



# 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 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 Murray, 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. Hannibal disappears, 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 rescues Yancy, who is apparently dead. Yancy 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. He 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. Charles Norton, a young planter, who assists the Judge, is mysteriously assaulted. Norton informs Carrington that Betty has promised to marry him. Carrington is mysteriously shot. More light on Murrell's plot. He plans uprising of negroes. Judge Price and Hannibal visits Betty, and she keeps the boy as a companion. In a stroll Betty takes with Hannibal they meet Judge Price's daughter of the overseer, who warns Betty of danger and counsels her to leave Belle Plain at once. 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 spurns his proffered love and the interview is ended by the arrival of Wars, 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 the Judge and allies with him. Judge Price visits Colonel Ferris, 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. Bruce Carrington and Betty come to an understanding.

## CHAPTER XXX.—(Continued.)

An hour later Pegloe's black boy presented himself to the judge. He came bearing a gift, and the gift appropriately enough was a square case bottle of respectable size. The judge was greatly touched by this attention, but he began by making a most temperate use of the tavern-keeper's offering; then as the formidable document he was preparing took shape under his hand he more and more lost that feeling of Spartan fortitude which had at first sustained him in the presence of temptation. He wrote and slipped in complete and quiet luxury, and when at last he had exhausted the contents of the bottle it occurred to him that it would be only proper personally to convey his thanks to Pegloe. Perhaps he was not un-inspired in this by ulterior hopes; if so, they were richly rewarded. The resources of the City Tavern were suddenly placed at his disposal. He attributed this to a variety of causes all good and sufficient, but the real reason never suggested itself; indeed it was of such a perfidious nature that the judge, open and generous-minded, could not have grasped it.

By six o'clock he was undeniably drunk; at eight he was sounding still deeper depths of inebriety, with only the most confused memory of impending events; at ten he collapsed and was borne upstairs by Pegloe and his black boy to a remote chamber in the kitchen wing. Here he was undressed and put to bed, and the tavern-keeper, making a bundle of his clothes, retired from the room, locking the door after him, and the judge was doubly a prisoner.

Rousing at last from a heavy, dreamless sleep the judge was aware of a faint impalpable light in his room, the ashen light of a dull October dawn. He was aware, too, of a feeling of profound depression. He knew this was the aftermath of indulgence and that he might look forward to forty-eight hours of utter misery of soul, and, groaning aloud, he closed his eyes. Sleep was the thing if he could compass it. Instead, his memory quickened. Something was to happen at sun-up—he could not recall what it was to be, though he distinctly remembered that Mahaffy had spoken of this very matter—Mahaffy, the austere and implacable, the disembodied conscience whose fealty to duty had somehow survived his own spiritual ruin, so that he had become a sort of moral sign-post, ever pointing the way yet never going it himself.

The judge lay still and thought deeply as the light intensified itself. What was it that Mahaffy had said he was to do at sun-up? The very hour accentuated his suspicions. Prob-

ably it was no more than some cheerless obligation to be met, or Mahaffy would not have been so concerned about it. Eventually he decided to refer everything to Mahaffy. He spoke his friend's name weakly and in a shaking voice, but received no answer.

"Solomon!" he repeated, and shifting his position, looked in what should have been the direction of the shake-down bed nor Mahaffy were there. The judge gasped—he wondered if this were not a premonition of certain hallucinations to which he was not a stranger. Then all in a flash he remembered Ferris and the meeting at Boggs', something of how the evening had been spent, and a spasm of regret shook him.

"I had other things to think of. This must never happen again!" he told himself remorsefully.

He was wide-awake now. Doubtless Pegloe had put him to bed. Well, that had been thoughtful of Pegloe—he would not forget him—the City Tavern should continue to enjoy his patronage. It would be something for Pegloe to boast of that Judge Slocum Price headquarters when in Raleigh. Feeling that he had already conferred wealth and distinction on the fortunate Pegloe the judge thrust his feet over the side of his bed and stood erect. Stooping he reached for his clothes. He confidently expected to find them on the floor, but his hand merely swept an uncarpeted waste. The judge was profoundly astonished.

"Maybe I've got 'em on. I don't recall taking them off!" he thought hopefully. He moved uncertainly in the direction of the window, where the light showed him his own bare extremities. He reverted to his original idea that his clothes were scattered about the floor.

He was beginning to experience a great sense of haste; it was two miles to Boggs' and Ferris would be there at sun-up. Finally he abandoned his

quest of the missing garments and turned to the door. To say that he was amazed when he found it locked would have most inadequately described his emotions. Breathing deep, he fell back a step or two, and then with all the vigor he could muster launched himself at the door. But it resisted him.

"It's bolted on the other side!" he muttered, the full measure of Pegloe's perfidy revealing itself to his mind. He was aghast. It was a plot to discredit him. Pegloe's hospitality had been inspired by his enemy, for Pegloe was Ferris' tenant.

