



"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."

"It was impossible for Abbott to receive all this as a whole; he took up the revelations one at a time. 'Is it possible that Fran is Mr. Gregory's daughter?'"

"Oh, she's his, all right, only child of his only legal wife—that's why she came, thinking her father would do the right thing, him that's always praying to be guided aright, and balking whenever the halter's pulled straight."

"Then," Abbott stammered, "Mrs. Gregory is..."

"Yap; is with a question mark. But there's one thing she isn't; she isn't the legal wife of this pirate what's always a-praying upon the consciences of folks that thinks they're worse than him."

"As for Mr. Gregory," Abbott began sternly—

Robert pursued the name with a vigorous expletive, and growled, "One thing, Mr. Gregory has done for me, he's opened the flood-gates that have been so long dammed—yes, I say dammed—I say—"

"Bob," Abbott exclaimed, "don't you understand Fran's object in keeping the secret? It's on account of Mrs. Gregory. If she finds it out—that she's not legally married—don't you see? Of course it would be to Fran's interests—bless her heart! What a—what a Nonpareil!"

"Tain't natural," returned Clinton, "for any girl to consult the interests of a woman that's supplanted her mother. No, Fran's afraid to have it told for fear she'd be injured by your cut-glass paragon, your religion-stuffed pillow that calls itself a man."

"Fran afraid? That's a joke! I tell you, she's thinking only of Mr. Gregory."

"I'm sorry for Mrs. Gregory," Robert allowed, "but Grace Noir is more to me than any other woman on earth."

You don't see the point. When I think of a girl like Grace Noir living under the same roof with that—"

"Mr. Gregory," Abbott supplied.

"—And she so pure, so high, so much above us. . . . It makes me crazy. And all the time she's been breathing the same air, she's thought him a Moses in the Wilderness, and us nothing but the sticks. Think of her believing in that jelly pulp, that steel engraving in a Family Bible! No, I mean to open her eyes, and get her out of his spider's web."

"I see your point of view."

"You do if you have eyes. Think of that perfect angel—but just say Grace Noir and you've called all the virtues. And her in his house!"

"You still believe in angels?" inquired Abbott gravely.

"Yap; and devils with long sort-of-curly hair, and pretty womanish faces, and voices like molasses."

"But Fran wants Mrs. Gregory spared—"

"Abbott, when I think of Grace Noir spending one more night under the roof of that burrowing mole, that crocodile with tears in his eyes and the rest of him nothing but bone and gristle—"

"Bob, if I assure you that Miss Noir will never spend another day under his roof, will you agree to keep this discovery to yourself?"

"You can't make no such assurance. If she ain't put wise to what branch of the animal kingdom he twigs to, she'll not leave his roof."

"Bob, if she leaves that house in the morning, for ever, won't you agree to silence, for Mrs. Gregory's sake—and because Fran asks it?"

"Fran's another angel, bless her heart! But you can't work it."

"Leave it to me, Bob. I'll be guided by the spur of the moment."

"I need a bookkeeper at my store," Robert said, ruminating.

"I promise you that Miss Noir will soon be open to offers."

"See here, Abbott, I can't afford to lose any chances on this thing. I'm going to see the feathers fly. No—I don't want Mrs. Gregory to learn about it, any more than you or Fran; but I'll limit the thing to Grace—"

"She'll tell Mrs. Gregory."

"Don't you say anything against Grace Noir, Abbott, for though you are my friend—"

"I say nothing against her; I say only that she's a woman."

"Well," Clinton reluctantly agreed, "I reckon she is. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go with you into that wolf's den, and I'll let you do all the talking; and if you can manage things in half an hour—just thirty minutes by my watch—so that Grace leaves there tomorrow, I'll leave you to steer things, and it's mum for keeps. But

I'm going to be present, though I don't want to say one word to that—that! But if he don't crawl out of his wool far enough to suit the purpose, in short, if he don't cave, and in half an hour—"

"Half an hour will do the business," said Abbott stoutly. "Come!"

