FRAN

BY

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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, laughs during the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of schools, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells he (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 is seen by 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 agitation asks Grace to leave the room. Fran relates the story of how Gregory married a young girl at Springfield while attending college and then deserted 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 assents to the story. Mrs. Gregory insists on her making her home with them and takes her to her arms. The breach between Fran and Grace widens. It is decided that Fran must go to school. Grace shows pretext for doubting Gregory's story of his dead friend and hints that Fran may be an imposter. She threatens to marry Bob Clinton and leave Gregory's service, much to the latter's dismay. Fran declares that she is secretly in love with Bob. Grace begins nagging tactics in an effort to drive Fran from the Gregory home but Mrs. Gregory remains staunch in her friendship.

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

Miss Sapphira was highly gratified. "I wish you'd talked this reasonable at first. It's always what people don't see that the most harm comes of. I'll give a little tea out here on the veranda, and the worst talkers in town will be in these chairs when you bring Fran away from Abbott's office. And I'll explain it all to 'em, and they'll know Abbott is all right, just as I've always known."

"Let Miss Grace to come," Bob said sheepishly. "She doesn't like Fran, and she'll be glad to know Abbott is doing his duty by her. Later, I'll drop in and have a bite with you."

This, then, was Bob's "idea," that no stone might be left unturned to hide the perfect innocence of the superintendent. He had known Abbott Ashton as a bare-legged urchin running on errands for his widowed mother. He had watched him through studious years, had believed in his future career—and no, no bold adventuress, though adopted into Hamilton Gregory's home, should be allowed to spoil Abbott's chances of success.

In his official character as chairman of the board, Robert Clinton marched with dignity into the superintendent's office, meaning to bear away the wilted Fran before the eyes of woman. Abbott Ashton saw him enter with a sense of relief. The young man could not understand why he had held Fran's hand, that night on the footbridge. Not only had the sentiment of that hour passed away, but the interview Fran had forced upon him at the close of a recent school-day, had inspired him with actual hostility. It seemed the irony of fate that a mere child, a stranger, should, because of senseless gossip, endanger his chances of reappointment—a reappointment which he felt certain was the best possible means of advancement. Why had he held Fran's little hand? He had never dreamed of holding Grace's—ah, there was a hand, indeed!

"Has she been sent down?" Bob

"Did I Get—What?" He Returned With a Puzzled Frown.

asked, in the hoarse undertone of a fellow-conspirator.

"No." Abbott was eager to prove his innocence. "I haven't seen a sign of her, but I'm looking every minute—glad you're here."

Confidences were impracticable, because of a tousled-headed, ink-stained pupil who gloomed in a corner.

"Why, hello, there, Jakey!" cried Clinton, disconcerted; he had hoped that Fran's subjugation might take place without witnesses. "What are you doing here, hey?"

"Waitin' to be whipped," was the defiant rejoinder.

"Tell the professor you're sorry for what you've done, so you can run along," said the chairman of the board persuasively.

"Naw, I ain't sorry," returned Jakey, hands in pockets. Then bethinking himself—"But I ain't done nothin'."

Abbott said regretfully, "He'll have to be whipped."

Clinton nodded, and sat down solemnly, breathing hard. Abbott was restlessly pacing the floor, and Bob was staring at him unwinkingly, when the door opened and in came Fran.

Fran walked up to Abbott hesitatingly, and spoke with the indistinctness of awed humility. "You are to punish me," she explained, "by making me work out this original proposition"—showing the book—"and you are to keep me here until I get it."

Abbott asked sternly, "Did Miss Bull send me this message'" .

"She is named that." Fran murmured, her eyes fastened on the open page.

From the yard came the shouts of children, breaking the bonds of learning for a wider freedom. Abbott, gazing severely on this slip of a girl, found her decidedly commonplace in appearance. How the moonlight must have bewitched him! He rejoiced that Robert Clinton was there to witness his indifference.

"This is the problem," Fran said, with exceeding primness, pronouncing the word as if it were too large for her, and holding up the book with a slender finger placed upon certain italicized words.

