



# The prodigal judge

*Vaughan Kester*

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## **The prodigal judge** Vaughan Kester

"[...]last of his name and race, old General Quintard, was dead in the great house his father had built almost a century before and the thin acres of the Barony, where he had made his last stand against age and poverty, were to claim him, now that he had given up the struggle in their midst. The two or three old slaves about the place, stricken with a sense of the futility of the fight their master had made, mourned for him and for themselves, but of his own blood and class none was present. Shy dwellers from the pine woods, lanky jeans-clad men and sunbonneted women, who were gathering for the burial of the famous man of their neighborhood, grouped themselves about the lawn which had long since sunk to the uses of a pasture lot. Singly or by twos and threes they stole up the steps and across the wide porch to the open door. On the right of the long hall another door stood open, and who wished could enter the drawing-room, with its splendid green and gold paper, and the wonderful fireplace with the Dutch tiles that graphically depicted the story of Jonah and the whale. Here the general lay in state. The slaves had dressed their old master in the uniform he had worn as a colonel of the continental line, but the thin shoulders of the wasted figure no longer filled the buff and blue coat. The high-bred face, once proud and masterful no doubt, as became the face of a Quintard, spoke of more than age and poverty—it was infinitely sorrowful. Yet there was something harsh and unforgiving in the lines death had fixed there, which might have been taken as the visible impress of that mystery, the bitterness of which had misshaped the dead man's nature; but the resolute lips had closed for ever on their secret, and the broken spirit had gone perhaps to learn how poor a thing its[...]"

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