FRAN

BY

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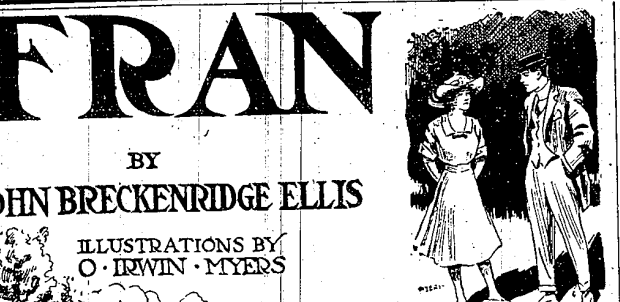
ILLUSTRATIONS BY O·IRWIN·MYERS



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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. Fran sings during the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of schools, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells her Gregory is a wealthy man, deeply interested in charity work, and a pillar of the church. Ashton becomes greatly interested in Fran and while taking leave of her, holds her hand and asks her for Sapphira Clinton, sister of Robert Clinton, chairman of the school board. Fran tells Gregory she wants a home with him. Grace Noir, Gregory's private secretary, takes a violent dislike to Fran and advises her to go away at once. Fran hints at a twenty-year-old secret, and Gregory in turn asks Grace to leave the room. Fran relates the story of how Gregory married a young girl at Springfield while attending college and then deserted her. Fran is the child of that marriage. Gregory had married his present wife three years before the death of Fran's mother. Fran takes a liking to Mrs. Gregory. 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 arms. Fran defiances the secretary must go. Grace begins nagging tactics in an effort to drive Fran from the Gregory home. Abbott, while taking a walk alone at midnight, finds Fran in a bridge telling her fortune by cards. She tells Abbott that she is the famous lion tamer, Fran Nonpareil. She tells of circus life and social life. 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 secretary during the temporary absence of Grace. The latter, hearing of Fran's purpose, returns and interrupts a touching scene between father and daughter. Grace tells Gregory she intends to marry Clinton and quit his service. He declares that he cannot continue life work without her. Carried away by passion, he takes her in his arms. Fran "wakes in them, and declares that Grace must leave the house at once. To Gregory's consternation he learns of Clinton's mission to Springfield. Clinton returns from Springfield and at Fran's request, Ashton urges him not to disclose what he has learned. On Abbott's assurance that Grace will leave Gregory at once, Clinton agrees to keep silent. Driven into a corner by the threat of exposure, Gregory is forced to dismiss Grace. Grace is offered 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 held in reserve for him: nearness to Grace Noir. 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 nearer.

"Is Miss Noir here?" Gregory asked, in a strained voice; the confusion hid 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 gone two or three weeks somewhere, nobody knows unless it's Bob, and Bob won't tell anything any more. Abbott wrote he'd

"But I Have Been Dying to Be Near You, to Talk to You."

be home tonight, and Bob drove over to Simmtown 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 the minstrel show and snake den. The set pity 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 soul's welfare—"

He left the sentence undiished. 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 oily 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. It 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 self—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."

In his realization that it was Fran, and Fran alone, who separated them, Gregory paused 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 know everything. Fran—is my own daughter."

She gave no sign save a sudden compression of the mouth; nevertheless, her surprise was extreme. Her mind flashed along the wires of the past and returned illuminated to the present entanglement.

He thought her merely stunned, and burst forth: "I tell you, Fran is my child. Now you know why I'm compelled to do what she wants. That's the secret Bob brought from Springfield. That's the secret Abbott Ashton hung over my head—the traitor! after I befriended him! All of my ungrateful friends have conspired to ruin me, to force you from me by this secret. But you know it now, and I've escaped its danger. You know it!"

"And does your wife know?"

"Would I tell her, and not tell you? It's you I've tried to shield. I married Josephine Derry, and Fran is our child. You know Fran. Well, her mother was just like her—frivolous, caring only for things of the world—irreligious. And I was just a boy—a mere college youth. When I realized the awful mistake I'd made, I thought it best to go away and let her live her own life. Years after, I put all that behind me, and came to Littleburg. I married Mrs. Gregory and I wanted to put all my past life away—clear away—and live a good open life. Then I found out I'd never known what love meant. It means a fellowship of souls, love does; it has nothing to do with the physical man. It means just your soul and mine. . . . and it's too late!"

