THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

By VAUGHAN KESTER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY D. MELVILLE

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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 kidnaped 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 Mairoy, a friend of the Ferrises, has an encounter with Captain Murrell, who forces his attentions on her, and is rescued by Bruce Carington. 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. 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 Slosson, 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. 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.

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)

He waited now for the night to come, and to him the sun seemed fixed in the heavens. At Belle Plain Tom Ware was watching it with a shuddering sense of the swiftness of its flight. But at last the tops of the tall trees obscured it; it sank quickly then and blazed a ball of fire beyond the Arkansas coast, while its dying glory spread aslant the heavens, turning the flanks of the gray clouds to violet and purple and gold.

With the first approach of darkness Carrington made his way to the shed. Hidden in the shadow he paused to listen, and fancied he heard difficult breathing from within. The door creaked hideously on its wooden hinges when he pushed it open, but as it swung back the last remnant of the day's light showed him some dark object lying prone on the dirt floor. He reached down and his hand rested on a man's booted foot.

"George—" Carrington spoke softly, but the man on the floor gave no sign that he heard, and Carrington's questioning touch stealing higher he found that George—if it were George—was lying on his side with his arms and legs securely bound. Thinking he slept, the Kentuckian shook him gently to arouse him.

"George?" he repeated, still bending above him. This time an inarticulate murmur answered him. At the same instant the woolly head of the negro came under his fingers and he discovered the reason of his silence. He was as securely gagged as he was bound.

"Listen, George—it's Carrington—I am going to take off this gag, but don't speak above a whisper—they may hear us!" And he cut the cords that held the gag in place.

"How yo' get here, Mas'r Ca'ington?" asked the negro guardedly, as the gag fell away.

"Around the head of the bayou."

"Lawd!" exclaimed George, in a tone of wonder.

"Where's Miss Betty?"

"She's in the cabin yonder—fo' the love of God, cut these here other ropes with yo' knife, Mas'r Ca'ington—I'm perishin' with 'em!" Carrington did as he asked, and groaning, George sat erect. "I'm like I was gone to sleep all over," he said.

"You'll feel better in a moment. Tell me about Miss Mairoy?"

"They done fetched us here last night. I was drivin' Missy into Raleigh—her and young Mas'r Hazard—when fo' men stop us in the road."

"Who were they, do you know?" asked Carrington.

"Lawd—what's that?"

Carrington, knife in hand, swung about on his heel. A lantern's light flashed suddenly in his face and Bess Hicks, with a low startled cry breaking from her lips, paused in the doorway. Springing forward, Carrington seized her by the wrist.

"Hush!" he grimly warned.

"What are you doin' here?" demanded the girl, as she endeavored to shake off his hand, but Carrington drew her into the shed, and closing the door, set his back against it. There was a brief silence during which Bess regarded the Kentuckian with a kind of stolid fearlessness. She was the first to speak. "I reckon you-all have come after Miss Mairoy," she observed quietly.

He Was as Securely Gagged as He Was Bound.

"Then you reckon right," answered Carrington. The girl studied him from her level brows.

"And you-all think you can take her away from here," she speculated. "I ain't afraid of yo' knife—you-all might use it fast enough on a man, but not on me. I'll help you," she added. Carrington gave her an incredulous glance. "You don't believe me? That would fetch our men up from the keel boat. No—yo-all's knife wouldn't stop me!"

"Don't be too sure of that," said Carrington sternly. The girl met the menace of his words with soft, full-throated laughter.

"Why, yo' hand's shakin' now, Mr. Carrington!"

"You know me?"

"Yes, I seen you once at Boggs'." She made an impatient movement. "You can't do nothing against them fo' men unless I help you. Miss Mairoy's to go down river tonight; they're only waiting fo' a pilot—you-all's got to act quick!"

Carrington hesitated.

"Why do you want Miss Mairoy to escape?" he said.

The girl's mood changed abruptly. "I reckon that's a private matter. Ain't it enough fo' you-all to know that I do? I'm showing how it can be done. Them four men on the keel boat are strangers in these parts, they're waiting fo' a pilot, but they don't know who he'll be. I've heard you-all was a river-man; what's to hinder yo' taking the pilot's place? Looks like yo' was willing to risk yo' life fo' Miss Mairoy or you wouldn't be here."

"I'm ready," said Carrington, his hand on the door.

"No, you ain't—jest yet," interposed the girl hastily. "Listen to me first. They's a dugout tied up 'bout a hundred yards above the keel boat; you must get that to cross in to the other side of the bayou, then when yo're ready to come back yo're to whistle three times—it's the signal we're expecting—and I'll row across fo' you in one of the skiffs."

"Can you see Miss Mairoy in the meantime?"

"If I want to, they's nothin' to hinder me," responded Bess sullenly.

