said Longfellow.

"My client," said Granzi, "was murdered yesterday."

"I know."

"The word I want to drop in your ear," said Granzi, "is that the police do not know that you are the one man in the world with what they are looking for."

"Which is?" asked Longfellow.

"A motive," said Granzi.

"Ah," said Longfellow.

"A private settlement would prevent the matter from reaching the ears of the police."

"So it would," said Longfellow.

"I thought you would see the light."

"I see lots of light," Longfellow said slowly. "I get the idea. I hired somebody to shoot Nina Motti, didn't I?"

"Exactly."

"WELL," said Longfellow, "if I knew something like this about somebody, I know what I would do. I wouldn't want to make money out of it. I would be kind of ashamed to use it that way. I would go as fast as I could to the district attorney."

"Don't be a fool."

"If I was honest. Of course, if I was crooked I would do what you are doing, because, as soon as you tell the district attorney, you can't use it for blackmail, can you? And what you know wouldn't have any money value any more. So, Mr. Granzi, if your whole case is honest you will tell, but, if you do not, then I will be pretty sure the whole thing is a plot. Now you had better get out."

"Don't be a fool."

"I am trying not to be," said Longfellow.

Granzi backed out of the door, his teeth showing in a feline snarl. But he did not speak. When he turned he found himself face to face with Piazza.

"Mornin', Mr. Granzi," said that individual.

"What are you doing here?" Granzi snapped.

"Seein' Mr. Deeds don't have no bad luck."

Granzi turned to Longfellow. "That makes it better," he said. "So you have a pet gunman, eh? The police will be glad to know that, too. It's pretty cheap to hire a murder done in this town—isn't it, Piazza?"

"Two for a quarter, these tough times," said Piazza.

(To be continued)