"Let me see it," said Abbott, with professional dryness. He grasped the book to read the proposition. His hand was against hers, but she did not draw away, for had she done so, how could he have found the place?

Fran, with uplifted eyes, spoke in the plaintive accents of a five-year-old child: "Right there, sir . . . It's awful hard."

Robert Clinton cleared his throat and produced a sound bursting with accumulated h's and r's—his warning passed unheeded.

Never before had Abbott had so much of Fran. The capillaries of his skin, as her hand quivered warmly against his, seemed drawing her in; and as she escaped from her splendid black orbs, she entered his brain by the avenue of his own thirsty eyes. What was the use to tell himself that she was commonplace, that his position was in danger because of her? Suddenly her hair fell shamwise past the corners of her eyes, making a triangle of smooth white skin to the roots of the hair, and it seemed good, just because it was Fran's way and not after a machine-turned fashion; Fran was done by hand, there was no doubt of that.

"Sit there," Abbott said, gravely pointing. She obeyed without a word, leaving the geometry as hostage in the teacher's hand. When seated at a discreet distance, she looked over at Bob Clinton. He hastily drew on his spectacles, that he might look old.

Abbott volunteered, "This is Mr. Clinton, President of the Board."

"I know," said Fran, staring at her pencil and paper, "he's at the head of the show, and watches when the wild animals are tamed."

Clinton drew forth a newspaper, and opened it deliberately.

Fran scribbled for some time, then looked over at him again. "Did you get it?" she asked, with mild interest.

"Did I get—what?" he returned, with puzzled frown.

"Oh, I don't know what it is," said Fran with humility; "the name of it's 'Religion'."

"If I were you," Clinton returned, flushing, "I'd be ashamed to refer to the night you disgraced yourself by laughing in the tent."

"Fran," Abbott interposed severely, "attend to your work."

Fran bent her head over the desk, but was not long silent. "I don't like a-b-c and d-e-f," she observed with more energy than she had hitherto displayed. "They're equal to each other, but I don't know why, and I don't care, because it doesn't seem to matter. Nothing interests me unless it has something to do with living. These angles and lines are nothing to me; what I care for is this time I'm wasting, sitting in a stuffy old room, while the good big world is enjoying itself just outside the window." She started up impetuously.

"Sit down!" Abbott commanded.

"Fran!" exclaimed Robert Clinton, stamping his foot, "sit down!"

Fran sank back upon the bench.

"I suspect," said Abbott mildly, "that they have put you in classes too far advanced. We must try you in another room—"

"But I don't want to be tried in rooms," Fran explained; "I want to be tried in acts—deeds. Until I came here, I'd never been to school a day in my life," she went on in a confidential tone. "I agreed to attend because I imagined school might be some fun, and I'm going to have some fun, I'm determined. I'm not going to be cooped up in a schoolroom and have my mind stuffed with things that don't matter. I'm going to live, and I'm going to have a good time doing it. I'm going to get in touch with life—something in it mixed up with love and friendship and justice and mercy. Wasn't I silly! I even believed—just fancy!—that you might really teach me something about religion. But, no! it's all books, nothing but books."

"Fran," Abbott reasoned, "if we put you in a room where you can understand the things we try to teach, if we make you thorough—"

"I don't want to be thorough," she explained, "I want to be happy. I guess all that schools were meant to do is to teach folks what's in books, and how to stand in a straight line. The children in Class A, or Class B have their minds sheared and pruned to look alike; but I don't want my brain after anybody's pattern."

"You'll regret this, Miss," declared Clinton, in a threatening tone. "You sit down. Do you want the name of being expelled?"

"I don't care very much about the names of things," said Fran coolly; "there are lots of respectable names that hide wickedness." Her tone changed: "But yonder's another wild animal for you to train; did you come to see him beaten?" She darted to the

"Don't You See That You Are Holding Up Ignorance as a Virtue?"

corner, and seated herself beside Jakey.

