



Ben Ames Williams

SYNOPSIS

Jim Saladine listens to the history of neighboring Hostile Valley, with gossip of the mysterious, enticing "Maddy," wife of Will Ferrin. Interested, he drives to the Valley for a day's fishing, though admitting to himself his chief desire is to see the reputedly glamorous Maddy. "Old Marm" Pierce and her nineteen-year-old granddaughter Jenny live in the Valley. Since little more than a child, Jenny has at first admired and then deeply loved young Will Ferrin, neighboring farmer, older than she, and who regards her still as merely a child. Will takes employment in nearby Augusta. Jenny is disappointed. Bart Carey, something of a ne'er-do-well, is attracted by Jenny, but the girl repulses him. Learning that Will is coming home, Jenny, smiling, sets his long-empty house "in rights" and has dinner ready for him. He comes—bringing his wife, Huldy. The girl's world collapses. Huldy becomes the subject of unfavorable gossip in the Valley. Entering his home, unlooked for, Will finds seemingly damning evidence of his wife's unfaithfulness, as a man who he knows is both Humphreys breaks from the house. Will overtake him, and chokes him to death, though Humphreys shatters his leg with a bullet. At Marm Pierce's house the leg is amputated. Jenny goes to break the news to Huldy. She finds Bart Carey with the woman. When he leaves Huldy makes a mock of Jenny's sympathy, declaring she has no use for "half a man," and is leaving at once. Will is legally exonerated, and with a home-made artificial leg, "carries on," hiring a helper, Zeke Dace. Months later, Huldy comes back. Will, only warning her she must "mend her ways," accepts her presence as her right. Two years go by. Zeke and Bart Carey engage in a fight, the trouble arising over Huldy. Amy Carey commits suicide. Before Huldy's return, Zeke Dace had been showing her attention, but she had succumbed completely to Huldy's will. Saladine comes to the Valley. Bad roads cause him to stop at the Ferrin farm where he meets Huldy. While fishing he is caught in a heavy rain and takes refuge at Marm Pierce's. Bart Carey, arriving carrying Huldy whom he claims has fallen from a ledge, and seemingly is dead.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

Jenny approached the task of tending Huldy with a deep reluctance; but this was not because of the part Huldy had played in her life heretofore. She had cause enough to hate the woman, not so much because Huldy had pre-empted the place in Will's heart to which the girl so long had yearned, but because Huldy had wronged Will and flouted him and embittered all his life these later years. But in this hour Huldy was no longer the woman whom Jenny at once hated and despised; but only one who was hurt to death, and needed tenderness. So after this first reluctance, Jenny began the task imposed upon her with gentle hands and pitying solicitude. Once, while she worked Marm Pierce called some question, and Jenny answered it almost heedlessly; but a moment later she was alert, watching the hurt woman keenly. For Huldy had stirred; and Jenny saw a faint movement of the other's breast. But Huldy did not rouse, and when there was no more that Jenny could do, she stood beside the couch, lost in dim dreams and long thoughts of what had been. After a long time, the pattern of the past began to shift and change, and Jenny glimpsed the future. Huldy was hurt, was dying. She would die, and Will would be left alone. Alone, and free. And Jenny, understanding, felt her pulse quicken to beat, and her cheeks grow warm. Her eyes began to shine. She had for the moment forgotten Huldy, in her thought of Will; yet she still stood above the hurt woman, looking down at her. And now suddenly she forgot Will's needs, for Huldy moved. Jenny saw her eyes half open, saw the lips crack, and the eyes—blank and wandering—stare up at the ceiling. Then Huldy's eyes met Jenny's, and she held them for a pulse beat that was eternity. She looked at Jenny, and then her lips twisted a little in that familiar, half-insolent, half-challenging smile. And from these lips came a sound, a low murmur of ironic laughter, perhaps a word. Jenny bent lower, infinitely gentle, she whispered: "It's all right, M's Ferra! We're taking care of you. Don't try to talk, ma'am. Just rest yourself." The smile widened, and this time Huldy spoke audibly. Her voice was thin and strained, yet the words were clear enough. And they cut like burned and stung; for she said: "You can have him now!" Jenny's eyes widened at that, as she sat at a table, she recalled, "Till I can rob that ankle of yours."

And then, over her shoulder, to Bart still lingering! "Well, then, go out in the hen pen and get me some feathers." "Feathers?" he echoed. "I'll burn 'em under her nose. Might make her gasp and gag and start breathing. Don't stand there arguing. Go along with you!" So Bart went out through the shed, and Saladine said gravely: "Ma'am, this ankle of mine can wait, if you can be doing anything for her."

