

FRAN

BY JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. IRWIN MYERS

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Ashton, she said with a curl of her lip, "I mean—when we are alone."



SYNOPSIS.

Fran arrives at Hamilton Gregory's home in Littleburg, but finds him absent conducting the choir at a camp meeting. She repairs thither in search of him...

more to my mother than to her," she said, catching her breath. "No, the secret must be kept—always. Father—I must never call you that except when we are alone—I must always whisper it, like a prayer—father, let me be your secretary."

It was strange that this request should surround Fran with the chill atmosphere of a tomb. His embrace relaxed insensibly. He looked at his daughter in frightened bewilderment, as if afraid she had drawn him too far from his security for further hiding. During the silence, she awaited his decision.

It was because of her tumultuous emotions that she failed to hear advancing footsteps.

"Some one is coming," he exclaimed, with ill-concealed relief. "We must be seen thus—we would be misunderstood." He strode to the window, and pretended to look out. His face cleared momentarily.

The door opened, and Grace Noir started in, then paused significantly. "Am I interrupting?" she asked, in quiescent accent.

"Certainly not," Gregory breathed freedom. His surprise was so joyful that he carried himself by the neck of his coat.

"Of course you are lonely, child, but that is your fault. You are in this house on a footing of equality, and all seem to like you, except Miss Grace—"

"I am here—" began Grace easily—"Yes, of course, that's the main thing," his delight could not be held in check.

"I am here," she steadily persisted, "because I learned something that affects my interests. I went part of the way with Mr. Clinton, but after thinking over what had been told me, I decided to leave the train at the next station. I have been driven back in a carriage. I may as well tell you, Mr. Gregory, that I am urged to accept a responsible position in Chicago."

He understood that she referred to marriage with Robert Clinton. "But—" he began, very pale.

She repeated, "A responsible position in Chicago. And I was told, this morning, that while I was away, Fran meant to apply for the secretaryship, thus taking advantage of my absence."

Fran's face looked oddly white and old, in its oval of black hair. "Who told you this?" she demanded, with a menacing gleam of teeth.

"Who knew of your intentions?" he other gracefully said. "But this is no matter. The point is that I have this Chicago opportunity. So if Mr. Gregory wants to employ you, I must know it at once, to make my arrangements accordingly."

"Can you imagine," Hamilton cried reproachfully, "that without any warning, I would make a change? Certainly not. I have no intention of employing Fran. The idea is impossible. More than that, it is—er—it is absolutely preposterous. Would I calmly tear down what you and I have been building up so carefully?"

and feeds unmolested until its armor gets hard. By the time that it weighs 25 pounds, which occurs the first year, it knows that it is far from all danger, for after that no fish, however hungry or well armed with teeth, can interfere. The turtle immediately withdraws its head into its neck between the two shells, and all intending devourers struggle in vain to impress it.

To illustrate the difficulty which attends any attempt to part the average man from his money for a church purpose collection, Bishop Murray recently told this story at a gathering in the Green Spring valley. It seems that a certain church had a very well-kept cemetery surrounded by a good fence, which fence was one night blown down by a violent storm.

A meeting of the church members was held to consider the rebuilding of the fence, and the vote of ninety-five to five. This point being decided, the minister announced that contributions to pay for the rebuilding would be next in order. The announcement was received in unenthusiastic silence, broken at last by a member who rose to object to the rebuilding of the fence.

"If you think it over," he argued, "you will see we don't need that fence. For, gentlemen, those who are inside the cemetery can't get out, and those outside certainly don't want to get in, so what use is a fence after all? I move to recall the vote."

And recalled it was by a vote of 100 to 0.

Why She Was Quitting. A famous Ohio humorist says that a new rich family in Cleveland, who were beginning to put on a lot of airs, hired a colored girl just arriving from the south to act as their serving-maid. Her new mistress insisted that all meals should be served in courses. Even when there wasn't much to eat it was brought to the table in courses.

