

HOSTILE VALLEY

by Ben Ames Williams

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CHAPTER VIII

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, he 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 chunked 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.

But Marm Pierce pointed to the floor. Here were wet, muddy traces where booted feet had stood, where soaked garments had dripped upon the boards.

"It's that Win," Marm Pierce decided scornfully. "He's forever prying around!" She shut the door with a slam.

"I should think you'd be nervous, you and Jenny, living here alone," he suggested.

"The Valley gets some folks," she agreed. "Folks that don't know how to be alone without being lonely. You've got to know how to be company for yourself, to get along around here!" And she added with a wry chuckle: "Just the same, I'm full as well pleased to have you 'round."

"You mean—on account of your brother?"

"Land, no!" she said scornfully. "No, I don't pay no heed to him. He comes and goes. But I'd as soon have a man in the house right now, for all that!"

He watched her curiously, but before she could answer his unspoken question, there was a step on the porch outside the door; and they turned to see Bart appear. He leaned a steel rod beside the door before he came in. He had changed into dry clothes, coat and overalls.

"Where's Will?" Marm Pierce demanded.

"He wa'n't around," Bart explained. "Nor Zeke either. I figured they'd heard about Huldy and come over here." He looked around. "Where's Jenny?" he asked.

"Gone to fetch Huldy's clothes," Marm Pierce told him. "It's a wonder you didn't meet her."

Bart shook his head. Saladine saw a broad leather belt about his waist, with a bait attached, and to which a holster hung.

"Hullo," he said. "You pack a gun?"

"Sure," Bart assented, and produced it. Saladine took the weapon in his hands. It was an old model, the front sight gone, of heavy caliber; and when Jim, holding back the hammer, gingerly tried the trigger, he found that the pull was feather light.

"I always carry it when I go fishing," Bart explained. "You never know when you run into a moose down here in the woods, or a wildcat."

Marm Pierce was in the dining room, and Bart lowered his tones. "That's the gun Seth shot Will Ferrin with," he said.

Marm Pierce returned, and Jim handed the weapon back to Bart.

The old woman was putting on an oilskin coat. "Bart, you see anybody fishing down brook this morning?" she inquired. "I heard there was tracks along the bank." "Win likely went that way," Bart reminded her. "I noticed tracks my own self, when I came down along. Figured it was him."

Marm Pierce pulled an oilskin hat over her white hair. "I get strangled for air, when I stay indoors the whole day," she declared, and went out. As she closed the door, they heard something slither and fall, and saw her stoop down.

"Knocked your rod over, Bart," she called.

"Can't hurt that rod," he assured her cheerfully. She stepped down off the porch and disappeared toward the barn.

"I met Will Ferrin, and Miss Ferrin, and Zeke Dace, this morning," Saladine said. "I was on my way to your place, till I run into the washout; so I backed up and left my car in Will's yard."

"I see it there a while ago," Bart assented.

"Zeke looked like a sick man, to me," Saladine suggested.

Bart grinned as though abashed. "He's falled a lot," he said. "But he was an able man, two years ago. He worked me over, proper one day. The Valley will whittle a man down." And he added:

"Some, like Marm Pierce and Jenny here, they're always the same, and Will's always the same, or would be if it wa'n't for Huldy. She's—twisted him, turned him wrong ways." His brow clouded. "I wouldn't blame him for anything he was to do. If I was Will, I'd have . . ." He changed this. "If she was mine, I'd have known how to handle her!"

Rain, rain, rain; the lash of whips against this little house, the pelt of bullets.

Bart looked thoughtfully at the door into the dining room; and said huskily, with a nod toward the other room: "You see her this morning, you said. What did you think of her?"

"She was a queer one," Saladine confessed.

Bart leaned forward with a deep intentness. "Saladine," he said. "How would she come to fall?"

"Got dizzy, maybe? Or tripped over something?"

"She wa'n't the sort to get dizzy," Bart protested. "And—the ledge is all smooth, and it's good footing there."

"You mean to say she jumped?" Bart grinned almost in derision.

"She look to you like one that would kill herself, did she?" he demanded.

"No," Saladine admitted. "No, she didn't."

"Then put a name on it," Bart whispered. "If she didn't fall, and didn't jump. . ."

But Saladine was always inclined to think twice before he spoke, and there was matter enough for thought here today. He shook his head, silently.

Bart—though they were quite alone—whispered: "There ain't a soul around here would blame Will!"

But Saladine stared silently at the stove, and Bart did not repeat his sinister suggestion; and a little after, Marm Pierce came briskly in.

"Well, you've let the fire go out, between you!" she said sharply. This was almost true. She whisked off a lid of the stove and thrust a billet in, scolding them impartially. She hung up her coat and hat. "Wet to the knees, I am. Got to go change."

She left them, departing through the dining room; and Bart's glance flickered after her through the open door, as though his eyes were drawn irresistibly that way. Then the two men sat alone a while, till Saladine heard a familiar sound, remotely, coming near. He rose and moved to the door, Bart at his shoulder.

"It's Will Ferrin," Saladine remarked. "And Jenny. In my car."

And Bart said in a low, surprised tone: "So 'tis! I didn't know but Will would've got out of the country by now!"

Saladine, to avoid reply, opened the door and stepped out on the porch. Then Will and Jenny, Will with an old suitcase in his hand, alighted from the car and came toward them here.

(To be continued)

H. B. HIGH

Funeral services were held Saturday afternoon from his home in Middlesex for H. B. High 64, prominent merchant and farmer of that town and father of a local woman. He died suddenly Friday night. Rev. W. G. Farrell, pastor of Middlesex M. E. Church assisted by Rev. J. C. Williams of Fuquay Springs, former pastor, officiated. Interment was in Middlesex cemetery.

