

Opera Hat

What has happened so far:

BACK in Mandrake Falls, Longfellow Deeds was a star wool-hides-and-fertilizer salesman and a poet of the greeting-card variety. In odd moments he played the tuba.

He was content—but for him Fate dealt other cards. An uncle, Victor Semple, played him the dirty trick of getting killed and leaving him a giant fortune, a score of mansions, a secretary named Roger Bengold, and the ownership of the Continental Opera Company. Now, as a tuba player, Longfellow appreciated music, but never before had he experienced such temperament as that displayed by Madame Pomponi, a star soprano; such anger as that expressed by Signor Visconti, the musical director; or such a deficit as that shown by the opera company's books.

Mr. Cedar, of Cedar, Cedar, Cedar & McGonigle, Semple's lawyers, did his level best to explain finances to Longfellow, but he failed to tell him that Mr. Semple had had a dual personality—with a weakness for the ladies. It was a shyster lawyer, Granzi, who broke the news to him.

According to this shady character there was a common-law wife (a dancer



in the opera named Nina Motti) and a child, and he (Granzi) had been retained to claim their rightful estate. Longfellow threw him out.

It is no wonder that our hero, burdened with such troubles, should occasionally seek solace in the poetry centers of the city. There he met Mr. Dide, a would-be author, who persuaded Longfellow to hire as a bodyguard an unemployed gangster, Piazza. The latter was a good influence for Longfellow, for he knew his operas from *Aida* to *Emperor*

Jones. Unfortunately, though, both he and Longfellow were backstage when the lady in question, Motti, happened to be murdered. Naturally, both became suspects.

As the town's most eligible bachelor, Longfellow was beset on all sides by matchmaking mothers—especially a Mrs. Garrison—but he had eyes only for Simonetta Petersen, Madame Pomponi's secretary. A sweet, lovable girl she was—the sort of girl a person would want to talk to when he is all confused

and in a lot of trouble. Spring tonic. "You're beautiful," he told her daily. "I like you; take me to dinner tonight," she would reply. And then she, too, was dragged into the mud and mire of the murder case. The police threatened to give her the third degree at headquarters. But Longfellow advised them to get more proof first.

"My Galahad," cooed Simonetta. "No Galahad about it," said Longfellow. "Just common sense."

The next installment follows. . . .



BY CLARENCE BUDINGTON KELLAND

MADAME POMPONI was giving a dinner in her apartment in the Cortillon. She loved to give dinners and to have at her table owners of names which loomed large in the *Social Register*, foreign nobility, politicians—and business men who might be willing to advise her about her investments or be otherwise financially useful. There was a heterogeneous quality about her dinners that made them unique. She did not select her guests with any care as to the congeniality; she mixed Fifth Avenue with Broadway and the Avenue Grande Armée with Grand Rapids. Of one thing you could be certain, and that was that if you saw a guest at Madame's table, Madame was planning to make use of him for her own benefit and behoof, either artistically, economically, or socially. For Pomponi's eye was ever fastened upon the main chance.

At table this evening were, first, and possibly most important, Longfellow Deeds. There were Mrs. Leonidas Garrison and Miss Garrison. There was, for some unfathomable reason, Percival Dide; there were Mr. Simeon Palk, largest manufacturer of soap in the world, and his wife. There were Mr. Cedar and Visconti, and finally a Mr. Bumpus, whom Longfellow discovered to be the dominant figure in the Intercontinental Broadcasting Company—with his wife.

There had been cocktails in the drawing-room, after which the party were herded like a flock of somewhat non-plussed sheep into the dining-room. Madame always herded people. She assigned them seats with the condescending air of royalty being gracious to the peasantry of the vicinage.

It was also characteristic of Madame's graciousness as a hostess that, invariably, she sought out each of her guests with a verbal probe and made him acutely uncomfortable. It was not that Madame

"D'ye know, Bengold," said Longfellow to his secretary, "I wouldn't be surprised if it was a good thing for opera that I had to get mixed in it"



ILLUSTRATED BY
GEORGE HOWE

"Do we always have to go to the opera?" asked Simonetta Petersen

lacked tact; she had plenty of it, but she doled it out sparingly. Mr. Palk, this evening, was the first recipient of her attentions.

"Why," she asked with a terrible directness, "did you hire Ponzi for your radio program instead of myself?"

Mr. Palk had been about to dip into his soup. There was an unquestionable splash. "Hoogsh!" he said.

"What d'ye mean by it?" Madame demanded. "If you want a soprano, why don't you get a soprano? If you're going to pay a couple of thousand dollars a night to have somebody sing

for you, why don't you pay it to me?"

"But, Madame—"

"A fine friend you are—fine. Always glad to accept my invitations, aren't you? Always glad to eat my dinners—but when you have anything to pass out, do I get it? Two thousand a night for that caterwauling!"

"I really know nothing about it, Madame," expostulated the hapless Mr. Palk. "My advertising department—"

"You're the boss, aren't you? I'd fire an advertising department that did a thing like that. I heard your program last night." Madame laughed. "Ponzi,"

she said, "ought to learn to use soap before she tries to sell it."

As suddenly as she had launched her attack upon the soap manufacturer, she abandoned it and paid her respects to Mr. Bumpus, of the Broadcasting Company.

