

THE FOURTH ESTATE

Novelized by
**FREDERICK
R. TOOMBS**

From the Great Play
of the Same Name
by Joseph Medill
Patterson and Harriet
Ford.

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In "The Fourth Estate" the effectiveness of newspapers in fearlessly exposing political and judicial corruption and the safeguard they are to the public are interestingly and convincingly set forth. A young, earnest newspaper writer and editor is the central figure, and his battles with a dishonest United States judge against big odds and against the cunningly underhanded machinations of the lawyer lobbyist Dupuy form one of the most valuable as well as most entertaining pieces of fiction of the day. That the false judge's daughter, the reigning beauty in the fashionable life of a leading city, should play a sensational part in this gripping story of strong honest men and of strong dishonest men, fighting each other in a war of dollars, evidences the romantic possibilities of the narrative. This is a story of today's America, a fact story torn out of life's book, dealing with the most vital issues that confront every one of us. Romance and humor vie with stirring action for supremacy in this instructive and fascinating novel, which teaches that the path of duty is the path to love and happiness and that in success, nobly won, lie rewards of greater and more lasting value than in a triumph ignobly and more easily gained.

CHAPTER I.

Burke said there were three estates in parliament, but in the reporters' gallery yesterday there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.—Caryle.

THE silence in the managing editor's room of the Daily Advance was abruptly broken by the entrance of Ross McHenry through a private door. His eighteen years of active newspaper work in a career extending from cub reporterhood to his present important office had drilled into him the necessity, even the habit, of constant action, quick thought, keen and accurate perception and readiness for emergencies. He hastily threw off his coat, glanced at several papers laid on his desk while he was out at dinner and seated himself in his managerial chair. He wrote a few rapid words on a pad of paper at his right hand as he pushed a button with his left to summon an office boy.

"Any one here while I was gone?" McHenry queried sharply as the boy entered.

"Yes, sir. Woman whose boy was pinched wants to keep it out of the paper. Been outside two hours. She's sittin' outside an' bawls an' bawls an' bawls."

"Tell her we're printing a newspaper and I've left for the night."

"Then there was a few phone calls. We handled 'em all 'cept the last. He was a man named Nolan, an' he wanted ter see you."

McHenry immediately became interested.

"What'd you tell him?" he asked, rising.

"That you was to the theater."

The managing editor picked up a Congressional Directory and shied it forcibly at the lad.

"Well, next time, young man, you tell him I've just stepped down to the night editor's room. Nolan, remember his name—Nolan. He's the new owner."

"Cheese it, another owner. Nobody keeps us long do they?"

"No," responded McHenry laconically. "Like certain other luxuries, nobody keeps us long. We're too expensive, Durkin."

As the managing editor hung up the receiver Moore, the night editor, entered carrying a bundle of galley proofs in his left hand, a schedule in his right.

"Well, Moore, what have you got for part 1?" asked McHenry.

The night editor repeated rapidly in a dead flat monotonous voice:

"Thirty-five columns of ads. Telegraph editor's hollering for twenty columns. He just got a couple of nice fashies—one from Pittsburg about a man eloping with his daughter-in-law; very fine people. Another first class murder from St. Louis. Local has twenty-six scheduled, sports are very heavy, bowling, fights, checkers, and Kentucky's shut down on racing; they want two pages. We've got a tip that Morgan has the asthma. Steel will probably open soft on Monday."

McHenry took down the telephone receiver and held it expectantly at his ear. He took the proofs from Moore's hand and began looking them over. They contained important articles which had been set up, but which he had not previously seen.

"Hello, there's a live one," he suddenly exclaimed, glancing over one of the sheets.

"Bill, I'd like to run that one. Senator Deering dead yet?"

"No, not yet."

The managing editor was disgusted.

"Bahaw!" he exclaimed. "I'll bet the old codger dies for the afternoon papers. We're having rotten luck lately."

The telephone rang.

"Hello! Who's this?" cried McHenry savagely. But his voice changed abruptly to its most sugary tones.

"Oh, Mr. Nolan, this is Mr. McHenry. Yes; why, the boy said I'd gone to the theater. He's new to newspaper offices. Yes, indeed. He doesn't know we newspaper men have little time for theaters—no, indeed—ha, ha! I was downstairs in the press room all the time—yes, indeed; trouble with the roller on cylinder 5 of the color press, and I happen to have a bit of a mechanical turn of mind—yes, indeed. Anything I can do for you, sir? Hope we may have the pleasure of showing you over the office—your office—pretty soon. Yes, sir. Tonight? Yes, any time. We're always here. Yes, sir. Thank you."

He hung up the receiver and reverted to his natural voice. "It's the new boss, Moore. 'S coming down tonight."

"I wonder if that means more changes?" observed the night editor as he filled his pipe.

McHenry sighed.

"Ain't a man who gets into this business a sucker?"

The night editor smiled grimly.

