

THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

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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 owner, the Quintards, is the subject of discussion by Jonathan Crenshaw, a business man, a stranger known as Bladen, and Bob Yancy, a farmer, when Hannibal Wayne Hazard, a mysterious child of the old southern family, makes his appearance. Yancy tells how he adopted the boy. Nathaniel Ferris buys the Barony, but the Quintards deny any knowledge of the boy. Yancy to keep Hannibal, Captain Murrell, a friend of the Quintards, appears and asks questions about the Barony. Trouble at Scratch Hill, when Hannibal is kidnapped by Dave Blount, Captain Murrell's agent. Yancy overtakes Blount, gives him a thrashing and secures the boy. Yancy appears before Squire Balaam, and is discharged with costs for the plaintiff. Betty Malroy, a friend of the Ferrises, has an encounter with Captain Murrell, who forces his attentions on her, and is rescued by Bruce Carrington. Betty sets out for her Tennessee home. Carrington takes the same stage. Yancy and Hannibal disappear, with Murrell on their trail. Hannibal arrives at the home of Judge Slocum Price. The judge recognizes in the boy, the grandson of an old time friend. Murrell arrives at Judge's home. Cavendish finds out that rescue Yancy, who is apparently dead. Price breaks jail. Betty and Carrington arrive at Belle Plain. Hannibal's rife discovers some startling things about 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 assassinated. 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 Blount, 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.



"Poor Little Lad!" He Muttered.

CHAPTER XXIII. (Continued.)

"And General Quintard never saw him—never manifested any interest in him!" the words came slowly from the judge's lips; he seemed to gulp down something that rose in his throat. "Poor little lad!" he muttered, and again, "Poor little lad!"

"Never once, sir. He told the slaves to keep him out of his sight. We all wondered, for you know how niggers will talk. We thought maybe he was some kin to the Quintards, but we couldn't figure out how. The old general never had but one child and she had been dead for years. The child couldn't have been hers no-how." Yancy paused.

The judge drummed idly on the desk.

"What implacable hate—what iron pride!" he murmured, and swept his hand across his eyes. Absorbed and aloof, he was busy with his thoughts that spanned the waste of years—years that seemed to glide before him in review, each bitter with its hideous memories of shame and defeat. Then from the smoke of these lost battles emerged the lonely figure of the child as he had seen him that June night. His ponderous arm stiffened where it rested on the desk, he straightened up in his chair and his face assumed its customary expression of battered dignity, while a smile at once wistful and tender hovered about his lips.

"One other question," he said. "Until this man Murrell appeared you had no trouble with Bladen? He was content that you should keep the child—your right to Hannibal was never challenged?"

"Never, sir. All my troubles began about that time."

"Murrell belongs in these parts," said the judge.

"I'd admire to meet him," said Yancy quietly.

The judge grinned.

"I place my professional services at your disposal," he said. "Yours is a clear case of felonious assault."

"No, it ain't, sir—I look at it this-a-ways; it's a clear case of my giving him the damndest sort of a body beating!"

"Sir," said the judge, "I'll hold your hat while you are about it!"

Hicks had taken his time in responding to the judge's summons, but now his step sounded in the hall and throwing open the door he entered the room. Whether consciously or not he had acquired something of that surly, forbidding manner which was characteristic of his employer. A curt nod of the head was his only greeting.

"Will you sit down?" asked the judge. Hicks signified by another movement of the head that he would not. "This is a very dreadful business," began the judge softly.

"Ain't it?" agreed Hicks. "What you got to say to me?" he added petulantly.

"Have you started to drag the bayou?" asked the judge. Hicks nodded. "That was your idea?" suggested the judge.

"No, it wa'n't," objected Hicks quickly. "But I said she had been actin' like she was plumb distracted ever since Charley Norton got shot."

"How?" inquired the judge, arching his eyebrows. Hicks was plainly disturbed by the question.

"Sort of out of her head. Mr. Ware seen it, too—"

"He spoke of it?"

"Yes, sir; him and me discussed it together."

