



SYNOPSIS.

Fran arrives at Hamilton Gregory's home in Littleburg, but finds him absent conducting the choir at a camp meeting. She repairs further in search of him, laughing during the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of schools, escorts Fran from the tent.

CHAPTER III.—Continued. The young man was astonished. "Didn't you see him in the tent, leading the choir?" "He has a house in town," Fran said timidly. "I don't want to bother him while he is in his religion. I want to wait for him at his house. Oh," she added earnestly, "if you would only show me the way."

Just as if she did not know the way. Abbott Ashton was now completely at her mercy. "So you know Brother Gregory, do you?" he asked, as he led her over the stiles and down the wagon-road.

"Never saw him in my life," Fran replied casually. She knew how to say it prohibitively, but she purposely left the bars down, to find out if the young man was what she hoped.

And he was. He did not ask a question. They sought the grass-grown path bordering the dusty road; as they ascended the hill that gave out a view of the village, to their ears came the sprightly Twentieth Century hymn. What change had come over Ashton that the song now seemed as fragrant as the April night, when the first left the tent? He felt the prick of remorse because in the midst of nature, he had so soon forgotten about souls.

Fran caught the air and softly sang:—"We reap what we sow!" "Don't!" he reproved her. "Child, that means nothing to you."

"Yes, it does, too," she returned, rather impudently. She continued to sing and hum until the last note was smothered in her little nose. Then he spoke: "However—it means a different thing to me from what it means to the choir."

He looked at her curiously. "How different?" he smiled. "To me, it means that we really do reap what we sow, and that if you've done something very wrong in the past—ugh! Better look out—trouble's coming. That's what the song means to me."

"And will you kindly tell me what it means to the choir?" "Yes, I tell you what it means to the choir. It means sitting on benches and singing, after a sermon; and it means a test, and a great evangelist and a celebrated soloist—and then going home to act as if it wasn't so."

Abbott was not only astonished, but pained. Suddenly he had lost "No-body's little girl," to be confronted by an edifyer of mischief. He asked with constraint, "Did this critical attitude make you laugh out, in the choir?"

"I wouldn't tell you why I laughed," Fran declared, "for a thousand dollars. And I've seen more than that in my day."

They walked on. He was silent, she impetuous. At last she said, in a changed voice, "My name's Fran. What's yours?" "He laughed boyishly. "Mine's Abbott."

His manner made her laugh sympathetically. "Goodness!" cried Fran, "Does it Hurt That Bad?"

"It was just the manner she liked best—gay, frank, and a little mischievous," she repeated; "well—is that all?"

"The 'Ashken' is the 'abbess' (Abbott Ashton) and yours?" "The rest of mine is Nonpareil—funny name, isn't it?—Fran Nonpareil. It means Fran, the small trophy, or Fran who's unlike everybody else. Oh, there are lots of meanings to me. Some find one, some another, some don't understand."

It was because Abbott Ashton was touched that he spoke lightly: "What a very young Nonpareil to



be wandering about the world, all by yourself!" She was grateful for his rally. "How young do you think?" "Let me see. Hmm! You are only—about—" She laughed mirthfully at his air of preposterous wisdom. "About thirteen—fourteen, yes, you are more than that of that enormous hat, little Nonpareil. There's no use guessing in the dark when the moon's shining."

Fran was gleeful. "All right," she cried to one of her childish tones, shrill, fresh, vibratory with the music of innocence. By this time they had reached the foot-bridge that spanned the deep ravine. Here the wagon-road made its crossing of a tiny stream, by slipping under the foot-bridge, some fifteen feet below. On the left lay straggling Littleburg, with its four or five hundred houses, faintly twinkling, and beyond the meadows on the right, a fringe of woods started up as if it did not belong there, but had come to be seen, while above the woods shone the big moon with Fran on the foot-bridge to shine for.

Fran's hat dangled idly in her hand as she drew herself. The moonlight was full upon her face; so was the young man's gaze. One of her feet found, after laborious exploration, a down-sloping board upon the edge of which she pressed her heel for support. The other foot swayed to and fro above the flooring, while a little hand on either side of her gripped the top rail.

"Here I am," she said, shaking back rebellious hair. Abbott Ashton studied her with grave deliberation—it is doubtful if he had ever before so thoroughly enjoyed his duties as usher. He pronounced judiciously, "You are older than you look."

"Yes," Fran explained, "my experience accounts for that. I've had a lot of things to think about."

Abbott's lingering here beneath the moon when he should have been hurrying back to the tent, showed how unequally the good things of life are parcelled out. For instance are divided. "You are sixteen," he hazarded, conscious of a strange exaltation.

