



THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

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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 Cronshaw, a business man, a stranger known as Hannibal, and Hob 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 overtake Blount, gives him a thrashing and secures the boy. Yancy appears before Squire Haisam, and is discharged with costs for the plaintiff. Betty Malroy, a friend of the Ferrises, is apparently 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.

CHAPTER X.

Belle Plain.

"Now, Tom," said Betty, with a little air of excitement as she rose from the breakfast table that first morning at Belle Plain, "I want you to show me everything!"

"I reckon you'll notice some changes," remarked Tom.

He went from the room and down the hall a step or two in advance of her. On the wide porch Betty paused, breathing deep. The house stood on an eminence; directly before it at the bottom of the slight descent was a small bayou, beyond this the forest stretched away in one unbroken mass to the Mississippi.

"What is it you want to see, anyhow, Betty?" Tom demanded.

"Everything—the place, Tom—Belle Plain! Oh, isn't it beautiful! I had no idea how lovely it was!" cried Betty, as with her eyes still fixed on the distant panorama of wood and water she went down the steps, him at her heels—he bet she'd get sick of it all soon enough, that was one comfort!

"Why, Tom! Why does the lawn look like this?"

"Like what?" inquired Tom.

"Why, this—all weeds and briars, and the paths overgrown?"

Mr. Ware rubbed his chin reflectively with the back of his hand.

"That sort of thing looked all right, Bet," he said, "but it kept five or six of the best hands out of the fields right at the busiest time of the year."

"Havon't I slaves enough?" she asked.

The dull color crept into Ware's cheeks. He hated her for that "I!"

So she was going to come that on him, was she?

"Don't you want to see the crops, Bet?"

The girl shook her head and moved swiftly down the path that led from terrace to terrace to the margin of the bayou. At the first terrace she paused.

"It's positively squallid!" cried Betty, with a little stamp of her foot.

Ware glanced about with dull eyes.

"I'll tell you, Betty, I'm busy this morning; you poke about and see what you want done and we'll do it," he said, and made a hasty retreat to his office.

Betty returned to the porch and seating herself on the top step, with her elbows on her knees and her chin sunk in the palms of her hands, gazed about her miserably enough. She was still there when half an hour later Charley Norton galloped up the drive from the highroad. Catching sight of her on the porch, he sprang from the saddle, and, throwing his reins to a black boy, hurried to her side.

"Inspecting your domain, Betty?" he asked, as he took his place near her on the step.

"Why didn't you tell me, Charley—or at least prepare me for this?" she asked, almost tearfully.

"How was I to know, Betty? I haven't been here since you went away, dear—what was there to bring me? Old Tom would make a cow pasture out of the Garden of Eden, wouldn't he—a beautiful, practical, sordid soil he is!"

Norton spent the day at Belle Plain; and though he was there on his good behavior as the result of an agreement they had reached on board The Nainid, he proposed twice.

Tom was mistaken in his supposition that Betty would soon tire of Belle Plain. She demanded men, and teams, and began on the lawns. This interested and fascinated her. She was out at sun-up to direct her laborers. She had the advantage of Charley Norton's presence and advice for the greater part of each day in the week, and Sundays he came to look over what had been accomplished, and, as Tom firmly believed, to put that little fool up to fresh nonsense. He could have booted him!

As the grounds took shape before her delighted eyes, Betty found leisure to institute a thorough reformation indoors. A number of house servants were rescued from the quarters and she began to instruct them in their new duties.

Betty's sphere of influence extended itself. She soon began to have her doubts concerning the treatment accorded the slaves, and was not long in discovering that Hicks, the overseer, ran things with a heavy hand. Matters reached a crisis one day when, happening to ride through the quarters, she found him disciplining a refractory black. She turned sick at the sight. Here was a slave actually being whipped by another slave while Hicks stood looking on with his hands in his pockets, and with a brutal, satisfied air.

"Stop!" commanded Betty, her eyes blazing. She strove to keep her voice steady. "You shall not remain at Belle Plain another hour."

Hicks said nothing. He knew it would take more than her saying so to get him off the place. Betty turned her horse and galloped back to the house. She felt that she was in no condition to see Tom just at that moment, and dismounting at the door, ran upstairs to her room.

Meantime the overseer sought out Ware in his office. His manner of stating his grievance was singular. He began by swearing at his employer. He had been insulted before all the quarter—his rage fairly choked him; he could not speak.

Tom seized the opportunity to swear back.

"Sent you off the place, did she; well, you'll have to eat crow. I'll do all I can. I don't know what girls were ever made for anyhow, damned if I do!" he added.

