



# 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 Balsam, 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. North informs Carrington that Betty has promised to marry him. Norton is mysteriously shot. Murrell and Carrington are made prisoners. Carrington 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 Miss Hicks, daughter of the overseer, who warns Betty of danger and counsels her to leave Belle Plain at once. Betty, fearing they will be stopped by Blossom, fled, acts on Miss's advice, and on their flight, she meets 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 at possible outcome of the crime. Judge Price, hearing of the abduction, plans action.

## CHAPTER XXII.

**The Judge Takes Charge.**  
All work on the plantation had stopped, and the hundreds of slaves—men, women and children—were gathered about the house. Among these moved the members of the dominant race. The judge would have attached himself to the first group, but he heard a whispered question, and the answer:  
"Miss Malroy's lawyer."  
Clearly it was not for him to mix with these outsiders, these curiosity seekers. He crossed the lawn to the house, and mounted the steps. In the doorway was big Steve, while groups of men stood about in the hall, the hum of busy purposeless talk pervading the place. The judge frowned. This was all wrong.  
"Has Mr. Ware returned from Memphis?" he asked of Steve.  
"No, sah; not yet."  
"Then show me into the library," said the judge with bland authority, surrendering his hat to the butler. "Come along, Mahaffy!" he added. They entered the library, and the judge motioned Steve to close the door. "Now, boy, you'll kindly ask those people to withdraw—you may say it is Judge Price's orders. Allow no one to enter the house unless they have business with me, or as I send for them—you understand? After you have cleared the house, you may bring me a decanter of corn whisky—stop a bit—you may ask the sheriff to step here."  
"Yes, sah." And Steve withdrew.  
The judge drew an easy-chair up to the flat-topped desk that stood in the center of the room, and seated himself.  
"Are you going to make this the excuse for another drunk, Price? If so, I feel the greatest contempt for you," said Mahaffy sternly.  
The judge winced at this.  
"You have made a regrettable choice of words, Solomon," he urged gently.  
"Where's your feeling for the boy?"  
"Here!" said the judge, with an eloquent gesture, resting his hand on his heart.  
"If you let whisky alone, I'll believe you; otherwise what I have said must stand."  
The door opened, and the sheriff slouched into the room. He was wearing a long wheat straw, and his whole appearance was one of troubled weakness.  
"Morning," he said briefly.  
"Sit down, sheriff," and the judge indicated a meek seat for the official in a distant corner. "Have you learned anything?" he asked.  
The sheriff shook his head.  
"What you turning all these neighbors out of doors for?" he questioned.  
"We don't want people tracking in and out the house, sheriff. Important evidence may be destroyed. I propose examining the slaves first—does that meet with your approval?"  
"Oh, I've talked with them; they don't know nothing," said the sheriff. "No one don't know nothing."



"Hicks Says Miss Malroy's Been Acting Queer Since Charley Norton Was Shot."

"I'll see the overseer—what's his name?—Hicks? Suppose you go for him!" said the judge, addressing the sheriff.  
The sheriff was gone from the room only a few moments, and returned with the information that Hicks was down at the bayou, which was to be dragged.  
"Why?" inquired the judge.  
"Hicks says Miss Malroy's been acting mighty queer ever since Charley Norton was shot—distracted like! He says he noticed it, and that Tom Ware noticed it."  
"How does he explain the boy's disappearance?"  
"He reckons she threw herself in, and the boy tried to drag her out, like he naturally would, and got drawn in."  
"Humph! I'll trouble Mr. Hicks to step here," said the judge quietly.  
"There's Mr. Carrington and a couple of strangers outside who've been asking about Miss Malroy and the boy; seems like the strangers know her and him back yonder in No'th Carolina," said the sheriff as he turned away.  
"I'll see them." The sheriff went