Fran dodged the issue behind a sermon. "I don't think you are so awfully old."

Abbott was brought to himself with a jolt that threw him hard upon self-consciousness. "I am superintendent of the public school," he said, and the words rang as a warning, and to become preternaturally solemn.

"Goodness!" cried Fran, considering his grave mouth and thoughtful eyes. "Doesn't that sound like a sermon?"

Abbott smiled. All the same, the position of superintendent must not be bartered away for the transitory pleasures of a foot-bridge. "We had better hurry, if you please," he said gravely.

"I am so afraid of you," murmured Fran. "But I know the meeting will last a long time yet. I'd like to have you wait long at Mr. Gregory's while that disagreeable lady who isn't Mrs. Gregory."

Abbott was startled. Why did she designate Mrs. Gregory's secretary? He looked keenly at Fran, but she only said plaintively: "Can't we stay here?"

He was disturbed and perplexed. It was as if a fitting shadow from some unformed cloud of thought-mist had fallen upon the every-day world out of his subconsciousness. Why did this stranger speak of Mrs. Gregory with the "lady who isn't Mrs. Gregory?"

The young man at times had caught himself thinking of her in just that way. School superintendents do not enjoy being mystified. "Really," Abbott declared abruptly, "I must go back to the meeting."

Fran had heard enough about his leaving her. She decided to stop that, and for all. "If you go back, I go, too!" she said conclusively. She gave him a look to show that she meant it, then became all humility.

"Please don't go back to that meeting. Please don't want to leave me. You are so learned and old and so strong—you don't care why a little girl

FRAN

BY JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. IRWIN MYERS

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"If you're in trouble," he exclaimed, "you've sought the right helper in Mr. Gregory. He's the richest man in the county, yet lives so simply, so frugally—they keep few servants—and all because he wants to do good with his money. I think Mr. Gregory is one of the best men that ever lived."

Fran asked with simplicity, "Great church worker?" "He's as good as he is rich. He never misses a service. I can't give the time to it that he does—to the church, I mean; I have the ambition to hold, one day, a chair at Yale or Harvard—that means to teach in a university—" he broke off, in explanation.

"You see," with a deprecatory smile, "I want to make myself felt in the world."

Fran's eyes shone with an unspoken "Hurray!" and as he met her gaze, he felt a thrill of pleasure from the impression that he was what she wanted of him to be.

Fran allowed his soul to bathe a while in divine eye-beams of flattering approval, then gave him a little stinging to bring him to life. "You are pretty old, not to be married," she remarked. "I hope you won't find some woman to get an end to your high intentions, but men generally do. Men fall in love, and when they finally pull themselves out of it, they're lost right in the throes of the love story."

A slight color stole to Abbott's face. In fact, he was rather hard hit. This wandering child was no doubt a witch. He looked in the direction of the tent as if he wished to escape the teasing of her. But he only said, "That sounds—er—practical."

"Yes," said Fran, wondering who the woman was, "you can't be practical, there's no use in it. Well, I can see you now, at the head of some university—you'll make it, because you're so much like me. Why, when they first began teaching me to read, I was just like you."

"Good gracious! What am I talking about?" She hurried on, as if to cover her confusion. "But I haven't got as far in books as you have, so I'm not religious."

"Books aren't religion," he remonstrated, then added with unnecessary gentleness, "Little Nonpareil! What an idea!"

"Yes, books are," retorted Fran, shaking her hair, swinging her foot, and twisting her body impatiently. "That's the only kind of religion I know anything about—just books. I know nothing about what you ought to believe and how you ought to act—all nicely printed and bound between covers. Did you ever meet any religion outside of a book, moving up and down, going about in the open?"

He answered in perfect confidence, "Mr. Gregory lives his religion daily—the kind that helps people, that makes the unfortunate happy."

Fran was not hopeful. "Well, I've come all the way from New York to see him. I hope he can make me happy. I'm not certain, but I think I can see you now, at the head of some university—you'll make it, because you're so much like me. Why, when they first began teaching me to read, I was just like you."

"From New York?" He considered the delicate form, the youthful face, and whistled. "Will you please tell me where your home is, Nonpareil?" She waved her arm impulsively.

"America. I wish it were concentrated in some spot, but it's just spread all over the place. I'll tell you, my country's about all I have. She broke off with a catch in her voice—she tried to laugh, but it was no use.

