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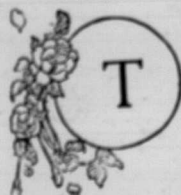
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The Fourth Estate

A Drama Revealing Privilege's Assaults on Democracy's Bulwarks

By B. O. FLOWER, Editor Twentieth Century Magazine

EDITOR'S NOTE.—One of the most absorbing plays now on the American stage is "The Fourth Estate" and it is one of the strongest and most realistic newspaper plays ever written. The play was written by an experienced newspaper man and therefore a man who knows whereof he speaks. The play shows how the great daily papers of United States (and it is the same in Canada) are controlled by corporation influence. It shows the various powerful and subtle influences that may be brought to bear upon any journal that dares to come out and tell the truth. But above all the drama demonstrates the power of a newspaper for good when that power is properly exercised. Mr. B. O. Flower, editor of the Twentieth Century Magazine, of Boston, has studied the drama and has written the following review of it in his magazine. We commend this article to our readers that they may better understand the attitude of the newspapers owned and controlled by corporations or politicians.



THE Fourth Estate is a big play, a play that is far more than an absorbingly interesting and wonderfully realistic drama of present day life. It is one of the most impressive exposures of the demoralizing influence of the republic destroying feudalism of privileged wealth that has been brought before the public imagination.

It is not strange that the critics on the papers that represent the "interests" savagely attacked the play and strove in every way possible to prevent people from going to see it; for it takes the public behind the scenes and shows precisely how the bench and the press are being debauched, and in so doing how the moral integrity of public and private life is being destroyed by the high financiers and masters of the trusts and corporations.

The play is fortunate in its name. It was Burke, who in parliament said, in substance: There are represented here, three estates (referring, of course, to the crown, the aristocracy and the commons). But yonder in the reporter's gallery, he continued, is a fourth estate, more powerful than either of the others—more powerful than all the others.

This play shows that while with a free press, democracy and public interest would be safe, the day of the free press has practically passed. It shows how multitudinous and how well nigh invincible are the weapons of the closely knit and highly organized feudalism of privileged wealth, and how it is not only gaining a strangle-hold on the press, but how its complacent, shrewd, political, intellectually keen and morally obtuse retainers among the lawyers from time to time are pushed to the front when there are vacancies on the bench; while with increasing insistence, the privileged classes unite in demanding that the same reverence should be shown the bench that the crown received in the old days when the "divine right" idea was accepted by the masses. It also shows how the moment a paper begins to serve the people, the "interests" set to work to capture, muzzle or destroy it; while the brilliant and capable reporters and editorial writers who cannot be bought or bribed in any one of a hundred different ways, are hounded into retirement, just as the corrupt feudalism of privileged wealth hounded Governor Folk, Mayor Johnston, Mayor Fagan and Francis J. Heney into retirement, as it is today trying to drive into obscurity La Follette, Judge Lindsey and all other statesmen who are found to be incorruptible, aggressive and loyal to the principles of fundamental democracy and popular rights.

Let no man be deceived. Every strong public character, who cannot be corrupted and who is aggressive in maintaining the principles of the Declaration of Independence, or who insists upon placing the public weal above all consideration of self, or of a class, is today a marked man and no stone will be left unturned in the effort to destroy him. And one reason why the metropolitan reactionary press tried to kill "The Fourth Estate" was because perhaps more vividly and convincingly than ever before this fact was presented at once to the ear, the eye, the brain and the heart of the auditor.

The Author

The author of the play, Joseph Medill Patterson, has proved himself to be a patriot after a large pattern of the fathers who gave to the world this great Republic. He is himself a journalist and the grandson

of principles and the cause of good government, suggest a Hampden or a Jefferson. At the opening of the play, he is promoted from city editor to managing editor of "The Advance" by the new proprietor.

MICHAEL NOLAN, a big hearted but illiterate capitalist, who as a miner in Colorado has struck rich ore and become a millionaire and has now brought his family to the metropolis. He has purchased "The Advance" and takes possession of it during the first act.