Again he attacked the door; he believed it might be possible to force it from its hinges, but Pegloe had done his work too well for that, and at last, spent and breathless, the judge dropped down on the edge of his bed to consider the situation. He was without clothes and he was a prisoner, yet his mind rose splendidly to meet the difficulties that beset him. His greatest activities were reserved for what appeared to be only a sea-

son of despair. He armed himself with a three-legged stool he had found and turned once more to the door, but the stout planks stood firm under his blows.

"Unless I get out of here in time I'm a ruined man!" thought the judge. "After this Ferris will refuse to meet me!"

The window next engaged his attention. That, too, Pegloe had taken the precaution to fasten, but a single savage blow of the stool shattered glass and sash and left an empty space that framed the dawn's red glow. The judge looked out and shook his head dubiously. It was twelve feet or more to the ground, a risky drop for a gentleman of his years and build. The judge considered making a rope of his bedding and lowering himself to the ground by means of it; he remembered French prison, the Bastille, who did this. However, an equally ingenious but much more simple use for his bedding occurred to him; it would form a soft and yielding substance into which to alight. He gathered it up into his arms, feather-tick and all, and pushed it through the window, then he wriggled out across the ledge, feet first, and lowering himself to the full length of his arms, dropped.

He landed squarely on the rolled-up bed with a jar that shook him to his center. Almost gaily he snatched up a quilt, draped it about him after the manner of a Roman toga, and thus lightly habited, started across Mr. Pegloe's truck-patch, his one thought Boggs' and the sun. It would have served no purpose to have gone home, since his entire wardrobe, except for the shirt on his back, was in the tavern-keeper's possession, besides he had not a moment to lose, for the sun was peeping at him over the horizon.

Unobserved he gained the edge of the town and the highroad that led past Boggs' and stole a fearful glance over his shoulder. The sun was clear of the treetops, he could even feel the

he would have preferred to remain in Raleigh in attendance upon Judge Price. Intimately acquainted with the judge's mental processes, he could follow all the devious workings of that magnificent mind; he could fathom the simply hellish ingenuity he was capable of putting forth to accomplish temporary benefits. Permitting his thoughts to dwell upon the mingled strength and weakness which was so curiously blended in Slocum Price's character, he had horrid visions of that great soul, freed from the trammels of restraint, confiding his melancholy history to Mr. Pegloe in the hope of bolstering his fallen credit at the City Tavern.

Always where the judge was concerned he fluctuated between extremes of doubt and confidence. He felt that under the urgent spur of occasion his friend could rise to any emergency, while a sustained activity made demands which he could not satisfy; then his efforts were discounted by his insane desire to realize at once on his opportunities; in his haste he was for ever plucking unripe fruit; and though he might keep one eye on the main chance the other was fixed just as resolutely on the nearest tavern.

With the great stake which fate had suddenly introduced into their losing game, he wished earnestly to believe that the judge would stay quietly in his office and complete the task he had set himself; that with this off his hands the promise of excitement at Belle Plain would compel his presence there, when he would pass some what under the restraining influence which he was determined to exert; in short, to Solomon, life embraced the one vital consideration, which was to maintain the judge in a state of sobriety until after his meeting with Ferris.

The purple of twilight was stealing over the land when he and his two companions reached Belle Plain. They learned that Tom Ware had returned from Memphis, that the bayou had been dragged but without results, and that as yet nothing had been heard from Carrington or the dogs he had gone for.

Presently Cavendish and Yancy set off across the fields. They were going on to the raft, to Polly and the six little Cavendishes, whom they had not seen since early morning; but they promised to be back at Belle Plain within an hour.

By very nature an alien, Mahaffy sought out a dark corner on the wide porch that overlooked the river to await their return. The house had been thrown open, and supper was being served to whoever cared to stay and partake of it. The murmur of idle purposeless talk drifted out to him; he was irritated and offended by it. There was something garish in this indiscriminate hospitality in the very home of tragedy. As the moments slipped by his sense of displeasure increased, with mankind in general, with himself, and with the judge—principally with the judge—who was to make a foolish target of himself in the morning. He was going to give the man who had wrecked his life a chance to take it as well. Mahaffy's cold logic dealt cynically with the preposterous situation his friend had created.

In the midst of his angry meditations he heard a clock strike in the hall and counted the strokes. It was nine o'clock. Surely Yancy and Cavendish had been gone their hour! He quitted his seat and strolled restlessly about the house. He felt deeply indignant with everybody and everything. Human intelligence seemed but a pitiable advance on brute instinct. A whole day had passed and what had been accomplished? Carrington, the judge, Yancy, Cavendish—the four men who might have worked together to some purpose—had widely separated themselves; and here was the duel, the very climax of absurdity. He resumed his dark corner and waited another hour. Still no Carrington, and Yancy and Cavendish had not come up from the raft.

"Fools!" thought Mahaffy bitterly. "All of them fools!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Haste to Reimburse.

While carrying a ladder through the crowded streets of Philadelphia the other day a big Irishman was so unfortunate as to break a plate glass window in a shop. Immediately dropping his ladder, the Celt broke into a run. But he had been seen by the shopkeeper, who dashed after him and caught him by the collar.

