

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 X.

BRAND hung up the telephone receiver with an anxious expression on his face. "Nolan must keep away from this," he muttered tensely. "Let him take a train or go to sleep or bury himself if he wants to. If Bartelmy or Dupuy gets hold of him after I've shown my hand there'll be the merry d-d to pay, and if they find him they might succeed in coaxing— I wonder if Nolan will stick; I wonder if Nolan will stick," he kept repeating over and over to himself.

The noise of voices raised in indignation broke in upon him from the outer hall at his right. "Oh, that's a chestnut," some one cried; "he's always out, always when I come."

The editor glanced around and saw Sylvester Nolan leading in his friend Powell, the poet.

"You're not out, are you, old man?" asked young Nolan of Brand. "Who's that fly duck that tried to keep me from coming in?"

"I'm sorry, Nolan; I'm very busy to-night, and you'll have to excuse me. I'm very busy."

"Brandy, old boy, I came in on business. Want to get a job for my friend Powell here. He's a poet." He dragged the wan eyed rhymer up to Brand's desk.

The editor looked Powell over. "We don't carry poets on the pay-rolls," he grunted.

"But just look at this one. Pow-wow, let Mr. Brand see your ode to the opening of the Omaha exposition. He went in the competition with this."

Powell handed the poem to Brand. "And I see he came out with it," snorted the newspaper man.

"Yes, sir," agreed Powell faintly. "People haven't time for poetry," commented Brand.

"That's what I've been trying to tell Pow-wow," put in Sylvester. "He was born after his time."

"How would you like to be a reporter?" asked the editor.

Powell's eyes gleamed with a sickly color that showed that he was enthused.

"A reporter? Oh, yes, sir," he said. Brand took down the phone.

"Hello! Give me night city editor, please. Hello! That you? I've got a cub here named Powell. Please give him a week's trial. Report to city editor."

"Where is he, sir?" asked Powell, bewildered.

"You're a reporter now. Find out. Yes, sir." He started toward the hall door.

"Over here, Pow-wow!" cried Sylvester, leading him in the opposite direction.

Joe Dillon now added to the managing editor's troubles by again coming into the office.

"Thank you, Mr. Brand," he began. "Could you spare me a little car fare?" Brand tossed him a quarter. "Never mind now," he said. "Say, Joe, go out with that cub tonight. It will give

"How would you like to be a reporter?" you something to think about, and you can show him as much in a night as he'd learn in a month alone. Mr. Dillon, allow me to present you to Mr. Sylvester Nolan. Mr. Dillon broke me into the business," said the editor to the newspaper owner's son.

Sylvester drew a ponderous wad of bills from his pocket and offered the top one to the old "down and outer."

"You want to handle my friend Pow-wow with gloves," advised Sylvester. "He's just full of temperament."

The old newspaper man indignantly refused the money which young Nolan held out to him and plunged out of the office.

The poet stood a mute witness to the proceedings.

"Go after him!" commanded Brand. "Thank you, sir," and Powell darted frightenedly after Dillon.

"Who is that old joker?" asked Sylvester of the editor.

"He was the best reporter that the

"What's the matter with him?"

"Booze."

"Too bad! Well, a fellow ought to learn to control himself," remarked Sylvester pompously. "Now, Brandy, old boy, I want to ask you just one more favor tonight, in reference to a little actress friend of mine, Miss Guenevere McKenzie."

"Oh—come—don't!"

"Run her picture in a prominent place, won't you?" Sylvester handed Brand a photo. "Miss Guenevere McKenzie. Don't you know her? She's in the second row at the Tyrone, and it's a darn shame. I've got a libretto for her later on. Can't you help her out and get her a small part now?"

"I'm afraid that is hardly in my line."

"You'd be doing a favor to the show, for she's good enough to be a prima donna. She's been kept back by jealousy. Told me so herself. When will you have it in—tomorrow?"

"I scarcely think we can do that sort of thing in the Advance. We don't print pictures of chorus girls unless there's some good story about them—lost jewels, barred from a hotel on account of a dog, divorce or—"

Sylvester broke in relievedly. "Oh, she's been divorced!"

"Has she? When?"

"Last year."

"That's dead. Wait till her next She doesn't go in."

"Why—why—won't you do it?" stammered the young man, who, deeply appreciating the fact that he was his father's son—yes, indeed—failed to comprehend how any employee on the Advance could refuse him anything.

"She's the cutest little girl you ever saw, you old gazook. You stick to me, and I'll give you an interest in this paper some day. Why, she was in—"

"That all may be," responded Brand, rising to end the conversation, "but the Advance doesn't issue passes to the stage entrance."

Sylvester's jaw fell in his astonishment at this unexpected blow, and after a moment, after vainly endeavoring to find appropriate words for a reply, he went out of the room.

Brand was impatient because of the precious time that had been wasted. He had work to do and little time in which to do it, and it was the most important work he had ever done in his life.

