



# THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

By VAUGHAN KESTER  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY D. MELVILL

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## 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 Cronshaw, 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, and how he, Yancy, and 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 Balaah, 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 house, Cavendish family on raft rescue Yancy, who is apparently dead. Price breaks jail. Betty and Carrington arrive at Belle Plain. Hannibal's sister 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. Charlie Norton, a young planter, who assists the judge, is mysteriously assassinated. Norton informs Carrington that Betty has promised to marry him. Norton is mysteriously shot. More light on Murrell's plot. He plans uprising of negroes. Judge Price, with Hannibal, visits Betty, and she keeps the boy as a companion. In a stroll Betty takes with Hannibal they meet Bess Hicks, daughter of the overseer, who warns Betty of danger and counsels her to leave Belle Plain at once. Betty, terrified, acts on Bess' advice, and on their way their carriage is stopped. Murrell, the tavern keeper, and a confederate, and Betty and Hannibal are made prisoners. The pair are taken to Hicks' place, almost inaccessible spot, and there Murrell visits Betty and reveals his part in the plot and his object.

## CHAPTER XX (Continued).

"Let me go!" she panted. He laughed his cool laugh of triumph.

"Let you go—ask me anything but that, Betty! Have you no reward for patience such as mine? A whole summer has passed since I saw you first—"

There was the noise, shuffling of feet on the stairs, and teething Betty, Murrell swung about on his heel and faced the door. It was pushed open an inch at a time by a not too confident hand and Mr. Slosson thus guardedly presented himself to the eye of his chief, whom he beckoned from the room.

"Well!" said Murrell, when they stood together on the landing.

"Just come across to the keel boat!" and Slosson led the way down stairs and from the house.

"Damn you, Joe, you might have waited!" observed the outlaw. Slosson gave him a hardened grin. They crossed the clearing and boarded the keel boat which rested against the bank. As they did so the cabin in the stern gave up a shattered presence in the shape of Tom Ware. Murrell started violently. "I thought you were hanging out in Memphis, Tom!" he said, and his brow darkened, as sinister and forbidding, he stepped closer to the planter. Ware did not answer at once, but looked at Murrell out of heavy bloodshot eyes, his face pinched and ghastly. At last he said, speaking with visible effort.

"I stayed in Memphis until five o'clock this morning."

"Damn your early hours!" roared Murrell. "What are you doing here? I suppose you're been showing that dead face of yours about the neighborhood—why didn't you stay at Belle Plain, since you couldn't sleep away?"

"I haven't been near Belle Plain; I came here instead. How am I going to meet people and answer questions?" His teeth were chattering. "Is it known she's missing?" he added.

"Hicks raised the alarm the first thing this morning, according to the instructions I'd given him."

"Yes," gasped Ware. He was dripping from every pore and the sticky color came and went on his unshaven cheeks. Murrell dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"You haven't been at Belle Plain, you say, but has any one seen you on the road this morning?"

"No one, John," cried Ware, panting between each word. There was a moment's pause and Ware spoke again. "What are they doing at Belle Plain?" he demanded in a whisper. Murrell's lips curled.

"I understand there is talk of suicide," he said.

"Good!" cried Ware.

"They are dragging the bayou down below the house. It looks as though you were going to reap the rewards of the excellent management you have given her estate. They have been trying to find you in Memphis, so the sooner you show yourself the better," he concluded significantly.

"You are sure you have her safe, John; no chance of discovery? For God's sake get her away from here as soon as you can; it's an awful risk you run!"

"She'll be sent down river tonight," said Murrell.

"Captain," began Slosson, who up to this had taken no part in the conversation, "when are you going to cross to 'other side of the bayou?"

"Soon," replied Murrell. Slosson laughed.