"Say, now," Bob remonstrated, pulling his mustache deprecatingly, "everybody knows I wouldn't see a dog hurt if it could be helped. I'm Jakey's friend, and I'd be yours, Fran—honestly—if I could. But how's a school to be run without authority? You ain't reasonable. All we want of you is to be biddable."

"And you!" cried Fran to Abbott, beginning to give way to high pressure, "I thought you were a school-teacher, not just, but also—a something very nice, also a teacher. But not you. Teacher's all you are, just rules and regulations and authority and chalk and a-b-c and d-e-f."

Abbott crimsoned. Was she right? Was he not something very nice plus his vocation? He found himself desperately wishing that she might think so.

Fran, after one long glowing look at him, turned to the lad in disgrace, and placed her hand upon his stubborn arm. "Have you a mother?" she asked wistfully.

"Yeh," mumbled the lad, astonished at finding himself addressed, not as an ink-stained husk of humanity, but as an understanding soul.

"I haven't," said Fran softly, talking to him as if unconscious of the presence of two listening men, "but I had one, a few years ago—and, oh, it seems so long since she died, Jakey—three years is a pretty long time to be without a mother. And you can't think what a faultblindest, spoilingest, cruddiest mother she was. I'm glad yours is living, for you still have the chance to make her proud and happy. . . . No matter how fine I may turn out—do you reckon I'll ever be admired by anybody, Jakey? Huh! I guess not. But if I were, mother wouldn't be here to enjoy it. Won't you tell Professor Ashton that you are sorry?"

"Fran—" Abbott began.

Fran made a mouth at him. "I don't belong to your school any more," she informed him. "Mr. School Director can tell you the name of what he can do to me; he'll find it classified under the E's."

After this explosion, she turned again to the lad: "I saw you punch that boy, Jakey, and I heard you say you didn't—and yet it was a good punch. What made you deny it? Punches aren't bad ideas. If I could strike out like you did, I'd wait till I saw a man bullying a weaker one, and I'd stand up to him—" Fran leaped impulsively to her feet, and doubled her arm—"and I'd let her have! Punch-ing's a good thing, and, oh, how it's needed. . . . Except at school—you mustn't do anything human here, you must be an oyster at school."

"Aw-right," said Jakey, with a glimmering of comprehension. He seemed coming to life, as if sap were trickling from winter-concealment.

Bob Clinton, too, felt the fresh breeze or early spring in his face. He removed his spectacles.

"The first thing I knew," Fran said, resuming her private conversation with Jakey, "I had a mother, but no father—not that he was dead, oh, bless you, he was alive enough—but before my birth he deserted mother. Uncle turned us out of the house. Did we starve, that deserted mother and her little baby? I don't look starved, do I? Pshaw! If a woman without a cent to her name, and ten pounds in her arms can make good, what about a big strong boy like you with a mother to smile every time he hits the mark? Tell these gentlemen you're sorry for punching that boy."

"Sorr," muttered Jakey shamefacedly.

"I am glad to hear it," Abbott exclaimed heartily. "You can take your cap to go, Jakey."

"Lemme stay," Jakey pleaded, not budging an inch.

Fran lifted her face above the tousled head to look at Abbott; she sucked in her cheeks and made a triumphant oval of her mouth. Then she seemed to forget the young man's presence.

"But when mother died, real trouble began. It was always hard work, while she lived, but hard work isn't trouble, la, no, trouble's just an empty heart! Well, sir, when I read about how good Mr. Hamilton Gregory is, and how much he gives away—to folks he never sees—here I came. But I don't seem to belong to anybody, Jakey, I'm outside of everything. But you have a home and a mother, Jakey, and a place in the world, so I say 'Hurrah!' because you belong to somebody, and, best of all, you're not a girl, but a boy to strike out straight from the shoulder."

Jakey was dissolved; tears burst their confines.