"Tell her then—" began Carrington, but Bess interrupted him.

"I know what yo' want. She ain't to cry out or nothin' when she sees you-all. I got sense enough fo' that."

Carrington looked at her curiously.

"This may be a serious business for your people," he said significantly, and watched her narrowly.

"And you-all may get killed. I reckin if yo' want to do anything bad enough you don't mind much what comes after," she answered with a hard little laugh, as she went from the shed.

"Come!" said Carrington to the negro, when he had seen the cabin door close on Bess and her lantern; and they stole across the clearing. Reaching the bayou side they began a noiseless search for the dugout, which they quickly found, and Carrington turned to George. "Can you swim?" he asked.

"Yes, Mas'r."

"Then go down into the water and drag the canoe farther along the shore—and for God's sake, no sound!" he cautioned.

They placed a second hundred yards betwen themselves and the keel boat in this manner, then he had George bring the dug-out to the bank, and they embarked. Keeping within the shadow of the trees that fringed the shore, Carrington paddled silently about the head of the bayou.

"George," he at length said, bending toward the negro; "my horse is tied in the woods on the right-hand side of the road just where you were taken from the carriage last night—you can be at Belle Plain inside of an hour."

"Look here, Mas'r Ca'ington, those folks yonder is kin to Boss Hicks. If he gets his hand on me first don't you reckon he'll stop my mouth? I been here heaps of times fotchin' letters fo' Mas'r Tom," added George.

"Who were the letters for?" asked the Kentuckian, greatly surprised.

"They was fo' that Captain Murrell; seems like him and Mas'r Tom was mixed up in a sight of business."

"When was this—recently?" inquired Carrington. He was turning over this astonishing statement of the slave over in his mind.

"Well, no, Mas'r; seems like they ain't so thick here recently."

"I reckon you'd better keep away from the big house yet a while," said Carrington. "Instead of going there, stop at the Belle Plain landing. You'll find a raft tied up to the shore; it belongs to a man named Cavendish. Tell him what you know—that I've found Miss Mairoy and the boy; tell him to cast off and drift down here. I'll run the keel boat aground the first chance I get, so tell him to keep a sharp lookout."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Keel Boat.

A few minutes later they had separated, George to hurry away in search of the horse, and Carrington to pass back along the shore until he gained a point opposite the clearing. He whistled shrilly three times, and after an interval of waiting heard the splash of oars and presently saw a skiff steal out of the gloom.

"Who's there?" It was Bess who asked the question.

"Carrington," he answered.

"Lucky you ain't met the other man!" she said as she swept her skiff alongside the bank.

"Lucky for him, you mean. I'll take the oars," added Carrington, as he entered the skiff.

Slowly the clearing lifted out of the darkness, then the keel boat became distinguishable; and Carrington checked the skiff by a backward stroke of the oars.

"Hello!" he called.

There was no immediate answer to his hail, and he called again as he sent the skiff forward.

"What do you want?" asked a surly voice.

"You want Slosson!" quickly prompted the girl in a whisper.

"I want to see Slosson!" said Carrington glibly and with confidence.

"Who be you?"

"Murrell sent you," prompted the girl again, in a hurried whisper.

"Murrell—" And in his astonishment Carrington spoke aloud.

"Murrell?" cried the voice sharply.

"—sent me!" said Carrington quickly, as though completing an unfinished sentence. The girl laughed nervously under her breath.

"Row closter!" came the sullen command, and the Kentuckian did as he was bidden. Four men stood in the bow of the keel boat, a lantern was raised aloft and by its light they looked him over. There was a moment's silence broken by Carrington, who asked:

"Which one of you is Slosson?"

"I'm Slosson," answered the man with the lantern. The previous night Mr. Slosson had been somewhat under the enlivening and elevating influence of corn whisky, but now he was his own cheerless self, and rather jaded by the passing of the hours which he had sacrificed to an irksome responsibility. "What word do you fetch from the captain, brother?" he demanded.

"Miss Mairoy is to be taken down river," responded Carrington.

Slosson swore with surpassing fluency.

"Say, we're five able-bodied men risking our necks to oblige him! You can get married a damn sight easier than this if you go about it right—I've done it lots of times." Not understanding the significance of Slosson's allusion to his own matrimonial career, Carrington held his peace. The tavern-keeper swore again with unimpaired vigor. "You'll find mighty few men with more experience than me," he asserted, shaking his head. "But if you say the word—"

"I'm all for getting shut of this!" answered Carrington promptly, with a sweep of his arm. "I call these pretty close quarters!"

Still shaking his head and muttering, the tavern-keeper sprang ashore and mounted the bank, where his slouching figure quickly lost itself in the night.

Carrington took up his station on the flat roof of the cabin which filled the stern of the boat.

"If I'd only pushed my quarrel with him!" he thought bitterly.

