



# 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 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 Blazam, 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. Murrell and Hannibal disappear, with Murrell on their 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 rescues Hannibal and Betty meet again. Murrell arrives at Belle Plain. Hannibal's rifle discloses some startling things to the judge. Hannibal and Betty meet again. Murrell arrives in Belle Plain, playing for big stakes. Yancy awakes from long dreamless sleep on board the raft. Judge Price makes startling discoveries in looking up land titles.

**(CHAPTER XII—(Continued).)**  
"So your sister doesn't like me, Tom—that's on your mind this morning, is it?" Murrell was saying.  
"Make it worth my while and I'll take her off your hands," and Murrell laughed.  
Tom favored him with a sullen stare.

There was a brief silence, during which Murrell studied his friend's face. When he spoke, it was to give the conversation a new direction.  
"Did she bring the boy here last night? I saw you drive off with him in the carriage."  
"Yes, she makes a regular pet of the little ragamuffin."  
"Is the boy going to stay at Belle Plain?" inquired Murrell.  
"That notion hasn't struck her yet, for I heard her say at breakfast that she'd take him to Raleigh this afternoon."  
"That's the boy I traveled all the way to North Carolina to get for Ferris."  
"Eh—you don't say?" cried Ware.  
"Tom, what do you know about the Quintard lands; what do you know about Quintard himself?" continued Murrell.

"He was a rich planter; lived in North Carolina. My father met him when he was in congress and got him to invest in land here. They had some colonization scheme on foot—this was upward of twenty years ago—but nothing came of it. Quintard lost interest."  
"And the land?"  
"Oh, he held on to that."  
"Quintard has been dead two years, Tom, and back yonder in North Carolina they told me he left nothing but the home plantation. The boy lived there up to the time of Quintard's death, but what relation he was to the old man no one knew. Offhand, Tom, I'd say that by getting hold of the boy Ferris expects to get hold of the Quintard land."  
"That's likely," said Ware; then struck by a sudden idea, he added, "Are you going to take all the risks and let him pocket the cash? If it's the land he's after, the stake's big enough to divide."  
"He can have the whole thing and welcome. I'm playing for a bigger stake." His friend stared at him in astonishment. "I'm licking a speculation into shape that will cause me to be remembered while there's a white man alive in the Mississippi Valley! Have you heard what the niggers did at Hayti?"  
"You let the niggers alone; don't you tamper with them," said Ware. He possessed a profound belief in Murrell's capacity.  
"Look here, what do you think I have been working for—to steal a few niggers? That furnishes us with money, but you can push the trade too hard and too far. The planters are uneasy. The Clan's got to deal a counter blow or go out of business. Between here and the gulf—" he made a wide sweeping gesture with his arm. "I am spotting the country with my men; there are two thousand active workers on the rolls of the Clan, and as many more like you, Tom—and Ferris—on whose friendship I can rely."  
"Sure as God, John Murrell, you are overreaching yourself! Your white men are all right, they've got to stick by you; if they don't they know it's only a question of time until they get a knife driven into their ribs—but niggers—there isn't any real fight in a nigger, if there was they wouldn't be here."  
"Yet you couldn't have made the whites in Hayti believe that," said Murrell, with a sinister smile.  
Ware, feeling the entire uselessness

of argument, uttered a string of imprecations, and then fell silent.  
"Well, how about the girl, Tom?" asked Murrell at length. "Listen to me, Tom. I'll take her away, and Belle Plain is yours—land, stock and niggers!" said Murrell.  
Ware shifted and twisted in his seat.  
"Do you want the land and the niggers? I reckon you'll have to take them whether you want them or not, for I'm going to have the girl."

