



THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

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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 Hazard, a mysterious child of the old southern family, makes his appearance. Yancy tells how he adopted the boy, Daniel Ferris, the Baron, but the Quintards deny any knowledge of the boy. Yancy keeps Hannibal, Carrington, a friend of the Quintards, appears and asks questions about the Baron. 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. Yancy plays 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. Murrell 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 by Slocum, the tavern keeper, and a confederate, and Betty and Hannibal are made prisoners. The pair are taken to Hickey's cabin, in an almost inaccessible spot, and there Murrell visits Betty and reveals his part in the plot and his object. Betty spurns 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 one is instituted. Carrington visits Judge Price and allies are discovered. Judge Price visits Colonel Ferriss, where he meets Yancy and Cavendish. 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. Carrington makes frantic search for Betty and the boy. Carrington finds Betty and Hannibal, and a fierce gun fight follows. Yancy appears and assists in the rescue.

CHAPTER XXIX.—(Continued.)

But Betty shrank from him in involuntary agitation.

"Oh, not now, Bruce—not now—we mustn't speak of that—it's wrong—it's wicked—you mustn't make me forget him!" she cried brokenly, in protest.

"Forgive me, Betty, I'll not speak of it again," he said.

"Wait, Bruce, and some time—Oh, don't make me say it," she gasped, "or I shall hate myself" for in his presence she was feeling the horror of her past experience grow strangely remote, only the dull ache of her memories remained, and to these she clung. They were silent for a moment, then Carrington said:

"After I'm sure you'll be safe here perhaps I'll go south into the Choctaw Purchase. I've been thinking of that recently; but I'll find my way back here—don't misunderstand me—I'll not come too soon for even you, Betty. I loved Norton. He was one of my best friends, too," he continued gently. "But you know—and I know—dear, the day will come when no matter where you are I shall find you and not lose you!"

Betty made no answer in words, but a soft and eloquent little hand was slipped into his and allowed to rest there.

Presently a light wind stirred the dead dense atmosphere, the mist lifted and enveloped the shore, showing them the river between piled-up mass of vapor. Apparently it ran for their raft alone. It was just twenty-four hours since Carrington had looked upon such another night, but this was a different world the gray fog was unmasking—a world of hopes, and dreams, and rich content. Then the thought of Norton—poor Norton—who had had his world, too, of hopes and dreams and rich content—

The calm of a highly domestic existence had resumed its interrupted sway on the raft. Mr. Cavendish, associated in Betty's memory with certain ear-splitting manifestations of ferocious rage, became in the bosom of his family low-voiced and genial and hopelessly impotent to deal with his five small sons; while Yancy was again the Bob Yancy of Scratch Hill, violence of any sort apparently had no place in his nature. He was deeply absorbed in Hannibal's account of those vicissitudes which had befallen him during their separation. They were now seated before a cheerful fire that blazed on the hearth, the boy very close to Yancy, with one hand clasped in the Scratch Hiller's, while about them were ranged the six small Cavendishes sedately sharing in the reunion of uncle and nevy, toward which they felt they had honorably labored.

"And you wa'n't dead, Uncle Bob?"

said Hannibal with a deep breath, viewing Yancy unmistakably in the flesh.

"Never once. I been floating peacefully along with these here titled friends of mine; but I was some anxious about you, son."

"And Mr. Slosson, Uncle Bob—did you smack him like you smacked Dave Blount that day when he tried to steal me?" asked Hannibal, whose childish sense of justice demanded reparation for the wrongs they had suffered.

Mr. Yancy extended a big right hand, the knuckle of which was skinned and bruised.

"He were the meanest man I ever felt obliged fo' to hit with my fist, Nevvy; it appeared like he had teeth all over his face."

"Sho'—where's his hide, Uncle Bob?" cried the little Cavendishes in an excited chorus. "Sho'—did you forget that? They themselves had forgotten the unique enterprise to which Mr. Yancy was committed, but the allusion to Slosson had revived their memory of it.

"Well, he begged so piteous to be allowed fo' to keep his hide, I hadn't the heart to strip it off," explained Mr. Yancy heartily. "And the winter's comin' on—at this moment I can feel a chill in the air—don't you all reckon he's going to need it fo' to keep the cold out? Sho', you mustn't be bloody-minded!"

"What was it about Mr. Slosson's hide, Uncle Bob?" demanded Hannibal. "What was you a-goin' to do to that?"

"Why, Nevvy, after he beat me up and threw me in the river, I was some peevish fo' a spell in my feelings fo' him," said Yancy in a tone of gentle regret. He glanced at the bruised hand. "But I'm right pleased to be able to say that I've got over all them oncharitable thoughts of mine."

"And you seen the judge, Uncle Bob?" questioned Hannibal.

"Yes, I've seen the judge. We was together fo' part of a day. Me and him gets on fine?"

"Where is he now, Uncle Bob?"