He sent the office boy to bring the two reporters, Howard and Jeff. Speaking to Miss Stowe, the "central" of the Advance's private telephone system, he said: "Do not put anybody else on this wire until you hear from me, no matter how long it takes. Understand? Connect this phone with editorial room 4 and have it connected until I tell you. Now be sure about this. Understand? Again he repeated, as it concerned the success of his entire scheme, "Don't break the connection until I tell you myself."

The two reporters came in. "Now, boys, understand what I want you to do. You've got to take, word for word, a conversation I'm going to have here. Go in room 4. You, Jeff, take the receiver."

"Yes, sir."

"And you, Howard, take the extension. Thus you will each hear what is said. Keep it glued to your best ear and take down every word you hear tonight between Judge Bartelmy and me. The judge will sit in the chair at the right of my desk. I will be in my own chair. The telephone will thus be midway between us. Whatever words he and I say will be said almost directly over the mouthpiece of the phone. Now, you see what I am going to do—"

Brand took a lead pencil from his pocket and began a proceeding which the two reporters, accustomed as they were in their business to ingenious strategy, failed at first to understand. Then the scheme dawned on them: Brand took the telephone receiver from the hook, and the metal arm immediately snapped upward, establishing the connection. Then he inserted the point of the lead pencil in the small aperture under the little metal arm or hook and deliberately broke it off. The tiny wedge thus held up the hook. Brand now hung up the receiver, and the pencil point prevented the weight of the receiver from bearing the hook down and breaking the connection. The connection was made continuous without the slightest indication that such was the case. Every word now spoken within a reasonable distance of the mouthpiece would be conveyed to the telephone and the extension telephone in editorial room 4, where Howard and Jeff were to be stationed. They had stenographers' pads with them, on which they were each to take down the conversation in shorthand.

"This phone will be open all the time that Bartelmy is here," announced Brand. "Go in there, Howard, and see if you can hear Jeff and me talking. Sit over here, Jeff." He pointed to the chair at his right. Howard went out.

"Now, Jeff, take down this and take down what you say to me," continued the editor.

Brand turned to Jeff and began to talk in a natural tone of voice.

"Jeff, you know I think the dog in the moon was seven times too slow in his journey through the paths of men, having lost 6,749,739,274,480 pounds in his auto northward. Is that your opinion?"

"No, not entirely. Hence and hereafter we complain of such a miraculous egotism of generality and soliloquism of peaceful garments and cold thought."

Brand struck a blow on the desk.

"On the contrary, it was unquestionable and with nasty justice, mis-called



"One can never be too careful about matters of this kind."

namby-pamby—got it?" cried the editor, bending over the mouthpiece.

"Come in, Howard!"

Howard hurried into the room. "Compare your notes, boys," instructed the managing editor.

They held the records side by side and quickly glanced over them.

"They are almost exactly the same," they exclaimed in unison.

A smile of satisfaction spread over Brand's face.

"All right. Now chase back to room 4, both of you!"

The office boy brought Brand a card. He took it, and as he glanced at it his eyes narrowed down into little sparks of light.

"He's on time," he murmured. "Very well, Durkin," he ordered, "show him in, and Durkin, remember, don't let any one else in under any circumstances."

A half a minute later Judge Bartelmy stood in the doorway. He nodded briefly to Brand, and his eyes swept around the entire room before he stepped in. Slowly he proceeded in front of Brand's desk.

"Good evening, Judge," said the editor.

"Good evening, Mr. Brand."

"Let me take your things. I'll hang them up," offered Brand. Just as Dupuy had been, Bartelmy was in evening dress. He took off his white kid gloves and put them in his pocket and then handed his hat and coat to the editor. Brand opened the door of a closet at the right hand side of the room and hung the judge's things therein. He closed the door. Bartelmy stepped to the closet, opened the door and peered sharply into its four corners, even fumbling behind his long coat, to make sure that no witness was lurking there to spy on him.

"Oh, that's the way you feel?" commented Brand. "I'll show you over the place. But you shouldn't worry."

Bartelmy coughed nervously.

"One can never be too careful about matters of this kind, Brand. I should think that you would have learned that much by this time."

"This is my first experience of this kind," said Brand.

"Of course it is," answered Bartelmy, with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "It always is the first time. But you are assuredly very lucky indeed, Brand, to do so very well at your first try at—"

"Come, look over the place, and let's get through with it," put in the editor.

He crossed and locked the door through which the judge had entered. Then he led his visitor over to the door on the opposite side of the room opening into a hallway which extended to various rooms. He pointed to the room directly across the hall. "It's quite dark, you see," he said. "This is where a couple of editorial writers sit. They go home nights, lucky dogs, not being newspaper men." Bartelmy was quick enough to catch the ironical comment of the busy managing editor on the scholarly men who wrote the opinions of the paper. Brand drew the judge back into his office and locked the door behind him.

"Now we are alone, absolutely alone," commented Brand significantly. He led the way to his desk and pointed out to the judge the chair at the right hand side. Brand dropped into his own chair. "Have a seat, Judge," he said.

Judge Bartelmy drew the chair indicated even closer to the managing editor's desk and seated himself in it. He leaned forward toward Brand and rested his elbow on the desk. His face was within ten or twelve inches of the telephone.

(To Be Continued.)

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