

FRAN

By JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS
Illustrations by O. Irwin Myers

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."

"We'll 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-though 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?"

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.

She slipped her hand into his. "Didn't I have a mother? Oh, these mothers! And who can make mother-wishes come true? Well! And you just studied with all your might; and you'll keep on and on, till you're . . . out of my reach, of course. Which would have suited your mother, too." She withdrew her hand.

"My mother would have loved you," he declared, for he did not understand, so well as Fran, about mothers' liking for strange young ladies who train lions.

"Mine would you," Fran asserted, with more reason.

Abbott, conscious of a dreadful emptiness, took Fran's hand again. "I'll never be out of your reach, Fran."

She did not seek to draw away, but said, with dark meaning, "Remember the bridge at midnight."

"I remember how you looked, with the moonlight silvering your face—you were just beautiful that night, little Nonpareil."

"My chin is so sharp," she murmured.

"Yes," he said, softly feeling the warm little fingers, one by one, as if to make sure all were there. "That's the way I like it—sharp."

"And I'm so ridiculously thin—"

"You're nothing like so thin as when you first came to Littleburg," he declared. "I've noticed how you are—have been—I mean . . ."

"Filling out?" cried Fran gleefully.

"Oh, yes, and I'm so glad you know, because since I've been wearing long dresses, I've been afraid you'd never find it out, and would always be thinking of me as you saw me at the beginning. But I am—yes—filling out."

"And your little feet, Fran—"

"Yes, I always had a small foot. But let's get off of this subject."

"Not until I say something about your smile—oh, Fran, that smile!"

"The subject, now," remarked Fran, "naturally returns to Grace Noir."

"Please, Fran!"

"I'll tell you why you hurt my feelings, Abbott. You've disappointed me twice. Oh, if I were a man, I'd show any meek-seed little hypocrite if she could prize secrets out of me. Just because it wears dresses and long hair, you think it an angel."

"Meaning Miss Grace, I presume?" remarked Abbott dryly. "But what is the secret, this time?"

"Didn't I trust you with the secret that I meant to apply for the position of secretary as soon as Grace Noir was out of the way? And I was just about to win the fight when here she came—hadn't been to the city at all, because you told her what I meant to do—handed her the secret, like a child giving up something it doesn't want."

"You are very unjust. I did not tell her your plan. I don't know how she found it out."

"From you; nobody else knew it."

"She did not learn it from me."

"—And that's what gets me!—you tell her everything, and don't even know you tell. Just hypnotized! Answer my questions: the morning after I told you what I meant to do—standing there at the fence by the gate—confiding in you, telling you everything—I say the next morning, didn't you tell Grace Noir all about it?"

"Certainly not."

Abbott tried to remember, then said casually, "I believe we did meet on the street that morning."

"Yes," said Fran ironically, "I believe you did meet somewhere. Of course she engaged you in her peculiar style of inquisitorial conversation?"

"We went down the street together."

"Now, prisoner at the bar, relate all that was said while going down the street together."

"Most charming, but unjust judge, not a word that I can remember, so it couldn't have been of any interest. I did tell her that since she—yes, I remember now—since she was to be out of town all day, I would wait until tomorrow to bring her a book she wanted to borrow."

"Oh! And she wanted to know who told you she would be out of town all day, didn't she?"

Abbott reflected deeply, then said with triumph, "Yes, she did. She asked me how I knew she was going to the



He Understood What Those Wise Nods Had Meant.

city with Bob Clinton. And I merely said that it was the understanding they were to select the church music. Not another word was said on the subject."

"That was enough. Mighty neat. As soon as she saw you were trying to avoid a direct answer, she knew I'd told you. That gave her a clew to my leaving the choir practice before the rest of them. She guessed something important was up. Well, Abbott, you are certainly an infant in her hands, but I guess you can't help it."

Self-pride was touched, and he retorted: "Fran, I hate to think of your being willing to take her position behind her back."

She crimsoned.

"You'd know how I feel about it," he went on, "if you understood her better. I know her duty drives her to act in opposition to you, and I'm sorry for it. But her religious ideals—"

"Abbott, be honest and answer—is there anything in it—this talk of doing God's will? Can people love God and hate one another? I just hate shams," she went on, becoming more excited. "I don't care what fine names you give them—whether it's marriage, or education, or culture, or religion, if there's no heart in it, it's a sham, and I hate it. I hate a lie. But a thousand times more, do I hate a life that is a lie."

