



THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

By VAUGHAN KESTER
Illustrations By D. MELVILLE



SYNOPSIS.

The scene at the opening of the story is laid in the library of an old worn-out southern plantation, known as the Barony. The place is to be sold, and its history and that of the owners, the Quintards, is the subject of discussion by Jonathan Crenshaw, a business man, a stranger known as Bladen, and Bob Yancy, a farmer, when Hannibal Wayne Hazard, a mysterious child of the old southern family, makes his appearance. Yancy tells how he adopted the boy, Nathaniel Ferris buys the Barony, but the Quintards deny any knowledge of the boy. Yancy to keep Hannibal, Captain Murrell, a friend of the Quintards, appears and asks questions about the Barony. Trouble at Scratch Hill, when Hannibal is kidnapped by Dave Blount, Captain Murrell's agent. Yancy overtakes Blount, gives him a thrashing and secures the boy. Yancy appears before Squire Balaam, and is discharged with costs for the plaintiff. Betty Malroy, a friend of the Ferrises, has an encounter with Captain Murrell, who forces his attentions on her, and is rescued by Bruce Carrington. Betty sets out for her Tennessee home. Carrington takes the same stage. Yancy and Hannibal disappear, with Murrell on their trail. Hannibal arrives at the home of Judge Slocum Price. The Judge recognizes in the boy, the grandson of an old time friend.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued).

"Boy, don't be afraid. Look on me as a friend," urged the Judge.
"I reckon I'll be glad to stop," answered Hannibal.
"Such confidence is inspiring. Are you hungry?"
"Yes, sir," replied Hannibal.
"What do you say to cold fish?" the Judge smirked his lips to impart a relish to the idea. "I dare swear I can find you some corn bread into the bargain." He began to assemble the dainties he had enumerated.
"Here you are!" he cleared his throat impressively, while benignity shone from every feature of his face. "A moment since you allowed me to think you were solvent to the extent of fifty cents—Hannibal looked puzzled. "I wonder if you could be induced to make a temporary loan of that fifty cents? The sum involved is really such a ridiculous trifle I don't need to point out to you the absolute moral certainty of my returning it at an early date."
It was not the loss of his money that Hannibal most feared, and the coin passed from his possession into his host's custody.
"Thank you, my boy! I must step down to the tavern—when I return, please God, we shall know more of each other." While he was still speaking, he had produced a jug from behind the quilt that screened his bed, and now took himself off into the night.

Left alone, Hannibal gravely seated himself at the table. What the Judge's larder lacked in variety it more than made up for in quantity, and the boy was grateful for this fact. Presently he heard the Judge's heavy, shuffling step as he came up the path from the road, and a moment later his gross bulk of body filled the doorway. Breathing hard and perspiring, the Judge entered the shanty, but his eagerness kept him silent until he had established himself in his chair beside the table, with the jug and a cracked glass at his elbow. Then, bland and smiling, he turned toward his guest.
"My tenderest regards, Hannibal!" and he nodded over the rim of the cracked glass his shaking hand had carried to his lips. Twice the glass was filled and emptied, and then again his roving, watery eyes rested meditatively on the child. "Have you a father?" he asked suddenly. Hannibal shook his head. "A mother?"
"They both of them done died years and years ago," answered the boy. "I can't tell you how long back it was, but I reckon I don't know much about it. I must have been a small child."
"Ho—a small child!" cried the Judge, laughing. He cocked his head on one side and surveyed Hannibal Wayne Hazard with a glance of comic seriousness. "In God's name what do you call yourself now?"
"I'm most ten," said Hannibal, with dignity.
"I can well believe it," responded the Judge. "Where did you come from?"
"From across the mountains."
"And where are you going?"
"To west Tennessee."
"Have you any friends there?"
"Yes, sir."
"You've money enough to see you through?" and what the Judge intended for a smile of fatherly affection became a leer of infinite cunning.
"I got ten dollars."
"Ten dollars—the Judge smirked his lips once. "Ten dollars—" he repeated, and smirked his lips twice.
The purple flush on the Judge's face, where the dignity that belonged to age had gone down in wreck, deepened.
He quitted his chair and, lurching somewhat as he did so, began to pace the floor.
"Take me for your example, boy! You may be poor, you may possibly be hungry—you'll often be thirsty, but through it all you will remain that splendid thing—a gentleman!"