"And you, Bumpus," she said, "the man who hires more singers than anybody else in the world. What have you ever done for me? Huh! Last winter I sang twenty-six weeks for Pink Mule cigars. It was a sensation. Thousands and thousands of letters. Everybody said it was the finest radio program ever presented."

"It was very fine," said Mr. Bumpus.

"Then why," she asked, "did you advise them to vary their program, and have a different operatic star every night? Oh, I know about it. I know how you double-crossed me. That was a nasty, low, unmitigated thing to do." She snorted. "You've drunk enough of my champagne to pay for a thirteen-week program."

BEFORE Bumpus could offer any rebuttal she abandoned him and turned upon Mrs. Garrison:

"Why didn't you invite me to your dinner party Tuesday night? You knew I wanted to meet Jason. Everybody knows I want to meet him. You're ready enough to accept my invitations, aren't you?"

To such a direct attack even so socially accomplished a lady as Mrs. Garrison had no immediate reply. It was Theresa who came to the rescue. She leaned forward and smiled at Madame with a sweet, but not spontaneous, smile: "Oh, Tuesday, you mean? We really couldn't have you Tuesday."

"Why not, I'd like to know?"

"We were just having younger people," said Theresa. "None of our guests was over fifty."

"Snip!" said Madame sharply, but if you had been watching closely you would have seen that her eyes twinkled. The table expected to hear an explosion, but for an instant Madame looked almost genial. She had asked for it and she had gotten it.

Longfellow was looking at her face, and, somehow, he liked Madame better then than he ever had before.

But, before the dinner could settle down, Madame burst into a harangue in Italian, addressed to Visconti, who had been sitting silently, brooding eyes half covered by heavy lids—a bulky, sulky Latin Buddha. Italian words pelted him like hailstones. He snatched his napkin from the front of his shirt where he had tucked it, tossed both hands into the air, and fired a return volley, with gestures. He was shrill, he snapped his thumbnail against his teeth; he even made the sign of the horns which the peasantry use to avert the evil eye.

"And that," said Madame placidly,

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"is what runs the Opera! That is what artists have to put up with. That, Mr. Deeds, is why Opera is going downhill. Swine! You hear what he says, and just because I told him I didn't mind favoritism, and I didn't object to kitchen politics, but I did object to his picking singers for his harem instead of for their voices. Old he-goat!"

By this time the dinner party was well on its feet and going nicely. Everybody had been made to feel perfectly at home, and a cozy atmosphere reigned, very much like that which must have prevailed in the anteroom to the guillotine among victims awaiting their turn.

Longfellow had been silent and apprehensive; but, unfortunately, he was of an inquiring turn of mind, and the Opera was very much in his thoughts. He had to make a decision. He was president of the company, and, apparently, the continuance of this form of art in the metropolis depended upon him. Before very long he must make a decision. And, in all sincerity, he wanted to decide correctly. If Opera was really a great institution, if it really was an art which the world must have, then he wanted to know it. But so far he had been unable to assure himself that this was so.

Here, however, was an opportunity to be instructed. Here, for instance, was the head of a great broadcasting chain who understood about amusement, about what the people wanted, and possibly something about art. Here, too, was Mr. Palk, a great manufacturer, who spent thousands upon thousands of dollars upon radio programs—and consequently must have given deep thought to the consideration of music and of the appeal of different sorts of music.

LONGFELLOW looked up from his soup and asked a question:

"Do you find, Mr. Palk, that the public likes opera over the air? I mean, do they care more for an opera singer singing something out of, say *Aida* or *Pagliacci*, than just somebody singing *Home, Sweet Home* or—or *Edie Was a Lady*?"

"Well, now, I tell you," said Mr. Palk, with an apprehensive glance at Madame. "If you want to have a classy program—I mean one with class, you know—it looks to me like you got to have opera stars and opera pieces. There's something about them that gives a program class, if you know what I mean."

"Yes," said Longfellow, "but do the public like it? Do they—er—clamor for it? To get right down to brass tacks, Mr. Palk, does Opera sell soap?"

"I wouldn't be able to tell you," said Mr. Palk. "Something sells soap. In the first place, it's good soap; get the idea. And we been selling it for years; and then along comes this radio, and everybody goes to using it. So we use it. I can't say we sell any more soap than

we did before radio came in, but we don't sell much less. Times like this you can't tell anything. What I say to my directors is, it don't do any harm. Maybe we could sell just as much soap if we just advertised in the papers and magazines. Yeah. Maybe not so much. But if you ain't on the air, folks think you ain't enterprising; see?"

"But about Opera rather than—than a crooner, say?" asked Longfellow.

"Well, I'll tell you how that is. Mamma—that's Mrs. Palk—she says to me, 'Papa, your soap is classy. Now, if

you go on the air you should do that classy. It's good for your family if you got a high-class art program. But if you was to have a crooner or a comic, it wouldn't be dignified, even if it sold soap.' So I says to Mamma that Opera it shall be if she thinks it'll do her any good around—you know, socially. And that's why I picked opera stars."

"Enough people don't attend the Opera to make it pay," said Longfellow.

"But all the best people go to it," said Mrs. Palk. "They have boxes."

"What do you (Continued on page 148)

"Why," said Longfellow, "I'd like to go any place with you"



she said. "I'm going in soon. I'll take you along if you want to go."

"Well," Gregory said, "I've got some photographs to mail to my agent."

"Fine," said Doris, mentally outlining a non-misanthropic day for Gregory.

