

# FRAN

BY JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. IRWIN MYERS

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### 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, leaving during the interview and the choir leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of the school, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells her Gregory is a wealthy man, deeply interested in charity work, and a pillar of the church. Fran takes a keen interest 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. Gregory tells her she is a 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 the girl and her mother. Mrs. Gregory 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 home. Fran declares the secretary must go. Grace begins nagging tactics in an effort to drive Fran from the house. She tells Fran to go to her home. Abbott, while taking a walk alone at midnight, finds Fran on her way to her home. She tells her she is the famous lion tamer, Fran Nonpareil. She tells her she is a girl 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 Abbott. She decides to ask Bob Clinton to go to Springfield to investigate Fran's story. Fran enlists Abbott in her battle against Grace. Fran offers her services to Gregory as a secretary. The latter, hearing of Fran's purpose, sends her to the temporary touching scene between father and daughter. Grace tells Gregory she intends to marry Clinton and his secretary. He declares that he cannot continue to work without her. Carried away by passion, he takes her in his arms. She walks in on them, and declares that Gregory's consternation by means of Clinton's mission to Springfield. Clinton refuses Fran's services. At Fran's request, Ashton urges him not to disclose what he has learned. On Abbott's assurance that Fran will leave Gregory at once, Clinton agrees to keep silent. Driven in to a corner by the threat of exposure, Gregory is forced to disclose to Fran that he is the job of bookkeeper in Clinton's grocery store. Gregory declares he will kill himself if she marries Clinton.

**CHAPTER XX.—Continued.**

It was the close of a July day that Hamilton Gregory left his house resolved, at any cost—save that of exposure—to experience once more the only pleasure life had in reserve for him: nearness to Grace Noe. She might be at the store, since all shops were to remain open late, in hopes of reaping sordid advantages from the gaiety of mankind. In a word, Littleburg was in the grip of its first street fair.

Before going down-town, Gregory strolled casually within sight of the Clinton boarding-house. Only Miss Sapphira was on the green veranda. Miss Sapphira, recognizing Gregory, waved a solemn greeting, and he felt reassured—for he was always afraid Robert would "tell." He pushed his way near her.

"In Miss Noe here?" Gregory asked in a strained voice; the confusion hid

"But I have been dying to be near you, to talk to you."

The odd catch his voice had suffered in getting over the name.

"No. She's down-town—but not at any show, you may be sure. She's left late at the store because—I guess you've heard Abbott Ashton has been away a long time."

"I have heard nothing of the young man," Gregory replied stiffly.

"Well, he's been off two or three weeks somewhere, nobody knows unless it's Bob, and Bob won't tell anything any more. Abbott wrote he'd be home tonight, and Bob drove over

"What do you call it? A resignation?"

"Grace!—we have only a few moments to be alone. For pity's sake, look at me kindly and use another tone—a tone like the dear days when you were by my side. . . . We may never be together again."

In his realization that it was Fran, and Fran alone, who separated them, Gregory passed into a state of anger, to which his love added recklessness. "Grace, hate me if you must, but you shall not misunderstand me!"

She laughed. "Please don't ask me to understand you, Mr. Gregory, while you hide the only secret to your understanding. Don't come to me with pretended liking when what you call 'mysterious business interests' at Springfield drive me from your door, and keep Fran at my desk."

He interposed in a low, passionate voice. "I am resolved that you should

preme court has taken the oath of allegiance when accepting his appointment to our highest tribunal. More than that, every attorney who has practiced before the Supreme court since that date—1890—has pledged his allegiance over the little volume. All, with one exception also, and that exception was Daniel Webster.

It is told even yet of the Supreme court of that day that Mr. Webster's fame as an orator had so preceded him that on the occasion when he came to argue his first case before the court the clerk, Mr. Caldwell, in his eagerness to hear the great speaker, forgot to administer the oath—Christian Herald.

**Where Old Gens Go.**

"Goodness gracious!" exclaims the housewife, "I wonder what becomes of all the tin cans that are thrown away." Never fear, dear madam, they are not lost, nor does one of them go to waste.

