

The Women's Candidate

By BYRON WILLIAMS

CHAPTER X.

Instead of leaving the vicinity of the cabin after being liberated, Bedight closed the door and replaced the bar. Drifting back into the bushes, he waited. An hour passed and then came voices and rustling in the wood. Soon the game warden and two deputies hove into view. The warden's face was flushed with excitement as he strode along in advance of his men.

Approaching the door, he called out: "Will ye surrender peaceable and come out o' there, or shall I come in an' git ye?"

From within there emanated no answering voice. Out in the bushes, twenty feet away, Bedight waited, tensely.

"Come on out; the door's unlocked," shouted the warden.

Still no answer.

"Gol darn ye; I'll show ye. Come on in, fellers," bawled the officer, throwing open the door and dashing into the cabin, followed by his deputies.

With an agile spring, Bedight left the clump of bushes and dashed for the door. The warden saw him coming and sprang to meet him—but too late! Slamming the door shut, the mayor shot the bar home.

He could hear the strenuous objections of the prisoners as he hurried away, making a detour to a farmer's house, where he hoped to secure something to eat. A ruddy-cheeked farmer's wife fed him bountifully and protested at the unnecessary size of the coin he gave her for his dinner and a basket of provisions, with which he set out for the cabin.

Reaching the wood-chopper's hut, in which two hours previous he had been a prisoner, he rapped on the door.

"Whoever's there," cried an excited voice within, "let us out!"

"Break the glass in the window," directed the mayor, his face illumined with smiles, "and eat out of my hand!"

A growl of mingled disappointment and relief preceded the shattering of the glass. Bedight held his basket on his left arm and began passing provisions through the aperture.

"Good grub, this, boys," he chuckled. "I serve excellent meals at both my boarding houses. I'll bring you tobacco tomorrow night. Just you make yourselves comfortable. How would you like a deck of cards?"

It was dark when Bedight reached Squirrel Inn and slipped unobserved to his room.

When Jackie Vining came down at six next morning to take a constitutional before breakfast the mayor sat in an easy chair on the veranda, smoking his favorite pipe.

"Will you kindly tell Miss Mason that I am waiting her commands?" he asked easily, with no trace of resentment in his voice.

"I was going to liberate you this morning," she said, simply, trying to hide her surprise.

"Oh, I got out last night, thank you. I'm particular about my own bed. Never could sleep well in a strange bunk," laughing.

After breakfast Alice Mason, the girl appointed by the court to defend Bedight on the occasion of his trial, called him aside.

"As your attorney, I am led to offer you your freedom today. I want to go to Lakeville for some cold cream, and if you will ride to the Four Corners with me, I will let you escape to your own devices. It is not always that an attorney can vouch for his client, but I am willing to take a

chance on you," confidently. "And besides, these girls have been badgering the life out of you. It's time somebody took pity," laughing.

The mayor put his lips close to the girl's rosy ear.

"Honest," he said, "hope to die, I've never had so much fun in all my life—but that bill business is dangerous, and I'd like to get through with the ordeal honorably. I can use today, and as a small expression of my gratitude, I'll send you the jolliest big box of candy in Chicago as I pass through."

"Thank you," she said, her eyes dancing. "I'll leave the selection to you."

An hour later Bedight, astride a good horse, was galloping toward Bordeaux, a railroad crossing ten miles to the north. Arriving at the station he sent a telegram, ate a typical meal at a typical country hotel, and started back. He reached the cross roads at



Cleo Summers.

dusk and let his tired mount plod leisurely homeward.

Saturday morning broke clear and tense after a sweltering night. The sun was copper colored and the leaves upon the crest, where they were wont to bow and curtsy to the zephyr's breath, hung listless in the shimmering heat. At breakfast, none looked refreshed and Mine Host complained of drought. Pauline, the cook, whose eggs were always soft-bolled to a creamy elasticity and whose toast was ever golden brown and delicious, fretted the former into blue-black globules surrounded by leathery gelatine, while the latter was burned and desiccated to a hard-tack condition decidedly disappointing to her usually delighted followers. The thermometer, to all intents and purposes, was so basely ambitious as to seemingly have no other desire than to climb higher and higher in its relentless rise.