"Be sure to call for Mr. Gregory by himself," said Robert, as they walked swiftly back to the Gregory residence. "If Grace comes into the room while we're talking, or Mrs. Gregory—"

"If they do," Abbott said quickly, "you are not to utter one word, not one, about Springfield—your understanding? It's a bargain, and I shall hold you to your word of honor."

"For half an hour I won't say a word," Clinton declared, "unless it's some word just drawn out of my bosom by the sight of that villain. Come!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Just Thirty Minutes.

During the week spent by Robert Clinton in search of Fran's life-secret, a consciousness of his absence and its cause was like a hot iron branding Gregory's brain. What a mocking fatality, that it should have been Grace to send Robert on his terrible errand—an errand which must result in ruin!

Mrs. Gregory would be pitted when it became known how she had been deceived; Fran would be pitted because she was a disowned daughter; Grace would be pitted for trusting in the integrity of her employer—but Gregory, who of all men needed pity most, would be utterly despised. He did not think of himself alone, but of his works of charity—they, too, would fall, in his disgrace, and Walnut Street church—even religion itself—would be discredited because of an exposure that could avail nothing.

Gregory had been too long proclaiming the living God not to feel Him as a Presence, and in this Presence he felt a shuddering fear that could suggest no relief but prostration. He as well as Abbott Ashton had kept himself informed of Robert's movements as far as they were known to Miss Sapphira, hence the day of Robert's return found his thought of atonement at its most frenzied stage.

As evening wore on, he made up his mind to the fatal step.

Before Robert could oppose him, Gregory would confess. Now that the last hour had come, he sought his wife, reeling like a sick man as he descended the hall stairs.

Mrs. Gregory was softly playing an old hymn, when he discovered her presence in the brilliantly lighted parlor. Grace was expecting a visit from Clinton and had made the room cheerful for his coming, and Mrs. Gregory, looking in and finding no one present, had sunk upon the stool before the piano. She did not see her husband, for her face was bent low as she feebly played, "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Gregory, well-nigh overwhelmed with the realization of what he meant to do, grasped the door for support. Presently he spoke, brokenly, "Lucy, how true that is—we do, indeed, need Him every hour."

She did not start at his voice, though his presence had been unsuspected. She raised her serious eyes, and observed his haggard face. "Mr. Gregory, you are ill."

"No—the light hurts my eyes." He turned off the lights and drew a chair near her. The room was partly revealed by an electric arc that swung at the street corner—its mellowed beams entered the open window.

"Lucy, I have something very important to say to you."

Her fingers continued to wander among the keys, making the hymn barely audible, then letting it die away, only to be revived.

"Lucy," he never spoken of this before, but it has seemed to me for a long time that we have wandered rather far apart—yes, very far apart. We sit close together, alone, our hands could touch, but our souls live in different worlds. Do you ever feel that way?"

She ceased playing abruptly, and answered almost in a whisper, "Yes."

"Perhaps it is my fault," said Gregory, "although I know that if you had taken more interest in what interests me, if you had been true to the Faith as I have tried to be—"

"I have been true to you," said Mrs. Gregory.

"Of course—of course—there is no question of our being true to each other. I feel that I am not wholly to blame. Lucy, it has been my fault and it has been your fault—that is how I look at it."

There was silence, then she said, "There seems nothing to be done."

"How do you mean? You speak as if our love were dead and buried—"

She rose abruptly, saying, "And its grave unmarked."

"Sit down, Lucy—I haven't told you what I came to tell—you must listen and try to see it as I see it. Let us be reasonable and discuss the future in a—in a sensible and matter-of-fact way. If you will agree—"

"I will not agree to it," she answered firmly. "Let me go, Mr. Gregory, there is no need ever to bring up that subject."

He had risen, and now in blank amazement, he stared at her, repeating, "You will not agree to it? To what? You are unreasonable. What subject have I brought up?"