"I didn't know but you'd clean forgot the Clan's business. I want to ask another question—but first I want to say that no one thinks higher or more frequent of the ladies than just me; I'm genuinely fond of 'em, and I've never lifted my hand agin 'em except in kindness." Mr. Slosson looked at Ware with an exceedingly virtuous expression of countenance. He continued: "Yo' orders are that we're to slip out of this a little after midnight, but suppose there's a hitch—here's the lady knowing what she knows and here's the boy knowing what he knows."

"There can be no hitch," rasped out Murrell arrogantly.

"I never knew a speculation that couldn't go wrong; and by rights we should have got away last night."

"Well, whose fault is it you didn't?" demanded Murrell.

"In a manner it were mine, but the ark got on a sandbank as we were fetching it in and it took us the whole damn night to get clear."

"Well?" prompted Murrell, with a sullen frown.

"Suppose they get shut of that notion of theirs that the lady's done drowned herself; suppose they take to watching the river? Or suppose the whole damn bottom drops out of this deal? What then? The lady, good looking as she is, knows enough to make west Tennessee mighty unhealthy for some of us. I say, suppose it's a flash in the pan and you have to crowd the distance in between you and this part of the world, you can't tell me you'll have any use for her then." Slosson paused impressively. "And here's Mr. Ware feeling bad, feeling like hell," he resumed. "Him and me don't want to be left in no trap with you gone God only knows where."

"I'll send a man to take charge of the keel boat. I can't risk any more of your bungling, Joe."

"That's all right, but you don't answer my question," persisted Slosson, with admirable tenacity of purpose.

"What is your question, Joe?"

"A lot can happen between this and midnight—"

"If things go wrong with us there'll be a blaze at the head of the bayou; does that satisfy you?"

"And what then?"

Murrell hesitated.

"What about the girl?" insisted Slosson, dragging him back to the point at issue between them. "As a man I wouldn't lift my hand agin no good looking woman except, like I said, in kindness; but she can't be turned loose; she knows too much. What's the word, Captain—you say it!" he urged. He made a gesture of appeal to Ware.

"Look for the light; better still, look for the man I'll send." And with this Murrell would have turned away, but Slosson detained him.

"Who'll he be?"

"Some fellow who knows the river."

"And if it's the light?" asked the tavern-keeper in a hoarse undertone. Again he looked toward Ware, who, dry-lipped and ashen, was regarding him steadfastly. Glance met glance, for a brief instant they looked into each other's eyes and then the hand Slosson had rested on Murrell's shoulder dropped at his side.

## CHAPTER XXI.

The Judge meets the Situation.

The judge and Mr. Mahaffy's celebration of the former's rehabilitated credit had occupied the slack of the evening, the small hours of the night, and that part of the succeeding day which the southwest described as soon in the morning; and as the stone Jug, in which were garnered the spoils of the highly confidential but entirely misleading conversation which the judge had held with Mr. Pegloe after his return from Belle Plain, lost in weight, it might have been observed that he and Mr. Mahaffy seemed to gain in that nice sense of equity which should form the basis of all human relations. The judge watched Mr. Mahaffy, and Mr. Mahaffy watched the judge, each trustfully placing the regulation of his private conduct in the hands of his friend, as the one most likely to be affected by the rectitude of his acts.

Probably so extensive a consumption of Mr. Pegloe's corn whisky had never been accomplished with greater high-mindedness. They honorably split the last glass.

The judge sighed deeply. He took up the jug and inverted it. A stray drop or so fell languidly into his glass.

"Try squeezing it, Price," said Mahaffy.

The judge shook the jug, it gave

forth an empty sound, and he sighed again; he attempted to peer into it, closing one watery eye as he tilted it toward the light.

"I wonder no Yankee has ever thought to invent a jug with a glass bottom," he observed.

"What for?" asked Mahaffy.

"You astonish me, Solomon," exclaimed the judge. "Coming as you do from that section which invented the wooden nutmeg, and an eight-day clock that has been known to run as much as four or five hours at a stretch. I am aware the Yankees are an ingenious people; I wonder none of 'em ever thought of a jug with a glass bottom, so that when a body holds it up to the light he can see at a glance whether it is empty or not. Do you reckon Pegloe has sufficient confidence to fill the jug again for us?"

