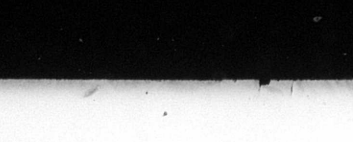

THE PRODIGAL JUDGE

By VAUGHAN KESTER

ILLUSTRATIONS By D. NEAVILLE

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SYNOPSIS.

The scene at the opening of the story is laid in the little village of an old southern plantation, known as the Burnt Chimney, and that of the owners the Quintards, is the subject of discussion by the gossips of the community. A new stranger arrives at Bladen's store, Tandy, a farmer, when Hannibal Wayne Hazard, a young lawyer from one of the northern States, enters his appearance. Tandy tells how he adopted the boy. Mr. Quintard lives near the Burnts. At the Quintards' party one Hannibal Quintard, Marcella, a friend of the family, Captain Evans and some questions about the Burnt Chimney Mystery. Hannibal Quintard is challenged by Dave Bladen to fight him Morrell's agent. Tandy overhears Bladen's threat. Hannibal Quintard leaves the bar. Tandy appears before Judge Jackson, and is discharged with costs for lack of evidence. Hannibal Quintard, Jr., Fortune, has an encounter with Bladen and Sam Morrell, who forms his attentions on Miss Quintard. Hannibal Quintard, Betty Ann and Sir Jack Townsend and Carrington takes the same stage. Tandy and Hannibal Carpenter, with Hannibal at their train.

CHAPTER VI. (Continued.)

In the tavern the three men were drinking—Morrell with the idea that the more Yancy came under the influence of Simeon's corn whisky the easier his speculation would be made; and Mr. Yancy on his part believed that if Morrell went to bed reasonably drunk he would sleep late and, on waking, perhaps be coerced, or to quit the tavern unobserved at break of day.

"When yo' get to feelin' like sleep," Simeon had said, "jes' step across de hall an' show yo' to yo' chamber." It was Simeon's boy Eph.

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

Eph secured a tin candle-stick with a half-burned 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.

"Dis heah's yo' chamber," he said and preceding his companion in to 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 the beauty, then, turning from the window, he tossed his bundle and rifle to the foot of the bed, where they would be out of his way, kicked off his trousers, threw out the window and lay down.

Yancy had, however, gone and more concerned in the evening's pleasure than Morrell was but on getting him drunk and manhood benefited drank to his brain.

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

The captain dropped out, and I "How it's about time for these here ladies to come to an end. I'm thinking some of going to bed myself," said Yancy. He kept his eyes fixed on Morrell. He realized that if the latter would proceed if he was not to leave the bar. He never shifted his glance from Morrell's face. Presently Simeon rose, the captain's eyes blazed back their challenge as he thrust his head back under the cock.

Fair play—I don't know who you are, but I know what you mean!" Yancy cried, the light in his frank gray eyes deepening. Morrell laughed and took a fresh step. At the same moment Simeon snatched up a heavy club from the back of the bar and dealt Yancy a murderous blow. Yancy staggered sideways, escaped the second blow, he struck out wildly as he lunged toward Morrell, who then had rushed and down the club on Yancy's shoulder. Yancy dropped heavily to the floor.

How long he lay there 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 ran back on his pillow intent and listening. A chilling terror that gripped him fast and would not let him go, seemed to his brain.

Where was his Uncle Bob? Why didn't he come to bed? Memories of his life with him faintly dead with the three lonely favorite flashed through his mind.

He slid from the bed, and for a long moment stood cold and shaking, his every nerve on the alert. With infinite caution he crept into his trousers and stuck pistol to listen, since he feared his first 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 before 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 see that distinguish that they carried some heavy burden between them and that they staggered as they moved.

They passed out of sight, and Hannibal, panic-stricken, fled around a corner of the tavern. He must be sure.

Presently he heard a distant sound —a splash—and it was a splash.

A little later the men came up the lane, the foreigner in the direction of the tavern. Hannibal peered after them. His eyes were, white they wrenched and tortured him, gave him a desperate kind of courage. As the gloom hid the two men, he started after them, and when he reached the side of the corralled, climbed a fence, and entered a dark-gloom 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 boot of the child's heart quickened as he gazed not on the river, but on the current that was hurrying out with its dreadful secret. Then the

Presently He Heard a Distant Sound—a Splash.

His Stay Only Temporary

Old Joke Had No Intention of Making a Very Long Sojourn in Dixcard Land.

A joke, whose career had been long and whose hoary whiskers and wobbly dragged on the ground, was at length driven out of circulation and in due course arrived at the home of the discard land. The inhabitants of the locality met him and gave the old joke their heartiest sympathy. Among those present were Broken New Year's resolutions, mostly I. O. U.s, forgotten fish and fashions, moss-grown political cities, warmed antheniasm, silenced slogans, vows of eternal constancy with their backs broken, endorsements on notes of boyhood friends, popular songs of yesteryear, faded love letters, shrunken reputations, moth-eaten mothers, bushed elastic cells, and many others of their ilk.

When entere here leaves hope behind," they informed him. "Like the rallenbur Jack you will never go back home."

"That may fit your cases, but it doesn't fit mine," cheerily replied the old joke, who was still in the best of health and strength. "That place, I'm sure, is home for you fellows who protest a health resort for me, and you can have it with the rest of your patronizing I feed. After I secure the same, I'm going back to the old home and tell that same yarn in comic opera, following which, when my name has become familiar to the public, I shall go around the other locality where the odious of 'Tis Me.' It is impossible to keep a good joke down."—Sailor.

Death Robbed Forger of Harvest.

Without doubt the most remarkable estate in a collection of dead man's "cheats" is that of Herman Schneider. He died some years ago on board a steamship while on his way to Europe. His "chest," outside some few personal effects, consisted of a number of bills of exchange drawn by American forgers on their European correspondents, together with a number of blank bills of exchange.

"When we received the property," said Mr. Harper, "we sent the bills of exchange to the banks which had issued the letters, supposing they had to be made to us. In reply we were informed by all of them that the bills were forgeries! Evidently Herman Schneider was planning to reap a harvest with his forged bills when death, himself a reaper, cut him down."

Wisdom.

The Foulish Virgins regarded one another in blank dismay. "We are out of oil!" they exclaimed.

But the Wise Virgins had bought for the rise, and saw that the lamps had come they were watching the ticker excitedly.

"Ten points up—on the report that the government will not prosecute!" they cried gleefully.

Showing that where virgins mingle in affairs, they will find wisdom quite helpful.—Puck.

—"I—he mighty kind to have this [illegible]," he said at length, with a comprehensive sweep [illegible] river.

"I—don't you?" and she opened her [illegible] questioningly.

"I—said Carrington with a short laugh, a chair near here and [illegible] seated.

Here, to surprise, gave him a quick look; then [illegible] glanced away [illegible] what she encountered in [illegible] as she leaned slightly [illegible] pale [illegible] of light appeared on a distant [illegible].

"I—how Madrid—Oh, is it, Mr. Morrell?" she called over [illegible] "I—so," but he did not alter his [illegible].

"I—you're not looking?"

"Yes—no—I'm looking at you. I reckon—you think me crazy. Miss Marcella—[illegible] and all that—but I—with Memphis could be wiped off the [illegible], and that we could go on like this for ever!"

"I—don't talk so—I am nothing to you."

"Yes—you are. You're everything to me—[illegible] and—I—I—I—I—I love you!" She was powerless [illegible] to him. She drew herself [illegible] her cheek, then he kissed [illegible] his arms fell at last—[illegible] face was white. "I was a fool—I—I—I—Betty, forgive me! I—I—I—I—