"See here!" angrily exclaimed the shopkeeper when he had regained his breath, "you have broken my window!"

"Sure I have," assented the Celt, "and didn't you see me running home to get the money to pay for it?"

## Promises.

A man usually wants the preacher to furnish proof that what he promises is going to come true, but he is willing to take the glib promoter's word for it.

## WOULD REVISE STATE GAME LAW

Annual Report of the Commission Sent to Gov. Tener

## ASK PROTECTION FOR ELK

Forbids Sale of Wild Game Whether Killed Within or Outside State—Bear, Rabbits, 'Coons and Squirrels Are Exempted.

(Special Harrisburg Correspondence.)

Harrisburg.—The State Game Commission in its annual report, submitted to the Governor, recommends the revision of the game laws in the following particulars: Giving absolute protection to elk. Placing turtle doves on the protected list. Forbidding the sale of all game of a kind found in a wild state in the United States, killed either within or outside the State, excepting bear, rabbits, raccoons and squirrels; game imported from foreign countries and game raised strictly in captivity within the State under the protection of existing laws. Providing for an appropriation for the commission to maintain the game preserves now created and to create additional preserves. Providing for an appropriation to employ a force of officers to enforce the game laws. The commissioners also recommend that no law be passed that will permit the killing of game or wild birds now protected. The report continues: "We feel satisfied that song and insectivorous birds of all kinds, classed as will birds, other than game birds, are increasing in this State, and the benefit to the Commonwealth from this increase, from an economic point of view, is most marked. The increase of game birds, beyond that of last year, is evident in many sections of the Commonwealth, quail being more plentiful in Pennsylvania than for many years, this increase of quail being in evidence in most of the counties of the Commonwealth, excepting a limited number of counties in the southeastern part of the State, where, because of close cultivation, it is impossible for these birds to exist at all." Ruffed grouse were more plentiful than for five years, and wild turkeys have been plentiful during the year. Deer and bear are increasing 1/3 the State, the deer being more numerous than they have been for twenty-five years. Two new game preserves have been created, one in Perry and another in Westmoreland counties. They have been stocked with deer obtained in Michigan.

To Remedy Stream Pollution. The reported killing of thousands of fish in the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, between Lock Haven and Williamsport, will cease, the Department of Fisheries believes, because of the elimination of acids and other waste matter. After investigations during several weeks by Fish Commissioner Buller and his wardens arrangements have been made to remedy the pollution traced to Bald Eagle Creek. The proprietors of the New York and Pennsylvania Company's paper mill at Lock Haven have agreed to co-operate with the Fisheries Department, and the company has purchased ground for the purpose of constructing a sedimentation plant, which will be in operation by the first of the year. The State Department of Health has also taken up the matter of the sewage pollution of the stream with Lock Haven city officials, and the city has been ordered to dispose of its sewage in some other way.

Heinz Sees Prosperity. "Business conditions were never more separated from politics and Wall Street in the history of the country than at present," said H. J. Heinz, the Pittsburgh pickle manufacturer, who was here attending a meeting of the Panama-Pacific Exposition Commission. "It was a foregone conclusion six months in advance of the election just how the country would go, and the people had really adjusted themselves to conditions by the time the results of the election were announced. The change in the administration, I believe, will have no appreciable effect upon the business conditions of the country. Good crops next year would offset any effect that those men who hold back might have on business."

## Big Electric Merger.

Papers were filed here covering the merger of thirteen recently incorporated electric companies of Lancaster County into the Edison Electric Company of Lancaster, of which Congressman W. W. Grist is president. The companies are the Elizabethtown, Marietta, Martie, Conoy, Eden, Conestoga, Providence, Ephrata, Earl, West Earl, Upper Leacock, Strasburg and Pequa.

## Complains Against Railway.

The Rev. J. Edwin Jones, of the Elmwood Methodist Episcopal Church, advises the State Railroad Commission that some of the cars of the Philadelphia Railway Company, operating from Third and Jackson streets to Bow Creek, do not have enclosed platforms for the protection of the motor-men. He also adds that six cars are now performing the service that seven were required to do, maintaining the same schedule. The extra speed in the winter, he thinks, on such a roadbed may become hazardous.

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Pegloe's Black Boy Came Bearing a Gift.

lifeless dust grow warm beneath his feet; and wrapping the quilt closer about him he broke into a labored run. Some twenty minutes later Boggs came in sight. He experienced a moment of doubt—doubtless Ferris had been there and gone! It was a hideous thought and the judge groaned. Then at the other end of the meadow near the woods he distinguished several men, Ferris and his friends beyond question. The judge laughed aloud. In spite of everything he was keeping his engagement, he was plucking his triumph out of the very dregs of failure. The judge threw himself over the fence, a corner of the quilt caught on one of the rails; he turned to release it, and in that instant two pistol shots rang out sharply in the morning air.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### Solomon's Last Night.

It had been with no little reluctance that Solomon Mahaffy accompanied Yancy and Cavendish to Belle Plain;