

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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CHAPTER II

WHEELER BRAND gazed at the girl, and above his own misery rose his sympathy and thought for her whom he longed to comfort, for the girl of his choice, whom duty said he must cause to suffer. He yearned to take her in his arms and wipe away the tears, but he knew that she would repulse him. He throbbled with the desire to prove to her his love by assuring her that the attack on her father was ended—but his duty whispered, "No."

And to himself he repeated the "No." For he must go on, and she must endure, and the judge must pay the price.

The voice of an outraged people had spoken through the pen of Wheeler Brand, and he was one of those men strong enough to refuse to take the price of silence.

He led the girl he loved to a chair, even as she sobbed and whispered, "Wheeler, Wheeler, Wheeler," endeavoring from her heart's depths. Brand looked down on her with a world of sadness in his eyes. He well knew, and the world would soon know, that those who sit in the high places must pay the penalty for sin, even as the lowliest among us who more blindly go astray.

Judith Bartelmy had been long enough in society to learn the art of the concealment and the concealment of emotions under many trying circumstances. Probably in any other situation than in one where her father and the man she loved were so deeply concerned, as in the present, she would have been able to retain a larger degree of self composure. Several minutes passed before she was able to speak in evenly balanced tones.

"Wheeler," she finally said, "if any one had told me that you would do what you have done against my father, against my family—her voice began to break again—against me, I would not have believed it. And you have now told me that you will cease your attack."

Brand thought to palliate her. He seated himself on a corner of the managing editor's desk and bent toward her as she sat in a chair near him.

"Now, Judith, let me try to explain," he said earnestly. "I think I can make you understand. You see, the Lansing Iron company owned a lot of valuable properties—see ranges, machinery, railroad trackage, etc. If it had been managed half way it would now be a wealth producing business, but some of our speculators down here were trying to get hold of it in a gamble with. They wanted to milk it, as the saying is, by watering it. They did have a stock market battle or two, which profited nobody but the lawyers on both sides. But they finally got it by juggling it into a receivership, which they never could have done if a United States judge had not been willing to exceed his functions. That judge was your father."

"Since the works shut down," he went on strongly, "the men are out of employment, and the gamblers have got rich because the company's gone broke. That's just what happened, and that's all I said."

"But it wasn't your facts, I tell you. It was your insinuation that was false."

"Not insinuation—interpretation."

"But it wasn't true—it wasn't true."

"Oh, yes, it was true, and more."

Judith varied on the hysterical again.

"If you loved me as you pretend to, no matter if you thought it true or not, you could not have written that article."

"Can't you see that I wasn't writing about your father, but about a United States judge who—"

She moved farther away from him. "That's spitting hairs, Wheeler."

He walked to her side.

"Judith, please—please don't let's quarrel about this."

The girl turned to him impudently.

"Oh, Wheeler, we were on the verge of it, weren't we? You cast his arms around her. You're sorry, aren't you?" She looked fondly into his face. "And you will take back that article, won't you?"

"You mustn't ask me to do that; I can't," looking at her earnestly.

"You can't?"

"No."

Judith drew away from him a step or two. She surveyed him coldly.

"Wheeler, I came here thinking only of my father, but I suddenly find myself facing a much more serious question—not what kind of a man he is, but what kind of a man *she* you."

Brand was deeply cut by her manner and her intonation.

"Judith, if you only knew the truth, all of it, things I can't tell you, you'd be with me heart and soul in what I'm trying to do."

He caught her in his arms again.

"Whatever I've done or whatever I may do I love you," he insisted passionately.

Judith showed equal fervor as she said:

"And you're more to me than my father, but for my sake you mustn't work against him. How could we ever be happy together if you did? You'd do this for me, Wheeler, just this? I want you to carry out your

ideals and live up to your high purposes in every other way, but you must not attack him. Promise me that you'll never do it again. Won't you promise me that? And you'll retract that article you had this morning. You'll do this for me, just this?"

"Judith—it's the truth—and, knowing that, would you have me retract it?"

"Yes."

"I can't."