One may shout oneself hoarse at the delivery of a speech which, if served upon printed page, would never prompt the reader to cast his hat to the ceiling. No mere print under bold headlines did Abbott read, but rather the changing lights and shadows in great black eyes. It was marvelous how Fran could project past experiences upon the screen of the listener's perception. At her, "When mother died," Abbott saw the girl weeping beside the death-bed. When she sighed, "I don't belong to anybody," the school director felt like crying: "Then belong to me!"

Fran now completed her work. She rose from the immovable Jakey and came over to Abbott Ashton, with meekly folded hands.

He found the magic of the moonlight-hour returning. She had mellowed — glowed — softened—womanized—Abbott could not find the word for it. She quivered with an exquisiteness not to be defined—a something in hair, or flesh, or glory of eye, or softness of lips, altogether lacking in his physical being, but eagerly desired.

"Professor Ashton," she spoke seriously, "I have been horrid. I might have known that school is merely a place where young people crawl into books to worm themselves from lid to lid, swallowing all that comes in the way. But I'd never been to school, and I imagined it a place where a child was helped to develop itself. I thought teachers were trying to show the pupils the best way to be what they were going to be. I've been disappointed, but that's not your fault; you are just a system. If a boy is to be a blacksmith after he's grown, and if a girl in the same class is to be a music teacher, or a milliner, both must learn about a-b-c and d-e-f. So I'm going away for good, because, of course I couldn't afford to waste my time in this house."

"But, Fran," Abbott exclaimed impulsively, "don't you see that you are holding up ignorance as a virtue? Can you afford to despise knowledge in this civilized age? You should want to know facts just because—well, just because they are facts."

"But I don't seem to, at all," Fran responded mildly. "No, I'm not making fun of education when I find fault with your school, any more than I show irreverence to my mother's God when I question what some people call 'religion.' It's the connection to life that makes facts of any value to me; and it's only in its connection to life that I'd give a pin for all the religion on earth."

"I don't understand," Abbott faltered.

She unfolded her hands and held them up in a quaint little gesture of aspiration. "No, because it isn't in a book. I feel lost—so out in space. I only ask for a place in the universe—to belong to somebody . . ."

"But," said Abbott, "you already belong to somebody, since Mr. Gregory has taken you into his home and he is one of the best men that ever—"

"Oh, let's go home," cried Fran impatiently. "Let's all of us skip out of this chalky old basement-smelly place, and breathe the pure air of life."

She darted toward the door, then looked back. Sadness had vanished from her face, to give place to a sudden glow. The late afternoon sun shone full upon her, and she held her lashes apart, quite unblinded by its intensity. She seemed suddenly illumined, not only from without, but from within.

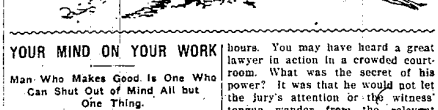
Abbott seized his hat. Robert Clinton had already snatched up his. Jakey squeezed his cap in an agitated hand. All four hurried out into the hall as if moved by the same spring.

Unluckily, as they passed the hall window, Fran looked out. Her eyes were caught by a group seated on the veranda of the Clinton boarding house. There were Miss Sapphira Clinton, Miss Grace Noir, and several mothers, sipping afternoon tea. In an instant, Fran had grasped the plot. That cloud of witnesses was banked against the green weather-boarding, to behold her ignominy.

"Mr. Clinton," said Fran, all sweetness, all allurement, "I am going to ask of you a first favor. I left my hat up in Miss Bull's room and—"

"I will get it," said Abbott promptly.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



YOUR MIND ON YOUR WORK

Man Who Makes Good Is One Who Can Shut Out of Mind All but One Thing.

The man who makes good is the man who can shut out of his mind all but one thing. An unsuccessful principal of a school once said that every teacher ought to be able to do three things at once. Of course, he was wrong. The teacher who does one thing at a time and does it well is giving the pupil the best possible object lesson in concentration. We have to learn to think clearly amid distracting noises, to go forward on a strait and narrow way without diversions and excursions that waste our time and our substance, and to keep at work regardless of the "tired" feeling, the "spring" feeling, and whether the fishing is good or not. When the soft breeze comes in at the window we stiffen the moral fiber against its allurement. We must pin our attention firmly to the turgid and dry geometry of a legal brief, or the serried figures of the daybook, or the busy system of a mercantile establishment, and let every other thought await its turn at the end of office hours. You may have heard a great lawyer in action in a crowded courtroom. What was the secret of his power? It was that he would not let the jury's attention or the witness' tongue wander from the relevant facts. He kept insistently to the straight line that is the shortest distance from point to point. He curtly dismissed all that was superfluous, immaterial and calculated to blur the salient outlines of the matter in controversy.

