



# 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, and how 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 Blaham, 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. Carrington takes the same stage as Murrell on his trail. Hannibal arrives at the home of Judge Stocum 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. 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. 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 by Sisson, 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 spurns his proffered love and the interview is ended by the arrival of Ware, terrified, 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 spurns his proffered love and the interview is ended by the arrival of Ware, terrified, 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 spurns his proffered love and the interview is ended by the arrival of Ware, terrified, and Betty and Hannibal are made prisoners.



The Pistol Slipped From His Fingers.

Price, a tall, gaunt figure in the shadowy uncertainty of that October morning. He was the first to reach the place of meeting, but he had barely entered the meadow when a man in a top hat, attended by Tom, stepped forward. They dismounted, and the judge lifted his hat. Mahaffy barely acknowledged the salute; he was in no mood for courtesies that meant nothing. Ware was clearly of the same mind.

There was an awkward pause, then the judge and Ware spoke together in low tones. The planter's speech was broken and hoarse, and his heavy, blood-shot eyes were the eyes of a hunted man; this was all a part of Fentress' scheme to face the world, and Ware still believed that the fires Hicks had kindled had served his desperate need.

## CHAPTER XXXI.—(Continued.)

At last he decided to go back to the judge; and a moment later was hurrying down the lane in the direction of the highroad, but, jaded as he was by the effort he had already put for that day, the walk to Raisley made tremendous demands on him, and it was midnight when he entered the little town.

It cannot be said that he was altogether surprised when he found the cottage dark and apparently deserted. He had half expected this. Entering, and not stopping to secure a candle, he groped his way upstairs to the room on the second floor where he and the judge shared.

"Price!" he called, but this gained him no response, and he cursed softly under his breath.

He hastily descended to the kitchen, lighted a candle, and stepped to the adjoining room. On the table lay a neat pile of papers, and topping the pile was the president's letter. Mahaffy, burdened by no false scruple, and thinking it might afford some clue to the judge's whereabouts, took it up and read it. He mastered its contents by instinctive glance in the direction of the Y Tavern, but it was wrapped in keenness.

"Price is drunk somewhere," was his definite conclusion. "But hebe at Boggs' the first thing in the morning—most likely so far gone than hardly stand!"

The letter, with its striking words, made little or no impression on him just then; it merely furnished the clue he had sought. The judge was somewhere marketing his prospects.

After a time Mahaffy went upstairs, and, without removing his clothes, threw himself on the bed. He was worn down to the point of exhaustion, yet he could not sleep, though the deep silence warri him that day was not far off. If he but he would not let the night shape itself in his mind. He witnessed the judge's skill with the pistol, and he had even a certain irrational faith in that gentleman's destiny. He prayed God that ngress might die quickly and decey with the judge's bullet through his brain. Over and over in prayer supplication he muttered his savage satisfaction might die.

Mahaffy watched for the ring of the dawn, but before the darkness lifted he had risen from the bed and gone downstairs, where he determined a cup of wretched coffee. Then he blew out his candle and watched the gray light spread. He was impatient now to be off, and fully an hour before the sun, set out for

the victim of an unprovoked attack." Mr. Ware accepted this statement with equanimity, not to say indifference.

"Are you ready?" he asked; he glanced at Mahaffy, who by a slight inclination of the head signified that he was. "I reckon you're a green hand at this sort of thing," commented Tom evilly.

"Yes," said Mahaffy tersely. "Well, listen: I shall count, one, two, three; at the word three you will fire. Now take your positions."

Mahaffy and the colonel stood facing each other, a distance of twelve paces separating them. Mahaffy was pale but dogged; he eyed Fentress unflinchingly. Quick on the word Fentress fired, an instant later Mahaffy's pistol exploded; apparently neither bullet had taken effect, the two men maintained the rigid attitude they had assumed; then Mahaffy was seen to turn on his heels, next his arm dropped to his side and the pistol slipped from his fingers, a look of astonishment passed over his face and left it vacant and staring while his right hand stole up toward his heart; he raised it slowly, with difficulty, as though it were held down by some invisible weight.

A hush spread across the field. It was like one of nature's invisible transitions. Along the edge of the woods the song of birds was stricken into silence. Ware, heavy-eyed—Fentress, his lips twisted by a tortured smile, watched Mahaffy as he panted for breath, with his hand clenched against his breast. That dead, oppressive silence lasted but a moment; from out of it came a cry that smote on the wounded man's ears and reached his consciousness.