THE morning was a happy one for Doris. She took Gregory to the post office, but, when he wanted to return to the boat, it developed that she just had to see two girls. He went along, of course, and spent an hour parrying questions. Then they went shopping—for Doris. At one o'clock she took him to the clubhouse and insisted they lunch with a noisy group of young people. She lost him after that.

Gregory wandered out onto the veranda. He sat down at a table in a corner which was occupied by a sour-looking little man with white, bristling sideburns. Gregory did not notice that the members of the club looked at him with curiosity. He wearily said something about its being a fine day for sailing, and some of the chill went out of the old man's blue eyes.

Later it developed that the old man had shipped before the mast as a small boy. Gregory told about his cruise. Doris finally found him helping the old man into his limousine.

"Where have you been?" she demanded, watching the black car purr off. "And how in the world did you meet him?"

"He's a nice old man," Gregory said, looking steadily at her. "I don't think he likes people very well."

"You know he's Charles Carew, don't you?"

Gregory didn't. But he did know that Charles Carew was one of the richest men in the world.

"Why," Doris said as they drove along the road, "the only people he ever speaks to at the club are the waiters."

"He's coming over tomorrow to see my boat," Gregory said thoughtfully. It seemed a little queer that he had not, until now, noticed how nice Doris was.

"You'd better come out and have lunch with us," he told her.

Doris mentally rolled up her sleeves. She had started something which might

be difficult to finish, but she meant to do her best. It was going to be a worth-while job straightening Gregory out if she had to combat, not only his own resolves, but the influence of the best-known misanthrope in the world. . . .

Gregory was frying codfish balls when Doris arrived the next day. Charles Carew, his sleeves rolled up above his thin elbows, seemed to be having the time of his life rolling the balls in egg and then sprinkling them with cracker crumbs.

During lunch Doris found herself drawn into an argument concerning the worthlessness of society. It was two against one. They pounced on her feeble arguments like hungry wolves and tore them to shreds.

She got a new conception of Gregory. He was an extremely able conversationalist. His mind literally flicked out in his arguments. She enjoyed herself immensely listening to them dig into accepted theories and dismember them. Carew finally looked at his watch and sighed.

"I've got to run along," he said regretfully. "But first let me tell you, Gregory, that you've got the right idea. No young person should marry." He nodded to include Doris. "Young women much less than young men. Your sex has nothing but drudgery after the ceremony. If you stay single, you have the greatest thing in the world—Freedom!"

"What a nice old man," Doris said involuntarily after he had gone ashore. . . .

Doris Kimball sat in her window looking over the cove as the sun set. It was a lovely evening, but she did not notice it. It was a week since she had listened to Charles Carew aboard the MISANTHROPE; but as each day passed she thought more and more of what he had said.

The very next day she found evidence to support his statement. In the succeeding days, everywhere she turned she found more corroboration. It was very silly, after all, to give up your freedom voluntarily.

Gregory was leaving in the morning to spend six months in the West Indies. She was glad that he might retain his freedom.

The telephone rang. It was Tommy Lee. Doris suddenly found that she had something to say to him.

"No," she said. "I'm not going to this evening. And, Tommy, I'm not going to marry you."

When it was done she felt relief. She went down to dinner. . . .

THE MISANTHROPE was gone the next morning. Gregory sailed before dawn. As the sun rose and the day grew older, he felt the silence and loneliness of the sea more than ever. About noon he had a sudden, inexplicable, and inconsistent dislike for Old Man Carew—who had done nothing more than support Gregory's conception of happiness.

Doris went to a luncheon, but left as soon as she could. Babies and clothes—what silly chatter! She slipped into her bathing suit and speared a few fish from the rock off the point. She swam ashore and sat on the veranda. Paul Kimball found her there, looking out over the bay. "Tired?" he asked.

Doris shook her head. Paul looked across the cove.

"I miss the ketch," he said quietly. Doris looked at him quickly, to see if he was joking. His eyes were steadily on her. She suddenly choked and found herself in his arms, weeping. He held her tightly while the sun went down. . . .

DORIS was awakened in the morning in the customary way. The curtain lightly touched her face as the sun found her red eyelids. The week with Gregory would make his absence unbearable, but there was nothing she could do about it now.

She thought of the morning so long ago when she had first seen the little boat in the cove. It was just such a morning as this. Involuntarily she turned on her side and looked across the sparkling water; then she sat up with a start. There, bobbing quietly at anchor in exactly the same spot, lay the white ketch!

She jumped out of bed and trained the glasses on it. Slowly it swung at its anchor until the stern came into view. She suddenly laughed delightedly. The name was the same, but it had a slight addition—a qualifying prefix. It said:

EX-MISANTHROPE
Los Angeles.



(Continued from page 65)

think about it, Mr. Bumpus?" Longfellow asked. "Is Opera a hit on the air?"

"It adds variety," said Mr. Bumpus, "and certainly a famous singer like Madame attracts more attention than a girl singing jazz. There is room on the air for all sorts of programs."

"Could you get along without Opera?"

Could broadcasting get along without arias from *Parsifal*?"

"It is good for variety," said Mr. Bumpus.

"I guess," said Longfellow, "it is hard to find out anything definite about Opera."

"A fine operatic program has its publicity value," said Bumpus.

"You mean if you hire a lot of expensive stars, and they sing pieces from Opera, people talk about it and there are things in the paper?"