A friend of the visitor, who is a well-known business man, is thoroughly acquainted with the tin can from its infancy to the day of its doom.

**BIBLE HAS LONG HISTORY**

That Used in the Supreme Court Probably the Oldest Connected With the Government.

It is a tiny little book, only five and one-half inches long and three and one-half inches wide. It is bound in bright red Morocco leather, with the word "Bible" printed in diminutive gold letters on the back. But one does not see that red Morocco cover unless he removes the little black leather slip which protects it.

Long, long ago the little red Bible began to show wear, and then the black leather slip was made to protect it—so long ago, in fact, that 15 of those covers, made to protect the venerated little volume, were worn out in the service. It is without doubt one of the oldest Bibles, if not the very oldest Bible, connected with the government, and is certainly the most historical.

It is in the book upon which since 1890 every chief justice—with the single exception of Chief Justice Chase—and every member of the Su-

to Simtown to meet him in the surrey, so Miss Grace is alone down there—"She nodded ponderously. "Alone!" he exclaimed involuntarily. "Yes—I look for Bob and Abbott now just any minute." She added, eyeing the crowd—"I saw Fran on the street, long and merry ago!" Her accent was that of condemnation. Like a rock she sat, letting the fickle populace drift by to minstrel show and snake den. The severity of her double chin said they might all go thither—she would not.

This was also Gregory's point of view; and even in his joy at finding the coast clear, he paused to say, "I am sorry that Fran seems to have lost all reason over this carnival company. If she would show half as much interest in her son's welfare—"

He left the sentence unfinished. The thought of Grace had grown supreme—it seemed to illuminate some wide and splendid road into a glorious future.

The bookkeeper's desk was in a gallery near the ceiling of the Clinton grocery store; one looked thence, through a picket-fence, down upon the only floor. Doubtless Grace, thus looking, saw him coming. When he reached her side, he was breathless, partly from the struggle through the masses, principally from excitement of fancied security.

She was posting up the ledger, and made no sign of recognition until he called her name.

"Mr. Clinton is not here," she said remotely. "Can I do anything for you?"

He admired her calm courtesy. If at the same time she could have been reserved and yielding he would have found the impossible combination perfect. Because it was impossible, he was determined to preserve her angelic purity in imagination, and to restore her womanly charm to actual being.

"How can you receive me so coldly," he said impulsively, "when I've not seen you for weeks?"

"You see me at church," she answered impersonally.

"But I have been dying to be near you, to talk to you—"

"Stop!" she held up her hand. "You should know that Mr. Clinton and I are—"

"Grace!" he groaned.

She whispered, her face suddenly growing pale, "Are engaged." The tete-a-tete was beyond her supposed strength.

"Engaged!" he echoed, as if she had pronounced one of the world's great tragedies. "Then you will give yourself to that man—yourself, Grace, that beautiful girl—and without love? It's a crime! Don't commit the horrible blunder that's ruined my life. See what wretchedness has come to me—"

"Then you think," very slowly, "that I ought to let Fran ruin my whole life because your wife has ruined yours? Then you think that after I have been driven out of the house to make room for Fran, that I ought to stay single because you married unwisely?"

"Grace, don't say you are driven out."

"What do you call it? A resignation?"

"Grace!—we have only a few moments to be alone. For pity's sake, look at me kindly and use another tone—a tone like the dear days when you were by my side. . . . We may never be together again."

She looked at him with the same repellent expression, and spoke in the same bitter tone: "Well, suppose we're not? You and that Fran will be together."

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"Well, what does become of all these cans?" was asked the authority.

"They are," he replied, "reincarnated, so to speak, and become, in fact, a new tin can, but mostly a window weight." Then he explained how the old tin cans are gathered up and hurled into a furnace, and how the thin veneer of tin, which is merely the outer covering, is separated as a melted product from the steel, which forms the real basis for the can. The tin is far more valuable than the steel, and it is used over and over again for covering cans. The steel part, when melted, becomes a solid chunk; in fact, the solidest chunk in the whole steel family. Window weights must be small, but heavy; hence the use of steel from tin cans.

