The Prodical Judge

(Continued from Page 1)

"Miss Betty?" asked Hannibal rather fearfully.

"Oh, I hope so, dear." She turned to Yancy. "I wonder you don't leave the Hill, Mr. Yancy. You could so easily go where Mr. Bladen would never find you. Haven't you thought of this?"

"That are a p'int," agreed Yancy slowly. "Might I ask you what parts you'd specially recommend?" lifting his grave eyes to hers.

"It would really be the sensible thing to do!" said Betty. "I am sure you would like west Tennessee—they say you are a great hunter." Yancy smiled almost guiltily.

"Mr. Yancy, if you should cross the mountains, remember I live near Memphis. Belle Plain is the name of the plantation—it's not hard to find; just don't forget—Belle Plain."

"I won't forget, and mebby you will see us there one of these days. Sho', I've seen mighty little of the world—about as far as a dog can trot in a couple of hours!"

Betty glanced toward the squire and Mr. Crenshaw. They were standing near the bars that gave entrance to the lane. Murrell had left them and was walking briskly down the road toward Crenshaw's store, where his horse was tied. She bent down and gave Yancy her slim white hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Yancy—lift Hannibal so that I can kiss him!" Yancy swung the child aloft. "I think you are such a nice little boy, Hannibal—you

"I Don't Know but What I Should Pull You Out of That Saddle and Twist Your Neck."

mustn't forget me!" And touching her horse lightly with the whip she rode away at a gallop.

"She sho'ly is a lady!" said Yancy, staring after her. "And we musn't forget Memphis or Belle Plain, Nevvy."

When Betty Malroy rode away from Squire Balaam's Murrell galloped after her. Presently she heard the beat of his horse's hoofs as he came pounding along the sandy road, and glanced back over her shoulder. With an exclamation of displeasure she reined in her horse. Murrell quickly gained a place at her side.

"I suppose Ferris is at the Barony?" he said, drawing his horse down to a walk.

"I believe he is," said Betty with a curt little air.

"May I ride with you?" he gave her a swift glance. She nodded indifferently and would have urged her horse into a gallop again, but he made a gesture of protest. "Don't—or I shall think you are still running away from me," he said with a short laugh.

"Were you at the trial?" she asked. "I am glad they didn't get Hannibal away from Yancy."

"Oh, Yancy will have his hands full with that later—so will Bladen," he added, significantly. He studied her out of those deeply sunken eyes of his in which no shadow of youth lingered, for men such as he reached their prime early, and it was a swiftly passing splendor. "Ferris tells me you are going to west Tennessee?" he said at length.

"Yes."

"I know your half-brother, Tom Ware—I know him very well."

"So you know Tom?" she observed, and frowned slightly. Tom was her guardian, and her memories of him were not satisfactory. A burly, unshaven man with a queer streak of meanness through his character.

"You've spent much of your time up north?" suggested Murrell.

"Four years. I've been at school, you know. That's where I met Judith Ferris."

"I hope you'll like west Tennessee. It's still a bit raw compared with what you've been accustomed to in the north. You haven't been back in all those four years?" Betty shook her head. "Nor seen Tom—nor any one from out yonder?" For some reason a little tinge of color had crept into Betty's cheeks. "Will you let me renew our acquaintance at Belle Plain? I shall be in west Tennessee before the summer is over; probably I shall leave here within a week," he said, bending toward her. His glance dwelt on her face and on the pliant lines of her figure, and his senses swam.

"I imagine you will be welcome at Belle Plain. You are Tom's friend." Murrell bit his lip, and then laughed as his mind conjured up a picture of the cherished Tom. Suddenly he reached out and rested his hand on hers.

"Betty—if I might think—" he began, but his tongue stumbled. His love-making was usually of a savage sort, but some quality in the girl held him in check. Betty drew away from him, an angry color on her cheeks and an angry light in her eyes. "Forgive me, Betty!" murmured Murrell, but his heart beat against his ribs, and passion sent its surges through him. "Don't you know what I'm trying to tell you?" he whispered. Betty gathered up her reins. "Not yet—" he cried, and again he rested a heavy hand on hers.

"Let me go—let me go!" cried Betty indignantly.

