



THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

By VAUGHAN KESTER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY D. MELVILL



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 Blalain, 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 Stobum 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 rifle 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. 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 Jess Hicks, daughter of the overseer, who warns Betty of danger and counsels her to leave Belle Plain at once. Betty, terrified, acts on Jess' advice, and of their way their carriage is stopped by Slosson, the tavern keeper, and a confederate, and Betty and Hannibal are made prisoners. The pair are taken to Hicks' cabin, in an almost inaccessible spot, and there Murrell visits Betty and reveals his part in the plot and his object. Betty spurs his proffered love and the interview is ended by the arrival of Ware, terrified at possible outcome of the crime. Judge Price, hearing of the abduction, plans action. The judge takes charge of the situation, and search for the missing ones is instituted. Carrington visits the judge and clues are discovered.



"Poor Little Lad!" He Muttered.

CHAPTER XXIII. (Continued.)
"And General Quintard never saw him—never manifested any interest in him?" the words came slowly from the judge's lips; he seemed to gulp down something that rose in his throat. "Poor little lad!" he muttered, and again, "Poor little lad!"
"Never once, sir. He told the slaves to keep him out of his sight. We all wondered, for you know how niggers will talk. We thought maybe he was some kin to the Quintards, but we couldn't figure out how. The old general never had but one child and she had been dead for years. The child couldn't have been hers no-how." Yancy paused.
The judge drummed idly on the desk.
"What implacable fate—what iron pride!" he murmured, and swept his hand across his eyes. Absorbed and aloof, he was busy with his thoughts that spanned the waste of years—years that seemed to glide before him in review, each bitter with its hideous memories of shame and defeat. Then from the smoke of these lost battles emerged the lonely figure of the child as he had seen him that June night. His ponderous arm stiffened where it rested on the desk, he straightened up in his chair and his face assumed its customary expression of battered dignity, while a smile at once wistful and tender hovered about his lips.
"One other question," he said. "Until this man Murrell appeared you had no trouble with Bladen? He was content that you should keep the child—your right to Hannibal was never challenged?"
"Never, sir. All my troubles began about that time."
"Murrell belongs in these parts," said the judge.
"I'd admire to meet him," said Yancy quietly.
The judge grinned.
"I place my professional services at your disposal," he said. "Yours is a clear case of felonious assault."
"No, it ain't, sir—I look at it this-a-way; it's a clear case of my giving him the damndest sort of a body beating!"
"Sir," said the judge, "I'll hold your hat while you are about it!"
Hicks had taken his time in responding to the judge's summons, but now his step sounded in the hall and throwing open the door he entered the room. Whether consciously or not he had acquired something of that surly, forbidding manner which was characteristic of his employer. A curt nod of the head was his only greeting.
"Will you sit down?" asked the judge. Hicks signified by another movement of the head that he would not. "This is a very dreadful business!" began the judge softly.
"Ain't it?" agreed Hicks. "What you got to say to me?" he added petulantly.
"Have you started to drag the bayon?" asked the judge. Hicks nodded. "That was your idea?" suggested the judge

"No, it wa'n't," objected Hicks quickly. "But I said she had been actin' like she was plumb distracted ever since Charley Norton got shot."
"How?" inquired the judge, arching his eyebrows. Hicks was plainly disturbed by the question.
"Sort of out of her head. Mr. Ware seen it, too."
"He spoke of it?"
"Yes, sir; him and me discussed it together."
The judge regarded Hicks long and intently and in silence. His magnificent mind was at work. If Betty had been distraught he had not observed any sign of it the previous day. If Ware were better informed as to her true mental state why had he chosen this time to go to Memphis?
"I suppose Mr. Ware asked you to keep an eye on Miss Malroy while he was away from home?" said the judge. Hicks, suspicious of the drift of his questioning, made no answer. "I suppose you told the house servants to keep her under observation?" continued the judge.
"I don't talk to no niggers," replied Hicks, "except to give 'em my orders."
"Well, did you give them that order?"
"No, I didn't."
The sudden and hurried entrance of big Steve brought the judge's examination of Mr. Hicks to a standstill.
"Mas'r, you know dat 'ar coachman George—the big black fellow dat took you into town las' evenin'? I jes' been down at Shanty Hill whar Milly, his wife, is carryin' on something scandalous 'cause George ain't never come home!" Steve was laboring under intense excitement, but he ignored the presence of the overseer and addressed himself to Slocum Price.
"Well, what of that?" cried Hicks quickly.
"Thar wa'n't no George, mind you, Mas'r, but dar was his team in de stable this mornin' and lookin' mighty nigh done up with hard driving."
"Yes," interrupted Hicks uneasily; "but a pair of lines in a nigger's hands and he'll run any team off its legs!"
"An' the kerriage all scratched up from bein' thrashed through the bushes," added Steve.
"There's a nigger for you!" said Hicks. "She took the rascal out of the field, dressed him like he was a gentleman and pampered him up, and now first chance he gets he runs off!"
"Ah!" said the judge softly. "Then you knew this?"
"Of course I knew—wa'n't it my business to know? I reckon he was off skylarking, and when he'd seen the mess he'd made, the trifling fool took to the woods. Well, he catches it when I lay hands on him!"
"Do you know when and under what circumstances the team was stabled, Mr. Hicks?" inquired the judge.
"No, I don't, but I reckon it must have been long after dark," said Hicks unwillingly. "I seen to the feeding just after sundown like I always do,

