



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 Hazard, 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 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 slain. 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 stops at a roadside 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 allies are discovered. Judge Price visits Colonel Fontaine, who is mysteriously assassinated. Carrington, becoming enraged, Price dashes a glass of whisky into the colonel's face and a duel is arranged. Murrell is arrested for negro stealing and his bubble bursts. The Judge and Mahaffy discuss the coming duel.



He Was as Securely Gagged as He Was Bound.

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)
He waited now for the night to come, and to him the sun seemed fixed in the heavens. At Belle Plain Tom Ware was watching it with a shuddering sense of the swiftness of its flight. But at last the tops of the tall trees obscured it; it sank quickly then and blazed a ball of fire beyond the Arkansas coast, while its dying glory spread ardent the heavens, turning the flanks of the gray clouds to violet and purple and gold.
With the first approach of darkness Carrington made his way to the shed. Hidden in the shadow he paused to listen, and fancied he heard difficult breathing from within. The door creaked hideously on its wooden hinges when he pushed it open, but as it swung back the last remnant of the day's light showed him some dark object lying prone on the dirt floor. He reached down and his hand rested on a man's booted foot.
"George?" Carrington spoke softly, but the man on the floor gave no sign that he heard, and Carrington's questioning touch stealing higher he found that George—if it were George—was lying on his side with his arms and legs securely bound. Thinking he slept, the Kentuckian shook him gently to arouse him.
"George?" he repeated, still bending above him. This time an inarticulate murmur answered him. At the same instant the woolly head of the negro came under his fingers and he discovered the reason of his silence. He was as securely gagged as he was bound.
"Listen, George—it's Carrington—I am going to take off this gag, but don't speak above a whisper—they may hear us!" And he cut the cords that held the gag in place.
"How yo' get here, Mas'r Ca'ington?" asked the negro guardedly, as the gag fell away.
"Around the head of the bayou."
"Lawd!" exclaimed George, in a tone of wonder.
"Where's Miss Betty?"
"She's in the cabin yonder—fo' the love of God, cut these here other ropes with yo' knife, Mas'r Ca'ington—I'm pershin' with 'em!" Carrington did as he asked, and groaning, George sat erect. "I'm like I was gone to sleep all over," he said.
"You'll feel better in a moment. Tell me about Miss Malroy?"
"They done fetched us here last night. I was drivin' Missy into Haleigh—her and young Mas'r Hazard—when fo' men stop us in the road."
"Who were they, do you know?" asked Carrington.
"Lawd—what's that?"
Carrington, knife in hand, swung about on his heel. A lantern's light flashed suddenly in his face and Bess Hicks, with a low startled cry breaking from her lips, paused in the doorway. Springing forward, Carrington seized her by the wrist.

"Hush!" he grimly warned.
"What are you doin' here?" demanded the girl, as she endeavored to shake off his hand, but Carrington drew her into the shed, and closing the door, set his back against it. There was a brief silence during which Bess regarded the Kentuckian with a kind of stolid fearlessness. She was the first to speak. "I reckon you-all have come after Miss Malroy," she observed quietly.
"Then you reckon right," answered Carrington. The girl studied him from her level brow.
"And you-all think you can take her away from here," she speculated.
"I ain't afraid of yo' knife—you-all might use it fast enough on a man, but not on me. I'll help you," she added. Carrington gave her an incredulous glance. "You don't believe me? That would fetch our men up from the keel boat. No—yo-all's knife wouldn't stop me!"
"Don't be too sure of that," said Carrington sternly. The girl met the menace of his words with soft, full-throated laughter.
"Why, yo' hand's shakin' now, Mr. Carrington!"
"You know me?"
"Yes, I seen you once at Boggs'." She made an impatient movement. "You can't do nothing against them fo' men unless I help you. Miss Malroy's to go down river tonight; they're only waiting fo' a pilot—you-all's got to act quick!"
Carrington hesitated.
"Why do you want Miss Malroy to escape?" he said.
The girl's mood changed abruptly. "I reckon that's a private matter. Ain't it enough fo' you-all to know that I do? I'm showing how it can be done. Them four men on the keel boat are strangers in these parts, they're waiting fo' a pilot, but they don't know who he'll be. I've heard you-all was a river-man; what's to hinder yo' taking the pilot's place? Looks like yo' was willing to risk yo' life fo' Miss Malroy or you wouldn't be here."
"I'm ready," said Carrington, his hand on the door.
"No, you ain't—jest yet," interposed the girl hastily. "Listen to me first. They's a dugout tied up 'bout a hundred yards above the keel boat; you must get that to cross in to the other side of the bayou, then when yo're ready to come back yo're to whistle three times—it's the signal we're expecting—and I'll row across fo' you in one of the skiffs."
"Can you see Miss Malroy in the meantime?"
"If I want to, they's nothin' to hinder me," responded Bess sullenly.
"Tell her then—" began Carrington, but Bess interrupted him.
"I know what yo' want. She ain't to cry out or nothin' when she sees you-all. I got sense enough fo' that." Carrington looked at her curiously.
"This may be a serious business for your people," he said significantly, and watched her narrowly.
"And yo'-all may get killed. I reckon if yo' want to do anything bad