Mr. High is survived by his wife, the former Miss Ada Boyette and daughters, Mrs. Drewery L. Liles of Spring Hope and Miss Helen Burns High of Middlesex; three brothers, S. G. High of Middlesex, S. E. High of Lucama and Dewey High of Selma; two sisters, Mrs. Bettie Deans of Middlesex and Mrs. Willie Strickland of Bailey.



DEBNAN — PAINTS

WENDELL Theatre

WENDELL, N. C.

Program for Week of April 23

Thursday, Friday—April 23, 24
BING CROSBY in
"ANYTHING GOES"

Saturday, April 25
JOHN WAYNE in
"THE DAWN RIDER"

Sunday, April 26
A Good Picture—Title to be announced later. Shows at 2:00 and 9:00 p. m.

Monday and Tuesday, April 27-28
MAE WEST in
"KLONDIKE ANNIE"

Wednesday (Bargain Day) Apr. 29
"ONE WAY TICKET"
with Lloyd Nolan, Peggy Conklin
Matinee 3:30—10c to all
Night 7:30—10c and 15c

PAYMENTS

Under the Soil Conservation program payments of grants will be made in separate checks to landlords and tenants. Payments are to be made in one check to each person eligible to receive payment. Payments are to be made on performance only. There are no contracts to sign.

HOME NURSERY

Making the farm home more beautiful is one of the objectives of the Future Farmers of America. A number of boys in the Bailey chapter have made a definite start toward this goal by beginning a home nursery. Developing the home nursery is a part of the work in Vocational Agriculture.

After a suitable site has been selected cuttings of available shrubs are made and set out. This is the beginning. As the cuttings take root and grow they will be transplanted to a larger plot and finally to the place where they are to grow permanently. Then, too, seeds will be planted and budding and grafting will be studied and practiced in growing fruit trees, vines and shrubs.

These home nurseries have among others the following cuttings in generous quantities: Abelia Grandiflora, Ligustrum Lucidum, Ligustrum Lucidum, Forsythia, Spirea Van Houtti, Fotinia Cerelotta, Spirea Thunbergi and Golden Arbor Vitae.

Those boys who have begun a home nursery are Earl Finch, McCoy Turnage, Jack Finch, Worth Eatman, Richard Smith, Bruce Farmer and Arnold Boswell.

He said, "There's this about my wife;

I learned it with a shock. It's That she never picks my suits, But always picks my pockets."

A woman may buy her shoes to have a better understanding, but buying a hat always goes to her head.

Shells are easily removed from boiled eggs if salt has been added the water in which they were cooked.

ALMANAC



"Those who ask the fewest favors are received as favored guests."

APRIL
23—S.S. Great Western crosses Atlantic in record of 15 days, 1838.

24—Start of losing five-day Irish Rebellion, 1916.

25—Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of radio, born, 1874.

26—Federal law abolishes imprisonment for debt, 1831.

27—City of Tripoli surrenders to the United States navy, 1805.

28—Napoleon starts for Elba and exile, 1814.

29—Sundbach patents the hookless fastener, 1913.

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The New Heaterless

DeGRAFF PERMANENT WAVE
Is Now Being Demonstrated. All \$7.50 and \$10.00 Waves — Special This Week Only

\$5.00 and \$6.50
MARTHA'S BEAUTY SHOP

WENDELL, N. C.

Mrs. Martha Alexander, Owner.— Nettie Turnage, Manager.



FARM NOTES

(By T. H. LeCroy)

MASS MEETING FAILS TO GET ACTION ON TOBACCO COMPACT

After approximately six thousand farmers of eastern North Carolina left their work and gathered in a body at Raleigh last Tuesday, after requests and demands by the state have gone out from farmers and after every conceivable method at hand has been exhausted, the Governor still says that the farmers, farm leaders, legislators at Washington and others who disagree with him are "nitwits" if they think that a special session of the General Assembly could pass compact laws which would be effective in controlling this year's crop. Every reason presented by the Governor last Tuesday against the proposed compacts had already been considered carefully by farmers and farm leaders in the tobacco belt. After the "reasons" against the compacts were presented, the entire delegation of farmers at the mass meeting still voted in favor of the compact idea. While feeling among the farmers at the mass meeting was running high, there were no demonstrations and those present gave the Governor due respect. Based on general attitude of Nash farmers and the reputed and evident attitude of other tobacco farmers, the last of the demand for effective tobacco control is not in sight. Whoever blocks or materially holds up the securing of effective tobacco crop control and consequent higher prices will expect no mercy at the hand of tobacco farmers when they gather at the polls to vote.

Time alone can tell whether the Governor is right or wrong in his attitude regarding a special session now. He has shown himself to be a friend of the tobacco farmer in the past. But thousands of farmers in the largest tobacco producing state think that the Governor is taking upon himself too much responsibility in refusing their demand for compact legislation at this time.

In the meantime, it is urged that every tobacco farmer join with his fellow farmers and cooperate under the Soil Conservation Program by reducing his crop. The U. S. Department of Agriculture estimates that there will be an increase of 8 per cent in the tobacco acreage this year. With not much over normal production per acre we will probably take 10 to 15 cent for our tobacco. With a high production per acre such as we had last year, we can expect less than 10 cent for our tobacco.

If you have had a permanent wave, do not use a vinegar to rinse your hair.

The King of England has a gold dinner service worth ten million dollars.

It is said by scientists that rats milk is richer in both fat and protein than cow's milk.

Grant was the only president who graduated from West Point.