



FRAN

BY JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. IRWIN MYERS

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SYNOPSIS.

Fran arrives at Hamilton Gregory's home in Littleburg and finds him absent conducting the choir at a camp meeting. She repairs thither in search of him, laughing during the service and is asked to leave. About Ashton, superintendent of schools, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells her Gregory is a wealthy man, deeply interested in charity work, and a pillar of the church. Ashton becomes greatly interested in Fran and while taking leave of her, holds her hand and is seen by Sapphira Clinton, sister of Robert Clinton, chairman of the school board. Fran tells Gregory she wants a home with him. Grace Noir, Gregory's private secretary, takes a violent dislike to Fran and advises her to go away at once. Fran hints at a twenty-year-old secret, and Gregory in agitation asks Grace to leave the room. Fran relates the story of how Gregory married a young girl at Springfield, while attending college and then deserted her. Fran is the child of that marriage. Gregory had married his present wife three years before the death of Mrs. Gregory. Fran takes a liking to Mrs. Gregory. Ashton explains that Fran is the daughter of a very dear friend who is dead. Fran agrees to the story. Mrs. Gregory insists on her making her home with them and takes her to her arms. Fran declares the secretary must go. Grace begins nagging Fran in an effort to drive Fran from the Gregory home. Ashton, while taking a walk alone at midnight, finds Fran on a bridge telling her fortune by cards. She tells Abbott that she is the famous lion tamer, Fran Nonpareil, who is tired of the circus and sought a home. Grace tells of seeing Fran come home after midnight with a man. She guesses part of the story and surprises the rest from Ashton. She decides to ask Bob Clinton to go to Springfield to investigate Fran's story. Fran enlists Ashton in her battle against Gregory. Fran offers her services to Gregory, as secretary during the temporary absence of Grace. The latter, hearing of Fran's purpose, returns and interrupts a touching scene between father and daughter. Fran goes fishing with Mrs. Gregory's mother, Ashton, whose relation as superintendent is to be decided that day. He finds her sitting alone in a buggy. He joins her and is discovered by Clinton and his sister. Grace tells Gregory she intends to marry Clinton and quit his service. He joins her and she cannot continue his work without her. Carried away by passion, he takes her in his arms. Fran walks out and she declares that Grace must leave the house at once.

CHAPTER XVI.—Continued.

Gregory beheld the awful secret quivering upon her lips. The danger drove him mad. "You devil!" he shouted, rushing upon her.

Fran stood immovable, her eyes fastened on his. "Don't strike me," she said tensely, "don't strike me, I warn you, unless you kill at the first blow."

He staggered back as if her words possessed physical impact. He shrunk in a heap in the library chair and dropped his head upon his arms. To prevent Grace from learning the truth, he could have done almost anything in that first moment of insane terror; but he could not strike Fran.

In the meantime, Mrs. Gregory had been ascending the stairs. They could hear her now, as she softly moved along the hall. No one in the library wished, at that moment, to confront the wife, and absolute silence reigned in the apartment. They heard her pause, when opposite the door, doubtless to assure herself that the typewriter was at work. It she did not hear the clicking of the keys, she might conclude Grace was absent, and enter.

Gregory raised his haggard head with an air suggesting meditated flight. Even Grace cowered back instinctively.

Swift as a shadow, Fran darted on tiptoe to the typewriter, and began pounding upon it vigorously.

Mrs. Gregory passed on her way, and when she reached the farther end of the hall, an old hymn which she had been humming, broke into audible words. Fran snatched the sheet from the typewriter, and bent her head to listen. The words were soft, full of a thrilling faith, a dauntless courage—

"Still all my song shall be Nearer my God to Thee, Nearer—"

A door closed. She was gone. Gregory dropped his head with a groan.

It seemed to Fran that the voice of his wife who was not a wife, lingered in the room. The hymn, no longer audible, had left behind it a fragrance, as sometimes lingers the sweet savor of a prayer, after its "amen" has, as it were, dropped back into the heart whence it issued. Fran instinctively held out both arms toward the direction of the door just closed, as if she could see Mrs. Gregory kneeling behind it.