"Yes."

"And that is valuable?"

"The more people we can attract to listen in on any program, the more valuable that program becomes."

"So," said Longfellow, "if you could think up a program that would be kind of sensational, and that you could advertise, you would have something pretty good."

"If it turned out to be good."

"I wouldn't be surprised," said Longfellow, "if maybe I've got an idea. We can't get in enough money at the box office to make it pay, so, the only way to keep Opera going is to find other ways to make it pay, or for somebody like me to make up the deficit. And then there's the long months that the opera house stands idle, eating its head off."

"What's your idea?" asked Bumpus.

"I was just thinking," said Longfellow, "that it would be kind of sensational if you were to broadcast Opera right from the opera house. I mean, folks could sit at home and hear the artists singing right on the stage."

"The Opera," said Mr. Cedar, "would never tolerate it. Undignified, Mr. Deeds."

"As near as I can make out," said Longfellow, "I am the Opera. And I don't know as I ever worried much about being dignified. Now, Mr. Palk, if you could

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broadcast Opera, do you think it would be a good business move for you?"

"It sounds sensational," said Mr. Palk. "Suppose," said Mr. Bumpus, "you and Mr. Palk and I discuss this tomorrow. At my office. At eleven."

"All right," said Longfellow. "I'll be there."

"You know," said Mr. Palk unexpectedly, "one of the reasons Mamma was so anxious to come here tonight was to hear all about the inside of that murder." Instantly all conversation ceased. Mr. Palk wore a startled look. Longfellow's eyes sought and encountered the eyes of Simonetta down the table. Visconti bent forward, and the lids folded up from his sulky eyes—like lifting curtains.

Mrs. Palk thrust forward her head with a sweetly simple look of profound curiosity on her chubby face.

"Yes, about the murder," she said. "You must know a lot about it. Weren't some of you right there?"

Madame's lip curled. "Go right ahead," she said. "Harp on it. We like to discuss it. Just to put you at your ease, Mrs. Palk, I'll tell you there are about half a dozen people at this table who are suspected by the police of having done it. Now, what was it you wanted to know?"

"I wanted to know," said Dide, "if there were ever any authors in the *Social Register*, and, if so, which of them had licked a cop."

"I don't believe you ever licked a cop," said Theresa.

"Theresa!" said Mrs. Garrison.

"I think," said Theresa, "it's pretty slick to know a man who even thinks of licking a cop. Do you know, you're quite impossible socially, Mr. Dide. But isn't there some low dive where I can meet you secretly and listen to you talk?"

"Dozens," said Mr. Dide. "It's a date."

"Perhaps Madame will sing for us," suggested Mrs. Palk.

"Sing! When I sing I get paid for it. Madame certainly will not sing."

"I don't think," Theresa said to Dide, "that I was ever at a more successful party. As a hostess Madame Pomponi has what it takes."

"Slumming among the divas and authors," observed Dide. "D'y'e know, you've got all the externals of a lousy snob."

"Ain't the make-up grand?" she retorted. "But inside I'm just one of the people. And how is your stomach-ache?"

IT WAS Pomponi who broke up the party. "I don't know what you people do for a living," she said, "but I sing. And I can't sit up all night."

"Subtle," said Dide.

"But after you think it over," said Theresa, "you get a vague idea what she's driving at."

So they went home.

Longfellow walked across the room to Simonetta.

"Good night," he said. "I would have liked it better if I could have talked to you a little."

"Without being vain," she said, "I do think that could have improved your evening."

Longfellow had been compelled to change the hour of his appointment with Mr. Palk and Mr. Bumpus, and it had seemed a good idea to him also to change

the place of it, because there might be certain technical details and expert knowledge which could be given only by someone thoroughly familiar with the routine and the problems of Opera. The meeting, therefore, was arranged to take place in the opera house itself, with Visconti present.

He entered Visconti's office, and found the director sitting stolidly at his desk, sulkily staring at some papers before him. His interpreter lurked in a corner.

"Signor Visconti?" said Longfellow.

The director turned his sleepy-lidded eyes. "Ha!" he said.

"Mr. Palk and Mr. Bumpus have not arrived?"

Visconti spread his hands and pouted. "E say nobody 'as come," said the interpreter; but at that moment Bumpus and Palk became visible through the door and Longfellow indicated seats.

"I guess we might as well come to the point," he said, "and the point is giving Opera over the air."

"My wife," said Palk, "thinks it is a good idea."

"ONE thing about it," said Longfellow, "it has never been done. Now, back in Mandrake Falls I never heard any operas. Some tunes on the phonograph. But it would interest people like that to hear some operas—even if they didn't like that kind of music."

"There are technical difficulties," said Bumpus.

"We will talk about them in a minute, but first I want to take up other points. There is a rival broadcasting company, Mr. Bumpus?"

"Yes."

"If you should be the first to broadcast Opera it would make them sit up and think. There would be a lot in the papers about it—and that would be free advertising, both of Mr. Palk's soap and of your broadcasting company."

"Those are points," said Mr. Bumpus.

"Now, Opera doesn't pay. I don't know why. We lose about two hundred thousand a year, and somebody has to put that up. It used to be Mr. Semple, and now they expect me to do it. But it isn't good business."