"Fran, you don't know what you are saying."

"Yes I do know what I'm saying. Is religion going to church? That's all I can see in it. I want to believe there's something else, I've honestly searched, for I wanted to be comforted, I tell you, I need it. But I can't find any comfort in mortar and stained-glass windows. I want something that makes a man true to his wife, and makes a family live together in blessed harmony, something that's good on the streets and in the stores, something that makes people even treat a show-girl well. If there's anything in it, why doesn't father—"

She snatched away her hand that she might cover her face, for she had burst into passionate weeping. "Why doesn't a father, who's always talking about religion, and slogging about it, and praying about it—why doesn't that father draw his daughter to his breast . . . close, close to his heart—that's the only home she asks for—that's the home she has a right to, yes a right, I don't care how far she's wandered—"

"Fran!" cried Abbott, in great distress. "Don't cry, little one!" He had no intelligent word, but his arm was full of meaning as it slipped about her. "Who has been unkind to you, Nonpareil?" She let her head sink upon his shoulder, as she sobbed without restraint. "What shams have pierced your pure heart? Am I the cause of any of these tears? Am I?"

"Yes," Fran answered, between her sobs, "you're the cause of all my happy tears." She nestled there with a movement of perfect trust; he drew her closer, and stroked her hair tenderly, trusting himself.

Presently she pulled herself to rights, lifted his arm from about her, and rested it on the back of the seat—a friendly compromise. Then she shook back her hair and raised her eyes and a faint smile came into the rosy face. "I'm so funny," she declared. "Sometimes I seem so strange that I need an introduction to myself." She looked into Abbott's eyes fleetingly, and drew in the corners of her mouth. "I guess, after all, there's something in religion!"

Abbott was so warmed by returning sunshine that his eyes shone. "Dear Fran!" he said—it was very hard to keep his arm where she had put it. She tried to look at him steadily, but somehow the light hurt her eyes. She could feel its warmth burning her cheeks.

"Oh, Fran," cried Abbott impulsively, "the bridge in the moonlight

was nothing to the way you look now—so beautiful—and so much more than just beautiful . . ."

"This won't do," Fran exclaimed, hiding her face. "We must get back to Grace Noir immediately."

"Oh, Fran, oh, no, please!"

"I won't please. While we're in Sure-Enough Country, I mean to tell you the whole truth about Grace Noir." The name seemed to settle the atmosphere—she could look at him, now.

"I want you to understand that something is going to happen—must happen, just from the nature of things, and the nature of wives and husbands—and the other woman. Oh, you needn't frown at me, I've seen you look that other way at me, so I know you, Abbott Ashton."

"Fran! Then you know that I—"

"No, you must listen. You've nothing important to tell me that I don't know. I've found out the whole Gregory history from old Mrs. Jefferson, without her knowing that she was telling anything—she's a sort of 'Professor Ashton' in my hands—and I mean to tell you that history. You know that, for about three years, Mrs. Gregory hasn't gone to church—"

"You must admit that it doesn't appear well."

"Admit it? Yes, of course I must. And the world cares for appearances, and not for the truth. That's why it condemns Mrs. Gregory—and me—and that's why I'm afraid the school-board will condemn you: just on account of appearances. For these past three years, the church has meant to Mrs. Gregory a building plus Grace Noir. I don't mean that Mrs. Gregory got jealous of Grace Noir—I don't know how to explain—you can't handle cobwebs without marring them." She paused.

"Jealous of Miss Grace!" exclaimed Abbott reprovingly.

"Let's go back, and take a running jump right into the thick of it. When Mr. Gregory came to Littleburg, a complete stranger—and when he married, she was a devoted church-member—always went, and took great interest in all his schemes to help folks—folks at a distance, you understand . . . She just devoured that religious magazine he edits—yes, I'll admit, his religion shows up beautifully in print; the pictures of it are good, too. Old Mrs. Jefferson took pride in being wheeled to church where she could see her son-in-law leading the music, and where she'd watch every gesture of the minister and catch the sound of his voice at the high places, where he cried and, or nevertheless. Sometimes Mrs. Gregory could get a dozen ands and butts out of one discourse. Then comes your Grace Noir."

