



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. 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 Balaban, and is discharged with costs for the plaintiff. Betty Hairov, 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. Is playing for big stakes. Yancy awakes from long dreamless sleep on board the raft. Judge Price makes startling discoveries in looking up and 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. Murrell visits Betty, and counsels her to leave Belle Plain at once. Betty, terrified, acts on Hess' advice, and on their way their carriage is stopped by Blossom, 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 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 ones is instituted. Carrington visits the judge and allies are discovered. Judge Price visits Colonel Fentress, where he meets Yancy and Cavendish.

CHAPTER XXIV. (Continued).

When they entered the library Fentress turned and took stock of his guests. Mahaffy he had seen before; Yancy and Cavendish were of course strangers to him, but their appearance explained them; last of all his glance shifted to the judge. He had heard something of those activities by means of which Slocum Price had striven to distinguish himself, and he had a certain curiosity respecting the man. It was immediately satisfied. The judge had reached a degree of shabbiness seldom equaled, and but for his mellow, effluent personality might well have passed for a common vagabond; and if his dress advertised the state of his finances, his face explained his habits. No misconception was possible about either.

"May I offer you a glass of liquor?" asked Fentress, breaking the silence. He stepped to the walnut center-table where there was a decanter and glasses. By a gesture the judge declined the invitation. Whereat the colonel looked surprised, but not so surprised as Mahaffy. There was another silence.

"I don't think we ever met before?" observed Fentress. There was something in the fixed stare his visitor was bending upon him that he found disquieting, just why, he could not have told.

But that fixed stare of the judge's continued. No, the man had not changed—he had grown older certainly, but age had not come ungracefully; he became the glossy broadcloth and spotless linen he wore. Here was a man who could command the good things of life, using them with a rational temperance. The room itself was in harmony with his character; it was plain but rich in its appointments, at once his library and his office, while the well-filled cases ranged about the walls showed his tastes to be in the main scholarly and intellectual.

"How long have you lived here?" asked the judge abruptly. Fentress seemed to hesitate; but the judge's glance, compelling and insistent, demanded an answer.

"Ten years."

"You have known many men of all classes as a lawyer and a planter?" said the judge. Fentress inclined his head. The judge took a step nearer him. "People have a great trick of coming and going in these western states—all sorts of damned riffraff drift in and out of these new lands." A deadly earnestness lifted the judge's words above mere rudeness. Fentress, cold and distant, made no reply.

"For the past twenty years I have been looking for a man by the name of Gatewood—David Gatewood." Disciplined as he was, the colonel started violently. "Ever heard of him, Fentress?" demanded the judge with a savage scowl.

"What's all this to me?" The words came with a gasp from Fentress' twitching lips. The judge looked at him moody and frowning.

"I have reason to think this man Gatewood came to west Tennessee," he said.

"If so, I have never heard of him."

"Perhaps not under that name—at any rate, you are going to hear of him now. This man Gatewood, who between ourselves was a damned scoundrel—the colonel winced—"this man Gatewood had a friend who threw money and business in his way—a planter he was, same as Gatewood. A sort of partnership existed between the pair. It proved an expensive enterprise for Gatewood's friend, since he came to trust the damned scoundrel more and more as time passed—even large sums of his money were in Gatewood's hands—" Fentress' countenance was like stone, as expressionless and as rigid.

By the door stood Mahaffy with Yancy and Cavendish; they understood that what was obscure and meaningless to them held a tragic significance to these two men. The judge's heavy face, ordinarily battered and debauched, but infinitely good-natured, bore now the markings of deep passion, and the voice that rumbled forth from his capacious chest came to their ears like distant thunder.

"This friend of Gatewood's had a wife—" The judge's voice broke, emotion shook him like a leaf; he was tearing open his wounds. He reached over and poured himself a drink, sucking it down with greedy lips. "There was a wife—" he whirled about on his heel and faced Fentress again. "There was a wife, Fentress—" he fixed Fentress with his blazing eyes. "A wife and child. Well, one day Gatewood and the wife were missing. Under the circumstances Gatewood's friend was well rid of the pair—he should have been grateful, but he wasn't, for his wife took his child, a daughter; and Gatewood a trifle of thirty thousand dollars his friend had entrusted to him!"

There was another silence.

"At a later day I met this man who had been betrayed by his wife and robbed by his friend. He had fallen out of the race—drink had done for him—there was just one thing he seemed to care about, and that was the fate of his child, but maybe he was only curious there. He wondered if she had lived, and married—" Once more the judge paused.

"What's all this to me?" asked Fentress.