"Wonder what kind of a joke is this Nolan anyway?" he asked.

The night editor's brow wrinkled.

"All I know is that he's a Colorado miner with a hill of ore all his own." He glanced over the night editor's schedule. "What is this T-T—golf or politics?"

"Taft—both; golf 2 down—conference with Aldrich."

"Are you going to use that follow up story about Judge Bartelmy throwing the Lansing Iron company into a receivership?" he queried.

"I dunno. Any kicks on this morning's story?"

"I should say yes—telephone going all day."

McHenry turned and pounded the desk with his fist.

"If they kicked on that they'd get our jobs on this."

He pointed at the proof of the new Bartelmy story which he had taken from Moore.

"All the same, the judicial crime is getting rather soiled these days. It makes me sore to think of what they're pulling off on the federal bench. He's had all through, that Bartelmy. Whose story is it—Brand's?"

"Yep," responded the city editor. "By heaven, he is a newspaper man."

"That's why he won't last in this office," put in Moore sarcastically.

"Yep," supplemented the city editor. McHenry's face took on a resigned expression as he said: "Well, we'll have to pass it up." He paused. "It's likely to be libelous."

He laid aside the proof sheet and resumed his perusal of the schedule of articles intended to be used in the next morning's paper.

"How about divorces?" McHenry asked suddenly, raising his head to the city editor.

"The Sarrup divorce is up again. Two new correspondents named." He pointed them out among the photos.

McHenry drew a few lines on one of the photos and rang for the boy. "Bring me an artist, Durkin," he ordered. The artist soon appeared.

"Here," spoke up the managing editor, "take these correspondents and run 'em with the two you had yesterday, but fix those up different. Put a hat on one and the other in low neck, and put Sarrup himself in the middle with a daddo of hearts around."

McHenry changed his mind. "No; make it a big question mark of cupid and the caption 'Which of These Women Does This Man Love?' Yes, and frame to his wife too. Three columns."

"Yes, sir," responded the artist, starting away with the photos.

But McHenry called him back. "Hey!" he cried. "Make that 'Which of These Beautiful Women Does This Man Love?'"

The artist bowed in acquiescence and escaped.

McHenry took up another photograph.

"Ha, what a beauty!" he said enthusiastically. "What's she been doing?"

"She is Judith Bartelmy, the judge's daughter. She gave a reception to day," answered Downs, the city editor.

High society all there as usual, I suppose," mused McHenry. "The Bartelmays are an old family, and they're held on to some of their money. Here, Downs," he went on, "play her up for two—no, three columns. Maybe it will square it with the judge for what we did to him in the paper this morning. You explain to an artist."

"All right."

"The new boss, Nolan, is coming down to look us over tonight," added McHenry.

"Wonder where we'll all be working next week?" was the city editor's reply over his shoulder as he quickly made his exit.

The boy came in and laid a card on the managing editor's desk.

"Miss Judith Bartelmy!" exclaimed McHenry as he glanced at it. "Well, what do you think of that, Moore?"

"It's a kick sure, and—"

"By the way," interjected McHenry deliberately, "this girl, Judith Bartelmy, isn't she engaged to Wheeler Brand?"

"Seems to me I've heard something of the sort," assented Moore vaguely.

"Well, same here, and Brand wrote that story this morning showing up her father, the judge, as a trickster of the worst, most dangerous sort. Now the girl comes to this office—probably to defend her dad. Say, Moore—the managing editor was becoming excited—things are getting warm around here. Brand certainly had his nerve with him to hand such a roast to his prospective father-in-law."

McHenry turned abruptly to one side and reached for his coat, which he quickly donned.

"Show her in," he called to the boy. Moore hastily retreated from the room as Judith Bartelmy entered, leaving the judge's daughter alone with the managing editor. McHenry had long flattered himself that he had

met many attractive women in his time, but as he rose to meet Judith Bartelmy and surveyed this fashionably gowned young woman he made a mental note that she surpassed them all. Her blond features were of distinctly patrician cast. Her blue eyes had the magnetic qualities so envied by the many less fortunate women, and the pure whiteness of her finely curved chin and neck was advantageously revealed by the low cut collar of her princess gown of wine colored silk which clung to a figure that celebrated artists had pronounced unusual in its symmetry.

"I desire to complain about the article attacking my father this morning," the girl began.

"Yes?" answered McHenry. "I wish an apology for it."

"Is this a message from your father?"

"That's not the point. This is the first time in his life that any one has ventured to question his honor. The article is false, and I think your paper should apologize for it immediately."

"Before saying as to that," returned the managing editor, "I should have to refer the matter to the new proprietor, Mr. Nolan. You know it is not customary for a newspaper to take back what it says."

The judge's daughter raised her eyebrows in surprise as she drew close to McHenry's desk, where he had resumed his seat.

"I should think you'd have a good many lawsuits," she suggested.