"It's Price!" he gasped, his words bathed in blood, and he pitched forward on his face.

Ware and Fentress had heard the cry, too, and running to their horses threw themselves into the saddle and galloped off. The judge midway of the meadow roared out a furious protest, but the mounted men turned into the highroad and vanished from sight, and the judge's shaking legs bore him swiftly in the direction of the gaunt figure on the ground.

Mahaffy struggled to rise, for he was hearing his friend's voice now, the voice of utter anguish, calling his name. At last painful effort brought him to his knees. He saw the judge, clothed principally in a gaily colored bed-quilt, hatless and shoeless, his face sodden and bleary from his night's debauch. Mahaffy stood erect and staggered toward him, his hand over his wound, his features drawn and livid, then with a cry he dropped at his friend's feet.

"Solomon! Solomon!" And the judge knelt beside him. "It's all right, Price; I kept your appointment," whispered Mahaffy; a bloody spume was gathering on his lips, and he stared up at his friend with glassy eyes. In very shame the judge hid his

face in his hands, while sobs shook him.

"Solomon—Solomon, why did you do this?" he cried miserably. The harsh lines on the dying man's face erased themselves.

"You're the only friend I've known in twenty years of loneliness, Price. I've loved you like a brother," he panted, with a pause between each word.

Again the judge buried his face in his hands. "I know it, Solomon—I know it!" he moaned wretchedly.

"Price, you are still a man to be reckoned with. There's the boy; take your place for his sake and keep it—you can."

"I will—by God, I will!" gasped the judge. "You hear me? You hear me, Solomon? By God's good help, I will!"

"You have the president's letter—I saw it!" said Mahaffy in a whisper. "Yes!" cried the judge. "Solomon, the world is changing for us!"

"For me most of all," murmured Mahaffy, and there was a bleak instant when the judge's ashen countenance held the full pathos of age and failure. "Remember your oath, Price," gasped the dying man. A moment of silence succeeded. Mahaffy's eyes closed, then the heavy lids slid back. He looked up at the judge while the harsh lines of his sour old face softened wonderfully. "Kiss me, Price," he whispered, and as the judge bent to touch him on the brow, the softened lines fixed themselves in death, while on his lips lingered a smile that was neither bitter nor sneering.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

The Judge's Grandson. In that bare upper room they had shared, the judge, crushed and broken, watched beside the bed on which the dead man lay; unconscious of the flight of time he sat with his head bowed in his hands, having scarcely altered his position since he begged those who carried Mahaffy up the narrow stairs to leave him alone with his friend.

He was living over the past. He recalled his first meeting with Mahaffy in the stuffy cabin of the small river packet from which they had later gone ashore at Pleasantville; he thanked God that it had been given him to see beneath Solomon's forbidding exterior and into that starved heart! He reviewed each phase of the almost insensible growth of their intimacy; he remembered Mahaffy's fine true loyalty at the time of his arrest—he thought of Damon and Pythias—Mahaffy had reached the heights of a sublime devotion; he could only feel ennobled that he had inspired it.

At last the dusk of twilight invaded the room. He lighted the candles on the chimney-piece, then he resumed his seat and his former attitude. Suddenly he became aware of a small hand that was resting on his arm and glanced up; Hannibal had stolen quietly into the room. The boy pointed to the still figure on the bed.

"Judge, what makes Mr. Mahaffy lie so quiet—is he dead?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yes, dear lad," began the judge in a shaking voice, as he drew Hannibal toward him, "your friend and mine is dead—we have lost him." He lifted the boy into his lap, and Hannibal pressed a tear-stained face against the judge's shoulder. "How did you get here?" the judge questioned gently.

"Uncle Bob fetched me," said Hannibal. "He's down-stairs, but he didn't tell me Mr. Mahaffy was dead."

"We have sustained a great loss, Hannibal, and we must never forget the moral grandeur of the man. Some day, when you are older, and I can bring myself to speak of it, I will tell you of his last moments." The judge's voice broke, a thick sob rose chokingly in his throat. "Poor Solomon! A man of such tender feeling that he hid it from the world, for his was a rare nature which only revealed itself to the chosen few he honored with his love." The judge lapsed into a momentary brooding silence, in which his great arms drew the boy closer against his heart. "Dear lad, since I left you at Belle Plain a very astonishing knowledge has come to me. It was the Hand of Providence—I see it now—that first brought us together. You must not call me judge any more; I am your grandfather—your mother was my daughter."