"I got to thinking," Longfellow went on, "and it seemed to me that if there were ways for Opera to earn money besides just selling tickets, that was good business. The worst part of it from a business point of view is that this theater doesn't earn a cent for three quarters of the year. And I've got an idea about that—but first the radio. It's an honest way to earn money. Folks have told me it is undignified and will lower Opera—but Opera, the way it looks to me, is like a beggar. And if a beggar starts in to earn his living, people ought not to complain if he isn't dignified."

Suddenly Visconti detonated. He made ponderous gestures, and torrential Italian swept through the room. "E say 'e quit," said the interpreter. Longfellow shrugged his shoulders. "What I am offering you, Mr. Palk," he said, "is the right to broadcast, direct from the theater, an entire season of Opera—fourteen or sixteen weeks."

"Our contracts," said Bumpus, "run for thirteen-week periods." He paused. "It would be fine publicity for the Opera, Mr. Deeds."

Longfellow spoke a bit dryly. "Suppose

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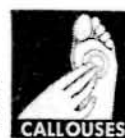
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we stick to what it will do for soap," he said.

"Now, an hour of Opera, three evenings a week, and then the whole matinee Saturdays," said Mr. Palk. "That'll sock some of my competitors in the eye."

"You pay a lot for your present program, don't you? Artists and an orchestra and all?"

"Yes."

"I'll guess maybe five thousand dollars a night," said Longfellow. "Well, I'll make you an offer that will give you a better program for less money. I tell you what I'll do. I'll sell you the right to broadcast Opera for thirteen weeks for one hundred thousand dollars."

"We might go fifty thousand," said Mr. Palk.

"Well," Longfellow said, "I gave you the first chance. Er—Signor Polese, will you get the president of the other broadcasting company on the phone?"

"Hey, wait a minute," exclaimed Palk; "we haven't started to dicker yet."

"I have," said Longfellow; "I've finished." And then a rhyme popped into his head and he added quite conversationally:

"If you've lots of time it is jolly to dicker,
But to close the transaction is very much slicker."

"Eh?" said Palk.

"What I mean," said Longfellow, "is a hundred thousand or nothing."

"NOW, you just hold your horses," said Mr. Palk anxiously. "Mamma's in this, you understand. It's more or less her idea. Mamma wants to sit up in that diamond horseshoe, but, all the same, just broadcasting Opera don't sound so good as a business proposition. Before I settle it I want to talk to her again."

"And there are legal and technical details to be considered," said Mr. Bumpus.

"I guess that's reasonable," answered Longfellow. "You can work out the technical part with Signor Visconti."

Again a furious freshet of Italian.

"E say," said the interpreter, "that Americans worship gold. 'E say the gr-r-reat Visconti weel not-a direct Opera for radio. It destroy-a the gr-r-reat institution. Also 'e say pish and tush."

"Ask him," said Longfellow, "if he would feel different about it if we raised his salary."

Visconti replied to the question without having it interpreted. It appeared that language relating to finance was quite understandable to him.

"Ow mooch?" he asked.

"And Americans," said Longfellow mildly, "will sell their souls for money. Well, Signor Visconti, there won't be any raise. Not a single penny. I guess you're going right on directing the Opera, but if you can't stand it then I'll agree not to hold you to your contract and you can go back to Milano like you said."

Another eruption of Italian:

"E say you r-r-release-a heem from his contract? 'E say 'e is man of honor. 'E say he mak' the sacrifice, 'e suffer the torture, 'e bleed and die for this Opera w'ich is so dear to hees heart."

"I thought he'd feel like that," said Longfellow. "Now, let's get this all closed up." He sighed. "I bet the other directors, that don't put up a cent, will think I haven't any finer feelings, or any art, be-



ANSWERS

FOLLOWING are the correct answers to the motor-safety test on page (110). Compare your answers with these.

- | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|
| 1. Yes | 8. No | 16. No |
| 2. Yes | 9. No | 17. No |
| 3. No | 10. No | 18. No |
| 4. Yes | 11. Yes | 19. No |
| 5. Yes | 12. No | 20. No |
| 6. No | 13. Yes | 21. Yes |
| 7. No | 14. Yes | 22. No |
| | 15. No | |

Thousands of tests in New Jersey have shown the following average scores for good, intelligent drivers: *Adults*, not more than 2 errors; *senior high-school students*, not more than 3 errors; *junior high-school students*, not more than 4 errors. If your percentage of wrong answers is higher than this, better look into your driving.

cause maybe I've saved myself a hundred thousand dollars."

"Do we always," asked Simonetta Petersen, "have to go to the Opera? There are other places of amusement."

"Why," said Longfellow—he was speaking to Miss Petersen over the telephone—"I should like to go any place with you."

"Very well. Say seven o'clock. I'll have thought up something startling."

LONGFELLOW was quite happy for a time, because it had seemed to him that Simonetta was a little friendlier than usual. It was very important to him that he make a good impression upon her, because he had awakened in the middle of last night and found himself thinking about her. He thought about her so hard he could not go to sleep again, and before morning he admitted to himself openly that he loved her, and that he wanted to marry her if he could manage to induce her to accept him.

True, he had hinted at the thing to himself, had skirted the edges of it, but now it blazoned itself on his mind and overshadowed everything else in the world. His resolution was to commence an efficient courtship no later than the coming of day.