The judge, Yancy and Mahaffy, sprang from their chairs. Mr. Mahaffy was plainly shocked at the spectacle of Mr. Cavendish's lawless violence. Yancy was disturbed, too, but not by the moral aspects of the case; he was doubtful as to how his friend's act would appeal to the judge. He need not have been distressed on that score, since the judge's one idea was to profit by it. With his hands on his knees he was now bending above the two men.
"What do you want to know, judge?" cried Cavendish, panting from his exertions. "I'll learn this parrot to talk up!"
"Hicks," said the judge, "it is in your power to tell us a few things we are here to find out." Hicks looked up into the judge's face and closed his lips grimly. "Mr. Cavendish, kindly let him have the point of that large knife where he'll feel it most!" ordered the judge.
"Talk quick!" said Cavendish, with a ferocious scowl. "Talk—or what's to hinder me slicing open your wozzen?" and he pressed the blade of his knife against the overseer's throat.
"I don't know anything about Miss Betty," said Hicks in a sullen whisper.
"Maybe you don't, but what do you know about the boy?" Hicks was silent, but he was grateful for the judge's question. From Tom Ware he had learned of Pentress' interest in the boy. Why should he shelter the colonel at risk of himself? "If you please, Mr. Cavendish," said the judge, nodding toward the knife.
"You didn't ask me about him," said Hicks quickly.
"I do now," said the judge.
"He was here yesterday."
"Mr. Cavendish—" again the judge glanced toward the knife.
"Wait!" cried Hicks. "You go to Colonel Pentress."
"Let him up, Mr. Cavendish; that's all we want to know," said the judge.

CHAPTER XXIV.
Colonel Pentress.
The judge had not forgotten his ghost, the ghost he had seen in Mr. Saul's office that day he went to the court house on business for Charley Norton. Working or idling—principally the former—the ghost, otherwise Colonel Pentress, had preserved a place in his thoughts, and now as he moved stolidly up the drive toward Pentress' big white house on the hill with Mahaffy, Cavendish and Yancy trailing in his wake, memories of what had once been living and vital crowded in upon him. Some sense of the wreck that littered the long years, and the shame of the open shame that had swept away pride and self-respect, came back to him out of the past.
He only paused when he stood on the portico before Pentress' open door. He glanced about him at the wide fields, bounded by the distant timber lands that hid gloomy bottoms, at the great log barns in the hollow to his right; at the huddle of white-washed cabins beyond; then with his big fist he reached in and pounded on the door. The blows echoed loudly through the silent house, and an instant later Pentress' tall, spare figure was seen advancing from the far end of the hall.
"Who is it?" he asked.
"Judge Price—Colonel Pentress," said the judge.
"Judge Price," uncertainly, and still advancing.
"I had flattered myself that you must have heard of me," said the judge.
"I think I have," said Pentress, pausing now.
"He thinks he has!" muttered the judge under his breath.
"Will you come in?" it was more a question than an invitation.
"If you are at liberty." The colonel bowed. "Allow me," the judge continued. "Colonel Pentress—Mr. Mahaffy, Mr. Yancy and Mr. Cavendish." Again the colonel bowed.
"Will you step into the library?"
"Very good," and the judge followed the colonel briskly down the hall.
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Women Win High Honors.
Once more women have triumphed at the Royal academy. For the second time in three years the gold medal has been won by a female student, while of the fourteen prizes offered no less than ten have been carried off by women. In presenting these and congratulating Miss Margaret Williams on her brilliant achievement, the president of the Royal academy paid high tribute to the perseverance and the talent of women artists; but again, we ask, why is it not recognized by the Royal Academy of Arts in the obvious way? In every way women show their fitness to compete with men for the honor of admission to the academy, yet still they stand without the gate.—Lady's Pictorial.