At the end of a week the girl threw up her job. Being pressed for a reason for quitting so suddenly, she said: "I'll tell you, lady. In dis yer house dere's too much shittin' of de dishes fur de fewness of de vittles."

"Then you had already refused Fran before I came?"

"I had—hadn't I, Fran?" Fran gave her father a look such as had never before come into her dark eyes—a look of reproach, a look that said, "I cannot fight back because of the agony in my heart." She went away silent and with downcast head.

CHAPTER XV.

In Sure-Enough Country.

One morning, more than a month after the closing days of school, Abbott Ashton danced to look from his bedroom window at Hamilton Gregory's buggy, with Fran in it, passed. Long fishing-poles projected from the back of the buggy.

By Fran's side, Abbott discovered a man. True it was "only" Simon Jefferson; still, for all his fifty years and his weak heart, it was not as if it were some pleasant, respectable woman—say Simon's mother. However, old ladies do not sit upon creek-banks.

The thought of sitting upon the bank of a stream suggested to Abbott that it would be agreeable to pursue his studies in the open air. He snatched up some books and went below.

On the green veranda he paused to inhale the fragrance of the roses. "I'm glad you've left your room," said Miss Sapphira, all innocence, all kindness. "You'll study yourself to death. It won't make any more of life to take it hard—there's just so much for every man."

Huge and serious, Miss Sapphira sat in the shadow of the bay-window. Against the wall were arranged sturdy round-backed wooden chairs, each of which could have received the landlady's person without a quiver of a spindle. Everything about Abbott seemed too carefully ordered—he pined for the woods—some mossy bank sloping to a purling stream.

Suddenly Miss Sapphira grew ponderously significant. Her massive head trembled from a weight of meaning not to be lifted lightly in mere words, her double chins consolidated, and her mouth became as the granite door of a cave sealed against the too-curious.

Abbott paused uneasily before his meditated flight—"Have you heard any news?" She answered almost tragically, "Board meeting, tonight."

Ordinarily, teachers for the next year were selected before the close of the spring term; only those "on the inside" knew that the fateful board meeting had been delayed week after week because of disagreement over the superintendency. There was so much dissatisfaction over Abbott Ashton—because of "so much talk"—that even Robert Clinton had thought it best to wait, that the young man might virtually be put upon good behavior.

"Tonight," the young man repeated with a thrill. He realized how important this meeting would prove in shaping his future.

"Yes," she said warningly. "And Bob is determined to do his duty. He never went very far in his own education because he didn't expect to be a school-teacher—but ever since he's been chairman of the school-board, he's aimed to have the best teachers, so the children can be taught right; most of 'em are poor and may want to teach too, when they're grown. I think all the board'll be for you to-night, Abbott, and I've been glad to notice that for the last month, there's been less talk. And by the way, she added, "that Fran-girl went with Simon Jefferson just now, the two of them in Brother Gregory's buggy. They're going to Blubb's Rifle—he with his weak heart, and her with that silly smile of hers, and it's a full three miles!"

Abbott did not volunteer that he had seen them pass, but his face showed the ostensible integrity of a jam-thief, who for once finds himself innocent when missing jam is mentioned.

She was not convinced by his look of guilelessness. "You seem to be carrying away your books."

"I want to breathe in this June morning without taking it strained

through window-screens," he explained.

Miss Sapphira gave something like a choked cough, and compressed her lips. "Abbott," she said, looking at him sidewise, "please step to the telephone, and call up Bob—he's at the store. Tell him to leave the clerk in charge and hitch up and take me for a little drive. I want some of this June morning myself."

Abbott obeyed with alacrity. On his return, Miss Sapphira said, "Bob's going to fight for you at the board meeting, Abbott. We'll do what we can, and I hope you'll help yourself."