"Come on, Mr. Bedight," exclaimed Molly McConnell, "row me over to Waxelbaum's Point. I want to sketch La Veck's cabin, the remaining relic of what was once the oldest trading post in the state. It is tumbledown and ramshackle and will make a fine study. I was by there a week ago on a calm day and the reflection in the placid water was almost as realistic as the old log-pile itself. A photograph taken when I saw the cabin would puzzle the beholder to tell which was the cabin and which the reflection. Today promises to be still and bids fair to afford me an opportunity to get just the right atmosphere. I'll be ready in ten minutes."

She came down to the dock, her black eyes dancing in anticipation. Bedight packed her outfit in the prow of the boat along with the lunch basket, held the boat firmly against the dock as she put her dainty foot upon the stern seat, and dipped gracefully into position, a magazine under her arm and a camera slung across her shoulder.

As the mayor took the oars he looked at her—bareheaded, her lustrous black locks defying the sun, her full tempting lips shaping a perfect cupid's bow, a saucy little dimple on each side of a well-rounded cheek, and teeth as white as milk-coral through which the laughter trilled and rippled like a singing spring across its minty way.

Surely a man might well be sentenced for life to such a woman's whim, while but a day's service were as an hour in Naples after a hard passage!

Molly McConnell had one of those daring, unconventional temperaments that bespoke a woman of full blood and spirit, a being of beauty and grace and voluptuous constancy. To THE man she would be all in all, reigning queen of his heart, laughing at affinities, scorning jealousies, holding him secure with her mental and physical charms.

The lake was calm and through its mirrored depths long strands of weed and marsh grass could be seen streaming upward in the shallow places. Not even a ripple stirred the surface and the sun reflected from the sheening waters, glowed heatedly upon the faces of the two in the boat—the girl with hair like the night and eyes of liquid velvet, the man with a sentence to serve in the Garden of Eden with a pipkin as the forbidden fruit.

The mayor rested on his oars and mopped his sweating brow. The girl's eyes danced:

"And now," she babbled, "you are in a position to appreciate the arduous life of the galley slave. Row on, my man!"

"O, that this were the river of Life!" countered Bedight, matching the woman's frippery.

"One of the obligations imposed upon you by the 'Judge,'" solemnly, "was not to propose marriage or play

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the role of Lotario. I trust your intentions toward me are like the Christmas snow—simply another layer of white purity!"

"Pray do not tempt me, Eve," he said; "a boat is fully as perilous for loving as a fat for matrimony."

Her merry laughter rippled out across the water from a throat as shapely as an artist's model. Her neck, browned from the life at Squirrel Inn, was full and moulded free of hollow dips.

"O, you old Adam!" she giggled. "don't you know that the price of apples has gone up—away up—since our mothers quit sewing carpet-rags and spinning flax. It takes a man with a head these days to keep my lady gratified."

"Apples, say the physicians, are necessary to the human system. And I may point also to a higher authority who has said it is not good for man to dwell alone! As for the price, was there ever an Adam who thought of this?"

"Not until the baby needed shoes!" agreed the woman, letting her hand ripple the water over the rail. "Many an Adam has asked his Eve to fly with him and after the flight couldn't buy a curry of chicken wings in a Boston restaurant!"

The mayor smiled.

"Marriage as it is practiced," he commented, "is a bigger gamble than the board of trade—and twice as interesting."

The boat glided onward across the sleeping waters, leaving a V-shaped ripple in its wake. Traversing the lake, Bedight pulled through a narrow neck that connected Goose Lake with the main body of Sylvan. The view was enchanting—pine, cedar and hemlock, birch and maple varied the shores and green bushes trailed their drooping tendrils in the cool waters. La Veck's cabin came into view, situated upon a knoll beside the lake, a picturesque pile of the lumber-jack days. About its tumbled sides the wild amplexus scrambled, and rag-weed flourished in the clearing. The mayor drew the skiff upon the shore, carried the girl's easel, box and camp chair to a spot designated and stood by for orders.

"Can you make coffee?" asked Miss McConnell, as she got out the canvas and prepared to begin the sketch.

"In these days of the new woman," he said, banteringly, "man has come to recognize in a kindlier light the ladylike art of cooking. Fair enchantress, I can make coffee fit for the gods, but woman's dainty hand must pour, else it loses its flavor."

"Very well," she said, "now run away and forget me until the coffee is boiling in the pot."