"Steadily," she came to Abbott Ashton that he understood the language of moon, watching woods, meadow-lands, even the gathering pain-ebbs; all spoke of the universal brotherhood of

man with nature; a brotherhood including the most ambitious superintendent of schools and a homeless Nonpareil; a brotherhood to be confirmed by the clapping of sincere hands. There was danger in such a confirmation, for it carried Abbott beyond the limits that mark a superintendent's confides.

As he stood on the bridge, holding Fran's hand in a warm and sympathetic pressure, he was not unlike one on picket-service who slips over the trenches to hold friendly parley with the enemy. Abbott did not know there was any danger in this brotherly handclasp; but that was because he could not see a feisty and elderly lady slowly coming down the hill. As superintendent, he was not responsible to the public; he did consider them when the lady, breathless and severe, approached the bridge, while every word of her scornful form cast its weight upon the heat of his disapproving, low-voiced and significant, "Good evening, Professor Ashton."

Fran whistled. The lady heard, but she swept on without once glancing back. There was in her none of that salacious tendency that made of Lot a widower; the lady desired to see no more, but she did not know that she was the widest extent, as she demurely asked, "How cold is it? My thermometer is frozen."

The young man did not betray uneasiness, though he was really alarmed, for his knowledge of the fleshy lady enabled him to foresee gathering clouds more sinister than those overhead. The obvious cause to be done was to release the slender hand; he did so rather hastily.

"Have I got you into trouble?" Fran asked, with her elfish laugh. "If so, we'll be neighbors, for that's where I live. Who was she?"

"Miss Sapphira Clinton," he answered as, by a common impulse, they began walking toward Hamilton Gregory's house. "Bob's Clinton's sister, and my landlady." The more Abbott thought of his adventure, the darker it grew; before they reached their destination it had become a deep gray.

"Do you mean the 'Brother Clinton' that couldn't get through?" "Yes—" He's the chairman of the School Board."

"Ah!" murmured Fran comprehendingly. "At Gregory's gate," she said. "Now you run back to the tent and I'll be the lion by myself. I know it has sharp teeth, but I guess it won't bite me. Do you try to get back to the tent before the meeting's over. Show yourself there. Parade up and down the aisles."

He laughed heartily, all the sorrier for her because he found himself in trouble. "It was fun while it lasted, wasn't it?" Fran exclaimed, with a sudden gurgle.

"Part of it was," he admitted "Goodby, then, little Nonpareil." He held out his hand.

"No, sir!" cried Fran, clasping her hands behind her. "That's what got me into trouble. Good-by. Run for it!"

Two Eccentric Englishmen Who Practiced Self-Denial Through Many Years of Their Lives.

The most persistent fast of all time was probably Roger Crab, who lived in the times of the commonwealth.

In order to carry out his ideas most effectively he sold off his stock in trade, distributed the proceeds among the poor and took up his residence in a hut near Ikenham, where he lived on three farthings a week.

"Instead of strong drinks and meats," says the eccentric Roger, "I give the old man a cup of water and give him broth thickened with bran and pudding made with bran and turnip leaves chopped together."

Vigorous health was the result, says Roger from Chronicle, but his abstinence from food was regarded with such suspicion that on one occasion he narrowly escaped being burned alive as a wizard.

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CHAPTER IV.

The Woman Who Was Not Mrs. Gregory.

Hardly had Abbott Ashton disappeared down the village vista of moonlight and shadow-patches, before Fran's mood changed. Instead of seeking to carry out her threat of bearding the lion in its den, she sank down on the porch-steps, gathered her knees in her arms, and stared straight before her.

Though of skillful resources, of impregnable resolution, Fran could be despondent to the bluest degree; and though competent at the clash, she often found herself purpling on the eve of the crisis.

Hamilton Gregory was coming through the gate. As he halted in surprise, a black shadow rose slowly, wearily. He, little dreaming that he was confronted by a shadow from the past, saw in her only the girl who had been publicly expelled from the tent.

The choir-leader had expected his home-coming to be crowned by a vision very different. He came up the walk slowly, not knowing what to say. She waited for him to speak, in a whisper. He, little dreaming that he was confronted by a shadow from the past, saw in her only the girl who had been publicly expelled from the tent.

She addressed him, "Good evening, Mr. Gregory." He halted. When he spoke, his tone expressed not only a general disapproval of a girl who wandered away from her homes in the night, but an especial repugnance to one who could laugh during religious services. "Do you want to speak to me, child?"

"Yes." The word was almost a whisper. The sound of his voice had weakened her.

"What do you want?" He stepped up to the porch. The moon had vanished behind the rising masses of storm-clouds, not to appear again, but the light through the glass door, revealed his poetic features. Flashing of lightning as yet faint but rapid fire, shone, showed his beauty as that of a young man. Fran remained silent, moved more than she could have thought possible. He stared intently, but under that propitious haze she was practically invisible, save as a black shadow. He added again, with growing impatience, "What do you want?"