To initiate a deliberate courtship was something he had never done before, and as he lay awake he planned his campaign. How should a poet woo the lady of his heart? Why, with poetry, because poetry was the very language of love. He would write poems to her, and maybe these, inspired by Simonetta, might turn out to be literature, might be worthy of a better fate than printing on post cards, might take their place beside the poetry of Keats and Shelley and Kipling and—and Longfellow himself!

So, in the morning, after making an engagement with Simonetta for the evening, he sat at his desk with paper before him and endeavored to think beautiful thoughts which should take permanent form in meter and rhyme.

It would be splendid to start the first one with her name. That would make it very personal. So he set down:

"Miss Simonetta Petersen."

Then he went in for rhymes—fen, glen, again, men, wren—wren! A bird, a nice little bird that people built houses for on their lawns. So he started once more:

How like the cunning little wren
Is Simonetta Petersen.
High in some shady, lofty tree
I'd build a little house for thee.

That, he was forced to admit, was not without merit. So far it came up to his ideals of poesy. But it must have a finish, a telling finish. And it must be terse, so that she would feel the full impact of it almost instantly. Then it came to him in a flash of inspiration:

My heart will never rove again
From Simonetta Petersen.

He had worked in her name twice, and he had told it all. He had compressed volumes into six lines. Upon his best paper he made a fair copy, placed it carefully in an envelope, and put the envelope in his pocket.

At this instant Bengold entered with the mail. He cleared his throat:

"That lawyer—Granzi—is waiting to see you, Mr. Deeds."

"How did he get in?"

"I thought it was best to admit him, Mr. Deeds, rather than have him create a disturbance in the street."

"I don't believe Piazza would have let him create a great deal of disturbance, Bengold." He paused and studied his secretary. "You were with Mr. Semple a good many years?"

"Eight."

"Then you must have gotten to know a good deal about him."

"Naturally, Mr. Deeds."

"DID you—did you know about his reputation with women?"

"One could not avoid knowing that. Mr. Semple made few efforts to conceal his affairs."

"But they were just affairs, weren't they, Bengold? I mean, he was never serious about these women."

"Quite the contrary, Mr. Deeds. He was very apt to become serious. Mr. Cedar kept a constant watch upon him for fear he would become—enthusiastic—and marry one of them."

"Now, Bengold, about this Motti woman. Was Mr. Semple interested in her?"

"More than in any of the others, I should say. He seemed quite mad about her. He hinted, Mr. Deeds, that there was a child. And he seemed quite proud of it. At his age, you know. Once he asked me if I would be surprised to hear he was married to Nina Motti. I said I would be very much astonished to hear he had led her to the altar. And he replied that in this state you didn't have to lead them to any altars—you could be just as much married as anybody by just agreeing that you were."

"Ah," said Longfellow. "A common-law wife."

"It was the impression I took, Mr. Deeds."

"That gives me something to think about. But I will not see Mr. Granzi. Tell him I am giving consideration to the matter he wants to talk about, and that he'd better be patient a little while. And you might say that I am not afraid of any lawsuit or anything. When I am ready to talk to him Mr. Cedar will give him a ring."

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BUG BEARS

by "Quick Henry" the FLIT man

As seen by Helen Hokinson



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FLIT MUST SATISFY, OR MONEY REFUNDED

What Bengold had told him was evidence, not conclusive, but pretty bad. Added to the letters, it created a strong assumption that Mr. Semple had actually entered into a binding alliance with Nina Motti. Bengold was watching his employer's face. It did not fall, nor was it overshadowed by dismay. It expressed nothing at all.

The day dragged slowly. Longfellow dressed himself at six and paced up and down his room waiting until it was time to start for the Cortillon. On the way, he read his poem over again to be sure everything was all right about it. He could see no room for improvement.

Simonetta was dressed and ready. She surveyed Longfellow with the calm gaze which seemed to strip things of pretense and get through to realities. "You are quite a presentable young man," she said. "What a difference a tailor can make. But where is your Opera Hat?"

He flushed. "I've got one. One that opens and shuts. But I never had on a high hat and I feel kind of funny about it. I don't know why, but I've got ideas about that Opera Hat."

"What ideas?"

"Well," he said, "it is a kind of a symbol. It sort of stands for this new way of living. And, you know, I'm not so very sure I'm going on living this way—not with common-law wives and all. And I would never wear one back in Mandrake Falls. So I thought it was a good idea not to get used to it until everything was fixed up."

"I see," said Simonetta, with a pert little nod. "We'll let it stand at that."

"Where do we go to eat?"

"I'll take you. And afterward we're not going to the Opera. We're going to a picture I want to see—in the biggest, most imposing motion-picture house in town. I gather you haven't been there yet."

"No."

"Then," she said, "let's tear ourselves away from Madame and start."

SHE took him to a little place on Forty-ninth Street where the food was as fine as could be had in America.

"I brought you here," she said, "because I've wanted to come and you're the only man I know who can afford to bring me."

"Is that so important?" he asked.

"Your money? Of course, it is important."

"Yes, but—but how about me? I mean if I didn't have this money—"

"Would I still esteem you for your manly virtues? How should I know? I do know it's nice you have it."

"Maybe," he said, "I won't have it so much longer. I guess if money is so important to you I'd better not give you what I was going to."

"Such, for instance, as—?"

"A poem," he said.

"You wrote it?"

"Yes. On purpose for you."