Bedight turned to the forest's fringe



"Your Diplomacy Is Admirable."

and began gathering firewood. When with terrible speed and deposited upon the shore. He shook the water from his eyes. Beside him on the sand lay the girl, and a rod down the shore the boat hung upon the shingle.

She opened her eyes to the sound of his voice and the pressure of his hand upon her heart. Coughing, she sat up on the beach and rubbed the sand from her face and hands. Her clothes hung closely upon her, showing the outlines of her body. The rain still fell in torrents and ran down their necks in thin rivulets.

"Oh!" she gasped, when her senses marshaled themselves from the bewilderment, "I've lost my sketch!"

The mayor laughed.

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Lucille Walters.

that now—although I'm willing to admit you'd make a swell mermaid."

The storm was raging off in the east, the wind where they stood had ceased cracking its lungs, but a heavy sea was running on the lake and both oars were gone. Bedight looked about for shelter. Mounting the shore's bluff, he saw, off to the north, a hut still standing, evidently some fisherman's shanty. He beckoned the girl, who came up laughing.

"If I look as funny as you do with your clothes all sticking to you, the little birds will be in paroxysms tomorrow!" laughed the bedraggled woman, saucily, gazing brazenly at the man.

"Well," replied Bedight, returning the stare, "your hair is down, your shirtwaist is out at the back, your skirt is showing your limbs and your shoes squash when you walk. Otherwise you are dressed for one of Mine Host's summer feeds or evening hops—that is, dress appropriate for Squirrel Inn when there are no men to en-



"Oh, if Pauline Could Only See Us Now," Laughed Miss McConnell.

snare and all dancing parties are feminine."

"You're horrid!" she scowled. "What are we going to do?"

"There's a hut over there. If there's any part of it that will burn, we will preserve the remainder and use it as a Garden of Eden supplied by a kind providence."

The woman hesitated. The Garden of Eden stuff in the morning was not then so pregnant with possibilities. Bedight set off ahead, apparently oblivious to her doubt.

Miss McConnell's face was clouded. What else was there to do? They were on the opposite side of the turbulent lake from the inn, with an oarless, shattered, boat. The country about was rough and unsheltered? The night was upon them and the way to the inn around Sylvan lake was too far for her to attempt walking it in the night, along the rough trails and through the mud-covered roads.

Bedight met her at the door.

"Welcome, Eve," he said, teasingly. "Eden isn't such a bad place, after all. There's a stove and some flour and salt here, also matches, a dishpan, three chairs and a bunk. I'm going to see if the lake has yielded up our coffee pot and some coffee."

"I'll go," said Miss McConnell, soberly. "You start the fire and put the kettle on."

She went out abstractedly and walked down to the beach. What should she do? Was she sure of this man

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Cloverport Churches

Baptist Church
Baptist Sunday School, 9:30 a. m. C. E. Lightfoot, Superintendent. Prayer Meeting Wednesday 7:30 p. m. Baptist Aid Society meets Monday after Second Sunday, every month. Mrs. A. B. Skelliman, President. Preaching every Sunday at 11:30 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Rev. E. O. Cottrell, Pastor.

Methodist Church
Methodist Sunday School, 9:30 a. m. Ira D. Heben, Superintendent. Preaching every Sunday at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Frank Lewis, Pastor. Prayer meeting Wednesday 7:30 p. m. Epworth League, regular service Sunday 9:45 p. m.; business meeting first Tuesday night each month. Miss Margaret Lutz, President. Ladies' Aid Society meets first Monday each month. Mrs. Furrer Lightfoot, President. Ladies' Missionary Society meets second Sunday in every month. Mrs. Virg. Babbage, President. Choir practice Friday night 7:30. A. H. Murray, Director.

Presbyterian Church
Presbyterian Sunday School 9:45 a. m.—Conrad Sippel, Superintendent. Preaching every Third Sunday, Rev. Adair, Minister. Prayer meeting Tuesday, 7:30 p. m. Ladies' Aid Society meets Wednesday after Third Sunday every month. Mrs. Chas. Satterfield, President.

Catholic Church
First Sunday of each month, Mass, Sermon, and Benediction, 9:30 a. m.; other three Sundays at 10:15 a. m. On week days Mass at 7:30 a. m. Catechetical instruction for the children on Saturdays at 8:30 a. m., and on Sundays at 9:30 a. m. and 2:30 p. m.

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