



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. Murrell arrives at Judge's home. Cavendish family on raft rescue Yancy, who is apparently dead. Price breaks jail. Betty and Carrington arrive at Belle Plain. Hannibal's ride discloses some startling things to the Judge. Hannibal and Betty meet again. Murrell arrives in Belle Plain. Is playing for big stakes. Yancy awakes from long dreamless sleep on board the raft. Judge Price makes startling discoveries in looking up land titles. Charley Norton, a young planter, who assists the Judge, is mysteriously assaulted. Norton informs Carrington that Betty has promised to marry him. Norton is mysteriously shot.

CHAPTER XVI—(Continued).

"There you go, Price—" began Mahaffy.

"Solomon, this is no time for me to hang back. I shall offer a reward of five thousand dollars for this information." The Judge's tone was resolute. "Yes, sir, I shall make the figure commensurate with the poignant grief I feel. He was my friend and client—"

The next morning it was discovered that some time during the night the judge had tacked his anonymous communication on the court house door; just below it was another sheet of paper covered with bold script:

"To Whom It May Concern:

Judge Slocum Price assumes that the above was intended for him since he found it under his office door on the morning of the twenty-fifth inst.

"Judge Price begs leave to state it as his unqualified conviction that the writer is a coward and a cur, and offers a reward of five thousand dollars for any information that will lead to his identification.

Tom Ware was seated alone over his breakfast. He had left his bed as the pale morning light crept across the great fields that were alike his pride and his despair—what was the use of trying to sleep when sleep was an impossibility? He was about to quit the table when big Steve entered the room to say there was a white fellow at the door.

"Fetch him along in here," said Ware.

The white fellow delivered a penciled note from Murrell. When he was gone, the planter ordered his horse.

As Ware rode away from Belle Plain he cursed Murrell under his breath. His own inclination toward evil was never robust; he could have connived over a long period of years to despoil Betty of her property, but murder and abduction was quite another thing.

Three miles from Belle Plain he entered a bridge path that led toward the river. A growth of small timber was standing along the water's edge, but as he drew nearer, those betterments which the resident of that lonely spot had seen fit to make for his own convenience, came under his scrutiny; these consisted of a log cabin and several lesser sheds.

Landing, he advanced toward the cabin. As he did so he saw two women at work heaving flax under an open shed. They were the wife and daughter of George Hicks, his overseer's brother.

"Morning, Mrs. Hicks," he said, addressing himself to the mother, a hulking ruffian of a woman. "Anybody with the captain?"

"Colonel Ferris is."

"Humph!" muttered Ware. He moved to the door of the cabin and entered the room where Murrell and Ferris were seated, facing each other across the breakfast table.

"Well, what the devil do you want of me, sayhow?" demanded the planter.

"How's your sister, Tom?" inquired Murrell.

"I reckon she's the way you'd expect her to be." Ware dropped his voice to a whisper.

"John, you'll ruin yourself with your damned crazy infatuation!" it was Ferris who spoke.

"No, I won't, colonel, but I'm not going to discuss that. All I want is for Tom to go to Memphis and stay there for a couple of days. When he comes back Belle Plain and its niggers will be as good as his. I am going to take the girl away from there tonight. How soon can you get away



"And Then It's Change Your Name and Strike Out for Texas."

from here, Tom?" he asked abruptly.

"By God, I can't go too soon!" cried the planter, staggering to his feet. He gave Ferris a hopeless beaten look.

"You're my witness that first and last I've no part in this!"

The colonel shrugged his shoulders. Murrell reached out a hand and rested it on Ware's arm.

"Keep your wits, Tom, and within a week people will have forgotten all about Norton and your sister. I am going to give them something else to worry over."

Ware went from the cabin.

"Look here, how about the boy—are you ready for him if I can get my hands on him? I'll send him either up or down the river and place him in safe keeping where you can get him at any time you want."

"This must be done without violence, John!" stipulated Ferris.

"Certainly, I understand. Which shall it be—up or down river?"

"Could you take care of him for me below, at Natchez?" inquired Ferris.

"As well there as anywhere."

"Good!" said Ferris, and took his leave.

Three-quarters of an hour slipped by, then, piercing the silence, Murrell heard a shrill whistle; it was twice repeated; he saw Bess go down to the landing again. A half-hour elapsed and a man issued from the scattering growth of bushes that screened the shore. The newcomer crossed the clearing and entered the cabin. He was a young fellow of twenty-four or five, whose bronzed face wore a reckless expression.

"Well, captain, what's doing?" he asked.

"If anything's to be done, now is the time, Hues. What have you to report?"

"Well, I've seen the council of each Clan division. They are ripe to start this thing off."

Murrell gave him a moment of moody regard.

"Twice already I've named the day and hour, but now I'm going to put it through!" He set his teeth and thrust out his jaw.