He heard Slosson's shuffling step in the distance, a word or two when he spoke gruffly to some one, and a moment later he saw Betty and the boy, their forms darkly silhouetted against the lighter sky as they moved along the top of the bank. Slosson, without any superfluous gallantry, helped his captives down the slope and aboard the keel boat, where he locked them in the cabin, the door of which fastened with a hasp and wooden peg.

"You're boss now, pardner!" he said, joining Carrington at the steering oar.

"We'll cast off then," answered Carrington.

Thus far nothing had occurred to mar his plans. If they could but quit the bayou before the arrival of the man whose place he had taken the rest would be, if not easy of accomplishment, at least within the realm of the possible.

"I reckon you're a river-man?" observed Slosson.

"All my life."

The line had been cast off, and the crew with their setting poles were forcing the boat away from the bank. All was quietly done; except for an occasional order from Carrington no word was spoken, and soon the unwieldy craft glided into the sluggish current and gathered way. Mr. Slosson, who clearly regarded his relation to the adventure as being of an official character, continued to stand at Carrington's elbow.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SHE COULD ANSWER FOR HIM

Little Comfort for Candidate in Reason Assigned by Wife for Her Being Confident.

Mr. Williams, one of five candidates for the office of sheriff in one of the northern counties of Wisconsin, was making a house-to-house canvass of a rural district, soliciting votes. Coming to the house of Farmer Thompson, he was met at the door by the good housewife, and the following dialogue ensued:

"Is Mr. Thompson at home?"

"No; he has gone to town."

"I am very sorry, as I would have liked to talk to him."

"Is there anything I can tell him for you?"

"My name is Williams, candidate for sheriff, and I wanted to exact a promise from him to vote for me at the coming election."

"Oh, that will be all right. I know he will promise, for he has already promised four other candidates the same thing."—Norman E. Mack's National Monthly.

PIMPLES COVERED FACE

1613 Dayton St., Chicago, Ill.—"My face was very red and irritated and was covered with pimples. The pimples festered and came to a head. They itched and burned and when I scratched them became sore. I tried soaps and they would not stop the itching and burning of the skin. This lasted for a month or more. At last I tried Cuticura Ointment and Soap. They took out the burning and itching of the skin, soothing it very much and giving the relief that the others failed to give me. I used the Cuticura Soap and Ointment about three weeks and was completely cured." (Signed) Miss Clara Mueller, Mar. 16, 1912.

Cuticura Soap and Ointment sold throughout the world. Sample of each free, with 32-p. Skin Book. Address post-card "Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston." Adv.

Explains the Undertaker's Grouch.

"Who is that fellow sitting humped up and muttering to himself out there on the horse block?"

"Aw, that's Ezra Toombs, the undertaker," replied the landlord of the Skeedee tavern. "He's feeling sore over the way his business has been going of late. You see, the doctor gave Judge Feebles two weeks to live; that was six weeks ago, and the judge is up and around now and figgerin' on marryin' again. Every time Ezra meets the doctor he asks him, 'How about it, hey?' and they have a row. And now he's sittin' out there watching a tramp painter gilding the weather vane of the church across the street. Ezra says, by Heck, he's about ready to move away, things is so dead here."—Kansas City Star.

Wise Young Man.

That was a very wise Cambridge student of whom the London story tellers were talking some time ago. One of his college friends finding himself without funds, went to this Solomon of students to borrow. He found him in bed. Seizing him by the shoulder, he shook him.

"I say," he said, "are you asleep?"

"Why do you ask?" queried the other, sleepily.

"I want to borrow a sovereign."

"Yes," said the other, turning over and closing his eyes. "I'm asleep."

Protected Both Ways.

Two conservative ladies or old-fashioned notions were traveling in the west and, becoming interested in a young girl on the train, finally asked why she was making so long a journey alone. They were greatly shocked at her blithe explanation:

"Well, you see, my mother and stepfather live at one end of the journey, and my father and stepmother live at the other. They send me to each other twice a year, so there isn't a bit of danger with four parents all on the lookout!"

Mooted Question.

"How's Willie getting on at that tree thought Sunday school you're sending him to?"

"First rate, from last accounts. He asked his pretty lady teacher who it was that first bit the apple in the Garden of Eden. Willie says she looked him straight in the eye and said nobody knew; that they'd been trying to figure it out for the last 6,000 years."

Mother Goose in Poultry Trade.

"It is reported that the following occurred in a small poultry store kept by the widow of the deceased merchant.

"I should like to see a nice fat goose," said a customer, entering the shop.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy. "Mother will be down directly."—Woman's Home Companion.

Official Scoring.

"Should Blucher get the credit for winning Waterloo?"

"No; that victory is properly credited to Wellington. Blucher didn't relieve him until about the eighth inning."