But Mahaffy's expression indicated no great confidence in Mr. Pegloe's confidence.

"Credit," began the judge, "is proverbially shy; still it may sometimes be increased, like the muscles of the body and the mental faculties, by judicious use. I've always regarded Pegloe as a cheap mind. I hope I have done him an injustice." He put on his hat, and tucking the jug under his arm went from the house.

Ten or fifteen minutes elapsed. Mahaffy considered this a good sign; it didn't take long to say no, he reflected. Another ten or fifteen elapsed. Mahaffy lost heart. Then there came a hasty step beyond the door, it was thrown violently open, and the judge precipitated himself into the room. A glance showed Mahaffy that he was laboring under intense excitement.

"Solomon, I bring shocking news. God knows what the next few hours may reveal!" cried the judge, mopping his brow. "Miss Malroy has disappeared from Belle Plain, and Hannibal has gone with her!"

"Where have they gone?" asked Mahaffy, and his long jaw dropped.

"Would to God I had an answer ready for that question, Solomon!" answered the judge, with a melancholy shake of the head. He gazed down on his friend with an air of large tolerance. "I am going to Belle Plain, but you are too drunk. Sleep it off, Solomon, and join me when



"Try Squeezing It, Price," Said Mahaffy.

your brain is clear and your legs steady."

Mahaffy jerked out an oath, and lifting himself off his chair, stood erect. He snatched up his hat.

"Stuff your pistols into your pockets, and come on, Price!" he said, and stalked toward the door.

He flitted up the street, and the judge puffed and panted in his wake. They gained the edge of the village without speech.

"There is mystery and rascality here!" said the judge.

"What do you know, Price, and where did you hear this?" Mahaffy shot the question back over his shoulder.

"At Pegloe's; the Belle Plain over-

seer had just fetched the news into town."

Again they were silent, all their energies being absorbed by the physical exertion they were making. The road danced before their burning eyes, it seemed to be uncoiling itself serpent-wise with hideous undulations. Mr. Mahaffy was conscious that the judge, of whom he caught a blurred vision now at his right side, now at his left, was laboring painfully in the heat and dust, the breath whistling from between his parched lips.

"You're just ripe for apoplexy, Price!" he spat, moderating his pace.

"Go on," said the judge, with stolid resolution.

Two miles out of the village they came to a roadside spring; here they paused for an instant. Mahaffy scooped up handfuls of the clear water and sucked it greedily. The judge dropped on his stomach and buried his face in the tiny pool, gulping up great thirsty swallows.

"If anything happens to the child, the man responsible for it would better never be born—I'll pursue him with undiminished energy from this moment forth!" he panted.

"What could happen to him, Price?" asked Mahaffy.

"God knows, poor little lad!"

"Will you shut up!" cried Mahaffy savagely.

"Solomon!"

"Why do you go building on that idea? Why should any one harm him—what earthly purpose?"

"I tell you, Solomon, we are the pivotal point in a vast circle of crime. This is a blow at me—this is revenge, sir, neither more nor less! They have struck at me through the boy, it is as plain as day."

"What did the overseer say?"

"Just that they found Miss Malroy gone from Belle Plain this morning, and the boy with her."

"This is like you, Price! How do you know they haven't spent the night at some neighbor's?"

"The nearest neighbor is five or six miles distant. Miss Malroy and Hannibal were seen along about dusk in the grounds at Belle Plain; do you mean to tell me you consider it likely that they set out on foot at that hour,

## BRAINS FIRST WITH M'GRAW

Giants' Leader Wants No Player Who Doesn't Think Rapidly—Illustrative Excerpt Recited.