"No—not y'et!" He urged his horse still nearer and gathered her close. "You've got to hear me. I've loved you since the first moment I rested my eyes on you—and, by God, you shall love me in return!" He felt her struggle to free herself from his grasp with a sense of savage triumph.

Bruce Carrington, on his way back to Fayetteville from the Forks, came about a turn in the road. Betty saw a tall, handsome fellow in the first flush of manhood; Carrington, an angry girl struggling in a man's grasp.

At sight of the new-comer, Murrell, with an oath, released Betty, who, striking her horse with the whip, galloped down the road toward the Barony. As she fled past Carrington she bent low in her saddle.

"Don't let him follow me!" she gasped, and Carrington, striding forward, caught Murrell's horse by the bit.

"Let go!" roared Murrell, and a murderous light shot from his eyes.

"I don't know but I should pull you out of that saddle and twist your neck!" said Carrington hotly. Murrell's face underwent a swift change.

"You're a bold fellow to force your way into a lover's quarrel," he said quietly. Carrington's arm dropped at his side. Perhaps, after all, it was that.

CHAPTER VI.

Betty Sets Out for Tennessee.

Bruce's first memories had to do with long nights when he perched beside his father on the cabin roof of their keel-boat and watched the stars or the blurred line of the shore where it lay against the sky, or the lights on other barges and rafts drifting as they were drifting, with their wheat and corn and whisky, to that common market at the river's mouth.

Bruce Carrington had seen the day of barge and raft reach its zenith, had heard the first steam packet's shrieking whistle, which sounded the death-knell of the ancient order, though the shifting of the trade was a slow matter and the glory of the old did not pass over to the new at once, but lingered still in mighty fleets of rafts and keel-boats and in the Homeric carousals of some ten thousand of the half-horse, half-alligator breed that nightly gathered in New Orleans.

After the reading of the warrant that morning, Charley Balaam had shown Carrington the road to the Forks, assuring him when they separated that with a little care and decent use of his eyes it would be possible to fetch up there and not pass plumb through the settlement without knowing where he was.

He was on his way to Fayetteville, where he intended to spend the night, and perhaps a day or two in looking around, when the meeting with Betty and Murrell occurred. The girl's face remained with him. It was a face he would like to see again.

He was still thinking of the girl when he ate his supper that night at Cleggett's Tavern. Later, in the bar, he engaged his host in idle gossip. He had met a gentleman and a lady on the road that day! he wondered, as he toyed with his glass, if it could have been the Ferrises? Mounted? Yes, mounted. Then it was Ferris and his wife—or it might have been Captain Murrell and Miss Malroy. Miss Malroy did not live in that part of the country; she was a friend of Mrs. Ferris', belonged in Kentucky or Tennessee, or somewhere out yonder—at any rate she was bringing her visit to an end, for Ferris had instructed him to reserve a place for her in the north-bound stage on the morrow.

Carrington suddenly remembered that he had thought of starting north in the morning himself.

The stage left at six, and as Carrington climbed to his seat the next morning Mr. Cleggett was advising the driver to look sharp when he came to the Barony road, as he was to pick up a party there. It was Carrington who looked sharp, and almost at the spot where he had seen Miss Malroy the day before he saw her again, with Ferris and Judith and a pile of luggage bestowed by the wayside. Betty did not observe him as the coach stopped, for she was intent on her farewells with her friends. There were hasty words of advice from Ferris, prolonged good-bys to Judith, tears—kisses—while a place was being made for her many boxes and trunks. Carrington gathered that she was going north to Washington; that her final destination was some point either on the Ohio or Mississippi, and that her name was Betty. Then the door slammed and the stage was in motion again.

All through the morning they swung forward in the heat and dust and glare, and at midday rattled into the shaded main street of a sleepy village and drew up before the tavern where dinner was waiting them.

Betty saw Carrington when she took her seat, and gave a scarcely perceptible start of surprise. Then her face was flooded with a rich color. This was the man who saw her with Captain Murrell yesterday! There was a brief moment of irresolution and then she bowed coldly.

It was four days to Richmond. Four days of hot, dusty travel, four nights of uncomfortable cross-road stations, where Betty suffered sleepless nights and the unaccustomed pangs of early rising. She occasionally found herself wondering who Carrington was. She approved of the manner in which he conducted himself. She liked a man who could be unobtrusive.