Judith began to take off the engagement ring Brand had given her.

"You don't mean to do that?" he cried in amazement.

"I most certainly do."

He was almost frantic. He grasped her hand.

"I won't let you mean it. I can't let you go without your ring. You may be Judge Bartelmy's daughter, but you are going to be my wife. You've worn my ring for a month, and you must wear it forever."

The girl passed his passionate appeal by without heeding it. She tossed back her pretty head defiantly, snatched the ring from her finger and threw it on the managing editor's desk.

"I'll not wear it again," she exclaimed resolutely, "unless—until you come to your senses." So expressing herself, she stalked majestically across the room.

"Judith!" called Brand in desperation, fearing that she was about to leave him.

"Will you do what I ask?" she queried imperiously.

"I cannot," he answered simply.

The judge's daughter tossed her head independently, caught her skirt in her hand, turned her back swiftly on Brand and walked indignantly from the room.

Wheeler Brand, dazed, heart sick and discouraged and torn by the emotions that welled within him, leaned helplessly against the desk. After all, he reasoned, what did it all matter? There were lots of evil men in the world, always had been, always would be. What harm would it do if one dishonest judge were allowed to go unmolested, even if he happened to be a United States judge? Surely there were other dishonest judges, and he could not drive all of them off the bench—no, indeed. And, moreover, this thankless task he had shouldered would if he succeeded rob him of the girl he loved. It would rob him of the love of the girl who loved him.

Then the thought of the enthusiasm that had buoyed him as he wrote the story that had exposed Judge Bartelmy came to him and clung to him. The inspiration in doing a strong man's work for the public good enthused the spirit of Wheeler Brand, captured his soul. The steady light burned once more in his eyes. He shook himself together—fastened his old time grip on himself. As for Judith, he would do his duty, and he would win her yet.

When the managing editor of the Advance re-entered his office and walked briskly toward his desk he found Wheeler Brand looking eagerly over a notebook which, quite unknown to McHenry, contained the data for an article on the Lansing Iron case even more damaging to Judge Bartelmy than the one already printed.

"Well, did you settle it?" asked McHenry.

Brand looked up and started toward the door.

"Yes, sir," he answered, and he was gone.

At this juncture Downs, the city editor, came into the managing editor's room. He addressed McHenry rapidly.

"Water main burst on Morton street, drowned seven dago kids in the basement of a tenement; mothers, scrub women, gone out to work and locked them in; water rising." He drew close to the desk. "Children, climbing stairs to escape, found huddled in each other's arms on top step, drowned! All but the youngest hanging on to a string of beads; must have died praying!"

The managing editor's face immediately lightened, and he pounded his desk enthusiastically.

"Good! Good! By glory, that's a dandy! That saves our lives! Now we'll have a paper tomorrow! We'll go the limit on this. Did you send a photographer?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

McHenry seized the office telephone.

"Night editor! Oh, hello! Cut three columns more out of those shavings. We've got a live one. Seven dago kids drowned. First time they ever saw water in their lives. Run three columns!" He hung up the receiver and turned to the city editor.

"Put in three leads and make it stick out like a sore thumb. And, say, put in a black faced bulletin saying the Advance will receive subscriptions for their families."

Durkin entered with a bundle of proofs.

"And, say, Downs," added McHenry, "print in bold faced type that the Advance will start the subscription with \$100."

"Mr. Dupuy is downstairs," announced Durkin.

The managing editor could not suppress a sour expression which crept across his face. "Dupuy, eh?" he grunted half audibly. "Wonder what he wants around here now? He's a regular buttinski."

McHenry knew Dupuy in a business way, knew he was counsel for several of the big mercantile establishments which advertised in the Advance and that the lawyer had represented various corporations at the state capital.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to see him," he finally resolved. "Show Mr. Dupuy in," he called to the boy.

"Good evening," was Dupuy's greeting to McHenry as he entered and placed his overcoat on a chair.

"Good evening, Mr. Dupuy. What can I do for you?" The visitor seated himself at the right of McHenry's desk.