"Are you sure it's nothing to you?" demanded the judge hoarsely. "Understand this, Fentress, Gatewood's treachery brought ruin to at least two lives. It caused the woman's father to hide his face from the world; it wasn't enough for him that his friends believed his daughter dead; he knew differently, and the shame of that knowledge ate into his soul. It cost the husband his place in the world, too—in the end it made of him a vagabond and a penniless wanderer."

"This is nothing to me," said Fentress.

"Wait!" cried the judge. "About six years ago the woman was seen at her

father's home in North Carolina. I reckon Gatewood had cast her off. She didn't go back empty-handed. She had run away from her husband with a child—a girl; after a lapse of twenty years she returned to her father with a boy of two or three. There are two questions that must be answered when I find Gatewood: what became of the woman, and what became of the child; are they living or dead; did the daughter grow up and marry and have a son? When I get my answer it will be time enough to think of Gatewood's punishment!" The judge leaned forward across the table, bringing his face close to Fentress' face. "Look at me—do you know me now?"

"But Fentress' expression never altered. The judge fell back a step.

"Fentress, I want the boy," he said quietly.

"What boy?"

"My grandson!"

"You are mad! What do I know of him—or you?" Fentress was gaining courage from the sound of his own voice.

"You know who he is and where he is. Your business relations with this man Ware have put you on the track of the Quintard lands in this state. You intend to use the boy to gather them in."

"You're mad!" repeated Fentress.

"Unless you bring him to me inside of twenty-four hours I'll smash you!" roared the judge. "Your name isn't Fentress, it's Gatewood; you've stolen the name of Fentress, just as you have stolen other things. What's come of Turberville's money? Damn your soul! I want my grandson! I'll pull you down and leave you stripped and bare! I'll tell the world the false friend you've been—the thief you are! I'll strip you and turn you out of these doors as naked as when you entered the world!" The judge seemed to tower above Fentress; the man had shot up out of his deep debasement. "Choose! Choose!" he thundered, his shaggy brows bent in a menacing frown.

"I know nothing about the boy," said Fentress slowly.

"By God, you lie!" stormed the judge.

"I know nothing about the boy," and Fentress took a step toward the door.

"Stay where you are!" commanded the judge. "If you attempt to leave this room to call your niggers I'll kill you on its threshold!"

But Yancy and Cavendish had that was evident, and Fentress' thin face cast itself in haggard lines. He was feeling the judge's terrible capacity, his unexpected ability to deal with a supreme situation. Even Mahaffy gazed at his friend in wonder. He had only seen him spend himself on trifles, with no further object than stepped to the door with an intention the next meal or the next drink; he had believed that as he knew him so he had always been, lax and loose of tongue and deed, a noisy tavern hero, but now he saw that he was filling what must have been the measure of his manhood.

"I tell you I had no hand in carrying off the boy," said Fentress with a sardonic smile.

"I look to you to return him. Stir yourself, Gatewood, or by God, I'll hold so fierce a reckoning with you—" The sentence remained unfinished, for Fentress felt his overwrought nerves snap, and giving way to a sudden blind fury, struck at the judge.

"We are too old for rough and tumble," said the judge, who had displayed astonishing agility in avoiding the blow. "Furthermore we were once gentlemen. At present I am what I am, while you are a hound and a blackguard! We'll settle this as becomes our breeding." He poured himself a second glass of liquor from Fentress' decanter. "I wonder if it is possible to insult you," and he tossed the glass and contents in Fentress' face. The colonel's thin features were convulsed. The judge watched him with a scornful curling of the lips. "I am treating you better than you deserve," he taunted.

"Tomorrow morning at sun-up at Boggs' race-track!" cried Fentress. The judge bowed with splendid courtesy.

"Nothing could please me half so well," he declared. He turned to the others. "Gentlemen, this is a private matter. When I have met Colonel Fentress I shall make a public announcement of why this appeared necessary to me; until then I trust this matter will not be given publicity. May I ask your silence?" He bowed again, and abruptly passed from the room.

His three friends followed in his steps, leaving Fentress standing by the table, the ghost of a smile on his thin lips.

As if the very place were evil, the judge hurried down the drive toward the road. At the gate he paused and turned on his companions, but his features wore a look of dignity that forbade comment or question. He held out his hand to Yancy.

"Sir," he said, "if I could command the riches of the Indies, it would tax my resources to meet the fractional part of my obligations to you."

"Think of that!" said Yancy, as much overwhelmed by the judge's manner as by his words.

"His Uncle Bob shall keep his place in my grandson's life! We'll watch him grow into manhood together." The judge was visibly affected. A smile of deep content parted Mr. Yancy's lips as his muscular fingers closed about the judge's hand with crushing force.

"Whoop!" cried Cavendish, delighted at this recognition of Yancy's love for the boy, and he gleefully smote the austere Mahaffy on the shoulder. But Mahaffy was dumb in the presence of the deccencies; he quite lacked an interpreter. The judge looked back at the house.