"It is very true that we have drifted too far apart to be as we were in the beginning. But there is still something left to me, and this something I shall cling to as long as I can. I mean to avoid the publicity, the open exposure, the shame of—of—a neglected wife."

"My God!" whispered Gregory, fall-

ing back, "then somebody has told you about Springfield—it was Fran!"

"I don't know what you mean," she returned, apparently without emotion. "What I mean is, that I shall never consent to a divorce."

"A divorce? Good heavens, Lucy, are you mad? Do you think I want a separation because you disown the church? What have I ever done to make you imagine such an absurdity?"

She answered gently, "Yes, it seems I misunderstood. But you said you wanted me to discuss the future in a matter-of-fact way, and I couldn't think of the future as having any other matter-of-fact solution."

Gregory was hotly indignant. "Lucy, if that is meant as an insinuation against—"

Mrs. Gregory raised her hand compellingly. "Do not speak any name," she said, looking at him steadily. "I can endure much," she went on, in a milder tone, finding him silent; "I often wonder if many women could endure as silently—but there must never be a name mentioned between us."

Her manner was so unwontedly final, that he stood looking at her, not knowing how to resume the pressing subject of his past. They were in that



"My God! Then Somebody Has Told You About Springfield. It Was Fran!"

same silent attitude when Grace Noir came in from the hall.

Grace turned up the lights, and then—"Oh!" It was impossible to prevent an unpleasant compression of the mouth at discovering Gregory so near his wife. "Am I in the way? I am looking for company, and I heard the doorbell—please excuse me!" she added, biting off the words.

"Of course you are not in the way," Gregory returned desperately. "Company, you say? And you heard the doorbell—is Bob Clinton—?" He grew white. "My eyes are bad, for some reason," he muttered, and switched off the lights again.

"How very dark you have it in here!" said Grace reprovingly. "Of course Mr. Clinton has been shown the back-parlor, where it is light. I

will go to him there, and leave you two—" she paused irresolutely, but neither spoke.

Grace had no sooner gone than Gregory with an effort found his voice. "Lucy, my conscience has tormented me until it will not let me rest—about you. It's right to know something more about my life than I have ever told—"

"Right in there," said the maid's voice, from the hall, and Abbott Ashton and Robert Clinton entered the half-light.

While Robert was greeting Mrs. Gregory with exaggerated pleasure, in order to escape facing her husband, Abbott spoke to the other with an odd sense of meanness, as if he partook, by mere nearness, of the other's cowardice. "I wish to speak to you for a few minutes, Mr. Gregory."

Gregory, like an animal brought to bay, said, "I suppose you've some excuse about playing cards with Fran."

"More important than playing cards," Abbott returned.

Gregory fought off the inevitable: "If you refer to losing your position at the public school—"

"No, Clinton has come home from Springfield, and we have a matter—"

"It's pressing business," spoke up Robert, who all this time had been asking Mrs. Gregory if her mother was well. "Simon Jefferson was no worse, if Fran was hearty, if Grace Noir was at home—and private business."

"I have no business," Mr. Gregory exclaimed, in fear, "that my wife need not know."

"This is—" cried Robert. Then remembering, he struck the keys a resounding chord.

Mrs. Gregory was about to leave the room.

"No, no!" exclaimed Mr. Gregory, starting to the door to intercept her. "I want you to stay. I'll have no secrets from you, Lucy. I want you to hear what these gentlemen have to say." He glared at Abbott as if daring him to speak the words that must destroy his wife's last feeble hold on her position.

"I hope Mrs. Gregory will excuse us," said Abbott, smiling at her as cheerfully as he could, "but she knows that there are matters of business that women don't understand, or care to learn. This is something that relates merely to you, Mr. Gregory, and ourselves."