The judge regarded Hicks long and intently and in silence. His magnificent mind was at work. If Betty had been distraught he had not observed any sign of it the previous day. If Ware were better informed as to her true mental state why had he chosen this time to go to Memphis?

"I suppose Mr. Ware asked you to keep an eye on Miss Malroy while he was away from home?" said the judge. Hicks, suspicious of the drift of his questioning, made no answer. "I suppose you told the house servants to keep her under observation?" continued the judge.

"I don't talk to no niggers," replied Hicks, "except to give 'em my orders."

"Well, did you give them that order?"

"No, I didn't."

The sudden and hurried entrance of big Steve brought the judge's examination of Mr. Hicks to a standstill.

"Mas'r, you know dat 'ar coachman George—the big black fellow dat took you into town las' evenin'—I jes' been down at Shanty Hill whar Milly, his wife, is carryin' on something scandalous 'cause George ain't never come home!" Steve was laboring under intense excitement, but he ignored the presence of the overseer and addressed himself to Slocum Price.

"Well, what of that?" cried Hicks quickly.

"That warn't no George, mind you, Mas'r, but dar was his team in de stable this morn'ng and lookin' mighty nigh done up with hard driving."

"Yes," interrupted Hicks uneasily; "put a pair of lines in a nigger's hands and he'll run any team off its legs!"

"An' the kerriage all scratched up from bein' thrashed through de bushes," added Steve.

"There's a nigger for you!" said Hicks. "She took the rascal out of the field, dressed him like he was a gentleman and pampered him up, and now first chance he gets he runs off!"

"Ah!" said the judge softly. "Then you knew this?"

"Of course I knew—wa'n't it my business to know? I reckon he was off skylarking, and when he'd seen the mess he'd made, the trifling fool took to the woods. Well, he catches it when I lay hands on him!"

"Do you know when and under what circumstances the team was stabled, Mr. Hicks?" inquired the judge.

"No, I don't, but I reckon it must have been long after dark," said Hicks unwillingly. "I seen to the feeding just after sundown like I always do,

then I went to supper," Hicks vouchsafed to explain.

"And no one saw or heard the team drive in?"

"Not as I know of," said Hicks.

"Mas'r Caington's done gone off to get a pack of dawgs—he 'lows his might 'important to find what's come of George," said Steve.

Hicks started violently at this piece of news.

"I reckon he'll have to travel a right smart distance to find a pack of dawgs," he muttered. "I don't know of none this side of Colonel Bates' down below Girard."

The judge was lost in thought. He permitted an interval of silence to elapse in which Hicks' glance slid round in a furtive circle.

"When did Mr. Ware set out for Memphis?" asked the judge at length.

"Early yesterday. He goes there pretty often on business."

"You talked with Mr. Ware before he left?" Hicks shook his head. "Did he speak of Miss Malroy?" Hicks shook his head. "Did you see her during the afternoon?"

"No—maybe you think these niggers ain't enough to keep a man stirring?" said Hicks uneasily and with a scowl. The judge noticed both the uneasiness and the scowl.

"I should imagine they would absorb every moment of your time, Mr. Hicks," he agreed affably.

"A man's got to be a hog for work to hold a job like mine," said Hicks sourly.

"But it came to your notice that Miss Malroy has been in a disturbed mental state ever since Mr. Norton's murder? I am interested in this point, Mr. Hicks, because your experience is so entirely at variance with my own. It was my privilege to see and speak with her yesterday afternoon; I was profoundly impressed by her naturalness and composure." The judge smiled, then he leaned forward across the desk. "What were you doing up here early this morning—hasn't a hog for work like you got any business of his own at that hour?" The judge's tone was suddenly offensive.

"Look here, what right have you got to try and pump me?" cried Hicks. "For no discernible reason Mr. Cavendish spat on his palms."

"Mr. Hicks," said the judge, urbane and gracious, "I believe in frankness."

"Sure," agreed Hicks, mollified by the judge's altered tone.

"Therefore I do not hesitate to say that I consider you a damned scoundrel!" concluded the judge.