"I reckon he's back at Belle Plain by this time. You see we left him in Raleigh along after noon to 'tend to some business he had on hand. I never seen a gentleman of his weight so truly sly on his legs—and all about you, Nevvy; while as to mind! Sho'—why, words flowed out of him as naturally as water out of a branch."

Of Hannibal's relationship to the judge he said nothing. He felt that was a secret to be revealed by the judge himself when he should see fit.

"Uncle Bob, who'm I going to live with now?" questioned Hannibal anxiously.

"That pint's already come up, Nevvy—him and me's decided that there won't be no friction. You-all will just go on living with him."

"But what about you, Uncle Bob?" cried Hannibal, lifting a wistful little face to Yancy's.

"Oh, me?—well, you-all will go right on living with me."

"And what will come of Mr. Mahaffy?"

"I reckon you-all will go right on living with him, too."

"Uncle Bob, you mean you reckon we all are going to live in one house?"

"I 'low it will have to be fixed that a-ways," agreed Yancy.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Judge Receives a Letter.

After he had parted with Solomon Mahaffy the judge applied himself diligently to shaping that miracle-working document which he was preparing as an offset to whatever risk he ran in meeting Ferriss. As sanguine as he was sanguinary he confidently expected to survive the encounter, yet it was well to provide for a possible emergency—had he not his grandson's future to consider? While thus occupied he saw the afternoon stage arrive and depart from before the City Tavern.

Half an hour later Mr. Wesley, the postmaster, came sauntering up the street. In his hand he carried a letter.

"Howdy," he drawled, from just beyond the judge's open door.

The judge glanced up, his quill pen poised aloft.

"Good evening, sir; won't you step inside and be seated?" he asked graciously. His dealings with the United States mail service were of the most insignificant description, and in personally delivering a letter, if this was what had brought him there, he felt Mr. Wesley had reached the limit of official courtesy and despatch.

"Well, sir; it looks like you'd never told us more than two-thirds of the truth!" said the postmaster. He surveyed the judge curiously.

"I am complimented by your opinion of my veracity," responded that gentleman promptly. "I consider two-

thirds an enormously high per cent. to have achieved."

"There is something in that, too," agreed Mr. Wesley. "Who is Colonel Slocum Price Turberville?"

The judge started up from his chair.

"I have that honor," said he, bowing.

"Well, here's a letter come in addressed like that, and as you've been using part of the name I am willing to assume you're legally entitled to the rest of it. It clears up a point that off and on has troubled me considerably. I can only wonder I wa'n't smarter."

"What point, may I ask?"

"Why, about the time you hung out your shingle here, some one wrote a letter to General Jackson. It was mailed after night, and when I seen it in the morning I was clean beat. I couldn't locate the handwriting, and yet I kept that letter back a couple of days and give it all my spare time. It ain't that I'm one of your spying sort—there's nothing of the Yankee about me!"

"Certainly not," agreed the judge.

"Candid, judge, I reckon you wrote that letter, seeing this one comes up a frank from Washington. No, sir—I couldn't make out who was corresponding with the president, and it worried me, not knowing, more than anything I've had to contend against since I came into office. I calculate there ain't a postmaster in the United States takes a more personal interest in the service than me. I've frequently set patrons right when they was in doubt as to the date they had mailed such and such a letter." As Mr. Wesley sometimes canceled as many as three or four stamps in a

single day he might have been pardoned his pride in a brain which thus lightly dealt with the burden of official business. He surrendered the letter with marked reluctance.

"Your surmise is correct," said the judge with dignity. "I had occasion to write my friend, General Jackson, and unless I am greatly mistaken I have my answer here." And with a fine air of indifference he tossed the letter on the table.

"And do you know Old Hickory?" cried Mr. Wesley.

"Why not? Does it surprise you?" inquired the judge. It was only his innate courtesy which restrained him from kicking the postmaster into the street, so intense was his desire to be rid of him.

"No, I don't know as it does, judge. Naturally a public man like him is in the way of meeting with all sorts. A politician can't afford to be too blame particular. Well, next time you write you might just send him my regards—G. W. M. de L. Wesley's regards—there was considerable contention over my getting this office; I reckon he ain't forgot. There was speeches made, I understand the lie was passed between two United States senators,

and that a quid of tobacco was thrown in anger." Having thus clearly established the fact that he was a more or less national character, Mr. Wesley took himself off.

When he had disappeared from sight down the street, the judge closed the door. Then he picked up the letter. For a long minute he held it in his hand, uncertain, fearful, while his mind slipped back into the past until his inward searching vision ferreted out a handsome soldierly figure—his own.

"That's what Jackson remembers if he remembers anything!" he muttered, as with trembling fingers he broke the seal. Almost instantly a smile overspread his battered features. He hitched his chin higher and squared his ponderous shoulders. "I am not forgotten—no, damn it—no!" he exulted under his breath. "Recalls me with sincere esteem and considers my services to the country as well worthy of recognition—" the judge breathed deep. What would Mahaffy find to say now! Certainly this was well calculated to disturb the sour cynicism of his friend. His bearded eyes brimmed. After all his groping he had touched hands with the realities at last! Even a federal judgeship, though not an office of first repute in the south, had its dignity—it signified something! He would make Solomon his clerk! The judge reached for his hat. Mahaffy must know at once that fortune had mended for them. Why, at that moment he was actually in receipt of an income!