**Orator Slightly Mixed.**

A former senator of the United States was addressing a meeting in his home town to celebrate the appropriation by the legislature of funds for the erection of a new state capitol. "My fellow citizens," said he, "we will build here the greatest ap-tap-uh under God's green footstool."

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"He agreed to hide everything, if I'd send you away."

"Oh, I see! So even he is one of Fran's allies. Never mind—did you say that when you married the second time, your first wife was living, and had never been divorced?"

"But Grace—dear Grace! I thought it all right. I believed—"

She did not seem to hear him. "Then she is not your wife," she said in a low whisper.

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"She believes!" Her voice rose scornfully. "And so that is the fact Fran wanted hidden; you are not really bound to Mrs. Gregory."

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"No. I will not go with you, unless you take me now."

"Now? Immediately?" he gasped, bewildered.

"Without once turning back," she returned. "There's a train in something like an hour."

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"Do I want to see her again? But Grace, if we stay here until training time, Bob will come and—and find us—I don't want to meet Bob."

"Then let us go. There are such crowds on the streets that we can easily lose ourselves."

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"If you can't keep him from finding me," Grace said, "let him find. I do not consider that I am acting in the wrong. This is the beginning of our lives," she finished, with sudden joy.

"And if Bob sees me with you, Grace, after what he knows, you can guess that something very unpleasant would—"

Grace drew back, to look searchingly into his face. "Mr. Gregory," she said slowly, "you make difficulties."

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**CHAPTER XXI.**

**Flight.**

To reach the station, they must first penetrate the heart of the town, or follow the dark streets of the outskirts; in the latter case, their association would arouse surprise and comment, but in the throng reasonable safety might be expected.

After the first intense moment of exultation, both began to fear a possible search. Grace apparently dreaded discovery as shrinkingly as if her conscience were not clear, and Gregory, in the midst of his own perturbation, found it incongruous that she who was always right, wanted to hide. But Grace's hand was upon his arm, and the crowd pressed them close together—and she was always beautiful and divinely formed. The prospect of complete possession filled him

birth to six elephants. A high wind at the same hour that a goat gave then came up and killed three dead hares and a wooden cigar India. "What do you think of that, dear?" he questioned suddenly.

She gave a little start, smiled and said: "I think that's a splendid bargain. Henry. You had better get a half dozen, for your stock of shirts is low."

—Puck.

**Old-Time Coffee Drinking.**

Coffee, like tea, was from an early date welcomed as a rival to alcoholic liquors. Writing in 1659, shortly after its introduction into England, Howells makes the comment that "this coffee drink hath caused a great sobriety amongst all nations; formerly clerks, apprentices, etc., used to take their morning draughts in ale, beer or wine, which often made them unfit for business. Now they play the good fellows in this wakeful and civil drink. The worthy gentleman, Sir James Muddiford, who introduced the practice thereof first in London . . . was much respected of the whole nation."

**Flemings Built Up English Town.**

Rochdale, England, laid the foundation of its prosperity in the reign of Edward III, when a body of Flemish emigrants took up their abode there and introduced their craft as clothiers. Rochdale, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, had become so famous for its woolen manufacturers that the "aulnager," the official appointed by the queen to measure all woolen cloth made for sale, had to appoint a special deputy there to keep pace with its manufacture and see that the crown was not robbed of its dues.

**Effect of Music on Animals.**

A unique musical experience has been conducted recently in France. It was resolved to institute concerts for animals for the purpose of observing the effects of music upon them. The results of the observations made established the fact that disconnected tones on stringed instruments created no effect upon horses beyond causing some of the animals to manifest signs of impatience, but when a melody was played the horses turned toward the players, pricked up their ears and showed plainly the pleasure they experienced.

with ecstasy, while Grace herself yielded to the joy that had outgrown all other principles of conduct.