Mr. Cavendish, accepting the judge's ultimatum as something which must debar Hicks from all further consideration, and being, as he was, exceedingly active and energetic by nature, if one passed over the various forms of gainful industry, uttered a loud whoop and threw himself on the overseer. There was a brief struggle and Hicks went down with the Earl of Lambeth astride of him; then from his boot leg that knightly soul flashed a horn-handled tinker of formidable dimensions.

The judge, Yancy and Mahaffy, sprang from their chairs. Mr. Mahaffy was plainly shocked at the spectacle of Mr. Cavendish's lawless violence. Yancy was disturbed, too, but not by the moral aspects of the case; he was doubtful as to how his friend's act would appeal to the judge. He need not have been distressed on that score, since the judge's one idea was to profit by it. With his hands on his knees he was now bending above the two men.

"What do you want to know, judge?" cried Cavendish, panting from his exertions. "I'll learn this parrot to talk up!"

"Hicks," said the judge, "it is in your power to tell us a few things we are here to find out." Hicks looked up into the judge's face and closed his lips grimly. "Mr. Cavendish, kindly let him have the point of that large knife where he'll feel it most!" ordered the judge.

"Talk quick!" said Cavendish, with a ferocious scowl. "Talk—or what's to hinder me slicing open your wooten?" and he pressed the blade of his knife against the overseer's throat.

"I don't know anything about Miss Betty," said Hicks in a sullen whisper.

"Maybe you don't, but what do you know about the boy?" Hicks was silent, but he was grateful for the judge's question. From Tom Ware he had learned of Festress' interest in the boy. Why should he shelter the colonel at risk of himself? "If you please, Mr. Cavendish!" said the judge, nodding toward the knife.

"You didn't ask me about him," said Hicks quickly.

"I do now," said the judge.

"He was here yesterday."

"Mr. Cavendish—" again the judge glanced toward the knife.

"Wait!" cried Hicks. "You go to Colonel Festress."

"Let him up, Mr. Cavendish; that's all we want to know," said the judge.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Colonel Festress.

The judge had not forgotten his ghost, the ghost he had seen in Mr. Saul's office that day he went to the court house on business for Charley Norton. Working or idling—principally the latter—drunk or sober—principally the former—the ghost, otherwise Colonel Festress, had preserved a place in his thoughts, and now as he moved stolidly up the drive toward Festress' big white house on the Hill with Mahaffy, Cavendish and Yancy trailing in his wake, memories of what had once been living and vital crowded in upon him. Some sense of the wreck that littered the long years, and the shame of the open shame that had swept away pride and self-respect, came back to him out of the past.

He only paused when he stood on the portico before Festress' open door. He glanced about him at the wide fields, bounded by the distant timber lands that hid gloomy bottoms, at the great log barns in the hollow to his right; at the huddle of white-washed cabins beyond; then with his big flat he reached in and pounded on the door. The blows echoed loudly through the silent house, and an instant later Festress' tall, spare figure was seen advancing from the far end of the hall.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Judge Price—Colonel Festress," said the judge.

"Judge Price," uncertainly, and still advancing.

"I had flattered myself that you must have heard of me," said the judge.

"I think I have," said Festress, pausing now.

"He thinks he has!" muttered the judge under his breath.

"Will you come in?" it was more a question than an invitation.

"If you are at liberty." The colonel bowed. "Allow me," the judge continued. "Colonel Festress—Mr. Mahaffy, Mr. Yancy and Mr. Cavendish." Again the colonel bowed.

"Will you step into the library?"

"Very good," and the judge followed the colonel briskly down the hall.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Women Win High Honors.

Once more women have triumphed at the Royal Academy. For the second time in three years the gold medal has been won by a female student, while of the fourteen prizes offered no less than ten have been carried off by women. In presenting these and congratulating Miss Margaret Williams on her brilliant achievement the president of the Royal Academy paid high tribute to the perseverance and the talent of women artists; but again, we ask, why is it not recognized by the Royal Academy of Arts in the obvious way? In every way women show their fitness to compete with men for the honor of admission to associateship and to election among the forty, yet still they stand without the gate.—Lady's Pictorial

Fate of Elfrida

Elfrida Moorer had been well brought up. Her mother had seen to that with the painstaking care of one who herself has learned through experience.