The next morning he found himself seated opposite her at breakfast. He received another curt little nod, cool and distant, as he took his seat.

"You stop in Washington?" said Carrington.

Betty shook her head. "No, I am going on to Wheeling."

"You're fortunate in being so nearly home," he observed. "I'm going on to Memphis."

Betty exclaimed: "Why, I am going to Memphis, too!"

"Are you? By canal to Cumberland, and then by stage over the National Road to Wheeling?"

Betty nodded. "It makes one wish they'd finish their railroads, doesn't it? Do you suppose they'll ever get as far west as Memphis?" she said.

"They say it's going to be bad for the river trade when they're built on something besides paper," answered Carrington. "And I happen to be a flatboatman, Miss Malroy."

No more was said just then, for Betty became reserved and did not attempt to resume the conversation. A day later they rumbled into Washington, and as Betty descended from the coach Carrington stepped to her side.

"I suppose you'll stop here, Miss Malroy," he said, indicating the tavern before which the stage had come to a stand.

"Yes," said Betty briefly.

"If I can be of any service to you—" he began, with just a touch of awkwardness in his manner.

"No, I thank you, Mr. Carrington," said Betty quickly.

"Good night . . . good-by." He turned away, and Betty saw his tall form disappear in the twilight.

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A month and more had elapsed since Bob Yancy's trial. Just two days later man and boy disappeared from Scratch Hill. Murrell was soon on their trail and pressing forward in hot pursuit. Reaching the mountains, he heard of them first as ten days ahead of him and bound for west Tennessee; the ten days dwindled to a week, the week became five days, the five days three; and now as he emerged from the last range of hills he caught sight of them.

Yancy glanced back at the blue wall of the mountains where it lay along the horizon.

"Well, Nevvy," he said, "we've put a heap of distance between us and old Scratch Hill."

For the past ten days their journey had been conducted in a leisurely fashion. As Yancy said, they were seeing the world, and it was well to take a good look at it while they had a chance.

Suddenly out of the silence came the regular beat of hoofs. These grew nearer and nearer, and at last when they were quite close, Yancy faced about. Smilingly Murrell reined in his horse.

"Why—Bob Yancy!" he cried in apparent astonishment.

"Yes, sir—Bob Yancy. Does it happen you are looking fo' him, Captain?" inquired Yancy.

"No—no, Bob. I'm on my way west."

Murrell slipped from his saddle and fell into step at Yancy's side as they moved forward.

"They were mightily stirred up at the Cross Roads when I left, wondering what had come of you," he observed.

"That's kind of them," responded Yancy, a little dryly. There was no reason for it, but he was becoming distrustful of Murrell, and uneasy.

They went forward in silence. A

Presently He Heard a Distant Sound—a Splash.

sudden turn in the road brought them to the edge of an extensive clearing. Close to the road there were several buildings, but not a tree had been spared to shelter them and they stood forth starkly, the completing touch to a civilization that was still in its youth, unkempt, rather savage, and ruthlessly utilitarian. A sign announced the dingy structure of logs nearest the roadside a tavern.

From the door of the tavern the figure of a man emerged. He was black-haired and bull-necked, and there was about him a certain shagginess which a recent toilet performed at the horse trough had not served to mitigate.

"Howdy?" he drawled.

"Howdy?" responded Mr. Yancy.

"Shall you stop here?" asked Murrell, sinking his voice. Yancy nodded. "Can you put us up?" inquired Murrell, turning to the tavern-keeper.

"I reckon that's what I'm here for," said Slosson. Murrell glanced about the empty yard. "Slack," observed Slosson languidly. "Yes, sir, slack's the only name for it." It was understood he referred to the state of trade. He looked from one to the other of the two men. As his eyes rested on Murrell, that gentleman raised the first three fingers of his right hand. The gesture was ever so little, yet it seemed to have a tonic effect on Mr. Slosson. What might have developed into a smile had he not immediately suppressed it, twisted his bearded lips as he made an answering movement. "Eph, come here, you!" Slosson raised his voice. This call brought a half-grown black boy from about a corner of the tavern, to whom Murrell relinquished his horse.

"Let's liquor," said the captain over his shoulder, moving off in the direction of the bar.