"McHenry," began Dupuy decidedly, "somebody on your paper has been making bad breaks lately, particularly the one this morning."

"What one this morning?"

"The Judge Bartelmy story, of course."

"Help!" sang out McHenry. "I've been getting that all day."

"It's no joke, McHenry," snapped Dupuy.

"It was a mistake," responded the managing editor.

"Mistake! Who was responsible for it?" leaning forward.

"Oh, it just slipped through in the rush."

"Tell that to the marines," retorted Dupuy sarcastically. He paused. "Who slipped it through?"

There was another pause. McHenry began to assert himself.

"Excuse me, Dupuy," he asked pointedly. "But how does the Bartelmy story affect you?"

"Some of my clients have a very high regard for the judge. Your story grossly misrepresents him."

"Yes, I suppose so."



"I'm growing reticent in bringing our judiciary into disrespect is a dangerous symptom of the unrest beneath the surface," spoke Dupuy pompously. "The federal bench is the ultimate bulwark."

McHenry laughed.

"Oh, capital in distress! Yes, I know all about that."

Dupuy stirred indignantly.

"There was no occasion for that remark," he shot forth tartly.

McHenry saw that Dupuy was very much in earnest, and the management of the Advance, as he had previously known it—representatives of an insurance company—would have desired to gratify the wishes of the powerful



"It's no joke, McHenry,"

Interests behind Dupuy. So far as the new owner was concerned, the managing editor could not tell what his attitude would be in the matter, but he had received no instructions as yet to change the policy of the paper. Plainly the course of wisdom, he reasoned, would be to act toward Dupuy as he had acted in the past, when the insurance company had insisted that the paper be operated on a purely commercial basis. Yes, he would deal carefully with Dupuy—that is, with Dupuy's clients.

"No offense meant," explained McHenry. "Well, we'll have nothing more about Bartelmy. Will that satisfy your people?"

"Thank you, McHenry. That will be eminently satisfactory both to them and to me as their legal adviser."

"All right; that settles that."

"Oh, not quite," said Dupuy, raising his hand warningly. "There's one more point. Who was responsible for the story?"

"Oh, let's pass that!"

But Dupuy could not be turned aside. McHenry had begun to give way to him, and the lawyer intended to follow up his advantage.

"Very well; it's up to you," he said. "But I want you to realize, whatever happens, there is no personal animosity in the matter."

"What do you mean by 'whatever happens?'" asked the managing editor quickly.

The visitor was a living picture of complacency.

"How much advertising did you get from our concern last year?"

The managing editor began to discern more clearly the hidden club in Dupuy's words and demands.

"Oh, I can't say as to that."

"About \$30,000 worth, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I should think so," admitted McHenry.

"Well, there's the answer," exclaimed Dupuy triumphantly. "As a matter of business, McHenry, if you are not friendly to my clients, why, you can hardly expect them to be friendly to you, and I shall explain to the new proprietor of the Advance, Mr. Noin, the reasons for the sudden drop in his advertising. He is a rich man, and he probably will not like to know that he is in the way of losing a good deal of money to further a radical propaganda which he probably abhors. Come, McHenry, for your own sake be reasonable. Who wrote the story? Surely you are not going to consider a mere reporter in a matter so vital to our interests. Who was it?"

McHenry surrendered.

"A young fellow named Wheeler Brand."

Dupuy rose and towered above McHenry as he sat at his desk.

"I thought so. I only wanted to make sure," he said. "He's a dangerous type. Comes from good enough people, but ambitious to get into the limelight by stirring up the mob. Thought he might have learned sense by now, but it seems he hasn't. Guess he never will; these fanatics never do."

"We consider him the best investigator in town," warmly, in praise of Brand.

"He's entirely too zealous. Do you catch me?" asked Dupuy, leaning over McHenry and gazing significantly into his eyes.

The managing editor caught Dupuy's meaning and stared at him blankly in his surprise.

"You don't mean—"

Dupuy smiled coldly.

"Yes—I mean—get rid of him!"

(To Be Continued.)

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