Elfrida knew at once when confronted by a bouillon spoon that it was not a cream scoop and she had a great scorn for a young man who walked on the wrong side of one upon the street. She always signed her formal letters "Most cordially yours," and spoke of her mother as "m-mah," and with the accent carefully placed on the last syllable.

So it is easily realized that tremendous self-control was required on Elfrida's part to endure the young man who sat next to her at the dance given by the Royal Order of Brothers of Something-or-Other in Elton Corners, where she was visiting some hitherto unknown cousins.

When the young man at the dance had broken the ice by saying that it was a pretty party Elfrida had recoiled. He had not been introduced! Everybody seemed to know everybody else in this town and she could not get used to such a situation.

There was something familiar about the young man's face as Elfrida stared at him, but when the full sweep of recollection rolled across her and she recalled vividly that she had seen him in Reston's butcher shop Elfrida almost choked. He was a nice looking young man. Dimly she recalled that his father was Reston, who owned the shop. Perhaps this young man cut off steaks and sliced bacon!

"I think not," Elfrida said faintly when young Reston asked if she would dance that night.

"All right; the next one, then," he said as a matter of course. Then he went to hunt for another partner.

Elfrida's cousins listened wonderingly a moment later to her fire of questions and her tale of woe.

"Why on earth shouldn't Ned Reston ask you to dance?" they inquired. "He goes with every one, and we've grown up with him! He went to the college across the river and is good looking! Why shouldn't he go to the same parties as we?"

Her sense of being wronged was hard to maintain, because young Reston had proved himself a good dancer when he had come back and taken his walk. Elfrida had touched his arm with the tips of her fingers and had tried not to breathe as she went through the ordeal.

The next night Ned Reston called and her cousins seemed to assume that the call was meant for their guest, for they gradually disappeared and left her the burden of entertaining him. Only a strict sense of duty to a guest under one's roof prevented her from rising and bidding him good night. She resolved in a kind of cold fury to have it out with her cousins after he left, and it was when she was taking out her hairpins later that she realized with a start that she had forgotten to do so. She had been thinking about a western story that Reston had told her. In angry disgust she admitted that he could talk well. Still, the taint of the butcher shop hung over it all.

Elfrida writhed the next day when her cousins frankly joked her about her "catch." She felt disgraced.

When there were picnics and other festivities to which every one went in crowds Ned Reston singled out Elfrida as a matter of course and nobody acted as though it was in the least extraordinary. Nobody tried to help her evade him. It was impossible to make her cousins realize the fine line of distinction which made it right for her to evade him.

Elfrida felt her brain tottering, especially as it grew harder and harder for her to realize in Ned Reston's company that the situation was impossible for a well brought up young girl. Finally the young part vanquished the well brought up section of Elfrida's nature and with a little thrill of exquisite horror she realized that Ned Reston was making love to her and that she liked it.

It was some time after Elfrida's mother was told that her daughter was going to marry Ned, whose father was buying him a half interest in the leading hardware store in Elton Corners, that she discovered the dark fact that this affluent parent owned the village meat market.

"We'll never, never speak of it!" she gasped to Elfrida in anguished dismay. The trousseau was nearly finished and she really couldn't break off the match. "My poor child! How could you, how could you!"

Elfrida regarded her mother in meditative curiosity as though recalling the time when she, too, had felt that way. Then she laughed—not a well brought up laugh, but an amused chuckle.

"My goodness," she said recklessly. "Things like that don't seem to make a bit of difference to me now!"—Chicago Daily News.

Chief End of Travel.

"We must go to Stratford."
"What's the use? We can buy Stratford post cards in London."
"My friend, one travels for something more than post cards. I want to write my name on Shakespeare's tomb."

GO EASY ON HEALTH FADS

Trouble is That They Cannot Be Made to Suit the Physical Make-Up of All People.