"Captain, you're the greatest fellow in America! Inside of a week men who have never been within five hundred miles of you will be asking of each other who John Murrell is!"

Murrell had expected to part with Hues then and there and for all time, but Hues possessed qualities which might still be of use.

"Hues, you must start back across Tennessee. Make it Sunday at midnight—that's three days off." Unconsciously his voice sank to a whisper.

"Sunday at midnight," repeated Hues slowly.

"When you have passed the word into middle Tennessee, turn south and

"When do you start south?" asked Hues quickly.

"Inside of two days. I've got some private business to settle before I leave. I'll hang round here until that's attended to."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Judge Extends His Credit.

That afternoon Judge Price walked out to Belle Plain. Solomon Mahaffy had known that this was a civility Betty Malroy could by no means escape. He had been conscious of the Judge's purpose from the moment it existed in the germ state, and he had striven to divert him, but his striving had been in vain, for though the Judge valued Mr. Mahaffy because of certain sterling qualities which he professed to discern beneath the hard crust that made up the external man, he was not disposed to accept him as his mentor in nice matters of taste and gentlemanly feeling. He owed it to himself personally to tender his sympathy. Miss Malroy must have heard something of the honorable part he had played; surely she could not be in ignorance of the fact that the lawless element, dreading his further activities, had threatened him. She must know, too, about that reward of five thousand dollars. Certainly her grief could not blind her to the fact that he had met the situation with a largeness of public spirit that was an impressive lesson to the entire community.

These were all points over which he and Mahaffy had wrangled, and he felt that his friend, in seeking to keep him away from Belle Plain, was standing squarely in his light. He really could not understand Solomon or his objections. He pointed out that Norton had probably left a will—no one knew yet—probably his estate would go to his intended wife—what more likely? He understood Norton had cousins somewhere in middle Tennessee—there was the attractive possibility of extended litigation. Miss Malroy needed a strong, clear brain to guide her past those difficulties his agile fancy assembled in her path. He beamed on his friend with a wide sunny smile.

"You mean she needs a lawyer, Price?" inquired Mahaffy.

"That slap at me, Solomon, is unworthy of you. Just name some one, will you, who has shown an interest comparable to mine? I may say I have devoted my entire energy to her affairs, and with disinterestedness, I have made myself felt. Will you mention who else these cutthroats have tried to browbeat and frighten? They know that my theories and conclusions are a menace to them! I got 'em in a panic, sir—presently some fellow will lose his nerve and light out for the tall timber—and it will be just Judge Slocum Price who's done the trick—no one else!"

"Are you looking for some one to take a pot shot at you?" inquired Mahaffy, sourly.

"Your remark uncovers my fondest hope, Solomon—I'd give five years of my life just to be shot at—that would round out the episode of the letter nicely"; again the judge beamed on Mahaffy with that wide and sunny smile of his.

"Why don't you let the boy go alone, Price?" suggested Mahaffy. He lacked that sense of sublime confidence in the Judge's tact and discretion of which the judge, himself, entertained never a doubt.

"I shall not obtrude myself, Solomon; I shall merely walk out to Belle Plain and leave a civil message. I know what's due Miss Malroy in her bereaved state—she has sustained no ordinary loss, and in no ordinary fashion. She has been the center of a striking and profoundly moving tragedy! I would give a good deal to know if my late client left a will!"

"You might ask her," said Mahaffy cynically. "Nothing like going to headquarters for the news!"

"Solomon, Solomon, give me credit for common sense—go further, and give me credit for common decency! Don't let us forget that ever since I came here she has manifested a charmingly hospitable spirit where we are concerned!"

"Wouldn't charity hit nearer the mark, Price?"

Laying Something by for Future.

The general prosperity can only be a reflection of the prosperity of the individual, and no individual is really prosperous who is not laying aside something for the future. The man who makes \$10,000 per year and spends \$10,000 is poorer than the man who makes \$1,000 and spends but \$900. It may be hard to walk while your neighbor whisks by in an automobile, but it is the man who has the courage and character to live well within his means who accumulates enough capital to do things in the world—Indianapolis Star.

COMMERCIAL

Weekly Review of Trade and Market Reports.

Bradstreet's says: "Business conditions are even more reassuring than heretofore. Crop developments continue exceptionally favorable. Industrial operations are moving at a swifter pace, labor is in scant supply, both in mill and field; buying for fall, winter and next spring is of larger proportions, money is in more active demand, currency is going to the country in large volume, a general shortage of railway cars in another month seems certain, the pig-iron trade displays marked activity and, finally, collections are gradually improving, with further betterment likely to ensue when the marketing of crops is on a larger scale."

Wholesale Markets

NEW YORK.—Wheat—Spot firm; new, No. 2 red, 106½ c f, track and 107½ f o b, afloat; No. 1 Northern Duluth, 105½ f o b, afloat.

Corn—Spot firm; export corn, 61½ c f o b, afloat.