"Um . . . I don't think I ever had a poem written for me before. Suppose we forget about the cash and let the poem come."

"I didn't mean to write any poems or to say anything about how I feel while things are so unsettled," Longfellow said, "but I woke up last night and got to thinking about it. So I wrote this poem for you—"

"Give," she said, extending her hand.

Diffidently he passed it to her across the

table. She opened the envelope and read it. He watched her face anxiously. She did not smile. A second time she read it, and, to his amazement and consternation—but also to his vast delight—he saw a tear poise on her eyelash and course down upon her cheek.

"Oh," she said, "Oh . . . It's funny. It's comical. It's absurd, but, Mike, it's—it's something else. I ought to laugh, but I can't." She dabbed at her eye angrily. "I can't, because it is so—so darned simple and real."

"Then you don't mind?"

"Mind! Mind! Oh, you small-town sap! You agricultural idiot! Mind!"

IT WAS queer, but he did not mind her calling him jeering names. Perhaps it was because of her tone, and perhaps it was because of her eyes.

"I—I was doing my best to make you understand," he said diffidently.

Her cool, clear voice was neither cool nor clear, but unsteady and muffled.

"I didn't know," she said, "that there was anything like you alive. I didn't know anyone could be so un-self-conscious and—and simple and—and genuine. I don't believe you even dream how synthetic people are. You have never found out—have you?—about miserable false values, and pretenses and vanities."

"I don't know very much about women," said Longfellow, "but I do know about you, and so I wrote the very best poem I could, to—to tell you I—I love you. And I'm telling you now because I—somehow I'm sure that if you ever came to love me it wouldn't make any difference to you whether Mr. Semple had a common-law wife or not and I had all this money taken away from me."

"You're sure of that, are you?"

"I'm certain," he said. "Now let's eat and I won't bother you any more about it. I just wanted you to know."

"No," she said, "we won't talk about it any more now. I think I shall want to sit in the dark and take stock of myself."

They dined quite companionably, and then she took him around the corner to the enormous theater, where they saw a picture and the sumptuous entertainment that went with it. He was very thoughtful.

"Lots of people come here," he said.

"Lots," she replied.

"They like it."

"Of course."

"It gives me a kind of an idea," he said.

He took her home. There was no other reference to his poem as he said good night to her. Curiously, he liked that.

"I want to see you often," he said.

"Why not?" she said. "Good night. I'm going in to find out things about Simonetta Petersen."

"They will be very nice things," he said; and then he went home. . . .

Longfellow was unhappy. He sat hunched over his desk, his head upon his hands, obsessed by a gnawing sense of futility. His worry was not for himself, but for Simonetta Petersen. It was evident to him that she stood in danger of arrest for the murder of Nina Motti—and he could do nothing to avert it. He realized almost for the first time how dear she was to him; how much her happiness and safety meant to him. But he was helpless to bring her either happiness or safety.

He was ashamed (Continued on page 154)

of himself for not turning out to be a storybook hero and rescuing her from her predicament by some astounding act or acuteness. From the beginning he had done nothing save to assure her that he believed in her innocence and would stand by her. But he had done nothing except to feel bewildered—and to send a cable to Italy to ask for information about a number of people connected with the Opera.

For a time he tried to write, but inspiration would not come; he tried to think, to reason, but encountered only bafflement. More or less in desperation he turned on the radio. A man's voice, unctuous and laden with distressingly correct pronunciations, announced that Biggley's Foamy Mouth Wash was about to put on the air its weekly Amateur Night.

"As you listen to these contestants—simon-pure amateurs every one—compare their performances," said the voice of the announcer. "Weigh one against the other, and when you have thus exerted your critical faculties, wire or telephone your vote to this station, care of Biggley's Foamy Mouth Wash Hour."

LONGFELLOW shook his head as if to clear it, and wondered if his ears were playing him tricks.

"The winner of each weekly contest," continued the voice, "will receive as a reward a contract to appear for four weeks upon the stage of a chain of vaudeville theaters. You may be assisting in the birth of a great career—in the emergence of an artist who will win fame and fortune. Telephone or telegraph your vote to Biggley's Foamy Mouth Wash. The first aspirant of the evening is Master Hermie Spantx, who will play for you upon his chosen instrument, the jew's harp."

There ensued a twanging sound which was interrupted by the clanging of a gong and by laughter. Hermie was succeeded by a gentleman who impersonated animals and birds, and by a pianist and by a tenor and by a banjoist and by a soprano. Some of these invisible personages were entertaining, some ludicrous, but, somehow, Longfellow found the thing distinctly interesting.

And the vote was announced. The winner was a young gentleman who played a half-dozen instruments at once and called himself a one-man orchestra. Longfellow was astounded at the number of votes cast. It totaled into the thousands.

He summoned Bengold.

"I've been listening to the Foamy Mouth Wash Amateur Hour," he said.

"Yes, Mr. Deeds."

"Is it on the level?"

"It is said to be so."

"Thousands of people voted."

"It is reported to be one of the most popular hours on the air," said Bengold. "I was speaking to an employee of the broadcasting company only the other day. He tells me that it exceeds in popularity even such stars as Madame Pomponi or Signor Pinella or the Philharmonic."

"You mean folks would rather listen to amateurs than to great opera stars?"

"It would seem to be the fact," said Bengold.

Longfellow grunted. He was not exactly surprised, for he had enjoyed it more himself.