"Mine!" he muttered. "The clothes he stands in—the food he eats—mine! Mine!"

CHAPTER XXV.

The Bubble Bursts.

At about the same hour that the judge was hurling threats and insults at Colonel Fentress, three men were waiting ten miles away at the head of the bayou which served to isolate Hicks' cabin. Now no one of these three had ever heard of Judge Slocum Price; the breath of his fame had never blown, however gently, in their direction, yet they were preparing to thrust opportunity upon him. To this end they were lounging about the opening in the woods where the horses belonging to Ware and Murrell were tied.

At length the dip of oars became audible in the silence and one of the trio stole down the path, a matter of fifty yards, to a point that overlooked the bayou. He was gone but a moment.

"It's Murrell all right!" he said in an eager whisper. "Him and another fellow—the Hicks girl is rowing them." He glanced from one to the other of his companions, who seemed to take firmer hold of themselves under his eyes. "It'll be all right," he protested lightly. "He's as good as ours. Wait till I give you the word." And he led the way into an adjacent thicket.

Meantime Ware and Murrell had landed and were coming along the path, the outlaw a step or two in advance of his friend. They reached the horses and were untying them when the thicket suddenly disgorged the three men; each held a cocked pistol; two of these pistols covered Murrell and the third was leveled at Ware.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Heavy.

"Speaking of the holy bonds of matrimony."

"Speak on. I am prepared to hear the worst."

"Our friend Muffins says there are times when they seem to him like log chains."



He Tossed the Glass and Contents in Fentress' Face.

BRIEF NEWS OF NEBRASKA

Mrs. Mary Ellaby of Ansley was killed in a runaway near that place. The sixteenth annual fraternal picnic of Diller will be held August 15.

Mrs. Mary Chivington, a territorial pioneer of Nebraska, is dead at Nebraska City.

Polk celebrated the sixth anniversary of the founding of the town August 8 and 9.

The chautauqua just closed at York was one of the most successful ever held at that place.

Former residents of Indiana now living in York county will hold a picnic in York, August 24.

L. K. Holmes, who was struck by an automobile near Lincoln a week ago, died as a result.

Lightning struck the steeple of the Catholic church at Seward during the electric storm Tuesday night.

Governor Aldrich and J. H. Morehead were speakers at the ninth annual street fair at Shubert, just closed.

Caroline Grainger, aged 5, of Eustis fell while playing, receiving injuries which resulted in blood poisoning, causing her death a few days later.

The Rev. A. Adams of Benson is arranging for the annual state conference of the Church of God, which is to be held at Moorefield, August 17-26.

In a runaway accident near Nysted, Jacob Sorenson was instantly killed, his wife seriously injured and several others in the party were badly shaken up.

Arrangements are in the making for a big time in Harvard August 22 and 23, when the Clay County Firemen's association holds its annual tournament.

J. E. Croft, aged 27, a farmer of Mullen, Neb., died at an Omaha hospital from blood poisoning, developing from the bite of a steer. He had been ill four days.

Boy scouts of Peru enjoyed a three-day encampment on the banks of the Missouri river near Brownville last week. The camp was under the direction of Prof. Smith.

Governor Aldrich will deliver the principal address at the tenth annual reunion of the Pioneers' association of Burt county, to be held in Folsom park at Tekamah, August 30.

The West Point Milling company has abandoned all hope of ever being enabled to restore the dam at West Point which was completely destroyed by the floods of last spring.

Two hundred visitors from various parts of the state witnessed the closing exercises of the annual tournament of the western division Tel. Jed. Sokol at Vavras park at Crete, Sunday.

The residence of M. A. Berry of Bethany was struck by lightning Monday morning. The chimney on the house was demolished and a hole made in the basement where the bolt hit the ground.

On the farm of Mrs. Pierce, four miles northeast of Clay Center, lightning struck Arthur Swanson, who was on a load of wheat bundles which he was hauling to the machine, killing him instantly.

Growers state that this has been the poorest season for sweet corn for many years. The first planting proved almost a failure because when the stalks were fertilizing dry weather prevailed and many failed to bear an ear.

The annual reunion of the G. A. R. of the eastern district of Nebraska, comprising the counties of Saunders, Cass, Lancaster, Otoe, Sarpy, Seward and Douglas, is in session at Ashland. The attendance is one of the largest in its history.

Mrs. Effie Campbell, wife of E. W. Campbell a farmer living three miles northwest of Adams, sustained a broken arm and severe bruises about the body in a runaway. Her 12-year-old daughter, who was with her, escaped injury. In going down a hill the neckyoke broke, frightening the team.