As Abbott went down the fragrant street with its cool hose-refreshed pavements, its languorous shadows athwart rose-bush and picket fence, his hopeful weeds already peering through the crevices where plank sidewalks maintained their worm-eaten right of way, he was in no dewy-morning mood. He understood what those wise nods had meant, and he was in no frame of mind for such wisdom. He meant to go far, far away from the boarding-house, from the environment of schools and school-boards, from Littleburg with its atmosphere of ridiculous gossip.

Of course he could have gone just as far, if he had not chosen the direction of Blubb's Rifle—but he had to take some direction. He halted before he came in sight of the stream; if Fran had a mind to fish with Simon Jefferson, he would not spoil her sport.

He found a comfortable log where he might study under the gracious sky. He did not learn much—there seemed a bird in every line.

When he closed his books, scarcely knowing why, and decided to ramble, it was with no intention of seeking Fran. Miss Sapphira might have guessed what would happen, but in perfect innocence, the young man strolled, seeking a grassy by-road, seldom used, redolent of brush, tree, vine, dust-laden weed. It was a road where the sun seemed almost a stranger; a road gone to sleep and dreaming of the feet of stealthy Indians, of noisy settlers, and skillful trappers. All such fretful bits of life had the old road drained into oblivion, and now it seemed to call on Abbott to share their fate, the fate of the forgotten.

But the road lost its mystic meaning when Abbott discovered Fran. Suddenly it became only a road—naked, it became nothing. It seemed that the sight of Fran always made wreckage of the world about her.

She was sitting in the Gregory buggy, but most surprising of all, there was no horse between the shafts—no horse was to be seen, anywhere. Best of all, no Simon Jefferson was visible. Fran in the buggy—that was all. Slow traveling, indeed, even for this sleepy old road!

"Not in a hurry, are you?" "I've arrived," Fran said, in unfriendly tone.

"Are you tired of fishing, Fran?" "Yes, and of being fished."

She had closed the door in his face, but he said—as through the keyhole—"Does that mean for me to go away?" "You are a pretty good friend, Mr. Gregory."

"I'm glad we're here, Fran, for you have your friendly look."

"That's because I really do like you. Let's talk about yourself—how you expect to be what you'll be—you're nothing yet, you know, Abbott; but how did you come to determine to be something?"

Into Abbott's smile stole something tender and sacred. "It was all my mother," he explained simply. "She died before I received my state certificate, but she thought I'd be a great man—so I am trying for it."

"And she'll never know," Fran lamented. (TO BE CONTINUED)

Had Not Fair Chance in Life. Recent statistics as to the life history of the inmates of the Elmira (N. Y.) reformatory, the prison to which offenders under the age of 25 are sent on their first conviction, show that 60 per cent. of them were raised in orphan asylums.

Grass and Live Stock. Grass and live stock should go hand in hand. There is no farm, in my judgment, which, if properly handled and kept at least one-half of the time in grasses and clovers, and gradually brought under a proper system of rotation, would not produce more, in fact, double the crops which it now does, and yet constantly be growing better and better.

Chickens and Hogs. If a woman can hate anything she hates a chicken-eating hog. The chickens don't know the difference between that kind and the other, so keep them apart, and keep peace in the family.

Quality Instead of Quantity. Overgrown fowls are no better in any particular than those of normal size. The breeding care and selection designed for increasing size had better be devoted to the development of laying qualities and table quality instead of quantity.

Increase Milk Supply. Properly managed, the silo will increase the amount of milk that can be produced upon the farm and will also aid to cut down the cost of production.

ROAD BUILDING

TEXAS BUILDING GOOD ROADS

Over Four Hundred Miles in Course of Construction—Many Counties Are Interested.

According to reports recently compiled for the consideration of the Texas Welfare commission, there are now in course of construction 437 miles of good roads within the state, with a prospect of double this amount during the next 12 months. On its face this looks like a large per cent. of improved highways for Texas, but on an area basis it is a small showing, and to secure the per cent. of mileage of good roads that the banner state, Connecticut, has we will have to build 525,000 miles more.