Perhaps you'll contend that the old order is overthrown, that family has gone to the devil? You are right, and there's the pity of it! The social fabric is tottering—I can see it totter—and he tottered himself as he said this.
"Well, I'm an old man—the spectacle won't long offend me. I'll die presently." He was so profoundly moved by the thought that he could not go on. His voice broke, and he buried his face in his arms. A sympathetic moisture had gathered in the child's eyes. He slipped from his chair and stole to the Judge's side.
"I'm mighty sorry you're going to die."
"Bless you, Hannibal!" cried the Judge, looking wonderfully cheerful, despite his recent bitterness of spirit. "I'm not experiencing any of the pangs of mortality now. My dissolution ain't a matter of tonight or tomorrow—there's some life in Slocum Price yet, for all the rough usage, eh? I think you'd better go to bed."
"I reckon I had," agreed Hannibal, slipping from his chair.
"Well, take my bed back of the quilt. You'll find a hoe there. You can dig up the dirt under the shuck tick with it—which helps astonishingly. What would the world say if it could know that Judge Slocum Price makes his bed with a hoe!"
Hannibal retired behind the quilt. "Do you find it comfortable?" the Judge asked, when the rustling of the shuck tick informed him that the child had lain down.
"Yes, sir," said the boy.
"Have you said your prayers?" inquired the Judge.
"No, sir. I ain't said 'em yet."
"Well, say them now. Religion is as becoming in the young as it is respectable in the aged. I'll not dis-

"You seem to be raising first-rate hell all by yourself." "Oh, be reasonable, Solomon. You'd gone down to the steamboat landing," said the Judge plaintively. By way of answer, Mahaffy shot him a contemptuous glance. "Take a chair—do, Solomon!" entreated the Judge. "When did I ever sneak a jug into my shanty?" asked Mahaffy sternly, evidently conscious of entire rectitude in this matter.
"I deplore your choice of words, Solomon," said the Judge. "You know damn well that if you'd been here I couldn't have got past your place with that jug! But let's deal with conditions. Here's a glass. Now what more do you want?"
Mr. Mahaffy drew near the table. "Sit down," urged the Judge.
"I hope you feel mean?" said Mahaffy.
"If it's any satisfaction to you, I do," admitted the Judge.
"You ought to," Mahaffy drew forward a chair. The Judge filled his glass.
"What's the news from the landing?"
Mahaffy brought his fist down on the table.
"I heard the boat churning away round back of the bend, then I saw the lights, and she tied up and they tossed off the freight. I ain't seen her churning away again and her lights got back of the trees on the bank. There was the lap of waves on the shore, and I was left with the half-dozen miserable loafers who'd crawled out to see the boat come in. That's the news six days a week!"
By the river had come the Judge, tentatively hopeful, but at heart expecting nothing, therefore immune to disappointment and equipped for fail-