Twisting the sheet of her bed about her neck, after fastening the loose end to the low post of the bed, Mrs. Emma Currier, aged thirty-three years, of Loup City, committed suicide at a Lincoln hospital. Mrs. Currier has been under treatment in the city for several days. A mental derangement was the cause.

On account of a real shortage of harvest hands to care for the grain, alfalfa and hay crops which are now being cut, 800 Cheyenne county business and professional men, clerks, county officers and stenographers, including many pretty girls, will go into the fields and donate one day's work in order to save the largest crops ever raised in Cheyenne county. The Sidney board of trade will set a day for the free labor.

A freight car shortage of more than 100,000 cars by October is the prophecy of Omaha railroad men who have been studying statistics and who know something of the big freight movement which is about to start.

Ernest Rick, a farm hand near Dakota City, was caught in a binder, when the horses started to run away, and was dragged 100 feet. He was seriously cut about the back and badly bruised. He was taken to a Sioux City hospital, and physicians believe that he will recover.

The threshing season started in Box Butte county, this week, and from now on until late this fall the threshing outfits will be kept busy. The acreage of the small grain is larger than usual and the yield will also be better than the general average.

The excellent weather of last week has developed the corn in Chase county very materially. Fall wheat is in shock and the spring wheat harvest will soon be over. As much as thirty-five bushels to the acre are claimed in some fields, the average yield for the county being estimated at fifteen bushels per acre.

WERE NOT AT ALL DIVERTING

Serious-Minded Quaker Saw Nothing to Smile at in the Lighter Poems of Whittier.

The late Gertrude Whittier Cartland, cousin of Whittier, the Quaker poet, presented an ideal picture of the saintly aged Quakeress. Her sweet, serene face, framed in its tight little bonnet, seemed to shine with clear, spiritual radiance; to hear her recite, in a voice of tranquil music, the hymns and graver poems of her famous relative was always delightful.

But she did not have her cousin's likely sense of humor; and it was hard to tell whether this lack lessened or increased the effect, when in exactly the same grave, even tones, she occasionally read aloud some of the verse that he wrote, not for publication, but for the pleasure of his intimate circle. That was always light, frequently gay, sometimes fairly rollicking.

Her admiration for the writer made her try very hard to appreciate his fun; and she thought she did so; yet mirth seemed always as alien to her tongue as a red rosette pinned upon her dove-gray shoulder-shawl would have been to her costume. This incongruity was felt, doubtless, by another friend, of even more serious mind than she, who once said to her reprovingly:

"The verses are harmless, and I perceive they are intended to be diverting; but they do not divert me, Gertrude, and I do not think they really divert thee. Be honest with yourself; if thee read them and did not know thy cousin Greenleaf wrote them, would thee not consider them extremely silly? Thee knows I mean no affront, and greatly admire the cousin Greenleaf. Surely he is a great poet; but a great poet may sometimes write such silly stuff. And surely this time thy cousin hath done it. Reflect and thee will agree with me."

She reflected—on the necessity of care in selecting an audience for a 'poke.—Youth's Companion.

What He Bought.

A Syracuse business man living in one of the suburbs decided to give up his spacious back yard to the raising of currants as a profitable side issue. So, wishing to absorb all the information he could acquire on the subject of the currant industry he went down town one Saturday afternoon recently and returned with his arms full of books.

"Well, Teddy," inquired his enthusiastic spouse, as he dumped the volumes on the table, "did you succeed in getting what you wanted?"

"Sure, I did!" he replied, proudly, pointing to the books. "I bought a whole year's edition of a standard work on current literature." — Exchange.

Unsatisfactory Transaction.

"I'll admit," said Erastus Pinkley, "dat de mule I done traded off for a bushel of oats warn't no good. But jus' de same I feels like I been cheated."

"What are de trouble?" inquired Miss Miami Brown.

"I traded de mule off for a bushel of oats. While I had my back turned de mule done et de oats, an' I don' see how I's gwinter break even." — Washington Star.

Lacks Originality.

"Bilkins tells me that he has lately subscribed for a new thought magazine."

"I hope its perusal will inspire him with some new thoughts. Nobody talks about the weather more than Bilkins does."

Business Practice.

"The new actor in this company certainly knows how to act on people's feelings with fine touches."

"Yes; he used to be a dentist."

Courtship is less expensive than marriage, according to the figures on gas bills.

Trying to be a Christian on the installment plan is a waste of time.

A Triumph Of Cookery—

Post Toasties

Many delicious dishes have been made from Indian Corn by the skill and ingenuity of the expert cook.

But none of these creations excels Post Toasties in tempting the palate.

"Toasties" are a luxury that make a delightful hot-weather economy.

The first package tells its own story.

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