"Almost," she said, in a solemn undertone, "thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Had anyone but Mrs. Gregory been singing that hymn, had anyone but Fran been the one to intrude upon the library scene, Grace must have been overwhelmed. As it was, she stood

quite untouched, resolving to stay in order to prove herself, and to show Gregory that they must sacrifice their love for conscience sake.

Gregory, however, was deeply touched by Fran's yearning arms. He rose and stood before her. "Fran, child, we promise that what you saw shall never happen again. But you mustn't tell about it. I know you won't. I can't send Grace away, because I need her. She will not go because she knows herself to be strong. We are going to hide our souls. And you can't tell what you've seen, on account of her—"

He pointed in the direction of his wife.

Fran knew very well what he meant. If she told the secret, it would disgrace Mrs. Gregory. The revelation might drive Grace away, though Fran did not think so, but certainly whether Grace went, or stayed, it would break the heart of the one she loved best in that home. Gregory was right; Fran could never betray him.

She turned blindly upon Grace: "Then have you no conscience?—you are always talking about one. Does no sense of danger warn you away? Can't you feel any shame?"

Grace did not smile contemptuously. She weighed these words at their real value, and soberly interrogated herself. "No," she declared with deliberation, "I feel no sense of danger because I mean to guard myself after this. And my conscience bids me stay, to show that I have not really done anything—"

But she could not deny the feeling of shame, for the burning of her cheeks proved the recollection of hot kisses.

"But suppose I tell what I have seen?"

"Well," said Grace, flashing out defiantly, "and suppose you do!"

Gregory muttered: "Who would believe you?"

Fran looked at him. "Then," she said, "the coward spoke." She added: "I guess the only way is for you to make her leave. There's nothing in her for me to appeal to."

"I will never tell her to go," he assured her defiantly.

"While, on the contrary," said Grace, "I fancy you will be put to flight in three or four days."

Fran threw back her head and laughed silently while they stared at her in blank perplexity.

Fran regained composure to say coolly, "I was just laughing. Then she stepped to her father's chair and handed him the sheet she had drawn from an unfinished letter to the Chicago Tribune."

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For surely Grace Noir was some other woman.

With these thoughts, Abbott met the evening train, to see Robert Clinton hastily emerge from the solitude he had endured in the midst of many.

Robert was in no pacific mood, and when he found himself almost in the arms of Abbott, his greeting was boisterous because impatient at being stopped. Abbott, knowing that Robert was not ordinarily effusive, thought, "He has the secret!"

Robert shook hands without delaying progress toward the waiting hack, bearing Abbott along on waves of greeting.

"But surely you are not going to ride!" Abbott expostulated.

"Business—very pressing—see you later."

"But I have business with you, Mr. Clinton, that can't wait. Come, walk with me to town and I'll explain; it'll delay you only a few minutes."

Like a restive horse on finding himself restrained, Robert Clinton lifted a leg without advancing. "Oh, very well," he agreed. "In fact, I've something important for you, old fellow, and I'll explain before I—before they, before," he ended, turning his back with a smothered growl.

"Lucky I was at the station," Abbott exclaimed, "since you've something to tell me, Bob. What is it?"

In thus addressing his old friend as "Bob" the young man was officially

looked at it fixedly, but Abbott held his hand upon the agitated arm.

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"Why are you sad, little boy?" asked the great man.

"Oh, sir, it is because Rothschild is dead," answered the boy.

"But he was not a relative of yours," added the great man.

"Ah, no! Therefore I weep," said the boy.

Read Story of Her Death.

When a blacksmith, named Lyon, declared that the body of a drowned woman, recently exhumed at Creil, France, was that of his wife, Juliette, who deserted him two years ago, a death certificate was made out in her name. Juliette, however, was very much alive, and, after reading the story in the Petit Parisien, she wrote an indignant letter to the authorities, demanding to be "officially resuscitated."

she won't be so cool when Mr. Clinton returns from Springfield."