ending a most extraordinary coincidence. When I went to the war of '12, a Hazard accompanied me as my orderly. His grandson is back of that curtain now—sleep—in my bed!" Mahaffy put down his glass.
"You were like this once before," he said darkly. But at that instant the shuck tick rattled noisily at some movement of the sleeping boy. Mahaffy quitted his chair, and crossing the room, drew the quilt aside. A glance sufficed to assure him that in part, at least, the Judge spoke the truth.
There was a hoof-beat on the road. It came nearer and nearer, and presently sounded just beyond the door. Then it ceased, and a voice said:
"Hullo, there!" The Judge scrambled to his feet, and taking up the candle, staggered into the yard. Mahaffy followed him.
"What's wanted?" asked the Judge holding his candle aloft. The light showed a tall fellow mounted on a handsome bay horse. It was Murrell.
"Have either of you gentlemen seen a boy go through here today?" Murrell glanced from one to the other. Mr. Mahaffy's thin lips twisted themselves into a sarcastic smile. He turned to the Judge, who spoke up quickly.
"Did he carry a bundle and rifle?" he asked. Murrell gave eager assent.
"Well," said the Judge, "he stopped here along about four o'clock, and asked his way to the nearest river landing."
"Hannibal—the Judge's voice and manner were rather stern. "Hannibal, a man rode by here last night on a big bay horse. He said he was looking for a boy about ten years old—a boy with a bundle and rifle." There was an awful pause. "Who was that man, Hannibal?"
"It were Captain Murrell." The Judge raised his fist and brought it down with a great crash on the table. "We don't know any boy ten years old with a rifle and bundle!" he said.
"Please—you won't let him take me away, Judge—I want to stop with you!" cried Hannibal. He slipped from his chair, and passing about the table, seized the Judge by the hand. The Judge was visibly affected.
"No!" he roared. "He shan't have you. Is he in to you?"
"No," said Hannibal. "He tried to get me away from my Uncle Bob."
"Where is your Uncle Bob?"
"He's dead." And the child began to weep bitterly. The Judge bent and lifted him into his lap.
"There, my son—" he said soothingly. "Now you tell me when he died, and all about it."
"He were killed. It were only yesterday, and I can't forget him. I don't want to—but it hurts—it hurts terrible!" Hannibal buried his head in the Judge's shoulder and sobbed aloud. Presently his small hands stole about the Judge's neck, and that gentleman experienced a strange thrill of pleasure.
"Tell me how he died, Hannibal," he urged gently. In a voice broken by sobs, the child began the story of their flight, a confused narrative. The Judge shuddered. "Can such things be," he murmured at last. Then he remembered what Mahaffy had told him of the man on the raft. "Hannibal," he said, "Solomon Mahaffy, who was here last night, told me he saw down at the river landing, a man who had been fished up out of the Elk—a man who had been roughly handled."
"Were it my Uncle Bob?" cried Hannibal, lifting a swollen face to his.
"Dear lad, I don't know," said the Judge sympathetically.
"It were Uncle Bob! I know it were my Uncle Bob! I must go find him!" and Hannibal slipped from the Judge's lap and ran for his rifle and bundle.
"Stop a bit!" cried the Judge. "Now, if it was your Uncle Bob, he'll come back the moment he is able to travel. Meantime, you must remain under my protection while we investigate this man Slosson."
It was Saturday, and in Pleasantville a jail-raising was in progress. During all the years of its corporate dignity the village had never boasted any building where the evil-doer could be placed under restraint; hence had arisen its peculiar habit of dealing with crime; but a leading citizen had donated half an acre of ground lying midway between the town and the river landing as a site for the proposed structure, and the scattered population of the region had assembled for the raising.
(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"His Grandson is Back of That Curtain, Now—Asleep in My Bed."

CHAPTER VIII.

Boon Companions.
Some time later the Judge was aware of a step on the path beyond his door, and glancing up, saw the tall figure of a man pause on his threshold. A whispered curse slipped from between his lips. Aloud he said:
"Is that you, Mr. Mahaffy?" He got no reply, but the tall figure, propelled by very long legs, stalked into the shanty and a pair of keen, restless eyes deeply set under a high, bald head were bent curiously upon him.
"I take it I'm intruding," the newcomer said sourly.
"Why should you think that, Solomon Mahaffy? When has my door been closed on you?" the Judge asked, but there was a guilty deepening of the flush on his face. Mr. Mahaffy glanced at the jug, at the half-emptied glass, lastly at the Judge himself.

ure. By the river had come Mr. Mahaffy, as unfit as the Judge himself, and for the same reason, but sour and bitter with the world, believing always in the possibility of some miracle of regeneration.
At the Judge's elbow Mr. Mahaffy changed his position with nervous suddenness. Then he folded his long arms.
"You asked if there was any news, Price; while we were waiting for the boat a raft tied up to the bank; the fellow aboard of it had a man he'd fished up out of the river, a man who'd been pretty well out to pieces."
"Who was he?" asked the Judge.
"Nobody knew, and he wasn't conscious. I shouldn't be surprised if he never opens his lips again. When the doctor had looked to his cuts, the fellow on the raft cast off and went on down the Elk."
It occurred to the Judge that he himself had news to impart. He must account for the boy's presence.
"While you've been taking your whiff of life down at the steamboat landing, Mahaffy, I've been expect-

TWO TOTS HOLD TO THE LIFE-LINE

Children Fall Through Rotten Cover Into Cistern

MOTHER THROWS A ROPE

Thomas and Anna Rinker Saved from Drowning by Mrs. Rinker's Quick Wit and Energy in White-marsh Township.