Grace, with hands locked upon her open ledger, stared straight before her, as if turned to stone. The little fenced-in box, hanging high above eager shoppers, was as a peaceful haven in a storm of raging noises. From without, gusts of merriment shrieked and whistled, while above them boomed the raucous cries of showmen, drowned in their turn by the indefatigable brass-band. The atmosphere of the bookkeeper's loft was a wedge of silence, splitting a solidarity of tumult.

Gregory covered his face with his hands. "Do you despise me, you pure angel of beauty? Oh, say you don't

"I Don't Think He Has Seen Us."

utterly despise me. I've not breathed this secret to any living soul but you, you whom I love with the madness of despair. My heart is broken. Tell me what I can do."

At last Grace spoke in a thin tone: "Where is that woman?"

"Fran's mother?"

She did not reply; he ought to know whom she meant.

"She died a few years ago—but I thought her dead when I married Mrs. Gregory. I didn't mean any wrong to my wife. I wanted everything legal, and supposed it was. I thought everything was all right until that awful night—when Fran came. There'd been no divorce, so Fran kept the secret—not on my account, oh, no, no, not on her father's account! She gave me no consideration. It was on account of Mrs. Gregory."

"Which Mrs. Gregory?"

"You know—Mrs. Gregory."

"Can I believe that?" Grace asked, with a chilled smile. "You believe Fran really cares for your wife? You think any daughter could care for the woman who has stolen her mother's rightful place?"

"But Fran won't have the truth declared; if it weren't for her, Bob would have told you long ago."

"Suppose I were in Fran's place—would I have kept the secret to spare man or woman? No! Fran doesn't care a penny for your wife. She couldn't. It would be monstrous—unnatural. But she's always hated me. That's why she acts as she does—to triumph over me. I see it all. That is the reason she won't have the truth declared—she doesn't want me to know that you are—are free."

Grace started up from the desk, her face deathly white. She was tottering, but when Gregory would have leaped to her side, she whispered, "They would see us." Suddenly her face became crimson. He caught his breath, speechless before her imperial loveliness.

"Mr. Gregory!" her eyes were burning 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."

"Not legally—but—"

"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 delirious. "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 train-time, Bob will come and—er—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."

"Bob will hunt for you, Grace, if he gets back with Abbott before our train leaves. Miss Sapphira said she was looking for him any minute, and that was a good while ago."

"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!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Flight.

To reach the station, they must either 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 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 with ecstasy, while Grace herself yielded to the love 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 and deceptive longings into something like real thought. If they were in the right, why did they feel such expansive relief when 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 stem-whistlings and organ, wailings against a drum-and-trombone band, while these distinct strata of sound were cut across by an outcropping 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 "barkers," cracking reports from target-practice, fusillades at the "doll-babies," clanging jars from strength-testers and the like; while from this horrid field of misguided 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. He was clinging to an upright, and while thus lifted above the heads of the multitude, sought to scan every face.

"I don't think he has seen us," muttered Hamilton Gregory, instinctively lowering his head.

"We can't get out now," Grace lamented. "No, he hasn't seen us—yet. But that's the only place of—of escape—and he keeps looking so curiously—he must have been to the store. He knows I'm away. He may have gone to the house."

It was because every side-show of the carnival company had insisted on occupying space around the court-house, and because this space was meager, that the country folk and excursionists and townsmen showed in such compressed numbers at every turn. In reality, however, they were by no means countless; and if Robert's eagle glance continued to travel from face to face, with that maddening thoroughness—

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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 the book upon which since 1800 every chief justice—with the single exception of Chief Justice Chase—and every member of the Supreme 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—1800—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.

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, Howell 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 deserves much respect of the whole nation."

MICHIGAN BREVITIES

Kalamazoo.—The health department seized more than 1,000 gallons of impure milk and poured it in the sewers.

Olivet.—Heat claimed John Bowen, sixty-five years old, a Walton township farmer. He was formerly overseer of highways.

Kalamazoo.—Many farmers are reporting that tramps milk their cows at night, and when morning comes the owners are unable to get milk.