enough you don't mind what comes after," she answered with a hard little laugh, as she went from the shed.
"Come!" said Carrington to the negro, when he had seen the cabin door close on Bess and her lantern; and they stole across the clearing. Reaching the bayou side they began a noiseless search for the dugout, which they quickly found, and Carrington turned to George. "Can you swim?" he asked.
"Yes, Mas'r."
"Then go down into the water and drag the canoe farther along the shore—and for God's sake, no sound!" he cautioned.
They placed a second hundred yards between themselves and the keel boat in this manner, then he had George bring the dug-out to the bank, and they embarked. Keeping within the shadow of the trees that fringed the shore, Carrington paddled silently about the head of the bayou.
"George," he at length said, bending toward the negro; "my horse is tied in the woods on the right-hand side of the road just where you were taken from the carriage last night—you can be at Belle Plain inside of an hour."
"Look here, Mas'r Ca'ington, those folks yonder is kin to Bess Hicks. If he gets his hand on me first don't you reckon he'll stop my mouth? I been here heaps of times tochin' letters fo' Mas'r Tom," added George.
"Who were the letters fo'?" asked the Kentuckian, greatly surprised.
"They was fo' that Captain Murrell; seems like him and Mas'r Tom was mixed up in a sight of business."
"When was this—recently?" inquired Carrington. He was turning over this astonishing statement of the slave over in his mind.
"Well, no, Mas'r; seems like they ain't so thick here recently."
"I reckon you'd better keep away from the big house yet a while," said Carrington. "Instead of going there, stop at the Belle Plain landing. You'll find a rat tied up to the shore; it belongs to a man named Cavendish. Tell him what you know—that I've found Miss Malroy and the boy; tell him to cast off and drift down here. I'll run the keel boat around the first chance I get, so tell him to keep a sharp lookout!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Keel Boat.

A few minutes later they had separated, George to hurry away in search of the horse, and Carrington to pass back along the shore until he gained a point opposite the clearing. He whistled shrilly three times, and after an interval of waiting heard the splash of oars and presently saw a skiff steal out of the gloom.
"Who's there?" It was Bess who asked the question.
"Carrington," he answered.
"Lucky you ain't met the other man!" she said as she swept her skirt alongside the bank.
"Lucky for him, you mean. I'll take

the oars," added Carrington, as he entered the skiff.
Slowly the clearing lifted out of the darkness, then the keel boat became distinguishable; and Carrington checked the skiff by a backward stroke of the oars.
"Hello!" he called.
There was no immediate answer to his call, and he called again as he sent the skiff forward.
"What do you want?" asked a surly voice.
"You want Slosson!" quickly prompted the girl in a whisper.
"I want to see Slosson!" said Carrington glibly and with confidence.
"Who be you?"
"Murrell sent you," prompted the girl again, in a hurried whisper.
"Murrell—?" And in his astonishment Carrington spoke aloud.
"Murrell?" cried the voice sharply.
"—sent me!" said Carrington quickly, as though completing an unfinished sentence. The girl laughed nervously under her breath.
"Row closer!" came the sullen command, and the Kentuckian did as he was bidden. Four men stood in the bow of the keel boat, a lantern was raised aloft and by its light they looked him over. There was a moment's silence broken by Carrington, who asked:
"Which one of you is Slosson?"
"I'm Slosson," answered the man with the lantern. The previous night Mr. Slosson had been somewhat under the enervating and elevating influence of corn whisky, but now he was his own cheerful self, and rather jaded by the passing of the hours which he had sacrificed to an irksome responsibility. "What word do you fetch from the captain, brother?" he demanded.
"Miss Malroy is to be taken down river," responded Carrington.
Slosson swore with surprising fluency.
"Say, we're five able-bodied men riskin' our necks to oblige him! You can get married a damn sight easier than this if you go about it right—I've done it lots of times." Not understanding the significance of Slosson's allusion to his own matrimonial career, Carrington held his peace. The tavern-keeper swore again with unimpaired vigor. "You'll find mighty few men with more experience than me," he asserted, shaking his head.
"But if you say the word—"
"I'm all for getting shut of this!" answered Carrington promptly, with a sweep of his arm. "I call these pretty close quarters!"
Still shaking his head and muttering, the tavern-keeper sprang ashore and mounted the bank, where his slouching figure quickly lost itself in the night.
Carrington took up his station on the flat roof of the cabin which filled the stern of the boat. He was remembering that day in the sandy Barony road—and during all the weeks and months that had intervened, Murrell, working in secret, had moved steadily toward the fulfillment of his desires! Unquestionably he had been back of the attack on Norton, had inspired his subsequent murder, and the man's sinister and mysterious power had never been suspected. Carrington knew that the horse-thieves and slave stealers were supposed to maintain a loosely knit association; he wondered if Murrell were not the moving spirit in some such organization.
"If I'd only pushed my quarrel with him!" he thought bitterly.
He heard Slosson's shuffling step in the distance, a word or two when he spoke gruffly to some one, and a moment later he saw Betty and the boy, their forms darkly silhouetted against the lighter sky as they moved along the top of the bank. Slosson, without any superfluous gallantry, helped his captives down the slope and aboard the keel boat, where he locked them in the cabin, the door of which fastened with a hasp and wooden peg.
"You're boss now, pardner!" he said, joining Carrington at the steering oar.
"We'll cast off then," answered Carrington.
Thus far nothing had occurred to mar his plans. If they could but quit the bayou before the arrival of the man whose place he had taken the rest would be, if not easy of accomplishment, at least within the realm of the possible.
"I reckon you're a river-man?" observed Slosson.
"All my life."
The line had been cast off, and the crew with their setting poles were forcing the boat away from the bank. All was quietly done; except for an occasional order from Carrington no word was spoken, and soon the unwieldy craft glided into the sluggish current and gathered way. Mr. Slosson, who clearly regarded his relation to the adventure as being of an official character, continued to stand at Carrington's elbow.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ISIDOR RAYNER, STATESMAN, DEAD