"From Springfield?" echoed Gregory aghast.

"From Springfield, Mr. Gregory, I have made the discovery that this Fran, whom you imagined only about sixteen years old, and the daughter of an old friend, is really of age. She's nothing but a circus-girl. You thought her joking when she called herself a lion-tamer; that's the way she meant for us to take it—but she can't deceive me. She's nothing but a show-girl pretending to come from Springfield. But I know better. So I've sent Mr. Clinton there to find out all about the family of your friend, and in particular about the girl that this Fran is impersonating."

"You sent Bob Clinton to Springfield?" gasped Gregory, as if his mind could get no further than that. Then he turned savagely upon Fran—"And did you tell her about Springfield?"

Fran smiled her crooked smile.

Grace interposed: "You may be sure she didn't! Do you think she wanted her history cleared up? Mr. Gregory, you are so blinded by what she says that you won't investigate her claims. I decided to do this for your sake. When Mr. Clinton comes back, it's good-by to this circus-girl!"

Fran looked at her father inscrutably. "I believe, after this," she said, "it will be safe to leave you two together."

CHAPTER XVII.

Shall the Secret Be Told?

Fran had expected Robert Clinton's return in four or five days, as had Grace Noir, but secrets that have been buried for many years are not picked up in a day. However, had the chairman of the school-board returned the day after his departure, Abbott Ashton would have met him at the station. Twice, in the opinion of Fran, the young man had failed her by allowing Gregory's mind to flash to important discoveries along the path of his insulated remarks about the weather. This third time was more equal, since he was to deal with no Grace Noir—merely with a man.

As Littleburg had only one railroad, and it a "branch," it was not difficult to meet every train; moreover, Miss Sapphira's hasty notes from her brother kept Abbott advised. At first, Miss Sapphira said, "It will be a week," later—"Then days more—and the business left like this!" Then came the final bulletin: "I may come tomorrow. Look for me when you see me."

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The general and widespread evidences of sorrow occasioned by the death of Mr. Morgan are everywhere apparent. They find some form of expression not only among the eminent and the wealthy, but to some extent among the poor and the lowly as well. It is always so. The taking-off of distinguished people who have creditably served their day and generation affects us all, more or less, in one

declaring that their relationship as teacher and school-director was for ever at an end, and they stood as man to man.

Clinton spoke rapidly, with his wonted brusqueness: "Guess you know I've been knocking about the country for the last three or four weeks—saw a good many old friends—a fellow can go anywhere without meeting somebody he knows—curious, isn't it? Well, I've just got an opening for you. You know how sorry I am because we had to plump another teacher on to your job, but don't you worry if Fran did your hand—just you keep your hands in your pockets after this, when there's danger—Say! I've got something lots better for you than Littleburg. School out in Oklahoma—rich—private man behind it—he owns the whole plant, and he's determined to run it to suit the new ideas. This rich man—chum of mine—went West, bought land, sat on it, got up with his jeans full of money. Wants you to come at once."

Abbott was elated. "What kind of new ideas, Bob?" he asked joyously.

"Of that impractical nonsense of teaching life instead of books. You know what I mean, but I don't think I do. Don't worry about it now—something terrible's on my mind—just awful! I can't think of anything else. What you want to do is to scoot out to Tahleah, Oklahoma, to this address—here's his card—tell 'em Bob sent you—"

He looked at Abbott feverishly, as if almost hoping Abbott would bolt for Tahleah then and there. His broad red face was set determinedly.