"Come on, Nevvy!" said Yancy following, and they all entered the tavern.

"Well, here's to the best of good luck!" said Murrell, as he raised his glass to his lips.

"Same here," responded Yancy. Murrell pulled out a roll of bills, one of which he tossed on the bar. Then after a moment's hesitation he detached a second bill from the roll and turned to Hannibal.

"Here, youngster—a present for you," he said good-naturedly. Hannibal, embarrassed by the unexpected gift, edged to his Uncle Bob's side.

"Thank you, sir," said the boy.

"Let's have another drink," suggested Murrell.

Presently Hannibal stole out into the yard. He still held the bill in his hand, for he did not quite know how to dispose of his great wealth. After debating this matter for a moment he knotted it carefully in one corner of his handkerchief.

In the tavern the three men were drinking—Murrell with the idea that the more Yancy came under the influence of Slosson's corn whisky the easier his speculation would be managed. Mr. Yancy on his part believed that if Murrell went to bed reasonably drunk he would sleep late and give him the opportunity he coveted, to quit the tavern unobserved at break of day.

"When yo' get to feelin' like sleep, young boss, Mas'r Slosson he says I show yo' to yo' chamber." It was Slosson's boy Eph.

"Yes, you can show me my chamber," Hannibal said.

Eph secured a tin candle-stick with a half-burnt candle in it and led the way into the passage back of the bar.

They mounted a flight of stairs and passed down a narrow hall. This brought them to the back of the building, and Eph pushed open the door on his right.

"This heah's yo' chamber," he said, and preceding his companion into the room, placed the candle on a chair.

The moon was rising and Hannibal went to the open window and glanced out. For a moment he considered the night, not unaffected by its beauty, then, turning from the window, he moved his bundle and rifle to the foot of the bed, where they would be out of his way, kicked off his trousers, blew out the candle and lay down.

Yancy had become more and more convinced as the evening passed that Murrell was bent on getting him drunk, and suspicion mounted darkly to his brain.

"Have a drink with me!" cried Slosson, giving way to drunken laughter.

"The captain's dropped out, and I 'low it's about time fo' these here festivities to come to an end. I'm thinking some of going to bed myself," said Yancy. He kept his eyes fixed on Murrell. He realized that if the latter could prevent it he was not to leave the bar. He never shifted his glance from Murrell's face. Scowling now, the captain's eyes blazed back their challenge as he thrust his right hand under his coat. "Fair play—I don't know who you are, but I know what you want!" said Yancy, the light in his frank gray eyes deepening. Murrell laughed and took a forward step. At the same moment Slosson snatched up a heavy club from the back of the bar and dealt Yancy a murderous blow. A single startled cry escaped the Scratch Hiller; he struck out wildly as he lurched toward Murrell, who drew his knife and drove it into his shoulder. Yancy dropped heavily to the floor.

How long the boy slept he never knew, but he awoke with a start and a confused sense of things. It was evidently very late, probably long after midnight—but where was his Uncle Bob?

He sank back on his pillow intent and listening. A chilling terror that gripped him fast and would not let him go, mounted to his brain.

Where was his Uncle Bob? Why didn't he come to bed? Memories of idle tales of men foully dealt with in these lonely taverns flashed through his mind.

He slid from the bed, and for a long moment stood cold and shaking, his every sense on the alert. With infinite caution he got into his trousers and again paused to listen, since he feared his least movement might betray him. Next he secured his pack, and was ready for flight.

Encumbered by his belongings, but with no mind to sacrifice them, he stepped out upon the shed and made his way down the slant of the roof to the eaves. He tossed his bundle to the ground and going down on his knees lowered his rifle, letting the muzzle fall lightly against the side of the shed as it left his hand, then he lay flat on his stomach and, feet first, wriggled out into space. When he could no longer preserve his balance, he gave himself a shove away from the eaves and dropped clear of the building.

As he recovered himself he was sure he heard a door open and close, and threw himself prone on the ground, where the black shadow cast by the tavern hid him. At the same moment two dark figures came from about a corner of the building. He could just distinguish that they carried some heavy burden between them and that they staggered as they moved.

They passed out of sight, and breathless and paisied, Hannibal crept about a corner of the tavern. He must be sure!