## CHAPTER XIII.

**Bob Yancy Finds Himself.**  
Mr. Yancy awoke from a long dreamless sleep; heavy-lidded, his eyes slid open. For a moment he struggled with the odds and ends of memory, then he recalled the fight at the tavern, the sudden murderous attack, the fierce blows Slosson had dealt him, the knife thrust which had ended the struggle. Therefore, the bandages that now swathed his head and shoulders; therefore, the need that he should be up and doing—for where was Hannibal?  
Suddenly a shadow fell obliquely across the foot of his narrow bed, and Cavendish, bending his long body somewhat, thrust his head in at the opening. He found himself looking into a pair of eyes that for the first time in many a long day held the light of consciousness.  
"How are you, stranger?" he demanded, in a soft drawl.  
"Where am I?" The words were a whisper on Yancy's bearded lips.  
"Well, sir, you are in the Tennessee river for certain. Polly! you jest step here."  
But Polly had heard Cavendish speak, and the murmur of Yancy's

in her wake came Connie with the baby, and the three little brothers who were to be accorded the cherished privilege of seeing the poor gentleman eat. Cavendish presented himself at the opening that did duty as a door.  
"This looks like bein' alive, stranger," he commented genially.  
"You-all ain't told me yo' name yet?" said Yancy.  
"It's Cavendish. Richard Keppel Cavendish."  
"My name's Yancy—Bob Yancy." Mr. Cavendish exchanged glances with Mrs. Cavendish.  
"Stranger, what I'm a-goin' to tell you, you'll take as bein' said man to man," he began, with the impressive air of one who had a secret of great moment to impart. "Ever hear tell of lords?"  
"No." Yancy was quick to notice the look of disappointment on the faces of his new friends.  
"Are you ever heard of royalty?" and Cavendish fixed the invalid's wandering glance.  
"You mean kings?"  
"I shore do."  
Yancy made a mighty mental effort. "There's them Bible kings—" he ventured at length.  
Mr. Cavendish shook his head.  
"Them's sacred kings. Are you familiar with any of the profane kings, Mr. Yancy?"  
"Well, taking them as they come, them Bible kings seemed to average pretty profane." Yancy was disposed to defend this point.  
"You must a heard of the kings of England. Sho, wa'n't any of yo' folks in the war agin' him?"  
"I'd plumb forgot, why my daddy fit all through the war!" exclaimed

"My grandfather said he never knowed a man with the same aversion agin labor as his father had. Folks put it down to laziness, but they misjudged him, as come out later, yet he never let on."  
"Then one day he got his hands on a paper that had come across in a ship from England. All at once, he lit on something in the paper, and he started up and let out a yell like he'd been shot. 'By gum, I'm the Earl of Lambeth!' he says, and took out to the nearest tavern and got 'billin' full. Afterward he showed 'em the paper and they seen with their own eyes where Richard Keppel Cavendish, Earl of Lambeth, had died in London. My great grandfather told 'em that was his uncle; that when he left home there was several cousins—but they'd up and died, so the title come to him. He never done a lick of work after that."  
"I'm an orphan man of title now and it's been my dream to take Polly and the children and go back to England and see the king about my title. Don't you reckon he's got the notion the Cavendishes has petered out?"  
Mr. Yancy considered this likely.  
The furious shrieking of a steam-packet's whistle broke in upon them.  
"It's another of them haws, want-in' all the river!" said Mr. Cavendish, and fled to the steering car.

## CHAPTER XIV.

**The Judge Sees a Ghost.**  
Charley Norton's good offices did not end when he had furnished Judge Price with a house, for Betty required of him that he should supply that gentleman with legal business as well.

Thus it happened that Judge Price, before he had been three days in Raleigh, received a civil note from Mr. Norton asking him to search the title to a certain timber tract held by one Joseph Quaid. The judge, powerfully excited, told Mahaffy he was being understood and appreciated.  
The immediate result of Norton's communication had been to send the judge up the street to the court house. He would show his client that he could be punctual and painstaking.

Entering the court house, he found himself in a narrow hall. He entered the county clerk's office. He was already known to this official, whose name was Saul, and he now greeted him.  
"A little matter of business brings me here, sir," began the judge, with a swelling chest and mellow accents. "I am in some haste to look up a title for my client, Mr. Norton."  
Mr. Saul scrambled up out of the depths of his chair and exerted himself in the judge's behalf.  
"This is what you want, sir. Better take the ledger to the window, the light in here ain't much." He drew forward a chair as he spoke, and the judge, seating himself, began to polish his spectacles with great deliberation.