"Of course I understand you, Abbott," said Mrs. Gregory gently, "and Mr. Gregory is wrong to insist on my interrupting—women are always in the way—"

She smiled, and, slipping around Gregory, had reached the door, when she came face to face with Grace Noir, entering. At sight of her

—for Grace did not pause, but went over to the piano—Mrs. Gregory apparently reconsidered, and stepped to her husband's side.

"So you did come," Grace said, smiling at Robert. "Shall we go into the other room?"

Robert revealed in her beauty, and to that extent his anger against Gregory flamed higher. "Pretty soon," he said, "pretty soon, Miss Grace—in just twenty minutes—" he looked at his watch, then at Abbott.

"I must tell you, Mr. Gregory," Abbott began rapidly, "that I had just thirty minutes to consummate the matter with you—just half an hour, when we came here, and ten minutes are already gone. Only twenty minutes being left?" Gregory blustered.

Abbott spoke carefully, at the same time drawing a little farther away from the man he despised: "Bob has been to Springfield about that matter, you understand."

"No, I don't," cried Gregory. "Or if I do—tell it out—all of it."

"He has been to Springfield," Abbott went on, "and he got on the inside of the business, and the interests are determined—that that they will retaliate on you for your successes in the past, and at the same time be a help to Bob."

"I don't understand," Gregory gasped blankly.

"Me neither," muttered Robert. "It's very simple," Abbott maintained. "The Springfield interests want to give you a blow, and give Bob a helping hand. Therefore, you are to transfer your secretary to his store, where a bookkeeper is needed."

"Oh, indeed," interposed Grace Noir icily. "I am a mere pawn, I presume, to be sent where I am wanted. But I would like to ask Mr. Clinton if he found out anything about Fran, while he was in Springfield?"

"Fran is all she claims to be," Robert declared bluntly.

"All? You can prove she's no fraud?"

"My pockets are full of proofs," Robert exclaimed, looking significantly at Gregory.

"Dear Fran!" murmured Mrs. Gregory with a sweet smile of reminiscence.

"Abbott," Mr. Gregory gasped, as he began to realize the compromise that was offered, "you have always been my friend—and you have been interested in my charities—you know how important my secretary is to my work. It is true that I did wrong, years ago—very wrong—it is true that I bitterly—what shall I say?—antagonized the interests at Springfield. But that was long ago. Am I to be punished now—"

"Mr. Gregory," said Abbott, clearly and forcibly, "I have nothing to do with any punishment, I have nothing to do with demanding the release of your secretary. I am a mere agent of the interests, sent to you to demand that your secretary be dismissed in the morning; and if you cannot see your way to promise me now that you will dismiss her, my office is ended. If you can promise to send her away, I give you my word the transactions shall be forever hushed up, so far as

we are concerned. If you cannot promise, all will be revealed at once."

"In just ten minutes," said Robert Clinton, consulting his watch.

Grace stood looking at Gregory as if turned to stone. She had listened intently to every word as it fell from Abbott's lips, but not once had she turned her head to look at him.

"You are heartless. If I send away the only one who is in perfect knowledge and sympathy with my work—"

"Then you refuse?"

"Of course I refuse. 'I'll not permit the work of years to perish because of an unreasonable and preposterous demand. You wouldn't exchange your position here for Bob's grocery, would you, Miss Grace?" he ended appealingly.

"Yes—if you dismiss me," Grace answered, her eyes smoldering.

"Lucy"—tell her she must stay—tell these men we cannot go on with our work, without her."

Not for worlds would Mrs. Gregory have betrayed her eagerness for Grace to go, but for no consideration would she have asked her to stay. "Mr.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CLERKS ROB NEW YORK BANK.

James Edward Foye Charged with Taking Over a Million Dollars from Farmers' Loan and Security Company.

New York, Nov. 26.—James Edward Foye, a clerk of the Farmers' Loan and Security Company, who was accused of the theft of over a million dollars today denies his accusers to prove the charges. He was preparing to go to Europe when arrested. He said today, "I worked for the Trust Company for \$75 per month. They knew I was 35 years old and should have known that a man cannot honestly live on such pay. They can't get me on it either." Police state that a certified check for \$97,500 was found in his pocket when Foye was searched.