"Oh, no; not many. We go up to the line, but we try not to step over it." He picked up several newspapers from his desk. "For instance—scanning the papers—I don't think your father will feel inclined to sue us." He rose as if to end the interview.

Judith, however, was not to be thus disposed of.

"I don't want to detain you," she remarked, "but I should like to ask you who was responsible for that article."

She seated herself in a chair which McHenry indicated.

"We never tell the name of our writers," answered the managing editor. Her father had diplomatically suggested to her that Wheeler Brand might have written the story. This she found difficult to believe. But she must be convinced, and one of her motives in visiting the newspaper had been to ask him—to ask him to tell her that he was not the author of the new attack on her father. She must see him and learn the truth from his lips alone.

"Is Mr. Brand in the office now?" she asked.

"Yes, I think so."

"Would it be possible for me to see him?"

"Why, yes, if you wish. I'll send for him."

McHenry summoned the boy and told him to "ask Mr. Brand to come in."

"We've noticed"—she hesitated—"all his friends have noticed that he's becoming very radical lately." Judith rose from the chair and stepped nervously toward the editor's desk.

"Oh," he laughed, "they all get that when they're young, like the measles."

"And that's something they all get over, isn't it?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes," responded McHenry, stirring as though to leave the room.

Judith stepped squarely in front of his desk.

"But I don't want to disturb you. Can't I go to his office?"

"He hasn't got any office, and they're all bunched in the local room in their shirt sleeves smoking. You wouldn't like it. We haven't a reception room."

McHenry laughed as he spoke.

In his shirt sleeves, rolled to his elbows, with quick steps and squared shoulders, Wheeler Brand, one of the ablest men on the city staff of the Advance, strode into the office of the managing editor through the door leading from the city and telegraph rooms.

"Yes, sir," he greeted McHenry. Then he stopped short both in his steps and in his speech. He had caught sight of the managing editor's visitor. "Why, Judith!" he gasped. "What in heaven's name are you doing here? I— At this point words failed him, and he stood staring at her, with his breast heaving violently as the result of his surprise.

The girl was also deeply disturbed in spite of her previous knowledge that she was to be confronted by the man she loved.

McHenry thought that the moment had arrived when his presence was no longer necessary.

"Miss Bartelmy has asked to see you for a few minutes," he said, rising and starting toward a door. "You may talk here." A handful of proof sheets rustled in his grasp as he disappeared. Wheeler Brand started toward the girl.

"Is there anything the matter?" he queried anxiously.

She hesitated before answering. Then she spoke determinedly.

"Yes; two things. First, you did not come to my reception this afternoon; secondly, there is that article about father this morning."

"I couldn't get off from the office to attend the reception, and I am awfully sorry," he protested. "But as for the story about your father—well, did he send you here?"

"No, he didn't send me. But I couldn't help seeing how disturbed he was, and—"

"Then he knew you were coming?"

"Why, yes," Judith was trying hard to understand what he meant by seeking out her father's knowledge of her present mission, one which was to her decidedly unpleasant.

Wheeler was plainly impressed, and unfavorably so, at the girl's reply.

"Oh," he ejaculated disappointedly. The quickly thinking girl detected the significant tone of the newspaper writer's reply and hastened to explain.

"I heard my father say at dinner that he feared there would be another attack tomorrow," she said, "and I

hoped through you to prevent its publication and to make the Advance apologize for what it said this morning. I don't see how your paper dares to publish such things."

"But Judith," he answered, "we couldn't dodge a story as big as that. We had to print it. That's what we're here for."

But she was still insistent.

"Oh, of course, print the story, but I mean the insinuation all through. Why, by using 'such unfair means' newspapers can bring discredit on any one. Mr. McHenry refused to apologize. He wouldn't even tell me who wrote it. Do you know?"

Brand gave a violent start. At first, in her present mood, he hardly dared answer the girl. With a determined effort he pulled himself together and answered her question.

"Yes, I know who wrote it."

"Who?" Judith leaned toward him, gazing intently into his eyes.

"I wrote it," he announced. Judith started back aghast.

"You, Wheeler? Why?" she cried hysterically.

"I had no choice." He struggled to maintain his grip on himself.

"You had no choice?"

"Judith, when this Lansing Iron case first broke loose," Brand responded firmly, "I saw straight off that it was one of the slickest—well, that there was a big story in it. I didn't know your father was involved in this at first. I just followed the path, and when I saw where it was leading me I wanted to turn back because of you, but I couldn't." He stopped for a moment, then went on: "No, no. I could not stop—not even—for you!"

"But it isn't loyal of you," was her response. "It wasn't like you—to at-

tack him suddenly in this way. It's almost as if you struck him from behind. And do you not see, Wheeler, that you are hurting me as much as you injure him? I am his daughter, Wheeler, and if you ruin my father you will ruin me."

She covered her face with her hands, and her bosom heaved convulsively in her anguish.

(To Be Continued.)

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