"This news is splendid!" Abbott declared enthusiastically. "I had already applied for a country school; I was afraid I had lost out a whole year, on account of—everything I must thank—"

"Abbott, I don't want to be thanked. I haven't got time to be thanked. Yonder's Hamilton Gregory's house and that's where I'm bound—good night—"

"But, Bob, I haven't told you my business—"

"I'll hear it later, old fellow—dear old fellow—I think a heap of you, old Abb. But I must go now—"

"No, you mustn't. Before you go into that house, we must have a little talk. We can't talk here—people are coming and going—"

"I don't want to talk here, bless you! I want to go in that house. My business is private and pressing." The gate was but a few yards away; he

looked at it fixedly, but Abbott held his hand upon the agitated arm.

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Robert. "What business can you have with me that wouldn't wait till morning? Look here, I'm desperate!"

"So am I!" retorted Abbott. "Bob, you've been to Springfield."

Robert Clinton snatched open the yard-gate, muttering, "That's my business—"

"Miss Noir sent you to unearth a secret."

"Oh!" exclaimed Robert, in an altered tone, stopping in the gateway, "did she tell you about it?"

"No—but you've brought back that secret, and you must not tell it to Miss Noir."

"Not tell her? That's funny!" Robert produced a sound which he expected to pass as laughter. "So that's what you wanted to tell me, is it? Do you know what the secret is?"

"I do not. But you mustn't tell it."

"However, that's what I'm going to do, as soon as I reach that door—take your hand off, man, my blood's up by George! Can't you see my blood's up? It's a-boiling, that's what it's doing! So all you want is to ask me not to tell that secret?"

"Not exactly all."

"Well, well—quick! What else?"

"To see that you don't tell it."

"How do you mean to see that I don't tell it?"

"You will listen to reason, Bob," said Abbott persuasively.

"No, I won't!" cried Robert. "Not me! No, sir! I'm going to tell this minute."

"You shall not!" said Abbott, in a lower and more compelling tone. His manner was so absolute, that Robert Clinton, who had forced his way almost to the porch-steps, was slightly moved.

"See here, Abbott—say! Fran knows all about it, and you pretend to think a good deal of her. Well, it's to her interests for the whole affair to be laid open to the world."

"I think so much of Fran," was the low and earnest rejoinder, "that if I were better fixed, I'd ask her to marry me without a moment's delay. And I think enough of her, not to ask her to marry me, until I have a good position. Now it was Fran who asked me to see that you didn't betray the secret. And I think so much of her, that I'm going to see that you don't!"

For a moment Clinton was silent; then he said in desperation: "Where is your nice dark alley? Come on, then, let's get it in!"

When they were safe from interruption, Clinton resumed: "You tell me that Fran wants that secret kept? I'd think she'd want it told everywhere. This secret is nothing at all but the wrong that was done Fran and her mother. And since you are so frank about how you like Fran, I'll follow suit and say that I have asked Grace Noir to marry me, and I know I'll stand a better show by getting her out of the hypnotic spell of that miserable scoundrel who poses as a bleating sheep—"

Abbott interrupted: "The wrong done Fran? How do you mean?"

"Why, man, that—that hypocrite in wool, that weed that infests the ground, that—"

"In short, Mr. Gregory? But what about the wrong done Fran?"

"Ain't I telling you? That worm-eaten pillar of the church that's made me lose so much faith in religion that I ain't got enough left worth the postage stamp to mail it back to the revival meeting where it came from—"

"For heaven's sake, Bob, tell me what wrong Mr. Gregory did Fran?"

"Didn't he marry Fran's mother when he was a college chap in Springfield, and then desert her? Didn't he marry again, although his first wife—Fran's mother—was living, and hadn't been divorced? Don't he refuse to acknowledge Fran as his daughter, making her pass herself off as the daughter of some old college chum? That's what he did, your choir-leader! I'd like to see that baton of his laid over his back; I'd like to lay it, myself!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Her Help.

"The fact of the matter is, I never married to anything before I was married."

"Then you give your wife credit for awakening your ambition?"

"No; for making it necessary for me to get out and hustle."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Worse Than Heat Produces

"Burn" Made by Cold Causes Stubborn Wound That Is Some Weeks in Healing.