Naval Cadetship Vacant.

I will hold a competitive examination at Columbia, S. C., on December 31st, to fill the vacancy at the Naval Academy from the 7th District. Only bona fide residents of the 7th District are eligible to take this examination. For further information and permission to take the examination, write me at Washington, D. C.

A. E. LEVER.

M. C. Seventh S. C.

"In Just Ten Minutes."

Gregory," she responded, "I cannot conceive of your being in the power of business interests to such an extent as to drive you to anything that seems like taking your heart's blood."

"I refuse!" cried Gregory, again. "Of course I refuse."

"Very well," said Abbott, turning.

"But what are you going to do?" Gregory asked shrilly.

"I shall go now; my endeavor to straighten out things—or rather to keep everything peaceful and forgot-

ten—comes to nothing, it seems. Good evening, Mrs. Gregory."

"But wait! Wait! Let us discuss this alone—"

"It is useless now, for the time has expired."

"That's right," Clinton confirmed, clicking to his watch.

"And all of it is going to be told? Everything?"

"Unless you will dismiss your secretary."

"But you insult Miss Grace to speak in that way. Good heavens, Abbott, what are you doing? How can you insult that—the best woman in the world?"

There was a moment's silence. Then Mrs. Gregory turned to her husband and said quietly, "If Miss Noir is the best woman in the world, you should be the last man in the world to say so."

He covered his face with his hands. "Everybody has turned against me," he complained. "I am the most miserable man on earth because for mere caprice, for mere spite, for no earthly good, it is the determination of people who have lost positions and the like, to drive me wild."

Robert Clinton thumped the keys of the piano with one hand.

"Why, hello, Mr. Bob!" cried Fran, dancing into the room. "So you're back, are you?" She shook hands breezily.

"Come back, Abbott, come back!" called Gregory, discovering that the young man was indeed going. "You know what I must do, if you drive me to the wall. I am obliged to do what you say. State the condition again if you have the courage to say it aloud."

"The past will be forgotten," said Abbott solemnly, "if you give your word that your secretary shall go in the morning."

"And you'll take me in her place," spoke up Fran decidedly.

"The time is up," said Clinton harshly. "It's too late now, for I shall tell—"

"I promise, I promise!" Gregory cried out, in an agony of fear. "I promise. Yes, I'll dismiss her. Yes, she shall go! Yes, let Fran have the place."

"Do I understand you to dismiss me, Mr. Gregory?" asked Grace, in a low concentrated tone, leaning slightly forward.

Fran turned on the lights to their fullest extent, and looked about with an elfish smile.

Hamilton Gregory was mute.

"I have your promise," said Abbott, bowing gravely. "That's enough."

"Yes," groaned Gregory, "but it is infamous."

Fran looked at Abbott inscrutably. "Third time's the charm," she said in a whisper. "I'm proud of you this time, Abbott."

Grace turned with cold dignity and moved slowly toward the hall door.

Fran slipped between Clinton and the piano, and began to play softly, carelessly with one hand, while she watched the retreating figure.

In a very short time, Gregory found himself alone in the parlor. Abbott and Clinton had withdrawn rather awkwardly, Mrs. Gregory had melted away unobtrusively, and Fran, last of

all, had given the piano a final bang, and darted out of the house.

Gregory stood pale and miserable. It seemed as if all the world had deserted him. The feature without Grace would be as dreary as now seemed his past with Fran's mother. He suffered horribly. Was suffering all that life had left for him? Perhaps he was reaping—but is there no end to the harvest? One sows in so brief a time; is the garnering eternal?

A bell rang, but he was not curious. Voices roused at the front door, footsteps passed, then silence once more—silence and despair. Gregory went to the open window, and leaned heavily on the sill, taking great breaths, staring dully.