Presently he heard a distant sound—a splash—surely it was a splash—

A little later the men came up the lane, to disappear in the direction of the tavern. Hannibal peered after them. His very terrors, while they wrenched and tortured him, gave him a desperate kind of courage. As the gloom hid the two men, he started forward again. He reached the end of the cornfield, climbed a fence, and entered a deadening of timber. In the long wet grass he found where the men had dragged their burden. He reached down and swept his hand to and fro—once—twice—the third time his little palm came away red and discolored.

There was the first pale premonition of dawn in the sky, and as he hurried on the light grew, and the black trunks of trees detached themselves from the white mist that filled the woods and which the dawn made visible. There was light enough for him to see that he was following the trail left by the men. He emerged upon the bank of the Elk river, white like the woods with its ghostly night sweat.

The dull beat of the child's heart quickened as he gazed out on the swift current that was hurrying on with its dreadful secret. Then the full comprehension of his loss seemed to overwhelm him and he was utterly desolate. Sobs shook him, and he dropped on his knees, holding fast to the stock of his rifle.

"Uncle Bob—Uncle Bob, come back! Can't you come back!" he wailed miserably. Presently he staggered to his feet. As he glanced about, he saw almost at his feet a dug-out, made from a single poplar log. It was secured to an overhanging branch by a length of a wild grape-vine. With one last fearful look off across the deadening in the direction of the tavern, he crept down to the water's edge and entered the canoe. In a moment, he had it free from its lashing and the rude craft was bumping along the bank in spite of his best efforts with the paddle. Then a favoring current caught it and swept it out toward the center of the stream.

CHAPTER VII.

On the River.

Betty stood under a dripping umbrella in the midst of a downpour.

Just arrived by the four-horse coach that plied regularly between Washington and Georgetown, she had found the long board platform beside the canal crowded with her fellow passengers. Suddenly she became aware of a tall, familiar figure moving through the crowd. It was Bruce Carrington. At the same moment he saw her, and with a casual air that quite deceived her, approached.

"You're leaving tonight?" he asked.

"Yes—isn't it miserable the way it rains? And why are they so slow—why don't they hurry with that boat?"

"It's in the last lock now," explained Carrington, and gathering up Betty's hand luggage, he helped her aboard.

By the time they had reached Wheeling, Betty had quite parted with whatever superficial prejudice she might have had concerning river-men. This particular one was evidently a very nice river-man, an exception to his kind. He made choice of the steamer on which she should continue her journey, and thoughtfully chose The Naiad—a slow boat.

The interior was mean enough, with its rough walls, dirt floor and black, cavernous fireplace. A shake-down bed in one corner of the room was tastefully screened from the public gaze by a tattered quilt.

"Boy, don't be afraid. Look on me as a friend," urged the judge.

"I reckon I'll be glad to stop," answered Hannibal.

"Such confidence is inspiring. Are you hungry?"

"Yes, sir," replied Hannibal.

"What do you say to cold fish?" the judge smacked his lips to impart a relish to the idea. "I dare swear I can find you some corn bread into the bargain." He began to assemble the dainties he had enumerated. "Here you are!" he cleared his throat impressively, while benignity shone from every feature of his face. "A moment since you allowed me to think you were solvent to the extent of fifty cents—" Hannibal looked puzzled. "I wonder if you could be induced to make a temporary loan of that fifty cents? The sum involved is really such a ridiculous trifle I don't need to point out to you the absolute moral certainty of my returning it at an early date."

It was not the loss of his money that Hannibal most feared, and the coin passed from his possession into his host's custody.

"Thank you, my boy! I must step down to the tavern—when I return, please God, we shall know more of each other." While he was still speaking, he had produced a jug from behind the quilt that screened his bed, and now took himself off into the night.

Left alone, Hannibal gravely seated himself at the table. What the judge's larder lacked in variety it more than made up for in quantity, and the boy was grateful for this fact. Presently he heard the judge's heavy, shuffling step as he came up the path from the road, and a moment later his gross bulk of body filled the doorway. Breathing hard and perspiring, the judge entered the shanty, but his eagerness kept him silent until he had established himself in his chair beside the table, with the jug and a cracked glass at his elbow. Then, bland and smiling, he turned toward his guest.