"Bengold," he said, "if there was an

amateur contest with an honest-to-goodness reward it would be a pretty good idea."

"Quite probably, Mr. Deeds."

"D'ye know," said Longfellow, "I wouldn't be surprised if it was a good thing for Opera that I had to get mixed in it. Yes, sir. Everybody connected with it always thinks along the same line. I guess they always have."

"Traditions," said Mr. Bengold.

"I wouldn't be surprised," Longfellow said, "if it wasn't possible to work so hard at traditions that you forget to keep alive the thing the traditions are about."

"You may be right," said Bengold, without comprehending in the least what Longfellow was talking about.

"Now, take the board of directors of the Opera," Longfellow said. "They look as if they hadn't heard of anything since Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Huh. Bengold, if I ever get out of this mess I'm in, I guess maybe I'll up and kick the stuffing out of some of these cobwebs."

"You will find it difficult, Mr. Deeds."

"I won't," said Longfellow pensively, "unless they can find somebody else to hold the bag." He considered that a moment. "Good night, Bengold," he said.

But before the door closed behind the secretary he spoke again: "Before you go out will you get Mr. Cedar on the wire?"

Presently his buzzer announced that the call was ready.

"Mr. Cedar?" asked Longfellow.

"Yes, Mr. Deeds."

"Will you call a meeting of the directors of the Opera tomorrow? At eleven."

"It is very short notice. Is it important?"

"Very."

"You are—young, Mr. Deeds, and perhaps less experienced than I. Might it not be a good idea if you told me what you wish to bring before them?"

"I think," said Longfellow, "I'd rather break it to them in—in a body. I guess I am young, and maybe I haven't had a lot of experience. But I'm not exactly loaded up with admiration for those directors. No, sir. If they get curious and want to know, you can tell them I'm coming down to kick the stuffing out of about a peck of traditions."

"You are what?"

"And you'd better have the janitor there to lug out a basketful of cobwebs," said Longfellow. "Good night."

LONGFELLOW read for an hour or so and retired. He dropped to sleep almost instantly and slept deeply. How long he slept he did not know, but some time in the night he awakened. There was a bright light in the bedroom. He opened his eyes, but was quite convinced he was still asleep and dreaming. On the ceiling above his head was an enormous elephant rearing upon his hind legs and hurling a hapless native into the jungle with its trunk. He blinked. Then he turned his head. On the wall opposite was a giraffe nibbling a palm. Everywhere he looked were animals or marvels of zoological life. He shut his eyes again, but this did not seem like a dream.

Then he started upright, for the voice of Mr. Percival Dide and the voice of Miss Theresa Garrison joined in shouting the word, "Surprise!"

They emerged from behind a screen, accompanied by two strange men in overalls with long brushes and pails of paste.

"Mr. Deeds," said Dide, "may I present Sam and Arthur. Bill posters. We acquired them in Greenwich—wasn't it?"

"Stamford," said Theresa.

"Both wrong," said Arthur. "It was Danville."

"Anyhow, it was a slick idea," said Theresa. "We saw them putting up those circus posters, and they looked nice, so we asked them to come along as witnesses."

"They were very good witnesses," said Dide, "and very amenable. They remained as guests at the breakfast—which was at four o'clock, p. m."

"What breakfast?" asked Longfellow.

"The wedding breakfast, of course," said Theresa. "Don't you recognize a honeymoon when you see it?"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Longfellow.

"And because," said Dide, "it was you who brought us together—"

"And made our blessed union possible by refusing to marry me yourself—" said Theresa.

"We decided to let you in on it," said Dide, "and to share our raptures."

"And we hoped you loved dumb animals," Theresa said, "so we brought along Sam and Arthur to brighten up your life. I've always wanted to do over this room."

"YOUR mother," said Longfellow, "will have a conniption."

"Oh, won't she!" exclaimed Theresa rapturously. "Do you want to kiss the bride?"

"And that reminds me," said Dide, "I've got a long cable for you from Italy. Almost forgot it in the excitement of the moment. There it is, laddie."

"What are you going to do—now?" asked Longfellow.

"We did think," said Theresa, "of going up to the Hall of Fame and giving it a few animal touches. But Sam and Arthur have almost run out. By the way, beloved, what'll we do with Sam and Arthur?"

"Put 'em to bed," said Dide.

"Here?" asked Longfellow.

"Where," demanded Dide, "is your Southern hospitality?"

"All right," said Longfellow. "Are you two going to stay, also?"

"Oh, no. We're going some place. Where was it we were going, beautiful?"

"Bermuda," said Theresa.

"Wrong. It was Constantinople."

"Let's compromise on Peking," said Theresa.

"Done, sweetheart. Let's go and buy the tickets. G'night, Sam and Arthur. Mr. Deeds 'll get you safely back to Danville and pay your fines if you get pinched. 'Night, Mike." He paused and came over to the bed and extended his hand. "And don't get fool ideas," he said. "Tess and I mean business. Don't we, nutsy?"

"It is an actual fact," said Theresa, "that we adore each other. Come along, Behemoth."

They departed. Longfellow rang for a disgruntled butler, who stowed Sam and Arthur in beds. Then, picking up the cablegram Dide had given him, he opened it and read. A contented smile broke out on his face, and, with a feeling in his heart that all was not wrong with the world, he closed his eyes and tried to go to sleep again.

(To be continued)

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