Footsteps were heard again. They were near by. They stopped at the door—they were hers. Gregory started up with a low cry of reanimated hope. Whatever happened—he was about to see Grace Noir once more.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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ANIMAL THAT NEVER DRINKS

Not a Drop Ever Passes the Brazilian Porcupine's Lips.

Kansas City Star.

An animal that never drinks has arrived in London. Undoubtedly it is the first and only one, and all London is rushing to see it. Naturally such a curiosity is confined in the zoo.

"Wot a hun'appy beast it is! No wonder its bristles stick out like that," remarks a man who has just drawn the back of his hand across his mouth.

"E do look drier than me Sunda; 'at," assented his companion.

Temperance advocates use the newcomer to point a moral and adorn a tale, "Behold the lesson that he teacheth! Never a drop passes his lips. Would that there were men in London that could say as much!"

It remains to be seen whether this Brazilian tree porcupine will take to drink now that he has been separated from his South American habitat and brought to the gloomy and chill purlieus of London. If he does demand drink, what will he choose? Maybe some of the curious visitors will surreptitiously ply him with a little ale or gin or some other London beverage to see its effect upon an animal that has never had a drop of anything to drink.

In his native Brazil this animal feeds upon the bark and leaves of trees, and the natives are very fond of its flesh. It has a prehensile tail, which serves as a fifth hand.

"Proof of the Pudding."

A group of negroes stood in front of a little grocery store in a country town, admiring the display of "water-miliums" lying out on the platform.

For a while they discussed the fine points of the different "miliums," and finally the argument settled into whether or not one man could eat the biggest melon in the pile, which weighed about twenty-five pounds. While this discussion was going on, a long lank ducky joined them.

"What you-all disputin' about?" he inquired.

"We's jest arguin'," replied one, "whether or not one man could eat that there milyun all by himself."

"Shucks," boasted the newcomer, "I could eat that milyun, and it wouldn't be a crack."

A white man, who had overheard the remarks turned to the long lank ducky.

"Why, you fool nigger," he said, "you know you couldn't eat all that melon at one time! I'll bet you can't."

"What you bet?" asked the ducky.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," proposed the white man. "If you'll eat it all, I'll pay for it; but if you don't, you pay for it."

The negro was a little cautious. "What does that milyun cost?" he asked the storekeeper, who had maun-tered out on the platform. It was priced 25 cents. The ducky scratched his head in doubt for a minute.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, boss," he said to the white man. "If yo'-all lemme go down to my house a little bit, I'll tell yo' whether I kin eat that milyun. I won't be gone more'n five or ten minutes."

The white man consented, and in about ten minutes the negro returned and announced his readiness to take the wager.

He ate the melon, scraped the rind and drank the juice.

"Well, you sure win," said the white man in admiration for his capacity. "But now I would like to know why you went down to your house."

"I done it all right, ain't I?" said the negro, a little uneasily.

"You certainly have," assured the white man. "You have won. But I just wanted to know from curiosity why you went to the house."

"Well, I'll tell yo' boss. Us niggers ain't got no money to lose, and I wanted to be sure. I had a milyun about this size down to my house, and I knowed if I could eat it, I could eat tis one. So I went home and tried it."—Judge.

Christmas "Fixings" in Various Parts of the Country.

In a little article entitled "Christmas 'Fixings'" in the December Woman's Home Companion, Bertha Bellows Streeter enumerates, as follows, various plants and vines that are used at Christmas time in different parts of the country:

"In almost every part of the country there are decorative plants and vines that can be used at Christmas time. For instance, there are the ground pine, privet, pepper trees, laurel, wild smilax, the poinsettia, red immortelles, holly, mistletoe, Oregon grape, white birch bark, spruce, boxwood, and conifers. I have even known of sage brush and grasses being used, the former dyed green and the latter red; and beautiful effects they gave, too, after being twined about balusters, pinned to white curtains, and made into wreaths."