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The Daughter
of David Kerr

"It can be done. Dave Kerr can do
anything he pleases. He's the abso-
lute boss of Belmont."

This was said with such a tone of
finality that Judge Gilbert saw no
need of replying. He knew that Kerr
was the absolute boss of Belmont.

There flashed through the minds of
both men the thought that the Bel-
mont News might have something to
say. It couldn't prevent a franchise
being passed, of course, but publicity
at times was unpleasant. This was
something Kerr did not court. Gilbert
knew. He was the easy boss, letting
every one have a share of the spoils,
and thus all were satisfied. Few in-
deed had been the times when the
town had attempted to revolt.

"You'd have the whole town up in
arms," remonstrated Gilbert.

"They've been up in arms before.
Once they brought ropes to hang the
council, but Kerr put through the
water works deal. You're the attor-
ney for the street railway company;
you know what he did there."

"Yes, yes I know," Gilbert admitted
hastily. Then with a sigh of relief,
"That's all past."

He ran his hand through his hair,
gray long before the frost of age
could come to silver it, and was
thankful that such episodes were
things of the past. He was weary of
it all. Kendall's next remark, deliv-
ered with the chill incisiveness of a
lawyer cross-examining a belligerent
witness, brought him once more to the
defense of the man who had made his
success possible.

"Is Dave Kerr keeping out of the
deal only through fear of young
Wright and the Belmont News?"

"He isn't afraid of anything. Mr.
Kerr merely says that it doesn't in-
terest him at the present time. As
for me, I'm out of it."

"You're still Kerr's right-hand ad-
viser."

"Pardon me, his legal adviser."
Kendall did not pause to acknowl-
edge the distinction, but went on, this
time straight to the heart of the mat-
ter.

"I made what the stock-yards peo-
ple consider a good offer. If that isn't
enough, what's his price?"

This point-blank question irritated
Gilbert. He much preferred to call a
spade an agricultural implement even
when talking with those who stood
close to him in his manipulations for
the various corporations he represented.
He therefore ignored the ques-
tion, preferring to tell why the mat-
ter could not be taken up at present.

"The election's coming on in a
couple of months, and your franchise
would be made an issue. We can't
afford it with the News in a position
to boost the opposition party."

"I've got to get it through as soon
as possible. There's nothing raw in
this franchise, is there?"

"That's the Chicago point of view,"
answered Kendall. "Stripped of legal
verbiage, what you want is to lay rail-
road tracks, on which will run cattle
trains, down a pretty residence street
and use a park for terminals, all with-
out giving property owners or the city
adequate compensation for ruining or
confiscating their property. I call that
pretty raw."

"Well, it's our best and certainly
our cheapest way if Kerr will put
through a franchise for us," Kendall
maintained stubbornly. "I'll come back
next week, and take the matter up
again. In the meantime you can talk
it over thoroughly with Kerr. He may
have something to say by that time."
"It hardly seems likely. He seldom
changes his mind."

"He may this time. I've got to get
away now and go by the hotel before
I go to the train. Let's go back to
the drawing-room, where I can have
a few more words with Wright. We
may be able to win him over."

"That's what I'm going to try to
do," replied Judge Gilbert, as they
rose to rejoin Mrs. Gilbert and her
guests.

The attorneys entered the drawing-
room to find a discussion regarding
newspapers just drawing to a close
with victory still uncertain on which
standard to perch.

"You just missed hearing Dr. Hayes
pay his respects to newspapers. Judge
Gilbert," said Joe Wright with a smile.
The layman's opinions always interest-
ed and usually amused a journalist.

"What's the matter? Have you told
him you won't publish the box scores
of the ball games this year?"

"I'll do that for him, and gladly."
"Then there's no occasion to kick.
That's the only thing that can trouble
a fat man."

"This time I was speaking general-
ly," explained Hayes. "I don't like
some of the ways reporters have."

"That's only a small part of the
business," laughed Wright. "If you
complain only about that I shall have
you for a staunch adherent."

Mrs. Hayes saw that Kendall was
at a loss to understand the drift of
the conversation, and accordingly
said, "Dr. Hayes is cornered, Mr. Ken-
dall, and the Panther man calls us up
at most unearthly hours."