from the room and the judge dismissed the servants.  
"Well, what do you think, Price?" asked Mahaffy anxiously when they were alone.  
"Rubbish! Take my word for it, Solomon, this blow is leveled at me. I have been too forward in my attempts to suppress the carnival of crime that is raging through west Tennessee. You'll observe that Miss Malroy disappeared at a moment when the public is disposed to think she has retained me as her legal adviser; probably she will be set at liberty when she agrees to drop the matter of Norton's murder. As for the boy, they'll use him to compel my silence and inaction." The judge took a long breath. "Yet there remains one point where the boy is concerned that completely baffles me. If we knew just a little more of his antecedents it might cause me to make a startling and radical move."  
Mahaffy was clearly not impressed by the vague generalities in which the judge was dealing.  
"There you go, Price, as usual, trying to convince yourself that you are the center of everything!" he said, in a tone of much exasperation. "Let's get down to business! What does this man Hicks mean by hinting at suicide? You saw Miss Malroy yesterday?"  
"You have put your finger on a point of some significance," said the judge. "She bore evidence of the shock and loss she had sustained; aside from that she was quite as she has always been."  
"Well, what do you want to see Hicks for? What do you expect to learn from him?"  
"I don't like his insistence on the idea that Miss Malroy is mentally unbalanced. It's a question of some

delicacy—the law, sir, fully recognizes that. It seems to me he is over-anxious to account for her disappearance in a manner that can compromise no one."  
CHAPTER XXIII.  
The Judge Finds Allies.  
They were interrupted by the opening of the door, and big Steve admitted Carrington and the two men of whom the sheriff had spoken.  
"A shocking condition of affairs, Mr. Carrington!" said the judge by way of greeting.  
"Yes," said Carrington shortly. "You left these parts some time ago, I believe?" continued the judge.  
"The day before Norton was shot. I had started home for Kentucky. I heard of his death when I reached Randolph on the second bluff," explained Carrington, from whose cheeks the weather-beaten bloom had faded. He rested his hand on the edge of the desk and turned to the men who had followed him into the room. "This is the gentleman you wish to see," he said, and stepped to one of the windows; it overlooked the terraces

where he had said good-by to Betty scarcely a week before.  
The two men had paused by the door. They now advanced. One was gaunt and haggard, his face disfigured by a great red scar; the other was a shock-headed individual who moved with a shambling gait. Both carried rifles and both were dressed in coarse homespun.  
"Morning, sir," said the man with the scar. "Yancy's my name, and this gentleman 'lows he'd rather be known now as Mr. Cavendish."  
The judge started to his feet.  
"Bob Yancy?" he cried.  
"Yes, sir, that's me." The judge passed nimbly around the desk and shook the Scratch Hiller warmly by the hand. "Where's my nevy, sir?—what's all this about him and Miss Betty?" Yancy's soft drawl was suddenly eager.  
"Please God we'll recover him soon!" said the judge.  
By the window Carrington moved impatiently. No harm could come to the boy, but Betty—a shudder went through him.  
"They've stolen him." Yancy spoke with conviction. "I reckon they've started back to No'th Carolina with him—only that don't explain what's come of Miss Betty, does it?" and he dropped rather helplessly into a chair.  
"Bob are just getting off a sick bed. He's been powerful poorly in consequence of having his head laid open and then being thrown into the Elk river, where I fished him out," explained Cavendish, who still continued to regard the judge with unmixed astonishment, first cocking his shaggy head on one side and then on the other, his bleached eyes narrowed to a slit. Now and then he favored the austere Mahaffy with a fleeting glance. He seemed intuitively to understand the comradeship of their degradation.  
"Mr. Cavendish fetched me here on his raft. We tied up to the sho' this morning. It was there we met Mr. Carrington—I'd knowed him slightly back yonder in No'th Carolina," continued Yancy. "He said I'd find Hannibal with you. I was counting a heap on seeing my nevy."  
Carrington, no longer able to control himself, swung about on his heel.  
"What's been done?" he asked, with fierce repression. "What's going to be done? Don't you know that every second is precious?"  
"I am about to conclude my investigations, sir," said the judge with dignity.  
Carrington stepped to the door. After all, what was there to expect of these men? Whatever their interest, it was plainly centered in the boy. He passed out into the hall.  
As the door closed on him the judge turned again to the Scratch Hiller.  
"Mr. Yancy, Mr. Mahaffy and I hold your nephew in the tenderest regard; he has been our constant companion ever since you were lost. In this crisis you may rely upon us; we are committed to his recovery, no matter what it involves." The judge's tone was one of unalterable resolution.  
"I reckon you-all have been mighty good and kind to him," said Yancy huskily.  
"We have endeavored to be, Mr. Yancy—indeed I had formed the resolution legally to adopt him should you not come to claim him. I should have given him my name, and made him my heir. His education has already begun under my supervision," and the judge, remembering the high use to which he had dedicated one of Peg-loe's trade labels, fairly glowed with philanthropic fervor.  
"Think of that!" murmured Yancy softly. He was deeply moved. So was Mr. Cavendish, who was gifted with a wealth of ready sympathy. He thrust out a hardened hand to the judge.  
"Shake!" he said. "You're a heap better than you look." A thin ripple of laughter escaped Mahaffy, but the judge accepted Chills and Fever's proffered hand. He understood that here was a simple genuine soul.  
"Price, isn't it important for us to know why Mr. Yancy thinks the boy has been taken back to North Carolina?" said Mahaffy.  
"Just what kin is Hannibal to you, Mr. Yancy?" asked the judge resuming his seat.  
"Strictly speaking, he ain't none. That he come to live with me is all owing to Mr. Crenshaw, who's a good man when left to himself, but he's got a wife, so a body may say he never is left to himself," began Yancy; and then briefly he told the story of the woman and the child much as he had told it to Bladen at the Barony the day of General Quintard's funeral.  
The judge, his back to the light and his face in shadow, rested his left elbow on the desk and with his chin sunk in his palm, followed the Scratch Hiller's narrative with the closest attention.