They gained the street before the court-house which by courtesy passed under the name of "the city square." Grace's hand grew tense on Gregory's arm—"Look!"

Her whisper was lost in the wind. But Gregory, following her frightened glance, saw Robert Clinton elbowing his way through the crowd, forcing his progress bluntly, or jovially, according to the nature of obstruction. He did not see them and, by dodging, they escaped.

The nearness of danger had paled Grace's cheeks. Gregory accepted his own trembling as natural, but Grace's evident fear acted upon his nebulous state of mind in a way to condense jumbled emotions into a deceptive longing into something like real thought. If they were in the right, why did they feel such expansive relief which the crowd swept them from the sidewalk to bear them far away from Robert Clinton?

The merry-go-round, its very music traveling in a circle, clashed its stent-whistlings and organ, wallings against a drum-and-trombone band, while these distinct strata of sound were cut across by an overtopping of graphophones and megaphones. Always out of sympathy with such displays, but now more than ever repelled by them, Grace and Gregory hurried away to find themselves penned in a court, surrounded on all sides by strident cries of "backers," crackling reports from target-practice, fusillades at the "doll-babies," clanging jays from strength-testers and the like; while from this horrid field of misgued energy, there was no outlet save the narrow entrance they had unwittingly used.

"Horrible!" exclaimed Grace, half-stumbling over the tent-ropes that entangled the ground. "We must get out of this."

It was not easy to turn about, so dense was the crowd.

Scarcely had they accomplished the maneuver when Grace exclaimed below her breath, "There he is!"

Sure enough, Robert Clinton stood at the narrowest point of their way.

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"No. I will not go with you, unless you take me now."

"Now? Immediately?" he gasped, bewildered.

"Without once turning back," she returned. "There's a train in something like an hour."

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"If you can't keep him from finding me," Grace said, "let him find. I do not consider that I am acting in the wrong. This is the beginning of our lives," she finished, with sudden joy.

"And if Bob sees me with you, Grace, after what he knows, you can guess that something very unpleasant would—"

Grace drew back, to look searchingly into his face. "Mr. Gregory," she said slowly, "you make difficulties."

He met her eyes, and his blood danced. "I make difficulties? No! Grace, you have made me the happiest man in the world. Yes, our lives begin with this night—our real lives. Grace, you're the best woman that ever lived!"

ing into his, "have you told me all the secret?"

"Yes—all."

"Then Mr. Clinton deceived me!"

"He agreed to hide everything, if I'd send you away."

"Oh, I see! So even he is one of Fran's allies. Never mind—did you say that when you married the second time, your first wife was living, and had never been divorced?"

"But Grace—dear Grace! I thought it all right. I believed—"

She did not seem to hear him. "Then she is not your wife," she said in a low whisper.

"She believes—"

"She believes!" Her voice rose scornfully. "And so that is the fact Fran wanted hidden; you are not really bound to Mrs. Gregory."

"In what way, then?"

"Why, in no regular way—I mean—but don't you see, there could be no marriage to make it binding, without telling her—"

"You are not bound at all," Grace interrupted. "You are free—as free as air—as free as I am. Are you determined not to understand me? Since you are free, there is no obstacle, in Heaven or on earth, to your wishes."

His passage from despair to sudden hope was so violent that he grasped the desk for support. "What?—Then you—you—Grace, would you—But—"

"You are free," said Grace, "and since Mr. Clinton's treachery, I do not consider myself bound."

"Grace!" he cried wildly, "Grace—star of my soul—go with me, go with me, fly with me in a week—darling. Let us arrange it for tomorrow."

"No. I will not go with you, unless you take me now."

"Now? Immediately?" he gasped, bewildered.

"Without once turning back," she returned. "There's a train in something like an hour."

"For ever?" He was delicious.

"And you are to be mine—Grace, you are to be mine—my very own!"

"Yes. But you are never to see Fran again."

"Do I want to see her again? But Grace, if we stay here until training time, Bob will come and—and find us—I don't want to meet Bob."

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