The Belmont Banner was the morn-
ing paper, and its editor, Deacon
Jerry Whitcomb, was always at the
beck and call of the town. Kerr let
him think that he had something to
do with directing the affairs of the
city. This was a harmless delusion,
since his pliant attitude always made

him consider a mere puppet in the
hands of the boss as a scheme which he him-
self had hatched.

"I think it is dreadful for nice men
to be mixed up in politics," said Mrs.
Gilbert.

Perhaps it was no more dreadful
than was the lack of knowledge of
politics displayed by the nice women
of Belmont. This would have been
difficult to impress upon Mrs. Gilbert.
She knew well enough that her hus-
band was consulted by that odious
David Kerr, but that was in a legal
way and Kerr paid well for the ad-
vice he received. Even the tone in
which she spoke showed how thank-
ful she was her husband was not in
politics. Mrs. Hayes was quick to say
what she thought along the same line
by adding:

"And Dr. Hayes doesn't have to at-
tend, you know. He says he does it for
the good of the party."

This would have been all very in-
teresting to Kendall if he had had the
entire evening to spend in such pleas-
ant company. Time was pressing,
however, and in the few minutes still
at his disposal he wished to sound
Wright at greater length about the
Belmont News.

Kendall looked closely at the young
man whom he had already set down
as an opponent. Physically Wright
seemed no shirker of a combat. His
shoulders were broad and his body
well developed. Led to believe from
his knowledge of the reformer type
that he would find Joe Wright a long-
haired theorist and Utopian dreamer,
the lawyer found instead a self-pos-
sessed, well-balanced young man. The
newspaper owner's manner, even in
repose, was judicial. To Kendall's
thinking he had the air of a man who
would not be swayed by prejudice or
liking. It was his part, however, as
a special pleader, to make Wright
think himself too much an idealist—
if he could—in opposing the just
claims of the stock-yard company.

"I suppose you found the News
somewhat run down when you took
hold of it," Kendall remarked casually.

"Yes, the name was about all I
bought."

"I thought the paper had a pretty
good mechanical plant," interjected
Gilbert.

Instinctively Wright felt the con-
certed action masked under the inno-
cent question and the remark by Gil-
bert. Just what Kendall had to gain
he did not know, but since he recog-
nized him as a representative of large
interests he thought best to let him
know what stand the News might be
expected to take. It was just as well
that Gilbert should have it clearly in
mind also. If the clients of these men
were playing the game fair and
square they would welcome his kind
of newspaper. If they weren't, and
Wright knew there had been lapses
from grace on the part of some of
them, he hoped they would recognize
in the paper the power which would
first seek to prevent, and, failing in
this, then try to correct. Judge Gil-
bert's allusion to the good mechanical
plant he seized upon for a text.

"That's true, the News has a good
mechanical plant." He paused to let
that sink in before he continued.
"Somehow or other when I think of a
newspaper I never think of that side
of it. I have in mind only the feel-
ing of confidence with which a news-
paper inspires its readers."

"What do you think the ideal news-
paper is like?" asked Judge Gilbert.
He wanted to know to what kind of
star this young man had hitched his
wagon.

"The ideal newspaper is one which
has no ax to grind, and no personal
animus in the discussion of private af-
fairs or public questions, but only a
constant regard for the truth and the
lasting welfare of the state."

Kendall went to what he considered
the heart of the matter.

"Aren't you leaving out of consid-
eration, Mr. Wright, that everything—
this government, even—is but a com-
promise?"

"No, I recognize that, and I believe
in compromise. Without it we would
still be cave dwellers. It is exactly
because of this everpresent compro-
mise that an honest newspaper is so
valuable. It must see to it that this
compromise is open and above board.
It mustn't be the give-and-take trade
of low politicians in the back room of
a saloon or the far more dangerous
trades of men higher up and powerful
interests; not that kind of compro-
mise, which after all is a sale of some-

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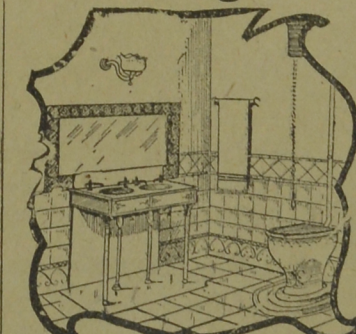
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