His unfrivolous gaze gave her the needed. "I want a home," she said decisively.

Hamilton Gregory was seriously disturbed. However, he did not want to be left to wander aimlessly about the streets. Of the three hotels in Littleburg, the cheapest was not overly particular. He would take out one of the rats served him as he temporized, "that you are absolutely alone."

Fran's tone was a little hard, not because she was angry, but lest she betray too great feeling. "Absolutely alone in the world."

Lucas lived mainly upon bread and penny buns, though to these were added at times eggs and herrings and a basket hung from the roof out of reach of the rats served him as he temporized, "that you are absolutely alone."

Two Coffins Many Centuries Old. Two tiny coffins have recently been found in the moorland burial ground of Peterborough, Northampton, England, and have been placed in Peterborough cathedral. They are said to be the coffins of the twin children of King Canute, who were drowned in Whitby Mere as they were crossing to be educated at Peterborough abbey.

Wrong Estimate. They say one per cent. of all the money in the country is put in automobiles. "Don't you believe it. There is more money than that in the gasoline alone."

KANSAS WOMAN WHO SUFFERED

From Headache, Backache, Dizziness and Nervousness, Restored to Health by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Lawrence, Kan.—"A year ago I was suffering from a number of ailments. I always had pain and was irregular. During the delay I suffered a great deal with headache, backache, dizziness, nervousness, and bleeding. I had been married nearly three years. I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and now I feel better than I have for years. I recommend Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to all who suffer as I did."—Mrs. M. Zarnen, 1035 New Jersey Street, Lawrence, Kansas.



Montana Woman's Case. Burns, Mont.—"Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound cured me of awful backache which I had suffered with for months. I was so weak I could hardly get out of bed, and my head and eyes ached all the time. Your Compound helped me in many ways and is a great strengthener. I always recommend it to my friends and tell them what a grand medicine it is for women. You may use my name for the good of others."—Mrs. JOHN FRANCIS, Burns, Montana.

The makers of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound have thousands of such letters as those above—they tell the truth, else they could not have been obtained for love or money. This medicine is no stranger—it has stood the test for years.

Don't Persecute Your Bowels

Cut out cathartics and purgatives. They are harsh, unwholesome, and dangerous. CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS. Purely vegetable. Act gently on the bowels, and soothe the delicate membrane of the bowels. Get the Little Liver Pills. Small Dose. Small Price. Genuine must bear Signature.



Tack, Son Gave Down to Tacks. Henry, age five, had two younger brothers. Henry's father had just moved, and was busy laying the kitchen linoleum. In order to facilitate the work he gave Henry the task of furnishing him with tacks. The little fellow worked faithfully for half an hour. Suddenly, however, he turned to his father and said: "Papa, you like me best, don't you?"

"But don't you like me a little bit better than the others?" queried Henry. "I like all my boys equally well," answered the father.

"Well, papa," said the lad, after a moment of reflection, "what's the use of my panning you these tacks then?"

Explaining the Game. At a unusual game in Downs last fall a young woman asked her escort: "Why does that man behind the hitter wear such a big bib?"

He explained to her that it was to keep the catcher's shirt from getting mussed when the ball knocked his teeth out.—Kansas City Times.

Begin With It. "Why are people so much disgusted with any one who informs upon another?" "Why shouldn't they be?" "Didn't every mother's son of us begin life as squallors?"

CLEARED AWAY

Proper Food Put the Troubles Away.

Our own troubles always seem more severe than any others. But when a man is unable to eat even a light breakfast, for years, without severe distress, he has trouble enough. It is small wonder he likes food of which which cleared away the troubles.

"I am glad of the opportunity to tell of the good Grape-Nuts has done for me," writes A. N. H. man. Many years I was unable to eat even a light breakfast without great suffering.

"After eating I would suddenly be seized with an attack of colic and vomiting. This would be followed by headache and misery that would sometimes last a week or more, leaving me so weak I could hardly sit up or walk."

"Since I began to eat Grape-Nuts I have been free from the old troubles. I usually eat Grape-Nuts one or more times a day, taking it at the beginning of the meal. Now I can eat almost anything I want without trouble."

"When I began to use Grape-Nuts I was way under my usual weight, but I weighed 30 pounds more than I ever weighed in my life, and I am glad to speak of the food that has worked the change." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read the little booklet, "The Road to Wellville," in pkg. "There's a Reason."