He sat down, the better to enjoy the unique sensation. Taxes were being levied and collected with no other end in view than his stipend—his ardent fancy saw the whole machinery



"I Was Quite Peevish After He Threw Me in the River."

of government in operation for his benefit. It was a singular feeling he experienced. Then promptly his spendthrift brain became active. He needed clothes—so did Mahaffy—so did his grandson; they must take a larger house; he would buy himself a man servant; these were pressing necessities as he now viewed them.

Once again he reached for his hat; the desire to flush off to Belle Plain was overmastering.

"I reckon I'd be justified in hiring a conveyance from Pegloe," he thought, but just here he had a saving memory of his unfinished task; that claimed precedence and he resumed his pen.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Thoughtful Child.

Little Alice was terribly afraid of cats. One day she had been standing on the doorstep for several minutes, looking at a big black tom cat gallivanting on the fence. Finally she rushed into the house, looking very excited, and exclaimed: "Muvver, I thought I'd better come in. Dat kitty was just so afraid of me, I felt sorry for it and comed away!"—Woman's Home Companion.

PRESIDENT TAFT TO THE GOVERNORS

His Effective Plea for Rural Credit Plan.

COMMITTEE TO TAKE ACTION.

The President Urges Uniform Legislation to Make Possible a System of Low-Interest-Bearing Loans.

Washington.—President Taft, in a speech to 26 governors here urged the adoption of uniform state legislation which would make possible in this country the adoption of a system of rural credits and low interest-bearing loans to farmers, similar to that in vogue in many European countries.

"We are not going to adopt a system over night," said the President. "It is going to take considerable time before the country shall receive the benefit of it, but the earlier we begin the agitation the earlier we shall achieve the purpose we have in bringing the matter to the attention of the public."

"There is no subject," continued the President, "of greater importance to the people of the United States than the improvement of the agricultural method, the keeping of them up to date in all agricultural communities, the securing of profits to the farmer, the attraction of the young men of the country to farming as a lucrative profession, and the lowering of the cost of producing agricultural products and the lowering of their prices to the consumer."

A Third Essential.

"We have great capital in this country and we have farming property that is producing farm products of immense value. It would seem clear that with these two elements it would be possible to introduce a third by which the farmer engaged in producing the crops should be able, in view of the value of what he produces and the value of the land on which it is produced, to obtain money on the faith of the land and the faith of the product which will enable him to expand his acreage and better his methods of cultivation and production."

Committee Appointed.

While conditions in this country and in Europe were somewhat different, the President said, by modification of the European plan the idea could find a proper place in the United States.

The following committee was named today to draft uniform rural credit legislation to be recommended to the states:

Governors O'Neal, of Alabama; Chairman; Johnson, of California; Plaisted, of Maine; Foss, of Massachusetts; Hadley, of Missouri; Harmon, of Ohio; Mann, of Virginia; McGovern, of Wisconsin, and Carey, of Wyoming.

On motion of Governor Hadley resolutions of thanks to President Taft for his active interest in the idea were unanimously adopted.

A general credit system for the financing of farmers, as outlined by President Taft to the governor's conference here will be considered as a part of the general currency reform to be attempted by the subcommittee of the House Banking and Currency Committee.

WOMAN HID IN BUNKERS.

Hoped To Reach Philadelphia On Battleship Kansas.

Galveston, Texas.—A woman was a passenger aboard the United States battleship Kansas, which, with other vessels of Admiral Fletcher's fleet, arrived in Galveston harbor from New Orleans. The woman, whose name could not be ascertained, was found hidden in the bunkers clad in man's clothing. She said she was penniless and boarded the battleship just before it left New Orleans in the hope that she might remain in hiding until the fleet was headed for Philadelphia, where she said, her relatives live.

OFFERS WILSON WARSHIP.

Taft Would Have President-Elect Visit Panama Canal.

Washington.—President Taft has written a letter to Governor Wilson offering to place at his disposal one of the big battleships of the navy to make a trip of inspection to the Panama Canal some time before Mr. Wilson is inaugurated. The President has a thorough knowledge of the work of the army engineers on the isthmus himself through personal visits to the Canal Zone and is of the opinion that his successor would like to know as much as possible about the nation's great engineering feat before he enters office.

"T. R.'S" PLURALITY 174.

Will Have 11 Out Of 13 California Electoral Votes.

Sacramento, Cal.—Roosevelt carried California by 174 votes, although he will have but 11 of the State's 13 electoral votes. The other two will be cast for Wilson. These figures are final, but will not be made official until the returns from Los Angeles county have been formally audited by Secretary of State Jordan.

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