Oats—Spot firm; new standard white, 41c; No. 2, 41½; No. 3, 41; No. 4, 40½ all tracks; new natural white, 40½@41½ track; new white clipped, 42@44.

Butter—Firm; creamery, extras, 26½@27c; seconds, 24@25; thirds, 22@23½; state dairy, good to prime, 23½@24½; common to fair, 21@23; process, extras, 24½@25; firsts, 23½@24; packing stock, current make, No. 2, 20.

Dressed Poultry—Weak; Western chickens, 17@22c; fowls, 14@17; turkeys, 16@17.

PHILADELPHIA.—Wheat—Firm, ½c higher; No. 2 red winter in export elevators, 95@95½c.

Cheese—Quiet, unchanged.

Live Poultry—Quiet, unchanged.

Dressed poultry, quiet, unchanged.

BALTIMORE.—Wheat—Spot and August, 101½c; September No. 2 red, 102; October No. 2 red, 103½.

Corn—Contract, 87c. The closing was quiet; spot and August, 87c nominal.

Oats—No. 2 white, 40; standard white, 39; No. 3 white, 38; No. 4 white, 36½@37.

Rye—Western Domestic—No. 2, 80@83; No. 3, 77@78. Nearby—No. 2, car lots, 80@82; bag lots, as to quality, 78@82.

Hay—Timothy—No. 1, \$23; No. 2, \$21@22; No. 3, \$17@19. Clover, mixed—Choice light, \$19.50@20; No. 1, \$17.50@18.50; No. 2, \$15@16. Clover—No. 1, \$14@14.50; No. 2, \$12@13.

Straw—Rye straw—No. 1 straight, \$15.50@16; No. 2 do, \$15@15.50; No. 1 tangled, \$12@12.50; No. 2 do, \$11@11.50. Wheat straw—No. 1, \$8@8.50; No. 2, \$7@7.50; Oat straw—No. 1, \$8.50@9; No. 2, \$8@8.50.

Butter—Creamery, fancy, 26½@27; creamery, choice, 26@27; creamery, good, 24@25; creamery, prints, 23@30; creamery, blocks, 27@29; ladies, 21@22; Maryland and Pennsylvania, rolls, 19@20.

Cheese—The market is firm. Jobbing lots, per lb, 17½@19c.

Eggs—Maryland, Pennsylvania and nearby firsts, 23c; Western firsts, 23; West Virginia firsts, 22@23; Southern firsts, 21@22. Recrated and rehandled eggs, ¼c higher.

Live Poultry—Chickens, per lb—Old hens, heavy, 14½@15c; do do, small to medium, 12½@14; old roosters, 9; spring, 1½ lbs and over, 18; do, 1½ lbs, 18; do, 1 lb and under, 18. Ducks, per lb—White Pekings, 12c; Muscovy, 11; puddle, 11; spring, 3 lbs and over, 14; do, smaller, 12@13.

Live Stock

CHICAGO.—Close: Cattle—Beaves, \$5.85@10.65; Texas steers, \$2.75@8.15; Western steers, \$5@6.85; stockers and feeders, \$4.30@7.25; cows and heifers, \$3@8.15; calves, \$8.50@11.

Hogs—Light, 8.25@8.95; mixed, \$8.10@8.95; heavy, \$7.90@8.75; rough, \$7.90@8.15; pigs, \$5.65@8.25; bulk of sales, \$8.25@8.75.

Sheep—Natives, \$4.40@5.65; Western, \$3.50@4.65; yearlings, \$4.50@5.60; lambs, native, \$4.75@7.10; Western, \$4.75@7.10.

KANSAS CITY, MO.—Cattle—Dressed beef and export steers, \$8.75@10.60; fair to good, \$8.75@8.75; Western steers, \$5.50@9; stockers and feeders, \$4.50@7.50; Southern steers, \$4.25@6; Southern cows, \$3.25@5.00; native cows, \$3.25@6.50; native heifers, \$5@8; bulls, \$4@5.25; calves, \$5@9.

Hogs—Bulk of sales, \$8.40@8.70; heavy, \$8.40@8.55; packers and butchers, \$8.40@8.75; light, \$8.60@8.75; pigs, \$6@7.

Sheep—Lambs, \$6@8.75; yearlings, \$4.50@5.35; wethers, \$4@4.40; ewes, \$3.50@3.80; stockers and feeders, \$2.25@4.

PITTSBURGH.—Cattle—Choice, \$9.25@9.50; prime, \$8.65@9.10.

Sheep—Steady; supply fair. Prime wethers, \$4.60@4.75; culls and common, \$1.50@2; lambs, \$4.50@7.50; veal calves, \$10.50@11.

Hogs—Lower. Prime heavies, \$9.10@9.15; mediums, \$9.35@9.40; heavy and light Yorkers, \$9.35@9.40; pigs, \$5@8.75; roughs, \$7.50@8.

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