The importance of brains in a baseball player is made much of by Manager John J. McGraw of the New York Giants, in the first of a series of stories he has written for the New Story Magazine. An illustrative excerpt follows:

"The man who plays ball under me must have brains. I don't mean to say that the green player, a diamond in the rough, has no chance with me. Few green players know the finer points of the game, 'inside ball.' If they have brains, though, they learn. If they have brains they are willing to unlearn a lot of stuff that went well in the company they just left, but couldn't pass in big company. Brains stick out all over a player. I believe I can spot them quicker than the legs and 'whip.' One sure thing, I look harder for them.

"I can't describe what it is. You know that at the crack of the bat the infielder tosses up his hand. The ball sticks in it. Consciously he has not even seen the ball leave the bat, much less coming toward him. But the ball sticks in his glove. The base runner stealing second does not see the catcher whipping the ball down to second base. He slides. He knows which way to slide so as to be farthest from the baseman as he stoops to tag him. Last year a ball player went from first to home on a short single that was handled perfectly. What is it? Instinct some call it, luck others. It's brains. Some day that wonderful mental apparatus will be laid bare, exposed. Then we can follow the train of thought that makes such things possible. Call it instinct, for want of a better name, but never luck. I'll stick to my definition—brains.

"Never yet have I called a man down because of a playing error. Never yet have I failed to call a man down for a thinking error. That same error, through a freak combination of circumstances, may win the game once. But let the player go unrebuked because of its winning the game and, repeated, it will lose nine out of ten other games. The percentage isn't there."

Stories of Importance of Signals Exaggerated by Writers—Some Yarns Are Made Readable.

A story has been going the rounds of the papers lately to the effect that the several clubs of the big leagues have been trying to emulate the early example of the Athletics in studying out the signals of the other clubs. It used to be the opinion that Connie Mack had his men trained so that they were constantly watching for the slightest indication of a signal on the part of the other players, and that the inside facts thus discovered were of inestimable value to the Athletics. It is contended that many of the other teams are doing the same thing, and that it is as much a part of the education of a baseball player to be alert and keen to discover the other fellows' signals as it is to play the physical part of the game.

There is a good deal of bunk about all this signal stuff and wonderful stories of inside play and all that sort of thing, says the Milwaukee Sentinel. Unquestionably a good deal of the routine of baseball is done after some signal, but there is not nearly so much of it as some writers try to make the public believe. Neither is there very much opportunity to grab off the signals of another team.

It does very well to write press agent stories about this sort of thing, and it must be admitted that they are reasonably readable, but most of them want to be taken with a large size grain of salt.

GRAIN OF SALT WILL HELP

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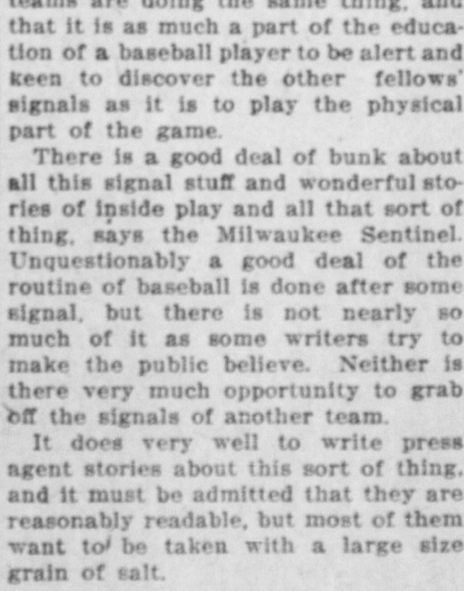
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## MADE THE NEW YORK GIANTS

Pittsburg Outfielder Secures Thirty-Four Triples During Season, Seven From Chicago.

J. Owen Wilson, whose services were acquired by the Pirates through the medium of the draft five years ago, is said to be the chap who help-



J. Owen Wilson.

ed the Giants to the flag this season. He has ripped off thirty-four triples this season, seven of them off the Cub pitchers.

Irwin's Promising Son.

Arthur Irwin, the scout of the Highlanders, has a son who is destined to shine on the diamond one of these days. He is working in the outfield every day and promises to be a clever player in time.

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