"My tenderest regards, Hannibal!" and he nodded over the rim of the cracked glass his shaking hand had carried to his lips. Twice the glass was filled and emptied, and then again, his roving, watery eyes rested meditatively on the child. "Have you a father?" he asked suddenly. Hannibal shook his head. "A mother?"

"They both of them done died years and years ago," answered the boy. "I can't tell you how long back it was, but I reckon I don't know much about it. I must have been a small child."

"Ho—a small child!" cried the judge, laughing. He cocked his head on one side and surveyed Hannibal Wayne Hazard with a glance of comic seriousness. "In God's name what do you call yourself now?"

"I'm most ten," said Hannibal, with dignity.

"I can well believe it," responded the judge. "Where did you come from?"

"From across the mountains."

"And where are you going?"

"To west Tennessee."

"Have you any friends there?"

"Yes, sir."

"You've money enough to see you through?" and what the judge intended for a smile of fatherly affection became a leer of infinite cunning.

"I got ten dollars."

"Ten dollars—" the judge smacked his lips once. "Ten dollars—" he repeated, and smacked his lips twice.

The purple flush on the judge's face, where the dignity that belonged to age had gone down in wreck, deepened.

He quitted his chair and, lurching somewhat as he did so, began to pace the floor.

"Take me for your example, boy! You may be poor, you may possibly be hungry—you'll often be thirsty, but through it all you will remain that splendid thing—a gentleman! Perhaps you'll contend that the old order is overthrown, that family has gone to the devil? You are right, and there's the pity of it! The social fabric is tottering—I can see it totter—" and he tottered himself as he said this.

"Well, I'm an old man—the spectacle won't long offend me. I'll die presently." He was so profoundly moved by the thought that he could not go on. His voice broke, and he buried his face in his arms. A sympathetic moisture had gathered in the child's eyes. He slipped from his chair and stole to the judge's side.

"I'm mighty sorry you're going to die."

"Bless you, Hannibal!" cried the judge, looking wonderfully cheerful, despite his recent bitterness of spirit. "I'm not experiencing any of the pangs of mortality now. My dissolution ain't a matter of tonight or tomorrow—there's some life in Slocum Price yet, for all the rough usage, eh? I think you'd better go to bed."

"I reckon I had," agreed Hannibal, slipping from his chair.

"Well, take my bed back of the quilt. You'll find a hoe there. You can dig up the dirt under the shuck tick with it—which helps astonishingly. What would the world say if it could know that Judge Slocum Price makes his bed with a hoe!"

Hannibal retired behind the quilt. "Do you find it comfortable?" the judge asked, when the rustling of the shuck tick informed him that the child had lain down.

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

"Have you said your prayers?" inquired the judge.

"No, sir. I ain't said 'em yet."

"Well, say them now. Religion is as becoming in the young as it is respectable in the aged. I'll not disturb you tonight, for it is God's will that I should stay up and get very drunk."

CHAPTER VIII.

Boon Companions.

Some time later the judge was aware of a step on the path beyond his door, and glancing up, saw the tall figure of a man pause on his threshold. A whispered curse slipped from between his lips. Aloud he said:

"Is that you, Mr. Mahaffy?" He got no reply, but the tall figure, propelled by very long legs, stalked into the shanty and a pair of keen, restless eyes deeply set under a high, bald head were bent curiously upon him.

"I take it I'm intruding," the new-comer said sourly.

"Why should you think that, Solomon Mahaffy? When has my door been closed on you?" the judge asked, but there was a guilty deepening of the flush on his face. Mr. Mahaffy glanced at the jug, at the half-emptied glass, lastly at the judge himself.

"You seem to be raising first-rate hell all by yourself."

"Oh, be reasonable, Solomon. You'd gone down to the steamboat landing," said the judge plaintively. By way of answer, Mahaffy shot him a contemptuous glance. "Take a chair—do, Solomon!" entreated the judge.

"When did I ever sneak a jug into my shanty?" asked Mahaffy sternly, evidently conscious of entire rectitude in this matter.

"I deplore your choice of words, Solomon," said the judge. "You know

Continued on Next Page

NERVES

Young and old have them. Some abuse them. They get tired, starved.

SYMPTOMS:—Loss of sleep and appetite, indigestion, irritability, eventually wrecked constitution.

