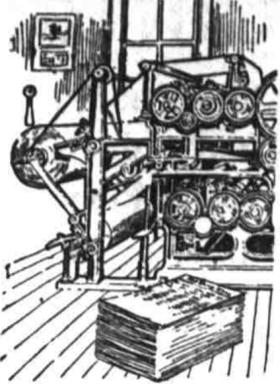


THE FOURTH ESTATE

Novelized by
**FREDERICK
R. TOOMBS**

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

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MEDILL PATTERSON AND
HARRIET FORD.



McHenry rang for the boy, Durkin, and on his belated arrival sent him to summon the city editor. "What you got?" saluted McHenry as the editor arrived.

Downs, the city editor, went straight to the point.

"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 ermine is getting rather soiled these days. It makes me sore to think of what they're pulling off on the federal bench. He's bad 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's and the caption 'Which of These Women Does This Man Love?' Yes, and frame in 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 today," answered Downs, the city editor.

"High society all there as usual, I suppose?" mused McHenry. "The Bartelmys are an old family, and they've 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 dattered 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?" "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—"

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 to 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-

ack 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.

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," endearingly 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 goes astray.

Judith Bartelmy had been long enough in society to learn the art of the control 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 or

could 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 not 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—ore ranges, machinery, railroad trackage, etc. If it had been managed halfway it would now be a wealth producing business, but some of our speculators downtown were trying to get hold of it to 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 verged 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 splitting hairs, Wheeler." He walked to her side.

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

The girl turned to him impulsively.

"Oh, Wheeler, we were on the verge of it, weren't we? He 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 are 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'll 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, heartsick 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 thoughtless 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 Bartel-

my to the public flashed through his mind.

"Wheeler," she finally said, "if any one had told me that you would or

could 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 not told me that you will cease your attack."

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