Glenside.—A life-line thrown by their mother saved the lives of Thomas Rinker, Jr., aged seven, and his sister, Anna, aged five, when they broke through the rotten covering of a 25-foot cistern and fell into seven feet of water at their home, just beyond Chestnut Hill, in Whitmarsh township. Scampering around the yard, the youngsters ran with too much impact across the puny boards and shot down into the gloomy depths with screams. Mrs. Rinker ran out to see what had happened, and the shattered cistern cover told the tale. Instead of yielding to panic or hysteria, however, the mother rushed into the house and brought out a clothes line, unfolding it as she ran. Tying one end to the pump, she tossed the pool to the two youngsters in the other below, telling them to grasp hold of it and to hold tight. This the children did. Then Mrs. Rinker ran to the house of a neighbor 500 yards away, and called to two men who were working in a garden. Nearly exhausted from her run, she gasped out her story, and in less than three minutes afterward the two men were leaning over the hole. One of the men slid down the rope and, treading water, tied the end of the rope to Anna's body, and she was hauled out. The same procedure was followed with Thomas, and then the rescuer was drawn from the cistern. Thomas sustained a severe cut on the foot as the result of the plunge. Anna Rinker and Mrs. Rinker, though suffering from shock and excitement, felt no other effects of the near-tragedy. Mrs. Rinker was congratulated by White-marsh residents on her presence of mind and thoroughness of action.

Gas Well Fire Throttled.

Washington.—After having burned millions of feet of natural gas, flames which had been raging since three days at the Ross Bowl Well, No. 3, at Lone Pine, were extinguished by a novel contrivance. Oil workmen fought the fire for three days, but the heat was so intense that operations near by were impossible and long-distance fire-fighting of no avail. Finally a plan was conceived by a driller. An oil-well boiler stock, a big inverted cup-shaped affair with an opening at the smaller end, was placed on low rollers which were fastened at the end of a long series of wagon trucks. These trucks were pushed up to the well, while the workmen were shielded from the heat by sheets of iron. The stock was dropped over the hole and the flames shot high into the air through its summit. A cable was then looped over the stock the cup-shaped affair was quickly jerked from its position. This caused a break in the gas current and the flames subsided instantly.

Soil Survey for Lehigh.

Allentown.—In fulfillment of a bill passed by Congress at the behest of Representative Rothermel, of the Berks-Lehigh district, for a soil survey of Lehigh County, the Department of Agriculture has assigned William T. Carter, Jr., to the work. Carter has established headquarters in New Tripoli, in the heart of the great Lehigh potato region. Carter estimates that it will take him until November to make a thorough soil survey of the county. Usually two men are put on a job, but since Lehigh is a small county, and the services of field workers are much in demand all over the country, he was given no associate. The thoroughness with which these soil surveys are made can be judged from the fact that a patch only ten acres in extent with a soil different from that of the surrounding region, will be indicated on the map. Rothermel's bill carries an appropriation of \$25,000.

Run Over by Beer Wagon.

Shenandoah.—While Miss Rose Har-savage and three little companions were trying to cross a busy street she was run down by a heavy beer wagon, which passed over her body. To the horror of hundreds of pedestrians, she was picked up unconscious, but revived with medical attendance. She is internally injured and suffers much from shock. Fatal results are feared. The beer wagon driver was arrested and held under heavy bail.

Hotel Men Found Dead.

South Bethlehem.—Barton Dietrich, aged 52, one of the oldest hotel men in the Lehigh Valley, in point of service, was found dead in bed. Dietrich was totally blind, yet took entire charge of his business, and had developed such a fine sense of touch that he seldom made a mistake in changing money. In his earlier years, while he was learning the butchering trade in Lancaster County, he accidentally ran a meat hook into his right hand. Bleeding poisoning set in and blindness followed.

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