Hicks consented to eat crow only after Mr. Ware had cursed and calmed him into a better and more forgiving frame of mind.

Later, after Hicks had made his apology, the two men smoked a friendly pipe and discussed the situation. Tom pointed out that opposition was useless, a losing game; you could get your way by less direct means. She wouldn't stay long at Belle Plain, but while she did remain they must avoid any more crises of the sort through which they had just passed, and presently she'd be sick of the place.

In the midst of her activities Betty occasionally found time to think of Bruce Carrington. She was sure she did not wish to see him again! But when three weeks had passed she began to feel incensed that he had not appeared. She thought of him with hot cheeks and a quickening of the heart. It was anger.

Then one day when she had decided forever to banish all memory of him from her mind, he presented himself at Belle Plain.

She was in her room just putting the finishing touches to an especially satisfying toilet when her maid tapped on the door and told her there was a gentleman in the parlor who wished to see her.

"Is it Mr. Norton?" asked Betty.

"No, Miss—he didn't give no name, Miss."

When Betty entered the parlor a moment later she saw her caller standing with his back turned toward her as he gazed from one of the windows, but she instantly recognized those broad shoulders, and the fine poise of the shapely head that surmounted them.

"Oh, Mr. Carrington—" and Betty stopped short, while her face grew rather pale and then crimsoned. Then she advanced boldly and held out a frigid hand. "I didn't know—so you are alive—you disappeared so suddenly that night—"

"Yes, I'm alive," he said, and then with a smile, "but I fear before you get through with me we'll both wish I were not, Betty."

"Do you still hate me, Betty—Miss Malroy—is there anything I can say or do that will make you forgive me?" He looked at her penitently.

But Betty hardened her heart against him and prepared to keep him in place.

"Will you sit down?" she indicated a chair. He seated himself and Betty put a safe distance between them. "Are you staying in the neighborhood, Mr. Carrington?" she asked, rather unkindly.

"No, I'm not staying in the neighborhood. When I left you, I made up my mind I'd wait at New Madrid until I could come on down here and say I was sorry."

"And it's taken you all this time?" Carrington regarded her seriously. "I reckon I must have come for more time, Betty—Miss Malroy." In spite of herself, Betty glowed under the caressing humor of his tone.

"Really—you must have chosen poorly then when you selected New Madrid. It couldn't have been a good place for your purpose."

"I think if I could have made up my mind to stay there long enough, it would have answered," said Carrington. "But when a down-river boat tied up there yesterday it was more than I could stand. You see there's danger in a town like New Madrid getting too sorry. I thought we'd better discuss this point—"

"Mayn't I show you Belle Plain?" asked Betty quickly.

But Carrington shook his head. "I don't care anything about that," he said. "I didn't come here to see Belle Plain."

"Then you expect to remain in the neighborhood?"

"I've given up the river, and I'm going to get hold of some land."

"Land?" said Betty, with a rising inflection.

"Yes, land."

"I thought you were a river-man?"

"I'm a river-man no longer. I am going to be a planter now. But I'll tell you why, and all about it some other day." Then he held out his hand. "Good-by," he added.

"Are you going?—good-by, Mr. Carrington," and Betty's fingers tingled with his masterful clasp long after he had gone.

CHAPTER XI.

The Shooting-Match at Boggs'.

The judge's faith in the reasonableness of mankind having received a staggering blow, there began a somewhat futile existence for himself, for Solomon Mahaffy, and for the boy. They kept to little frequented byways, and usually it was the early hours of the morning, or the cool of late afternoons, when they took the road.

A certain hot afternoon brought them into the shaded main street of



She instantly recognized the broad shoulders.

a straggling village. Near the door of the principal building, a frame tavern, a man was seated, with his feet on the horse-rack. There was no other sign of human occupancy.

"How do you do, sir?" said the judge, bating before this solitary individual whom he conjectured to be the landlord. "What's the name of this bustling metropolis?" continued the judge, cocking his head on one side.

As he spoke, Bruce Carrington appeared in the tavern door; pausing there, he glanced curiously at the shabby wayfarer.

"This is Raleigh, in Shelby county, Tennessee," said the landlord.

"Are you the voice from the tomb?" inquired the judge, in a tone of playful sarcasm.

Carrington, amused, sauntered toward him.

"That's one for you, Mr. Pegloe!" he said.

"I am charmed to meet a gentleman whose spirit of appreciation shows his familiarity with a literary allusion," said the judge, bowing.

"We ain't so dead as we look," said Pegloe. "Just you keep on to Boggs'

race-track, straight down the road, and you'll find that out—everybody's there to the horse-racing and shooting-match. I reckon you've missed the horse-racing, but you'll be in time for the shooting. Why ain't you there, Mr. Carrington?"