Whoever has applied a moltened finger to a piece of frosty metal in winter well remembers the painful experience thereby gained of the fact that cold, as well as heat, can blister the skin.

During some experiments in the production of excessively low temperatures, the French investigator, Pictet, the French chemist, was burned himself with cold several times, and the effects were so remarkable, says Harper's Weekly, that he deemed them worthy of description to a body of scientific men.

It appears that there are two kinds or degrees of cold burn. In the case of the less severe "burns" the skin at first turns red, but becomes blue the next day. The inflamed spot swells, and a period, varying from a month to six weeks, elapses before the wound heals.

When the contact with the cold substance is longer and more complete,

a burn of the second degree is produced. A malignant and stubborn wound is formed, and the process of healing is very slow.

A drop of liquid air falling on Pictet's hand, produced a cold burn which did not completely heal in six months, while a scorch from heat, accidentally inflicted on the same hand and nearly at the same time, was healed in ten or twelve days.

Reducing Cost of Harvest.

Grain is hereafter not to be reaped, but will be threshed in the field as it stands, saving the farmers something like \$200,000,000 a year. This is the claim of Frank Morse, who describes in the Technical World Magazine the recent invention of a Kansas, Curtis C. Baldwin. The machine has been used for three successive harvests, but proved its utility and practicability most conclusively last fall when it threshed from 25 to 30 acres of standing grain in a ten-hour day. The inventor contends that it will reduce the cost of the harvest from 14 cents to 2 cents a bushel.—San Francisco Argonaut.

Not even a woman ever liked all her relatives.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic, &c. A bottle 10c.

Ever notice how much fuss men make about their honor—on the stage?

Red Cross Ball Blue gives double value for your money, goes twice as far as any other. Ask your grocer. Adv.

Tact.

"Of course these pies are not like 'Not a bit, dear. Poor mother never ones your mother used to make,' or could make pies fit to eat."

WATERY BLISTERS ON FACE

Smithville, Ind.—"Six months ago our only girl, one year old, had a few red pimples come on her face which gradually spread causing her face to become very irritated and a fiery red color. The pimples on the child's face were at first small watery blisters, just a small blotch on the skin. She kept scratching at this until in a few days her whole cheeks were fiery red color and instead of the little blisters the skin was cracked and scaly looking and seemed to itch and burn very much."

"We used a number of remedies which seemed to give relief for a short time then leave her face worse than ever. Finally we got a cake of Cuticura Soap and a box of Cuticura Ointment. I washed the child's face with very warm water and Cuticura Soap, then applied the Cuticura Ointment very lightly. After doing this about three times a day the itching and burning seemed entirely gone in two days' time. Inside of two weeks' time her face seemed well. That was eight months ago and there has been no return of the trouble." (Signed) Mrs. A. K. Wooden, Nov. 4, 1912.

Cuticura Soap and Ointment sold throughout the world. Sample of each free, with 32-p. Skin Book. Address post-card "Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston."—Adv.

SUFFERED AWFUL PAINS

For Sixteen Years, Restored To Health by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Moretown, Vermont.—"I was troubled with pains and irregularities for sixteen years, and was thin, weak and nervous. When I would lie down it would seem as if I was going right down out of sight into some dark hole, and the window curtains had faces that would peck out at me, and when I was out of doors it would seem as if something was going to happen. My blood was poor, my circulation was so bad I would be like a dead person at times. I had female weakness badly, my abdomen was sore and I had awful pains."

"I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and used the Sanative Wash and they certainly did wonders for me. My troubles disappeared and I am able to work hard every day."—Mrs. W. F. SAWYER, River View Farm, Moretown, Vermont.

Another Case.

Gifford, Iowa.—"I was troubled with female weakness, also with displacement. I had very severe and steady headache, also pain in back and was very thin and tired all the time. I commenced taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and I am cured of these troubles. I cannot praise your medicine too highly."—Mrs. INA MILLS, SLAGLE, Gifford, Iowa.

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