## (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Dress for an Earthquake. An old lady was staying at a hotel at Nice at the time of the earthquake. "My dear," she was wont to say, "I was simply tumbled out of bed and the ceiling cracked. I threw on a fur cloak and unconsciously pulled on one long black suede glove, and when I got down to the hall and found all the other guests—my dear, I was the best dressed woman there!"

## DELANEY FACES FORMAN CHARGES

Governor Will Investigate Complaint of Consumers' League

OFFICER AWAITS HEARING

Chief Factory Inspector Accused of Derelictions in Office—Miss Sanville, Secretary, Files Complaint—Rumors Not Considered.

(Special Harrisburg Correspondence.) Harrisburg—Governor Tener will investigate the charges made against his Chief Factory Inspector, John C. Delaney, it was said at the Executive Department, following the filing of formal charges against Delaney by the Consumers' League of Philadelphia. The Governor continued his reticence regarding the charges. It is understood on Capitol Hill that he will examine the petition carefully, although there is little likelihood of an early public hearing. The charges of the Consumers' League are those which Miss Florence L. Sanville, general secretary, said she would produce when she, in company with the State Federation of Labor representatives, visited the Governor and accused Delaney of derelictions in office. At that time the Governor said that he would consider any charges lodged with him, but that they would have to be more than hearsay and newspaper rumors. "It is said that the formal charges go into detail, but the Governor declined to talk about the matter or divulge the contents of the petition. Mr. Delaney said he could not discuss the charges, because he did not know what they contained. "As soon as I learn what they are," he declared to-night, "I will willingly talk about them. If the charges are made by Miss Sanville, I hope, for her sake, they will be more accurate than the one she made last week. This declared that flagrant violations of the laws were being perpetrated in a Philadelphia factory. As in all such cases, I ordered an investigation immediately. I found that the factory complained of had not been in operation for a year. Miss Sanville asserted that the data had been looked up for her by a person who had given her inaccurate information and whom she had discharged."

Found Rare Old Print. Half buried under a pile of old tapestries, furniture, some other picture frames and a lot of books and other second-hand articles, in the shop of J. W. Hoover, North Sixth street, City Clerk Charles A. Miller found a rare mahogany framed print of Harrisburg taken some time before 1847. He paid a trifle for the picture, and will add it to his collection of old views about the city. The picture will be hung in the Common Council chamber along with the other views. The picture doesn't indicate in any way who the artist was or when the view was made. From the fact that some of the buildings which had been removed in 1847 are shown on the view it is believed that the picture dated to before that time. Allison's Hill is shown as a wooded stretch of bluff without a house, and the old arsenal stands just below the State House in Capitol Park.

Going Slow on Appropriations. Thirteen of the counties of the State have received their appropriations from the State in aid of agricultural fairs, and settlements will probably be made on others within a short time. But one is under investigation of charges by the Auditor-General. Last year at this time four complaints were pending and investigations being made of charges that gambling was permitted on the fair grounds. In some of these cases it was proved that games of chance were allowed and the exhibitions lost the State money. The effect of this stand has been that a couple of fairs which had figured in previous complaints and against which charges would have been filed did not make any application to their county commissioners for State appropriations.

New Measures Law. Compulsory inspection of weights and measures will be asked of the next Legislature by labor and other organizations, and a determined fight made to obtain it early in the session. Men identified with the State Federation of Labor have obtained data as to the results of inspection in Allegheny, Berks, Luzerne, Washington and other counties and in various cities, and will present it in support of the bill. The State Bureau of Standards, which gives the standards on all weights, will also have some bills relative to inspection, one of which will be for all inspectors of cities and counties to file reports of their work with the State bureau.

Mails Spread Smallpox. Associate Medical Inspector Hunt, of the State Department of Health, has just returned from an inspection of the smallpox situation in Wayne county, where there have been 41 cases quarantined. It is believed the epidemic started from the post-office at Hale's Eddy, N. Y., just across the Pennsylvania State line. The postmaster there held mail for two weeks after he was stricken with smallpox, and the carrier who took mail from that office into Wayne county is now ill with the disease.

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