Jackson.—T. G. Stallsmith of Chicago, a former Jackson man, has been appointed a special envoy from the United States to Australia and New Zealand. He will sail soon with a commission of five other Americans.

Marshall.—All records for divorce cases were broken in Calhoun county during the month of August when 28 cases were started and only 48 marriage licenses issued. The divorces have gradually been creeping up on the marriages.

Sebewaing.—Alice Finkbinder, Alma Ruchy and Lellah Donovan, of this place, claim the champion pedestrian title of this section, having completed a hike from here to Port Austin, a distance of 50 miles, including side trips, in less than 10 hours.

Port Huron.—Three Port Huron women have been selected as an advisory board to the board of education in this city, to confer relative to the course to be pursued in founding a domestic science department in the public schools. They are Mrs. W. L. Jenks, Mrs. E. D. Schumacher and Mrs. Lincoln Avery.

Mount Clemens.—The government dredging gang working near the Irish farm found the body of Martin Shevlin floating in the Clinton river. He was a single man thirty-five years old and claimed Pittsburgh, Pa., as his home, although he had been here for a year. It is thought he accidentally fell into the river.

Petoskey.—As a result of taking an overdose of asthma medicine and nerve tonic, C. M. Thomas of St. Louis was unconscious six hours and nearly died before two physicians could revive him. He collapsed while working in the laboratory of Dr. P. D. Miller, dentist, of whom he obtained employment. He is fifty-eight years old.

Pontiac.—Henry Geneva, twenty-one years old, and Richard Landy, nineteen, Detroit, are under arrest here charged with carrying concealed weapons. The officers believe they robbed a store in Rochester. When arrested they had revolvers and brass knuckles. Geneva has been held to the circuit court and Landy will have an examination September 9.

Flint.—Claims for damages totaling $20,000 have been filed against the city. Robert G. McLaughlin, who says he was permanently disabled by tripping over a guy wire attached to a telephone pole, asks $10,000; Mrs. Rena Lennon of Owosso wants $5,000 for injuries sustained when she fell in a hole in a sidewalk, and Olive Grant asks $5,000 for injuries received when she fell through an open culvert.

Bay City.—Martin Washibinski and daughter, twelve years old, went to Ann Arbor to take the Pasteur treatment. Washibinski, who resides on a farm in Kawkawlin township, had a dog which ran amuck a short time ago and bit the child and several cows. One of the cows bit Washibinski. He had to kill the three cows as a result. The township has ordered every unmuzzled dog running loose to be killed.

St. Joseph.—Lucy Beach, aged twenty, and Lawrence Blakeman, aged nineteen, college mates and sweethearts, rode to death in an automobile through an open draw in a river bridge here. The bodies were recovered from the St. Joseph river two hours later. The tragedy was witnessed by scores of passengers on the steamer City of Chicago, just leaving its docks for Chicago. It is said proper signals were not displayed at the approach.

Grand Rapids.—Chris Peterson, sixty-three years old, an employe of the G. R. & I. Railroad company, was seriously burned while lighting the lamps at Fuller station north of this city. He had filled one of the lamps with kerosene and was carrying it to the holder when it exploded, enveloping him in flames. Passengers waiting at the depot rolled him in coats and managed to smother the fire, but not before he had been burned so badly that the flesh fell from his bones.

Morrice.—The conference of the Lansing presbytery will be held in Morrice September 8-9. Rev. M. Grigsby will preside. The following topics will be discussed: "The Problem of the Country Church," Rev. Frank Armstrong; "The Challenge of Changing Conditions," Rev. George E. Barnes; "The Present Day View of Young Men on the Question of Entering the Ministry," Rev. W. S. Potter; "The Temperance Problem in Michigan," Rev. W. S. Waltman, and "The World in Chicago," Rev. C. E. Huffer.

Holland.—John Venheuiseen, a Holland township farmer, narrowly missed death when his rig was struck by a Holland interurban car near Waverly. The horse was instantly killed. Venheuiseen was thrown into a ditch and was found unconscious but suffering with only minor bruises.

Grand Rapids.—In order to settle a dispute of four years' standing the Reed's Lake mission house, valued at $5,000, has been deeded to the Michigan Baptist church. Two factions of Baptists, one of which favored selling the mission and the other keeping it, got together.