

The Woman Hater

By William Dudley Pelley

Can a Girl Be a Man's Mate and Benevolent Fairy Godmother All in One?

The time was a drowsy afternoon late May. The place was the dust-battered office of our Vermont pulp paper, the Paris Telegraph. The street door opened and a young man entered.

George Benedict was his name, and he had come to Paris to work for old Peter Gates in the office of the local pulp mill. Paris called him "the woman-hater." During the decade he had lived in town he had never been known to seek the society of a woman.

Old Peter had taught him the pulp business. He had expected his prodigy to succeed to the management. Ultra-conservative stockholders, however, had decided different-

I'll give you five-thousand-a-year ability for \$18 a week. I'll guarantee to make good in two weeks or you needn't pay me a cent."

"But why not put the facts before those stockholders?"

"They can't be called together. Old Julius Templeton has gone to Italy. He won't be back for a year. Since he left two of the directors have died, and Hastings has gone to Asia for the Thorne Knitting Mills people. Bird can't be fired. The local stockholders who are left are helpless. Besides, they don't realize how fatally Bird's management is affecting the company."

"You've got stock in the company, haven't you?"

"I lost my place down at the pulp company. So I had to begin at the bottom again somewhere else."

June Farley had come to us from the high school over in North Foxboro. Her father still ran a little farm somewhere back in the Green mountains.

As the days grew into weeks, June's interest and sympathy ripened into a pathetic, one-sided affection, from which we older heads in the office believed no good could possibly come.

All of this bored Benedict. He

understand. I'm worried—more than anyone knows. It's—it's—the pulp company. You know the story of my experience there, don't you?"

"Not wholly—at least I've never heard your side of the matter."

Benedict folded his paper. Almost before he was aware, he was acting the unwitting role of the discouraged and embittered boy, telling his troubles to a girl.

She listened quietly, gravely, somehow, on that ride she ceased being the plodding little proofread-

"Then why not walk in and throw him out? He's only an employe, isn't he? And you're a stockholder."

"Throw him out?" Benedict laughed harshly. "You mean figuratively or literally?"

"I mean literally. That is, if he refuses to resign and there's no alternative."

"Do you know what would happen if I tried that?"

"What?"

"Why, Bird would—would—would—"

"Well, what would he do? If you



Thereupon the assembled office employes beheld their late lord and master moving swiftly toward the outer door, a very capable, athletic young body supplying the power for his locomotion.

An older man had been hired from another concern to run pulp company, though George retained a place in the office.

"Mr. Hod," George said to the editor, "I'd like to talk with you private. —I—well, the plain fact is I want a job."

The editor led the way into his office.

"What's the matter that you're running around a country newspaper all of a sudden, hunting a job at country newspaper wages?" demanded.

"I've left the pulp company because I can't stand it another day. I want to start in here and forget I ever knew anything about manufacturing. Give me a place, and you won't regret it."

"How much money were you drawing when Gates died?"

"Five thousand a year."

"Gee whiz! How old are you?"

"Twenty-nine."

"Sonny," said the old editor kindly, "you don't want a newspaper job; you want a month in a sanitarium. A young man who's mastered the pulp business—or any business—so that he's worth \$100 a week at 29 in a little town like Paris, is either a fool or a sick man to confess himself beaten, because a bonehead like Bird has temporarily secured control."

But young Benedict only shook his head.

"I've soured on the pulp business," he returned doggedly. "Besides, Bird was hired under contract and put in down there by the stockholders. They can't get rid of him until his contract is up, and, confidentially, that's going to be too late to save the business. No. . . . I want a job on this paper, and

"I have—all my savings have gone into it. But some people are going to lose thousands where I'm going to lose only hundreds."

"What sort of work do you want to do around here?"

"Advertising. I want to learn the business end of newspaper publishing."

There was no dissuading the chap. Before the session with Sam was over he had landed the job.

On Monday morning of the week following George Benedict's affiliation with the Telegraph a young woman opened the office at seven-thirty, ran up the window shades and hung her hat on a hook alongside the old green safe. Then she pinned on a pair of paper cuffs and started through a pile of correspondence which has accumulated on her flat-topped desk during her absence.

She had been working but a few moments when the latch clicked and she raised her clear gray eyes to behold a young man. He nodded to her and passed through to Sam Hod's room as though he had a right in there.

"Is there something I can do for you?" the girl asked.

"I work here," the man replied.

"You work here!" she gasped.

"I'm Benedict—George Benedict. I'm looking after the advertising."