"There's nought to do for Huldy Ferrin now," she told him in slow tones, and tossed her head. "And I dunno as I'd do it if there was! But I'll have to wait till the pot boils, anyhow. Might as well be doing this as sitting here." He suggested: "You sent Carey to get some feathers. If there's no chance, why..." She retorted: "I got s'dgety with him hanging around." And after a silent moment she looked toward the dining room, as though her thoughts turned that way. Saladine asked: "How do you reckon M's Ferrin come to fall?" "I want to know," said old Marm Pierce, and Jim stirred in quick attention. The phrase was usual enough, as an expression of surprise and interest and wonder; yet Saladine thought her accent and her intonation had not been usual. There was a step in the shed, and Bart returned. She looked over her shoulder, saw him empty-handed. "Where's them feathers?" she demanded. Bart seemed faintly to hesitate, "I couldn't find a dry one anywhere," he declared. "The rain has wet them all!" She protested irritably: "Land sakes, I sh'd think you could find a dry one somewhere! You come along of me!" And she said to Jim, pointing toward the stove: "Let that boil up good, and then set it to cool. I'll be back in a minute to try it on her."

CHAPTER VIII



"He Hit Me!"

And a chair toppled over, somewhere. The sound was loud and startling. Saladine came to his feet, and his eyes were bold and strong. It was suddenly strange to Saladine that Bart and Jenny were not married long ago. They were neighbors, of a like age, both comely with the splendor of youth, their interests akin. Between them no obstacle appeared. Unless old Marm Pierce were an obstacle? Yet Saladine thought she had met Bart kindly today, treated him with courtesy. This might be grudge; she might, while appearing to approve, nevertheless check in every possible way the tendency of these two lives to flow together. In consequence, Saladine recalled the heavy footstock of the water lily, which Jenny had fetched that morning from the brook. Some shadow of a forgotten memory stirred in him, and was gone without recognition; yet this memory would recur. It was one of the intangibles which made the whole of this day like a disordered dream. The root itself was tangible enough; yet there were implications in it, just as there were implications in that peg leg Will Ferrin wore, and the cowboy hat so jauntily set atop the bowed and humble head of Zeke Dace, and the knot-roped that held Huldy Ferrin's garment close about her, and the boot prints on the fisherman's trail beside the brook, which had somehow ended without Saladine's remarking where they turned aside. But most of all he thought of Huldy, and wondered how she came to fall to her death this day. Then suddenly the dining room door opened, and Jenny came out into the kitchen, the old woman following her. "I'd best go myself," Jenny insisted; and Saladine saw a sort of stubborn haste in her eyes. Marm Pierce protested: "Like enough Will and Bart will remember to bring something." "Not Will," Jenny retorted. Her voice was gentle as she spoke the name. "A man wouldn't think of it. And it isn't for men to do, anyway. Rummaging through her things." She took down a heavy oil-skin coat from behind the kitchen door. "I'll go myself," she said. "If I meet Will, I'll have him come on here, case you need anything. I'll get what's wanted and fetch it." Then she was gone.

and his eyes were bold and strong. It was suddenly strange to Saladine that Bart and Jenny were not married long ago. They were neighbors, of a like age, both comely with the splendor of youth, their interests akin. Between them no obstacle appeared. Unless old Marm Pierce were an obstacle? Yet Saladine thought she had met Bart kindly today, treated him with courtesy. This might be grudge; she might, while appearing to approve, nevertheless check in every possible way the tendency of these two lives to flow together. In consequence, Saladine recalled the heavy footstock of the water lily, which Jenny had fetched that morning from the brook. Some shadow of a forgotten memory stirred in him, and was gone without recognition; yet this memory would recur. It was one of the intangibles which made the whole of this day like a disordered dream. The root itself was tangible enough; yet there were implications in it, just as there were implications in that peg leg Will Ferrin wore, and the cowboy hat so jauntily set atop the bowed and humble head of Zeke Dace, and the knot-roped that held Huldy Ferrin's garment close about her, and the boot prints on the fisherman's trail beside the brook, which had somehow ended without Saladine's remarking where they turned aside. But most of all he thought of Huldy, and wondered how she came to fall to her death this day. Then suddenly the dining room door opened, and Jenny came out into the kitchen, the old woman following her. "I'd best go myself," Jenny insisted; and Saladine saw a sort of stubborn haste in her eyes. Marm Pierce protested: "Like enough Will and Bart will remember to bring something." "Not Will," Jenny retorted. Her voice was gentle as she spoke the name. "A man wouldn't think of it. And it isn't for men to do, anyway. Rummaging through her things." She took down a heavy oil-skin coat from behind the kitchen door. "I'll go myself," she said. "If I meet Will, I'll have him come on here, case you need anything. I'll get what's wanted and fetch it." Then she was gone.