Palliating News.

"Oh, dear, officer, was my poor husband shot when you got him to the station?"

"No, madam; only half shot."

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic. 25c a bottle. Adv.

More firm and sure the hand of courage strikes when it obeys the watchful eye of caution.—Thomson.

Is it a blow to spiritualism when a man strikes a happy medium?

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SUGARED.

Kitty (blushing)—I am angry with Horace, and I only gave you that kiss through revenge.

Harry (laughing)—It reminded me of revenge.

Kitty—In what way?

Harry—Well, you know, "revenge is sweet."

Timely Reminder.

"We are still mining ore, growing cotton and manufacturing steel," said the American host.

"Why do you tell me that?" inquired the foreign visitor.

"I just want to remind you that the country is producing something besides politics."

Big Difference.

"Did you have any osculatory entertainment at your party?"

"No; only some kissing games."

Accounted For.

"The piece was very raw."

"Then it deserved a roasting."

Many a man's bad luck is due to the fact that he has neither inherited ability nor acquired industry.

TAKE FOLEY KIDNEY PILLS For Backache Rheumatism Kidneys and Bladder

Takes Ugliness Philosophically.

A man whose face is heavily pitted through a case of smallpox in his infancy, has been able to extract amusement from his appearance. Once he gave an explanation of it by saying that he had fallen down a shot tower.

Asked how he was able to shave himself, he answered:

"With a bell punch."

Usual One.

"What is the latest thing which Mrs. Cooke had in the way of a pickle?"

"I guess it is her husband."

Mean Hint.

"Men are what their diet makes them."

"You must have been eating a great deal of sheepshead fish lately."

Sioux City Directory

"Hub of the Northwest."

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Overwork Is Great Folly

Words of Two Prominent Men That Should be Considered by Every Busy Person.

Woman can rail at the folly of overwork and she gets scant heed. Here is what two prominent men have to say about it. Whether they practice as they preach is best known to themselves, but the sentiment is all right.

Chauncey Depew has said: "I do not believe in overwork, and the body can not endure it."

Kirkham, in his "Recources," writes: "If we do not play enough it is because we are overfond of business and because the modern ideal is, not a well-rounded man of elevated mind, healthy body and divers resources, but a rich man, a man of property—of one resource only. Another reason is, play implies leisure, and leisure is the cardinal heresy against the religion of trade, the dogma of business. The orthodox view is a life of constant effort, followed by retirement and rest. The fruit of that doctrine is a host of prematurely old men, synical, dyspeptic, nervously depleted, without resources, but with money; that is to say, dead men."

If instead of nagging, the worrying wife or mother has those two paragraphs stuck in the mirror of the man whose overwork is rankest folly, she may make an impression before the overstrain has earned its sure penalty of a bad breakdown.

Removal of Tattooing.

Until the present time it was thought that tattooing on the skin was of a permanent character, but it is said that a French army officer has discovered a process which, if carefully followed, will take these marks from the flesh so effectually that they cannot be detected by any means whatever. The process consists of first rubbing the skin until a thin layer of the surface is worn away, then applying a mixture of lime, slaked just before use, and powdered phosphorus. The tatooed part having been coated with this paste, a piece of gauze is laid over it, covered with a bandage. The dressing is removed after 48 hours. The scab is allowed to dry in the air, and comes away in about a fortnight, without leaving a scar. If any trace of the tattooing then remains, the treatment is repeated. The discoverer claims to have applied this treatment in a great many cases with perfect success.

Bas-Reliefs of the Stone Age.

Some large bas-reliefs dating from the Stone Age have just been discovered at Lanosel, in the French province of Dordogne. They are sculptured on the rock of a shallow grotto, and solely represent animals. It is thought that the primitive sculptors probably refrained from introducing the human figure in art by a tabu similar to the present Mohametan tabu on such representation. The animals shown in the reliefs are reindeer, oxen, bisons and a huge horse of prehistoric dimensions.

Not the Real Thing.

From a city apartment little Jack was going for the first time to spend Christmas at his grandfather's farm. As he ran up the steps of the old house his grandmother caught him up in her arms and put him down, rosy and laughing, before the great log fire in the living room.

"Isn't that fine, Jackie, boy?" she said. "You don't have big log fires like that in New York, do you?"

The boy looked with wide-eyed delight at the huge logs as they blazed and crackled in the generous old fireplace, but he was stanchly loyal to his "six rooms and bath."

"It's nice, grandma, but it's only an imitation gas log, isn't it? We have real ones in my house."—Lippincott's.

Less Poetic.

As I was walking along the street I saw a little girl who usually interested me, and I said to her: "What a bright little girl you are; I can just see the sunbeams playing all over your face." She looked up laughing and said: "Hum! My mamma calls those freckles."—Exchange.

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