Cleveland is the home of the newest fad. The Ohio city has a "Keep Well" club composed of persons who believe in restricting indulgence in food. They fast now and then from a week to a month. One apostle of the cult declares he has found abounding health in a diet of eight quarts of milk daily for eight months.

It may be that this foodless life is beneficial to some Clevelanders. It is probably also true that many people in other cities—perhaps even some in Detroit—eat too much, particularly in the summer time. But it is equally probable that many imitators of the cult will starve themselves beyond the endurance point of weak hearts and so commit virtual suicide.

It is just at this point that so many health, beauty, and nostrum fads become so deadly and so damaging. Every well-informed person knows that a wise medical practitioner when called to attend a sufferer, must try to adjust his remedies to the physical powers and idiosyncrasies of the patient. The remedy which acted like magic in the case of Jones who had la grippe may prove useless and actually dangerous to Smith, owing to some disturbance of Smith's digestion, weakness of his heart, or what not. So with health fads. Hence, before becoming any sort of a faddist see your family doctor.—Detroit Free Press.

WHEN MISS ANTHONY FAILED

Bowed in Defeat Before Her Woman's Nature, Though Probably She Never Knew It.

In an article on "A Woman and Her Raiment" in the American Magazine, Ida M. Tarbell has the following to say about bloomers:

"The story of the bloomer is piquant. It was launched and worn. It became the subject of platform oratory and had its organ. Why is it not worn today? No woman who has ever masqueraded in man's dress or donned it for climbing will ever forget the freedom of it. Yet the only woman in the Christian world who ever wore it at once naturally and with that touch of coquetry which is necessary to carry it off, as far as this writer's personal observation goes, was Mme. Die-lafoy, and Mme. Die-lafoy was protected by the French government and an exclusive circle.

"Bloomers proved too much for even the courage of dear Miss Anthony. For two years she wore them, and then with tears and lamentations resigned them. In that resignation Miss Anthony paid tribute, unconsciously no doubt, to something deeper than she ever grasped in the woman's question. Her valiant soul met its master in her own nature, but she did not recognize it. She abandoned her conventional and becoming costume because of prejudice, she said. What other prejudice ever dismayed her! She thrived on fighting them; she met her woman's soul, and did not know it!"

First Picture Postal Cards in 1870.

In Nuremberg they have been making arrangements to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the picture postal card with a congress and exposition this year. Unfortunately for their plans, however, it has been discovered that the first picture postal card was not made in Germany or sent from Nuremberg, nor was it born in 1882, as they had supposed. The distinction of making and mailing the first is now claimed by Leon Besnardeau, a book seller of Sille-le-Gull-laume, near Conlie, department of Sarthe, France, in 1870, during the war with Prussia, he printed pictures on postal cards he was mailing to clients. M. Besnardeau is still alive and there are many of his old customers in France who have the cards he mailed them. The Germans adopted the idea for the Nuremberg exposition in 1882.

Obedience to Moral Law.

"Obedience to moral law will not bring prosperity, necessarily, but it will enable a man to do without it; it will ennoble poverty. Goodness is its own paymaster. There is no need to make goodness attractive by artificial rewards; no need to make vice forbidding by arbitrary punishments. The fearful punishment of lying is to be a liar; the fearful punishment of vice is to be a vicious man; the horrible punishment of beastliness is to be a beast. The splendid reward of being good is to be a good man. You love your husband and wife and children and friends. Do you ask for more than the joy and privilege of loving?"—A Modern Preacher.

Friend of the People.

Mr. Pompus (to Butler)—"I'm expecting a deputation at 12 o'clock to ask me to stand for the borough."

Butler—Yes, sir.

Mr. Pompus—Perhaps it would be as well to remove all the best umbrellas from the hat stand.—London Opinion.

Thoughtless Query.

"Have you ever been married before?" asked the license clerk.
"Great heavens, young man!" exclaimed the experienced prima donna. "Don't you read the papers?"
Whereupon she wired immediate instructions to discharge her press agent.