"I'm going now, Mr. Pegloe," answered Carrington, as he followed the judge, who, with Mahaffy and the boy, had moved off.

"Better stop at Boggs'" Pegloe called after them.

But the judge had already formed his decision. Horse-racing and shooting-matches were suggestive of that progressive spirit, the absence of which he had so much lamented at the jail raising at Pleasantville. Memphis was their objective point, but Boggs' became a side issue of importance. They had gained the edge of the village when Carrington overtook them. He stepped to Hannibal's side.

"Here, let me carry that long rifle, son!" he said. Hannibal looked up into his face, and yielded the piece without a word. Carrington balanced it on his big palm. "I reckon it can shoot—these old guns are hard to beat!" he observed.

"She's the closest shooting rifle I ever sighted," said Hannibal promptly.

Carrington laughed.

There was a rusty name-plate on the stock of the old sporting rifle; this caught Carrington's eye.

"What's the name here? Oh, Turberville."

The judge, a step or two in advance, wheeled in his tracks with a startling suddenness.

"What?" he faltered, and his face was ashen.

"Nothing, I was reading the name

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In certain cities, such as New York, Boston, Cleveland and Chicago, and in states like Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut, the decline in the death rate from tuberculosis is more marked than in the country at large, which declined 18.7 per cent. in the ten years from 1901 to 1910. The National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis says that there are many factors working together to cause the decline in the tuberculosis death rate, such factors as the change in the character of our urban population, increased sanitation, and better housing, but probably as potent a factor as any has been the nationwide anti-tuberculosis campaign. "It may be foretold with considerable certainty," the association says, "that when the effects of the present rapidly increasing provision for the care of tuberculosis patients shall have become evident, the decline in the death rate from consumption in the coming decade will be even more marked than that in the last one."

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"O Clara, we had a dreadful scare this morning, a burglar scare!" said Mrs. Fink. "There was a frightful noise about two o'clock, and I got up. I turned on the light and looked down, to see a man's legs sticking out from under the bed."

"Mercy, how dreadful! The burglar's?"

"No, my dear, my husband's. He had heard the noise, too."—Youth's Companion.

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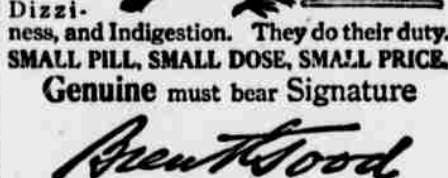
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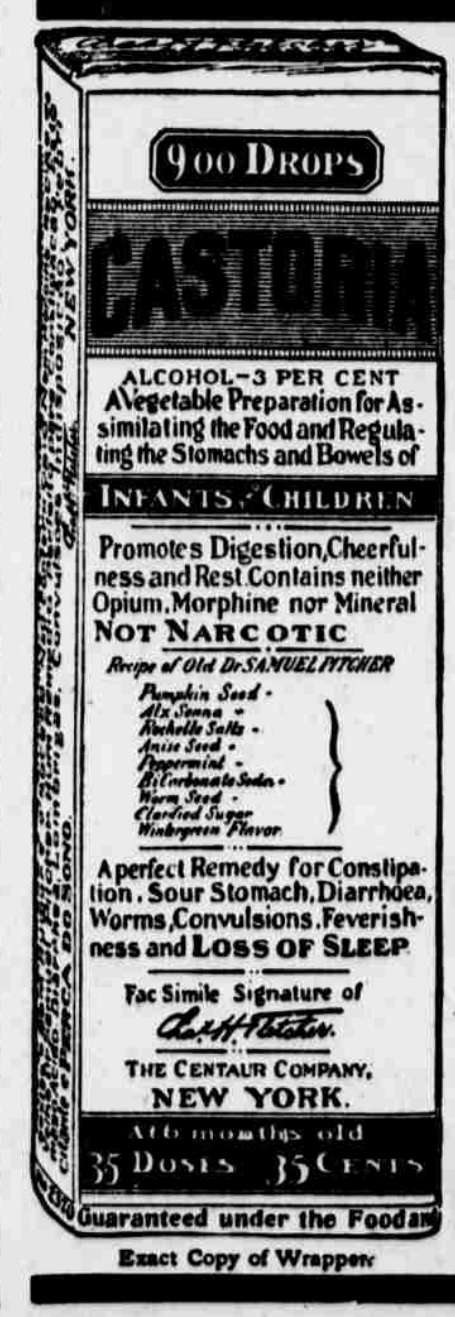


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