Alcoholic remedies stimulate only.

Scott's Emulsion

soothes and nourishes, feeds the nerves. A natural nerve-food, containing the salts of Hypophosphites, Iodine and Glycerine.

NO ALCOHOL.

ALL DRUGGISTS

11-18

"You Shall Be My Guest for the Night."

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I'm Hannibal Wayne Hazard," said the boy. The man quitted his chair.

"Well—I am glad to know you, Hannibal Wayne Hazard. I am Slocum Price—Judge Slocum Price, sometime major-general of militia and ex-member of congress, to mention a few of those honors my fellow countrymen have thrust upon me." He made a sweeping gesture with his two hands outspread and bowed ponderously.

The boy saw a man of sixty, whose gross and battered visage told its own story. There was a sparse white frost about his ears; and his eyes, pale blue and prominent, looked out from under beetling brows. He wore a shabby plum-colored coat and tight, drab breeches. About his fat neck was a black stock, with just a suggestion of soiled linen showing above it. His figure was corpulent and unwieldy.

"You don't belong in these parts, do you?" asked the judge, when he had completed his scrutiny.

"No, sir," answered the boy. He glanced off down the road, where lights were visible among the trees. "What town is that?"

"Pleasantville—which is a lie—but I am neither sufficiently drunk nor sufficiently sober to cope with the possibilities your question offers. Have you so much as fifty cents about you?" and the judge's eyes narrowed to a slit above their folds of puffy flesh. Hannibal, keeping his glance fixed on the man's face, fell back a step. "I can't let you go if you are penniless—I can't do that!" cried the judge, with sudden vehemence. "You shall be my guest for the night. They're a pack of thieves at the tavern," he lowered his voice. "I know 'em, for they've plucked me!" He rested a fat hand on the boy's shoulder and drew him gently but firmly into the shanty. With flint and steel he made a light, and presently a candle was sputtering in his hands. He fitted it into the neck of a tall bottle, and as the light flared up the boy glanced about him.

"But you're not looking!"

"Yes, I am—I'm looking at you. I reckon you'll think me crazy, Miss Malroy—presumptuous and all that—but I wish Memphis could be wiped off the map, and that we could go on like this for ever!"

"You mustn't talk so—I am nothing to you—"

"Yes, you are. You're everything to me," said Carrington doggedly. "You shall love me—" She was powerless in his embrace. She felt his breath on her cheek, then he kissed her. Suddenly his arms fell at his side; his face was white. "I was a brute to do that—Betty, forgive me! I am sorry—no, I can't be sorry!"

They were alongside the New Madrid wharf now, and a certain young man who had been impatiently watching The Naiad's lights ever since they became visible crossed the gang-plank with a bound.

"Betty—why in the name of goodness did you ever choose this tub?" said the new-comer.

"Charley!"

Carrington stepped back. This must be the brother who had come up the river from Memphis to meet her—but her brother's name was Tom! He looked this stranger—this Charley—over with a hostile eye, offended by his good looks, his confident manner, in which he thought he detected an air of ownership, as if—certainly he was holding her hands longer than was necessary. An instant later, when Betty, remembering, turned to speak to him, his place by the rail was deserted.

* * * * * * * *

All that day Hannibal was haunted by the memory of what he had heard and seen at Slosson's tavern. More than this, there was his terrible sense of loss, and the grief he could not master. Marking the course of the road westward, he clung to the woods, where his movements were as stealthy as the very shadows themselves.

Presently, as he stumbled forward, he came to a small clearing in the center of which stood a log dwelling. The place seemed deserted.

Tilted back in a chair by the door of this house a man was sleeping. The hoot of an owl from a near-by oak roused him. He yawned and stretched himself, thrusting out his fat legs and extending his great arms. Then becoming aware of that small figure which had stolen up the path as he slept and now stood before him in the uncertain light, he fell to rubbing his eyes with the knuckles of his plump hands.

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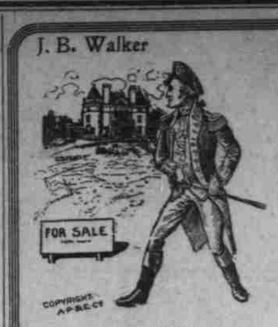

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