Expires at His Residence in Washington.

A LEADER IN CONGRESS.

Brilliant Baltimore Lawyer Who Won Fame in National Affairs—His Long and Eventful Career in Politics.

Washington, D. C.—Isidor Rayner, senior United States senator from Maryland, died at 6.20 o'clock Monday morning in his Washington apartment, 1320 Eighteenth street.

Though it has been known for the past week that the noted Maryland statesman could live but a few days, a relapse came suddenly and quickly, giving no warning. He seemed quite restless Saturday night, and upon awakening in the morning it was plainly evident that he was considerably weaker, though this was expected. He was still in the comatose condition in which he had been for the past five days. Several times Sunday he rallied, however, and was able to recognize the relatives in the sickroom. He again lapsed into a stupor shortly after 6 o'clock Sunday evening.

A Sudden Change.
At that time his condition was said to be unchanged, and every assurance was given that he would live through the night.



ISIDOR RAYNER.

The relapse came a few minutes after 8 o'clock, when his breath became short, and several times he could scarcely breathe at all. His heart and pulse also became worse and his condition rapidly grew more alarming. His physicians were hurriedly called and, after making an examination, they told the family that the end was near after a battle of a month.

All members of the Rayner family were summoned to the house before 9 o'clock and remained with him until he died.

Senator Rayner has been seriously ill for several weeks, and when his condition became critical Dr. J. M. T. Finney, associate professor of surgery in the Johns Hopkins University, was sent for, with a view to an operation to remove a tumor in the lower part of the alimentary canal, from which Senator Rayner was suffering.

Could Not Operate.
Dr. Finney, however, found that owing to the Senator's weak heart an operation was out of the question, as an anesthetic could not be administered, and, anyway, it was doubtful whether the knife would have proved adequate. For the same reason Senator Rayner was compelled to suffer a great deal of pain, as on account of the condition of his sufferings could only be partially eased. He was unconscious for most of three days before his death, with only a few intervals of consciousness.

SENATOR RAYNER'S CAREER.

Born in Baltimore April 11, 1850, son of the late W. S. Rayner. Educated at private schools and University of Virginia. 1871—Admitted to the bar. 1875—Made his first political speech in the Carroll-Morrison Campaign, supporting the Democratic candidate for governor. 1877—Elected a member of the legislature and made chairman of the city delegation in that body. 1885—Elected to the State Senate. 1886—Elected a member of the national House of Representatives. 1888—Nominated for Congress, but defeated by Hon. Henry Stockbridge. 1890—Elected to Congress. 1892—For the third time elected a member of the House of Representatives. 1899—Elected attorney general of Maryland. 1901—Counsel for Rear Admiral Schley before naval court of inquiry. 1904—Elected to the United States Senate. 1905—Opposed Poe amendment and challenged Senator Gorman to a joint debate. 1910—Re-elected to the Senate. 1912—Delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Mr. Rayner's last appearance on the political platform was in October last, when he met Hon. Bourke Cockran, of New York, in joint debate in the Lyric. After the election of Governor Wilson as President, he was suggested for secretary of state.

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