Abbott listened with absorbed attention. It was impossible not to be influenced by the voice that had grown to mean so much to him.

"Grace Noir is a person that's superhumanly good, but she's not happy in her goodness; it hurts her, all the time, because other folks are not as good as she. You can't live in the house with her without wishing she'd make a mistake to show herself human, but she never does, she's always right. She's so fixed on being a martyr, that if nobody crosses her, she just makes herself a martyr out of the shortcomings of others."

"As for instance—?"

"As for instance, she suffered martyrdom every time Mrs. Gregory nestled in an arm-chair beside the cozy hearth, when a Ladies' Aid, or a Rally was beating its way through snow-drifts to the Walnut Street church. Mr. Gregory was like everybody else about Grace—he took her at her own value, and that gave the equation: to him, religion meant Walnut Street church plus Grace Noir. For a while, Mrs. Gregory clung to church-going with grim determination, but it wasn't any use. The Sunday-school would have button contests, or the Ladies' Aid would give chicken pie dinners down-town, and Mrs. Gregory would be a red button or a blue button, and she would have her pie; but she was always third—in her home, or at church, she was the third. It was her husband and his secretary that understood the Lord. Somehow she seemed to disturb conditions, merely by being present."

"Fran, you do not realize that your words—they intimate—"

"She disturbed conditions, Abbott. She was like a turned-up light at a séance. Mr. Gregory was appalled because his wife quit attending church. Grace sympathized in his sorrow. It made him feel toward Grace Noir— I'm up against a stone wall, Abbott, I haven't the word to describe his feeling, maybe there isn't any."

"Fran Nonpareil! Such wisdom terrifies me . . . such suspicions!" In this moment of hesitancy between conviction and rejection, Abbott felt oddly out of harmony with his little friend. She realized the effect she must necessarily be producing, yet she must continue; she had counted the cost and the danger. If she did not convince him, his thought of her could never be the same.

"Abbott, you may think I am talking from jealousy, and that I tried to get rid of Grace Noir so I could better my condition at her expense. I don't know how to make you see that my story is true. It tells itself. Oughtn't that to prove it? Mrs. Gregory has the dove's nature; she'd let the enemy have the spoils rather than come to blows. She lets him take his choice—here is she, yonder's the secretary. He isn't worthy of her if he chooses Grace—but his hesitation has proved him unworthy, anyhow. The old lady—her mother—is a fighter; she'd have driven out the secretary long ago. But Mrs. Gregory's idea seems to be—'If he can't war, after I've given him myself, I'll not make a movement to interfere.'"

Abbott played delicately with the mere husk of this astounding revela-

tion: "Have you talked with old Mrs. Jefferson about—about it?"

"She's too proud—wouldn't admit it. But I've shyly told . . . however, it's not the sort of story you could pour through the funnel of an ear-trumpet without getting wheat mixed with chaff. She'd misunderstand—the neighbors would get it first—anyway she wouldn't make a move because her daughter won't. It's you and I, Abbott, against Grace and Mr. Gregory."

He murmured, looking away, "You take me for granted, Fran."

"Yes," Fran's reply was almost a whisper. A sudden terror of what he might think of her, smote her heart. But she repeated bravely, "Yes!"

He turned, and she saw in his eyes a confiding trust that seemed to hedge her soul about. "And you can always take me for granted, Fran; and always is a long time."

"Not too long for you and me," said Fran, looking at him breathlessly.

"I may have felt," he said, "for some time, in a vague way, what you have told me. Of course it is evident that he prefers Miss Noir's society. But I have always thought—or hoped—or wanted to feel, that it was only the common tie of religion—"

"It was not the truth that you clung to, Abbott, but appearances. As for me, let truth kill rather than live as a sham. If Grace Noir stays, the worst is going to happen. She may not know how far she's going. He may not suspect he's doing wrong. People can make anything they want seem right in their own eyes. But I've found out that wickedness isn't stationary, it's got a sort of perpetual motion. If we don't drive Grace away, the crash will come."

"Fran—how you must love Mrs. Gregory!"

"She breaks my heart."

"Dear faithful Fran! What can we do?—I say we, Fran, observe."

"Oh, you Abbott Ashton . . . just what I thought you! No, no, you mustn't interrupt. I'll manage Grace Noir, if you'll manage Bob Clinton."

"Where does Bob Clinton come in?"