When Jenny, thus departing, left Saladine and Marm Pierce alone, the old woman seemed for a moment almost embarrassed. She looked at Jim with her small bright eyes. "I'll boil up a cup of tea," she decided. "It's past dinner time, and I'm hungry. Low you could eat a bit your own self." She filled the kettle at the pump in the sink and clapped it on the stove. Bread from the pantry, jam, butter from the cellar, and a bit of salt pork and some cold boiled potatoes to slice and fry in the sweet fat. "Jenny's a fine girl," Saladine suggested presently. "It's a wonder she ain't married." Marm Pierce looked at him with eyes suddenly shrewd. "You said Huldy Ferrin showed you the path down to the brook," she remembered. "Go back to the house when you left her, did she?" "I don't know," he replied. "I looked up, from down below, and saw her still there." "Jenny told me," she said—"that you claimed somebody had fished down brook ahead of you." "I saw tracks in the trail," he assented. Rain began to drive against the windows, against the glass panel in the door. She said: "Well, everything's ready. You can set down!" He perceived in her the pent garb of a lonely old woman who too seldom has an audience; and while they ate, he encouraged her, skillfully, to speech. Marm Pierce, at first guardedly and then warming to her theme, told him about Jenny and Will. Once she was well started, she listened without interruption, finding in what she said the explanation of much that he had seen today. "She didn't know the meaning of it, first off," the old woman concluded. "Didn't know what was happening to her. She wa'n't but a girl then." And added: "But Jenny's growed to be a woman now." She broke off, seemed to listen; and he asked softly: "Hear something?" "Nothing, likely," she said after a moment. "Seemed like I heard some one in the barn. Like as not it was that no-good brother of mine." And she talked on and on; and rose at last and began to scrape the dishes clean and pile them in a pan in the sink. She chuckled the fire, noisily. Then suddenly the old woman replaced the lid on the stove with a clatter, and crossed as quiet as a mouse, to the shed door. Jim came to her side. "Seemed like I did hear some one," she whispered. He touched the latch and swung the shed door wide, to reveal—nothing. "Don't see anything!" he said doubtfully.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Soda and Nitrate Nitrate of soda and common washing soda are not the same. Nitrate of soda is sodium nitrate, the emerald; about some man, Bart Carey, perhaps? Bart stood straight,

"QUOTES" COMMENTS ON CURRENT TOPICS BY NATIONAL CHARACTERS

ESSENTIAL TO RECOVERY

By DR. J. A. DE HAAS, Of Harvard University.

IT IS becoming more and more evident that in our attempt to reconstruct the world after the war we have chosen the wrong path. Our only excuse is that it was not realized at the time that states are no longer primarily political units but economic units.

Many countries have indeed achieved a measure of recovery, but evidences can be observed on every hand that the limits of recovery in isolation have already been reached.

Great Britain has made a marvelous comeback, but her recovery is entirely based upon a reorganization and belated modernization of industries, and in the latter part of 1934 recovery began to slow down in that country.

Germany, Italy, France, practically every country in Europe, also has reached the limit of recovery in isolation. The answer is obvious: recovery through international co-operation only is possible.

NEW DEAL INEVITABLE

By EDWARD A. FILENE, Boston Merchant.

WHATEVER happens to the Roosevelt administration, whatever congress does, whatever the Supreme court says, we may rest assured that America is going to have some kind of New Deal. Business especially will never again be done as it was in the years previous to 1929. This would be impossible because the old conditions no longer exist and any government which is organized as well as any business which is organized must plan in relation to the new conditions regardless of how much we may prefer the old.

This is true throughout the world. Wherever conditions have changed sufficiently to make some new deal necessary there have been new deals. Some from my viewpoint have been very unfortunate deals and some that have been exceedingly autocratic have caused very many observers to conclude that the days of democracy are about over and that the world is turning to dictatorships.

SUSTAINING THE FRANC

By JEAN TANNERY, Governor, Bank of France.