ARE AFRAID OF FIRE MARSHAL

Existence of Departments Tends to Decrease of Incendiarism

BUT FOUR SUITS BROUGHT

Fear of Detection and Punishment a Preventive of Arson—State Marshal Baldwin Confident of Effect of New Plan.

(Special Harrisburg Correspondence.)
Harrisburg.—Joseph L. Baldwin, State Marshal, says that the very existence of a department to prevent fires and detect causes of fires has resulted in a marked decrease of incendiarism in this State. Statistics are not at hand to make comparisons of arson during other years and this year, but only four suits for setting fire to buildings have been brought since the fire marshal's department went into operation. This is an average of about one a month, and Baldwin says this is far less than the number which would be expected by men familiar with such matters. "I haven't the slightest doubt," he said, "that the fire marshal law has acted as a deterrent. Fear of detection and punishment is one of the greatest preventives of all crimes, of course, and the fact that a detective force exists, one of whose principal duties is the investigation of all cases of suspected arson, is naturally going to make a man think before willfully setting fire to a building." A number of cases of suspected incendiarism have been investigated by Baldwin's inspectors, evidence has been found in four.

Many Corporations Report.

Over 24,000 corporations of Pennsylvania will be called upon by Auditor General A. E. Sisson to file their reports on capital stock and corporate loans for 1912 at his department during the month of November. The blanks for these reports are prepared for mailing at the department and comprise a couple of cart-loads of envelopes, the postage bill on this mailing list being the largest of any operation of the kind on Capitol Hill. Under the law the corporations must file their reports during the month of November so that the basis of capital stock taxes may be established. The corporate loan reports are also to be made at that time, although they cover such items for the calendar year. For years the proposition of changing the capital stock report period has been under discussion, as the business of most of the corporations runs with the calendar year, the requirement of State reports up to November necessitating the making of special statements of business.

Coal Rate Inquiry.

The subject of inquiry into the charges that anthracite coal carrying rates charged by the Philadelphia & Reading, Pennsylvania, Lehigh Valley, Central-Railroad of New Jersey, and Delaware, Lackawanna & Western to Philadelphia and vicinity are exorbitant was taken up by the State Railroad Commission. The commission will call on all of the railroads made respondents to answer, and will then appoint a time later in the fall for a hearing. The inquiry will be the most important ever undertaken by the commission, and will probably require many weeks of investigation of conditions in the coal-fields and Philadelphia and railroad facilities. The question is solely one of charges for carrying coal.

Rifle Practice Keen.

Rifle practice season for the National Guardsmen will close with October 31, and the militiamen are hard at work on the ranges making up their scores so that they can be forwarded to the Inspector-General of Rifle Practice promptly. Practically every regimental inspector of small-arms practice is now making the rounds of his organizations, looking up the work that is being done, and urging the completion of practice. Under the law every member of the Guard must qualify at the ranges, from the generals down to the privates, and in many organizations the rivalry is very keen regimental and battalion shoots being held.

Pave Way for Big Park.

The State held an auction sale of houses at the Capitol, when 33 houses in the Capitol Park extension area were knocked down to low bidders for the material in them. Altogether \$1,146,500 was realized, or \$600 more than was obtained for 52 houses which were sold in one lot through bids presented after advertisements. The successful bidders must remove the houses and fill up foundations before the end of the year.

Typhoid in Reedsville.

At Reedsville John Albert Butler died from typhoid fever after an illness of only two weeks. He was a son of Commissioner G. A. Butler and proprietor of the McDonald Drug Company. Mr. Butler is the second victim of an epidemic of the disease which prevails in the little towns along the banks of the Kishacoquillus Creek, and many believe that this stream, from which much of the drinking water is obtained, has become infected. It drains the dumping ground for slaughter-house offal.

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