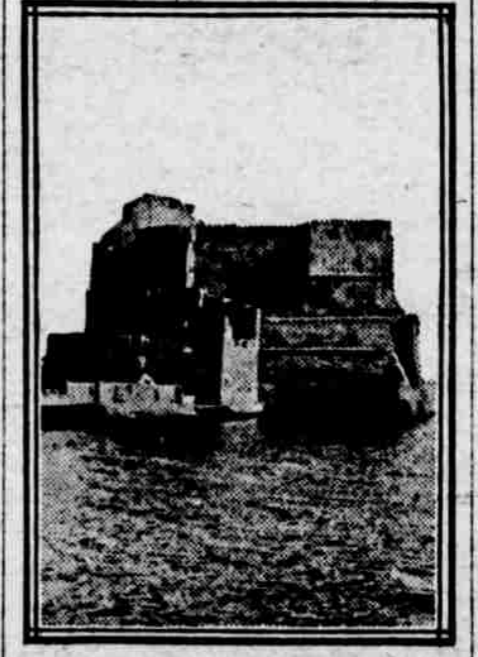
Rich Melodies Are Everywhere in This City.  
In the Variety Theater Voices Are Heard That Would Make the Owners Headliners on the American Stage.  
Naples, Italy.—The songs of Naples! In these perhaps is the real art of the city concentrated; and these are likely to prove your most pleasant memory of the place. You hear the seductive melodies everywhere—and the voices that sing them are usually very sweet. If you would have an evening of song go to La Fenice, a curious small "theatre of varieties," which consists of a pit, a tier of boxes in the first balcony, and a single row of seats in the gallery. The audience is a noisy one, and the women are beautiful and gorgeously dressed—perhaps too ostentatious to suit the Puritanical taste. The performers, too, are hardly models, ethically speaking, but vocally they are marvels, and they give you the best that Naples has to offer in the way of native songs. A dozen singers or so, follow each other in succession, and nearly every one of them of a quality that would win the title of a "headliner" in America. And there are some stunning beauties among them.  
One should not fail, while in Naples, to visit the National museum; it contains one of the finest collections of ancient bronzes in the world, and some splendid treasures of Herculaneum and Pompeii; and by all means do not fail to take in Pompeii itself. If the ruins at Rome are more impressive for their grandeur, the Pompeian ruins are likely to prove more absorbingly human. Here you witness actual evidences of human life, and if you are possessed of even a modicum of imagination the whole thing is capable more or less of mental reconstruction. And as you look down on the excellently paved narrow streets, impressed unmistakably by ruts of wheels; the narrow sidewalks, in good condition and as good as those at Naples; and as you examine the walls and interiors of the houses; and ever so many evidences of the pleasure-loving character of the people, you cannot escape reflecting upon certain physical resemblances it has in common with Naples. If you are a poet you are likely as not to write sonnets to the present desolation of the city. If you are a philosopher you will perhaps reflect upon the futility of things, the inevitable cycles of time, the eternal recurrences of history. If you are a moralist with orthodox tendencies—and an ax to grind—you will think of Sodom, you will think