Several of the largest undertakings of the south are now contemplated in the state, and one or two have taken tangible form, writes Ida M. Darden, in the Houston Post. The Red river-to-the-gulf highway, the much talked of and long hoped for trans-state road, when built, will have a total mileage of 630, and will serve more than fifty million acres of the state's most desirable agricultural land. Two-thirds of the counties along the route of this proposed highway are now building their links of the great thoroughfare. It has been estimated by the Texas Commercial Secretaries and Business Men's association, who keep close tab on road building throughout the state, that this highway will be completed

"I'm glad you ended up that way. Now look me in the eyes. Suppose you should see the school-board sailing down the road, Miss Sapphira thrown in. What would you do?" "What should I do?"

"Hide, I suppose," said Fran, suddenly rippling. "Then you look me in the eyes and listen to me," he said impressively. "Weigh my words—have you scales strong enough?"

"Put 'em on slow and careful." "I am not Mr. Chameleon for I show my true color. And I am a real friend, no matter what kind of tree I am!" He paused, groping for a word.

"Up?" she suggested, with a sudden chuckle. "All right—let the school-board come. But you don't seem surprised to see me here in the buggy without Mr. Simon."

"When Mr. Simon comes he'll find me right here," Abbott declared. "Fran, please don't be always showing your worst side to the town; when you laugh at people's standards, they think you queer—and you can't imagine just how much you are to me."

"Huh!" Fran sniffed. "I'd hate to be anybody's friend and have my friendship as little use as yours has been to me."

"He was deeply wounded. 'I've tried to give good advice.'" "I don't need advice, I want help in carrying out what I already know." Her voice vibrated. "You're afraid of losing your position if you have anything to do with me. Of course I'm queer. Can I help it, when I have no real home, and nobody cares whether I go or stay?"

"You know I care, Fran." Fran caught her lip between her teeth as if to hold herself steady. "Oh, let's drive," she said recklessly, striking at the dashboard with a whip, and shaking her hair about her face till she looked the elfish child he had first known.

"Fran, you know I care—you know it." "Well, drive into Sure-Enough Country," she said with a half-smile showing on the side of her face next him. "Whoa! Here we are. All who live in Sure-Enough Country are sure-enough people—whatever they say is true. Goodness!" She opened her eyes very wide—"It's awful dangerous to talk in Sure-Enough Country." She put up her whip, and folded her hands.

"I'm glad we're here, Fran, for you have your friendly look." "That's because I really do like you. Let's talk about yourself—how you expect to be what you'll be—you're nothing yet, you know, Abbott; but how did you come to determine to be something?"

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HAD NOTHING AT ALL TO SAY

Under the Circumstances Captain Could Hardly Be Blamed for Preserving Silence.

Everybody in Middle Bay knew that Mrs. Captain Liscomb was talking about making a visit to her married daughter in Cincinnati. She had been talking about it for two years, but she and the natural timidity of a woman unused to travel had postponed the great event from month to month, until the neighbors began to wonder whether it would ever come to pass.

So one morning, when Uncle Billy Evans met Captain Liscomb in Eccles' store, there was twinkle in his eye as he asked:

"When's Miss Liscomb going out to Ohio, Daniel?"

"Don't ask me!" returned the captain, a little peevishly. "I don't know nothin' about it. If I tell her to go, she says I want to get rid of her. If I tell her to stay to home, she says 'I mean!' I ain't saying a single word!"

ECZEMA SPREAD OVER BODY

Roxbury, Ohio.—"When my little boy was two weeks old he began breaking out on his cheeks. The eczema began just with pimples and they seemed to itch so badly he would scratch his face and cause a matter to run. Wherever that matter would touch it would cause another pimple until it spread all over his body. It caused disfigurement while it lasted. He had fifteen places on one arm and his head had several. The deepest places on his cheeks were as large as a silver dollar on each side. He was so restless at night we had to put mittens on him to keep him from scratching them with his finger nails. If he got a little too warm at night it seemed to hurt badly.