"Grace is trying to open a door so he can come in. I mean a secret in Mr. Gregory's past. She suspects that there's a secret in his past, and she intends to send Bob to Springfield where Mr. Gregory left that secret. Bob will bring it to Littleburg. He'll hand it over to Grace, and then she'll have Mr. Gregory in her power—there'll be no getting her hands off him, after that."

"Surely you don't mean that Mr. Gregory did wrong when he was young, and that Miss Noir suspects it?"

"Bob will bring home the secret—and it will kill Mrs. Gregory, Abbott—and Grace will go off with him—I know how it'll end."

"What is this secret?"

"You are never to know, Abbott."

"Very well—so be it. But I don't believe Mr. Gregory ever did very wrong—he is too good a man."

"Isn't he daily breaking his wife's heart?" retorted Fran with a curl of the lip. "I call that murder."

"But still!—But I can't think he

"Then," said Fran satirically, "we'll just call it manslaughter. When I think of his wife's meek patient face—don't you recall that look in her eyes of the wounded deer—and the thousands of times you've seen those two together, at church, on the street, in the library—everywhere . . . seeing only each other, leaning closer, smiling deeper—as if doing good meant getting close—Oh, Abbott, you know what I mean—don't you, don't you?"

"Yes!" cried Abbott sharply. "Fran, you are right. I have been—all of us



She Had Burst Into Passionate Weeping.

have been—clinging to appearances. Yes, I know what you mean."

"You'll keep Bob Clinton from telling that secret, won't you? He's to go tonight, on the long journey—tonight, after the board meetings. It'll take him three or four days. Then he'll come back . . ."

"But he'll never tell the secret," Abbott declared. His mouth closed as by a spring.

Fran snatched up the whip, and leaned over as if to lash the empty shafts. She had suddenly become the child again. "We must drive out of Sure-Enough Country, now. Time to get back to the Make-Believe World." She stood up, and the lap robe fell about her like green waves from which springs a laughing nymph.

Abbott still felt stunned. The crash of an ideal arouses the echo—"Is there no truth in the world?" But yes—Fran was here, Fran the adorable.

"Fran," he pleaded, "don't drive out of Sure-Enough Country. Wait long enough for me to tell you what you are to me."

"I know what I am to you," Fran retorted—"Git ap!"

"But what am I to you? Don't drive so fast—the trees are racing past like mad. I won't leave Sure-Enough Country until I've told you all—"

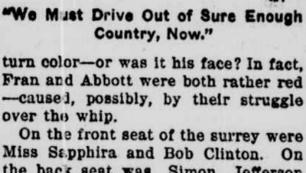
"You shall! No, I'll not let you take this whip—"

"I will take it—let go—Fran! Blessed darling Fran—"

She gripped the whip tightly. He could not loosen her hold, but he could keep her hand in his, which was just as well. Still, a semblance of struggling was called for, and that is why the sound of approaching wheels was drowned in laughter.

"Here we are!" Fran cried wickedly—"Make-Believe World of Every-Day, and some of its inhabitants . . ."

A surrey had come down the seldom-used road—had Miss Sapphira followed Abbott in order to discover him with Fran? The suspicion was not just, but his conscience seemed to



"We Must Drive Out of Sure Enough Country, Now."

turn color—or was it his face? In fact, Fran and Abbott were both rather red—caused, possibly, by their struggle over the whip.

On the front seat of the surrey were Miss Sapphira and Bob Clinton. On the back seat was Simon Jefferson whose hairy hand gripped a halter fastened to a riderless horse; the very horse which should have been between the shafts of the Gregory buggy.

Miss Sapphira stared at Abbott, speechless. So this is what he had meant by wanting the air unstrained by window-screens. Studying, indeed! Abbott, in his turn, stared speechlessly at the led horse.

Bob Clinton drew rein, and grasped his hay-colored mustache, inadequate to the situation. He glanced reproachfully at Abbott; the young fellow must know that his fate was to be decided this very night.

Abbott could not take his fill of the sight of Simon Jefferson whom he had fancied not far away, eyes glued on cork, hands in pockets to escape mosquitoes, sun on back, serenely fishing. He had supposed the horse grazing near by, enjoying semi-freedom with his grass. Now it seemed far otherwise. Miss Sapphira had even had him telephone Bob to bring her hither. With his own hands he had dug his pitfall.