"But you're the man who ran the pulp company?"

"Well, what of it?"

The girl gaped at him blankly.

"You're not going to buy the Telegraph?" she faltered.

"No," he laughed bitterly. "I'm here working for wages—like all the others."

"What's the matter with you?" the girl blurted.

The young man winced.

was one of those chaps who mature early; a woman had cut her pound of flesh from his heart, and the wound had never healed.

On Independence day, June Farley went down to visit an aunt who lived in Rutland, and returned on the last train. The day coach was crowded. She wandered down the long aisle looking for a seat. The only place available in which she might ride in comfort back to Paris was a half-seat toward the forward end of the car. The other half of that seat was occupied by George Benedict!

"May I—share this seat with you?" she asked, flushing as she recognized him.

He nodded curtly. He had a newspaper and read it industriously. The train started and turned up through the cool, fragrant ravines of the Green mountains.

"I take it you've been spending the day in Rutland also," she declared in a pitiful attempt at conversation.

"Yes," he answered, in a tone which implied that it couldn't possibly be any of her business.

The girl was piqued—mightily.

"You certainly do hate one of us with a terrific hatred, don't you?" she commented. "I can't make out whether you hate me worse or yourself."

"I—don't—hate—anybody," he defended.

Then what's the matter with you? You go about as if you'd lost your last friend, and when other people would be friendly with you, you—slap them. I've worked in the same office with you for over a month now. And there's hardly been a day when you haven't slapped me, somehow, before it ended."

He meditated on this.

"I'll have to apologize to you, then," he said finally. "you don't

and office girl in a country newspaper office up in Vermont. She was a very practical young lady, and her criticisms were constructive and sympathetic.

The train pulled into Paris before either was aware they had covered half the distance. They alighted, left the depot and walked side by side up through the streets in the hush of the summer night.

"But why don't you make a fight?" she demanded as they sat for a time on the steps of the Whitney house on Pine street where June boarded. "You're still a stockholder, aren't you? And all that's standing in your way is the stubbornness of this man Bird."

"Oh, you don't understand," he answered, lapsing at length into his usual cynicism. "It takes money, slathers of it, to get control of enough stock to oust that contrary bonehead. And it's superfluous to say that I haven't got it. I didn't even have enough to support myself so I could wait around Paris for something to crash up there at the mill. A fat chance I've got of buying any controlling interest in the business."

"You mean you're penniless?"

"All my savings went to pay for the stock Mr. Gates gave me the opportunity to buy. He thought all along that I was to succeed him. He trained me for it, and now I'm—I'm helpless."

"Does it really take money to do what you would like to do in the pulp company. Or does it take just plain brains and nerve?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Do you know how to run that business better than Mr. Bird?"

"Naturally, I think so."

"That isn't answering my question. Do you?"

"Yes."

really are a better man than he is, couldn't you match him nerve for nerve and move for move? Bird would have no one to whom to appeal to back him up. And if you can't make good between now and the time the majority stockholders get back, can you ever do it?"

"It isn't done," he declared. "Nobody ever heard of one lone stockholder walking in and ousting a corporation manager just because his fellow stockholders were absent."

"I see," the girl remarked acidly. "You lack the nerve!"

"I do not lack the nerve!" he returned hotly.

"Then why don't you do it? What's stopping you?"

"The law! Bird would have the law on me—somehow."

"But you have as much brains as Bird. Dig up a few laws of your own."

"That's cave-man stuff!" he tried to explain. "We don't get the things we want by knocking our competitors over the head with a club."

"Don't we? I've been under the impression that real men did—when they had sufficient provocation and all other expedients had been exhausted."

This stung him to anger.

"You're only a woman," he declared contemptuously. "You're not supposed to understand."

"And I'm reluctantly compelled to believe that you're only a coward. You're not supposed to understand, either."

Benedict arose stiffly.

"So you're whipped as easily as that?" she mused. "Well, I can understand now why the stockholders elected another man to the position you expected."

"If you were a man, Miss Farley, you'd apologize mighty quickly for that."

The girl smiled sagely.

"Indeed! If you're feeling so bellicose, why not try some of it on Mr. Bird?"

She had hurt him deeply. But she had meant to hurt him. Intuitively she felt that he required exactly such a jolt. When he did not reply, merely stood there with his face averted, she arose and laid her hand upon his arm. In quite another voice, she said:

"Please forgive me. I don't mean to be—cheap. Everybody says

COUNTRY FALLER