"You've set on the bench, sir?" suggested Mr. Saul.  
"In one of the eastern counties, but my inclination has never been toward the judiciary." He was turning the leaves of the ledger as he spoke. Suddenly the movement of his hand was arrested.  
"Found it?" asked Mr. Saul. But the judge gave him no answer; he was staring down at the open pages of the book. "Found the entry?" repeated Mr. Saul.  
"Eh—what's that? No—" he appeared to hesitate. "Who is this man Quintard?"  
"He's the owner of a hundred-thousand-acre tract in this and abutting counties," said Mr. Saul.  
"Who has charge of the land?"  
"Colonel Ferris; he was old General Ware's law partner. I've heard it was the general who got this man Quintard to make the investment, but that was before my time."  
The judge lapsed into silence.  
A step sounded in the narrow hall. An instant later the door was pushed open, and grateful for any interruption that would serve to take Mr. Saul's attention from himself, the judge abruptly turned his back on the clerk and began to examine the record before him. Insensibly, however, the cold, level tones of the voice that was addressing itself to Mr. Saul quickened the beat of his pulse, the throb of his heart, and struck back through the years to a day from which he reckoned time. He turned slowly, as if in dread.  
What he saw was a man verging on sixty, lean and dark, with thin, shaven cheeks of a bluish cast above the jaw, and a strongly aquiline profile. Long, black locks swept the collar of his coat, while his tall, spare figure was habited in sleek broadcloth and spotless linen. For a moment the judge seemed to struggle with doubt, then his face went white and the book slipped from his fingers to the window ledge.

"These here titles go to the eldest son. He begins by bein' a viscount," continued Chills and Fever. "It was my great grandfather come over here from England. His name was Richard Keppel Cavendish, same as mine is. He lived back yonder on the Carolina coast and went to raisin' tobacco. I've heard my grandfather tell all about it.

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His Face Went White and the Book Slipped From His Fingers.

voice in reply. Now her head appeared beside her husband's.  
"La, you are some better, ain't you, sir?" she cried, smiling down on him. "It's been right smart of a spell, too; yes, sir, you've laid like you was dead, and not for a matter of hours either—but days."  
"How long?"  
"Well, nigh on to three weeks."  
They saw Yancy's eyes widen with a look of dumb horror.  
"And you don't know nothing about my nevy?—you ain't seen or heard of him, ma'am?" faltered Yancy.  
Polly shook her head regretfully.  
"Ten or thereabouts, ma'am. He were a heap of comfort to me—" and the whisper on Yancy's lips was wonderfully tender and wistful. He closed his eyes and presently, lulled by the soft ripple that bore them company, fell into a restful sleep.  
The raft drifted on into the day's heat; and when at last Yancy awoke, it was to find Henry and Keppel seated beside him, each solacing him with a small moist band. Mrs. Cavendish appeared, bringing Yancy's breakfast.

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Strain on the Vital Organ Must Be Avoided When Middle Life Has Been Passed.

"The death by heart failure of Gen. Frederick D. Grant," says the Medical Recorder, "emphasizes the repeated warnings of the medical profession that we should treat a senile heart with respect. As far as we know there is not the slightest disagreement on this one point—every human heart over fifty, and perhaps over forty-five, cannot stand much internal pressure without being ruined or at least damaged. A very slight man may go through severe muscular exertion with but little damage, but a heavy man, like the general, places on the heart and arteries a hydrostatic pressure beyond the safety point, and it never recovers."  
"The pitiful feature of this deplorable death is the fact that Gen. Grant in his last annual report had called attention to the opinion of life insurance examiners that army officers were becoming poor risks on account of the increasing strain on their profession. It is safe to predict more deaths like Gen. Grant's, unless we treat the heart of a man over forty-five with more gentleness.

**Consoling Thought.**  
"Do you believe, doctor," asked Mrs. Wumps, "that men become what they eat?"  
"Yes, madam, I do," said the bishop.  
"What a comfort that must have been to those early missionaries when they were eaten by the cannibals!" sighed Mrs. Wumps.—Harper's Weekly.

**His Poss.**  
"Mrs. Hewligus, what is your husband's attitude on the woman suffrage question?"  
"One foot in the air, of course. He's one of the chronic kickers."

**Love recognizes the frigid mitt when it gets the shake.**

**DIFFERENT NOW.**  
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