JUDGE BARTELMY, a Federal Jurist, who as an attorney with a very unenviable reputation has valiantly striven to become United States senator, and later an ambassador. Finally, however, he had been appointed to the Federal bench, to the entire satisfaction of the Wall Street gamblers and privilege-seeking and corrupt corporate wealth. The Judge is a consummate politician, suave and diplomatic.

JUDITH BARTELMY, the beautiful and accomplished daughter of the Judge, whose respect, admiration and affection for her plausible father enable him to use her in furthering his selfish interests. At the opening of the play, she is the affianced bride of Wheeler Brand.

DUPUY, a newspaper lobbyist; that is one of the jackals of the high interests that corrupt and control the press as the political lobbyists

These with a number of other characters, chiefly employees of The Advance, including night editors, city editors, artists, printers and the ubiquitous office boy, Durkin, make up the cast.

The drama opens in the office of the managing editor of The Advance, a struggling metropolitan daily which, after passing through various hands has now become the property of Mr. Nolan.

When the curtain rises, it is night. Ross McHenry, the manager, enters the office from a private door, and then follows the first of two vivid panoramic pictures of the newspaper in the making. In this act, the editorial side of the work is chiefly represented, as in the last act there is a given panoramic picture of the mechanical as well as the editorial work in the making of a daily paper, that has probably never before been equalled in the realism on any stage.

It soon develops that in the morning edition of The Advance there has appeared a searching exposure of one of the many infamous commercial plots that have marked the business history of America since Wall Street and the feudalism of privileged wealth have become the dominant factors in the business life of our nation. In this instance the Federal Judge Bartelmy is connected in an ugly way with a shameful proceedings. Through his aid and connivance the Wall Street gamblers, who are euphoniouly termed "high financiers," have wrecked a great iron company. The exposures created consternation, not only among the highly respectable gamblers involved, but the "big interests" in general, who rely upon an accommodating judge to further their various schemes for acquiring wealth owned and earned by others. All day long the telephone has been in constant use, registering the indignant protests of the "safe sane and conservative" wreckers and their confederates, who realize that if the people once come to understand that the elevation of a shrewd and complacent corporation attorney to the bench, does not necessarily transform the man who has been fighting for corrupt privilege for years, into a high-minded patriot, whose master interest is centered in the public weal, one of the strongest trump cards will be lost to the republic destroying influences.

In the meantime, Wheeler Brand, the day city editor, who has been responsible for the exposure has prepared a still more damaging article. At this juncture Judith Bartelmy, daughter of the judge, enters and pleads with McHenry to retract the statements, which she supposes to be utterly false, relating to her father, and to promise not to publish any further reflections upon him. She also tries to find out who is the author of the offensive exposure. Failing in all these things she asks to see Wheeler Brand, who as her affianced husband, she believes will be



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of Joseph Medill, so long the master spirit of the Chicago Tribune. His knowledge of all phases of newspaper work, has enabled him to show at once precisely how the metropolitan paper is made and to depict with equal fidelity the multitudinous agencies secretly employed by privilege and corruption in poisoning the fountains of public information.

The plan considered broadly, is history rather than fiction. Though the details are fiction, the drama is in a general way the true picture of the present-day daily press under the immoral and oppressive despotism of privileged wealth.

The cast contains five principal characters.

WHEELER BRAND, a militant reformer,—a man whose lofty patriotism and fidelity to

corrupt and control legislatures in the interests of privileged wealth.

There are several characters who, though occupying important roles are quite subordinate to the five principles. Among these are:

ROSS McHenry, at the opening of the play, managing editor, but later a subordinate editor under Brand.

PHYLLIS NOLAN, the beautiful daughter of the new proprietor of The Advance. Phyllis is a Bryn Mawr girl of little depth of character but extremely anxious to get into good society.

MRS. NOLAN, the wife of the millionaire; deeply attached to her daughter and eager to gain social position for the benefit of her children.

SYLVESTER NOLAN, an empty-headed youth, ruined by too much wealth. His father has tried in vain to get him through the freshman year in Harvard, and at the opening of the play he is busy engaging in sowing wild oats.

POWELL, an impetuous poet, friend of Sylvester Nolan and later cub reporter on The Advance.