of Gomorrah—and then you will think of Naples. And in the end all three of you will return to Naples and watch from the embankment of via Caracciolo the smooth, sapphire-hued waters of the Mediterranean; in the distance, the vague outlines of the lovely Isle of Capri—and, above all, the still smoking mount of Vesuvius, all gorgeous in its sunset raiment of an indescribable rose-purple, and below it the squatting city with its hundreds of roofs, resembling for a brief space so many patches of resplendent rose-gold.  
REALLY POOR WITH \$480,000  
Couple Penniless Because Big Fund Is Tied Up in Trust by Pittsburgh Bank.  
Pittsburgh, Pa.—Claiming they own property worth over \$480,000, yet are penniless, with no income for their own support or to keep their son, who is a freshman at Princeton university, Thomas MacConnell and his wife have filed a petition in the common pleas court asking that the Safe Deposit and Trust company be compelled to furnish them with an income. The MacConnells state they placed the property in the hands of the trust company to manage, and charge the trust company so manages the property that the People's Savings bank, which is alleged to be closely connected with the trust company, entered judgment against the property and so tied it up that the plaintiffs are unable to borrow any money.  
Stop Jangling Coins.  
Cincinnati.—Jangling coins and changing money in a church will be stopped by an order of Archbishop Moeller of southern Ohio. Pew rent will take the place of contributions.

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## ONLY THING IS TO FIND HER

Every Man Has an Affinity Somewhere on the Earth, is a Law of Nature.  
Every man has a best girl waiting for him somewhere in the world. The moment that he is born, the catalogue clerk in Time's great factory assigns him to a best girl or else puts him on the waiting list.  
There is no escaping your best girl. No matter where she may be born or how far apart from her you were when you started, the inevitable attraction will work your destiny, and when you meet you will both know it.  
All that is lacking is the material realization, and inasmuch as all ideas eventually find their way to the surface, yours is bound to come.  
Sometimes a man's best girl is homely; sometimes her mouth is not a cupid's bow, and her features are irregular; that makes no difference; he will love her just the same when he meets her.  
Also, she may be another man's wife. Such things have been known.  
Here's hoping that it will not happen to you.—Life.

Result of the Primary.  
It had been a hard day at the polls. The addition of nearly a thousand women's votes to the poll made the counting a prolonged proposition.  
"Well, James," said Mrs. Wallicky, as her husband returned from his arduous labors as a teller, "how did the vote go?"  
"Nine hundred and two votes for Blidd, seven hundred and fifty-three for Slathers, eight recipes for tomato ketchup, four wash lists and a milliner's Bill," said Wallicky. "It was a mighty interesting vote."—Judge.  
Would I Could.  
Before his wedding Pat confided to his priest that he loved his girl so much that he could eat her.  
His marriage had been an eye-opener, and he was inclined to grumble at his lot.  
"But, Pat," said the priest, "did ye not say ye loved her enough to eat her?"  
"Yes, yer riv'ince," answered Pat, "but the thrubble is I didn't do it."

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Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, a safe and sure remedy for infants and children, and see that it bears the Signature of *Dr. J. C. Fletcher* In Use For Over 30 Years.  
Children Cry for Fletcher's Castoria  
A Formal Figure.  
"A delegate doesn't get a chance to take much more than a perfunctory part in a big convention nowadays."  
"No," replied the prominent citizen; "if he is associated with a successful candidate he feels like an usher at a wedding. If he isn't he feels like an honorary pallbearer."

To remove nicotine from the teeth, disinfect the mouth and purify the breath after smoking, Paxtine is a boon to all. At druggists, 25c a box or sent postpaid on receipt of price by The Paxton Toilet Co., Boston, Mass.  
Can't Afford It.  
Hostess—Mr. Mann, you eat roast beef rare, do you not?  
Guest—Yes, rare and rarely.—Boston Transcript.  
Cole's Carbolicine  
Relieves and cures itching, torturing diseases of the skin and mucous membrane. A superior Pile Cure. 25 and 50 cents, by druggists. For free sample write to J. W. Cole & Co., Black River Falls, Wis.  
What Did He Mean?  
Geraldine—Can't you read your answer in my face?  
Gerald—It's plain to be seen.  
The Tendency.  
She—What's the matter with the woman's club?  
He—It's always hitting the men.

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Let it kick out all the disorders, such as Gas Pains, Foul Breath, Constipation, Kidney, Liver and other complaints. Then it will add strength, energy and vigor to your blood and body.  
60 years without a rival

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Cures itching, torturing diseases of the skin and mucous membrane. A superior Pile Cure. 25 and 50 cents, by druggists. For free sample write to J. W. Cole & Co., Black River Falls, Wis.  
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