"We tried a treatment and he didn't get any better. He had the eczema about three weeks when we began using Cuticura Soap and Ointment. I bathed him at night with the Cuticura Soap and spread the Cuticura Ointment on and the eczema left." (Signed) Mrs. John White, Mar. 19, 1913.

Cuticura Soap and Ointment sold throughout the world. Sample of each free, with 35-p. Skin Book. Address postcard "Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston."—Adv.

His Farewell Speech. James H. Walls, the fly man of Boise, has made Idaho the most sanitary and most flyproof state in the Union.

Mr. Willis, discussing his success with a New York reporter, laughed and said:

"I have succeeded in eradicating the fly by making all Idaho hate the fly, even as poor old Dan Carson hated his wife.

"Poor old Dan lay dying. His wife, melted a little for once, said to him: 'You're going, Dan.' "Dan, his eyes closed, made no answer. His wife then repeated, with a sigh: 'Dan, you're going, but I'll soon follow you.' "Upon this Dan's glassy orbs opened, and he said in a hollow voice: 'You stay here as long as you can.'"

Question of Hearing. The burly farmer strode anxiously into the post office. "Have you got any letters for Mike Howe?" he asked.

The new postmaster looked him up and down. "For who?" he snapped. "Mike Howe?" replied the farmer. The postmaster turned aside.

"You don't understand!" roared the applicant. "Can't you understand plain English? I asked if you've got any letter for Mike Howe!" "Well, I haven't," snorted the postmaster. "Neither have I a letter for anybody else's cow! Get out."

Mean Intimation. "What is this hard round object which has just rolled to my feet?" "I don't know whether it's a golf ball or one of my wife's biscuits."

Appropriate One. "What kind of a horse do you think would suit a fireman best?" "I suppose a plug would."

AN OLD NURSE Persuaded Doctor to Drink Postum. An old faithful nurse and an experienced doctor, are a pretty strong combination in favor of Postum, instead of tea and coffee.

The doctor said: "I began to drink Postum five years ago on the advice of an old nurse."

"During an unusually busy winter, between coffee, tea and overwork, I became a victim of insomnia. In a month after beginning Postum, in place of tea and coffee, I could eat anything and sleep as soundly as a baby."

"In three months I had gained twenty pounds in weight. I now use Postum altogether instead of tea and coffee; even at bedtime with a soda cracker or some other tasty biscuit."

"Having a little tendency to Diabete, I used a small quantity of saccharine instead of sugar, to sweeten with. I may add that today tea or coffee are never present in our house and very many patients, on my advice, have adopted Postum as their regular beverage."

"In conclusion I can assure anyone that, as a refreshing, nourishing and nerve-strengthening beverage, there is nothing equal to Postum." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Write for booklet, "The Road to Wellville."

Postum comes in two forms. Regular (must be boiled). Instant Postum doesn't require boiling but is prepared instantly by stirring a level teaspoonful in an ordinary cup of hot water, which makes it right for most persons.

QUEER THING IS THE TURTLE

Scotch Naturalist of Wide Repute Declares It is Neither Fish, Flesh Nor Fowl.

According to Macdonald, a Scotch naturalist of wide repute, the turtle is the strangest of all living things and the most unfathomable. He can live in the water as well as out of it and can seemingly go for indefinite lengths of time without air or food or light.

He is neither fish nor flesh nor fowl, and yet he has the characteristics of all three. As for his eating, it seems quite superfluous, for he can remain shut up in a barrel for a number of weeks and emerge at the end of the time apparently none the worse for the lack of food and light and air.

The baby turtle seems also just as indifferent to its surroundings as its parents are. As soon as it comes forth from its egg it scuttles off to the sea. It has no one to teach or guide it. In its brain seems implanted the idea that until its armor becomes hard it has no defense against hungry fish. And so it seeks shelter in gulf weed



"My Unfortunate Child—My Daughter—Oh, Why Were You Born."



He Understood What Those Wise Nods Had Meant.