WE ARE resolved to defend the franc against every attack. We possess the means and consider it our duty. The success of our efforts should prepare the way to facilitate measures of wider importance. After economic restoration and the resumption of normal commercial relations between our peoples should come a general stabilization of money. Heralding the end of the depression, this stabilization would be the surest method of causing a real and durable rise in prices. It would re-establish security, for from the moment that the different moneys that are now unstable should become definitely fixed, the business leaders in setting their prices would no longer be obliged to take the exchange factor into account.

ABOLITION OF SUBS

By SIR BOLTON EYRES-MONSELL, First Lord of British Admiralty.

REICHSFUHRER HITLER did say in his speech of May 27 that Germany was ready to abolish submarines if the other countries would do the same, and this willingness was reaffirmed by the delegates from Berlin during the Anglo-German naval talks. But it had long been known that Britain also was willing to abolish submarines and had pressed for their elimination by international agreement at the Washington Naval conference and ever since. This fact that the British views on the subject were in accord with Germany's was called to the attention of Hitler's representatives. But it was also recognized by both sides in the London naval negotiations that other powers, including France and Japan, had not yet consented to abandon undersea craft.

TREND OF PRICES

By DR. GEORGE F. WARREN, Cornell Professor and Monetary Adviser to Administration.

JUST as I believed that the price level that prevailed before the depression could not hold, so I now believe that there is no probability of prices in gold returning to any such level. I have seen no sound reasons presented for anticipating that the long time relationships of value have permanently changed; that is, I anticipate that the long-time value of gold relative to the value of other commodities will continue to be in proportion to the relative supplies of gold compared with the supplies of other commodities but that extremely violent fluctuation in the value of gold will occur.

Rubber Used in Place of Down in Upholstery

Rubber is being used increasingly as a household commodity. The latest purpose is as a substitute for down in cushions and upholstery. The rubber is converted into sponges, of varying dimensions, and is thus given the spring quality needed for stuffing of upholstery, cushions, tops of large footstools, etc. It is this rubber-sponge upholstery that is competing with down. In softness, it is manufactured to be comparable. When the rubber is totally deodorized, the competitive value reaches a high water mark. It is true that down will acquire a faint unalred odor unless cushions are shaken frequently, and aired occasionally also. So both rubber and down require care in order to preserve their freshness. In this use for cushioned furniture or soft cushions.

In many ways, iceless refrigerators have rubber insulations. Rubber and glass are competitive agents of insulation, each having certain advantages for their specific uses.

Rubber knobs come to stick into backs of furniture to keep them from hitting walls hard. They are excellent for sofas and davenport positioned with backs along walls. These buttons, in varying sizes are put to many uses to suit the homemaker's needs.

To enumerate all the many household purposes of rubber would be an impossible task in one short article, which is primarily to acquaint homemaker with the novel upholstery use to which it is being adapted.

© Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.

Women Are Less Liked by Men Than in Former Years

We are in the middle years of a woman's generation which was vigorous with hopes and intentions of accomplishments, electric with desire to be worth something to the world, ambitious to have women of equal stature with the men who were their husbands and companions.

The original plan, we must remember, was never to incur the resentment of men. Women felt very sure that such resentment and antagonism as they encountered in their first efforts was the result of shock and would be transient; they expected that a few years of accomplishment would do away with it.

There has been much accomplishment, the best of it unfortunately concentrated in the hands of a comparatively few women, and more than a few years have passed. But the resentment of men has not disappeared. Quietly it has grown and deepened. They are no longer angry as they were in the beginning when women did unaccustomed or conspicuous things. Men love individual women as passionately as they ever have, but in the aggregate they seem to like women less. Young girls, married women, working women and the widows all come in for a share of this general criticism.—Margaret Culkin Banning in Harper's Magazine.

Advertisement for Grape-Nuts Flakes featuring a cartoon character and text: 'STRIKE UP THE BAND AND GIVE IT A HAND', 'THE FLAVOR'S GLOR-I-OUS', 'JOIN IN THE CHOR-I-OUS', 'IT'S GOT EVERYTHING IT'S THE CEREAL KING', 'GRAPE-NUTS FLAKES!', 'ONCE you taste Grape-Nuts Flakes, you'll cheer too! And it not only has a delicious flavor, but it's nourishing. One dishful, with milk or cream, contains more varied nourishment than many a hearty meal. Try it—your grocer has it! Product of General Foods.'

Advertisement for Advertisements: 'Read Them! Heed Them! ADVERTISEMENTS Are Your Guides to Value'.