Fran, suddenly aware of her ridiculous attitude, sat down and began to laugh.

Bob Clinton inquired: "Taking a drive, Abb?"

Miss Sapphira set her heavy foot upon her brother's unseemly jocularly. "Unfortunately," said Miss Sapphira, speaking with cold civility: "Mr. Jefferson had to come clear to town before he could recapture the horse. We were giving him a lift, and had no idea—no idea that we should find—should come upon— We are sorry to intrude." Had her life depended on it, Miss Sapphira could not have withheld a final touch—"Possibly you were not looking for Mr. Jefferson to come back so soon."

"Why," answered Abbott, stepping to the ground, "hardly so soon." At any rate, he felt that nothing was to be gained by staying in the buggy. "Is that the horse that belongs to this buggy? Let me hitch it up, Mr. Simon."

"This has been a terrible experience for me," growled Simon. All the same, he let Abbott do the work, but not as if he meant to repay him with gratitude.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THAW EXTRADITED.

GOV. FELKNER OF NEW HAMPSHIRE HONORS EXTRADITION FOR FUGITIVE.

Governor's Decision Automatically Throws it Into United States Tribunal, Where Application for Habeas Corpus is Pending. Won't Be Moved at Once.

Concord, N. H., Nov. 8.—Gov. Felkner today honored the requisition of the State of New York for the extradition of Harry K. Thaw, the fugitive from the New York State Hospital for the Criminal Insane at Matteawan. The case is now transferred automatically to the federal courts, where a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of Thaw is pending.

The governor based his decision on the indictment returned against Thaw in New York county, which charged him with conspiracy to escape from the asylum, to which he was committed after his second trial for the killing of Stanford White. Thaw made his sensational flight on August 17, and a few days later was arrested near Coaticook, Canada.

Thaw's attorneys announced that they would immediately file an amendment to their petition for a writ of habeas corpus, application for which was made soon after Thaw was arrested in this State following his deportation from Canada.

316 VERDICT IN BROWN CASE.

Jury Decides that Railroad Should Pay \$10,000 for Killing of L. V. Brown.

From The Daily Item, Nov. 8.

The verdict in the case of W. S. Frierson, administrator of the estate of L. V. Brown, against the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company, W. P. Holman and J. W. Johnson, came to a close last night in the court of common pleas when the jury returned a verdict of \$10,000 in favor of the plaintiff.

The case had consumed two days of court and it was after eleven o'clock last night before the jury decided upon a verdict, when which was left sealed until this morning, when it was announced when court convened. This case has attracted considerable interest because of the large amount sued for, the verdict being just one-tenth of the damages asked for.

The arguments in the case were strong ones on both sides and eloquent pleas were made on behalf of the plaintiff and defendant by the attorneys on the respective sides and were heard by a large crowd which had gathered in the court house.

It is probable that there will be no appeal.

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The above statement must carry conviction to the mind of every reader. Don't simply ask for a kidney remedy—ask distinctly for Doan's Kidney Pills, the same that Mr. Copleston had—the remedy backed by home testimony. 50c all stores. Foster-Milburn Co., Props., Buffalo, N. Y.

"When Your Back is Lame—Remember the Name." No. 31.

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A cough that bothers you continually is one of the danger signals which warns of consumption. Dr. King's New Discovery stop the cough, loosen the chest, banish fever and let you sleep peacefully. The first dose checks the symptoms and gives prompt relief. Mrs. A. F. Mertz, of Glen Ellyn, Iowa, writes: "Dr. King's New Discovery cured a stubborn cough after six weeks' doctoring failed to help." Try it, as it will do the same for you. Best medicine for coughs, colds, throat and lung trouble. Money back if it fails. Price 50c and \$1.00. All druggists, by mail, E. J. Bucklen & Co., Philadelphia or St. Louis.—Adv't.

BURGLARS MAKE \$12,000 HAUL.

Bank Suspends Business on Account of Heavy Loss.

Montour Falls, N. Y., Nov. 7.—Burglars last night went through a brick wall in the rear of E. A. Dunham & Co.'s private bank and robbed the bank's cash box of about \$12,000. Today the bank doors were closed and Fred J. Dunham, of the firm, said he did not know what arrangements would be made about the resumption of business. The Dunham Bank has been in business since 1886.

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