Anesthetized Rejection Slip.

Elizabeth Jordan said that with all the manuscripts the late Margaret E. Sangster had occasion to return, not one ever carried a heartache with it.

She saw everyone who wanted to see her, receiving all callers. She was greatly interested in young writers. And when they had no writing gift, tactfully she would set them going on in some other direction. Perhaps some woman who had brought her poor little efforts to Mrs. Sangster could bake sweetmeats, though she couldn't write. Then would Mrs. Sangster work around among the club women she knew until she got sufficient orders for sweetmeats to give that woman employment.—Christian Herald.

DISCOVER PLOT TO KILL THE KING

BULGARIANS ARRESTED ARE SAID TO HAVE PLANNED ASSASSINATION.

INTENDED TO BLOW UP ROYAL PALACE.

Bulgaria Withdraws Recent Acceptance of Czar's Offer to Arbitrate Territorial Differences of Allies.

A plot fomented by Bulgarians against the life of King Constantine of Greece, has been discovered at Saloniki. A number of Bulgarian soldiers, disguised in civilian dress, were arrested by the Greek military police.

A quantity of explosives had been discovered outside of the city gates and investigation led to the discovery of the conspiracy. One of the Bulgarians who was arrested confessed that an attempt was to have been made to blow up the king's palace.

Constant fighting between Greeks and Bulgarians is going on near Saloniki. The city has been strongly fortified on the landward side.

Bulgaria withdrew its recent acceptance of Czar Nicholas' proposal to arbitrate the territorial dispute between this country on one side and Servia and Greece on the other. This may mean that Russia's attempt to prevent a fresh conflict in the Balkans will prove futile.

The Bulgarian press is bitterly hostile against Russia, charging that the Russian government is secretly encouraging Servia and Greece to aggressive measures.

Bible School at Raisin Valley.

Preparations are being made for a bible conference and reunion at the Raisin Valley seminary, August 1 to 11. The conference will be conducted along the Chautauqua plan, and among the instructors will be: Rev. William Kirby, pastor of the Friends' church, Columbus, O.; Mary Barrett Pim, former instructor in the Cleveland Bible institute, Rev. Edgar Wootan, field secretary of the Cleveland Bible institute.

One of the leading features of the conference will be the reunion, Aug. 10, of all of the former students of the seminary. In order to make this event a success, announcements and invitations are already being sent out in the form of chain letters.

Nine Men Are Drowned.

Nine men were drowned and five others had a narrow escape when a sudden Mississippi river squall hit the government survey boat Beaver, causing it to capsize four miles above New Madrid, Mo.

The boat sank near Hotchkiss light in Snakey Bend, and as soon as a report of the accident was received, word was sent to Memphis and the government steamer Chiska hurried to the scene.

The party had been up the river on surveying work and it is supposed were about to return here when the squall struck them.

Panama Jurist is Dead.

The death of Facundo Mutis Duran, the eminent Panama jurist occurred recently. He was governor of Panama when it seceded from Colombia and was the first chief justice of the supreme court of the canal zone. He was at one time secretary of foreign relations.

Largest Cargo of Coal.

Steamer Col. James M. Schoonmaker left Ashtabula for Superior, Wis., with 13,712 tons of coal, the biggest cargo ever placed on board a lake ship. It required 296 cars of coal to load her. The Schoonmaker, one of the world's largest lake freighters, was built at Ecorse.

For the second time within a few weeks a hunting dog, Barney, saved the life of Violet Haveman, 3 years old of Cadillac. The child was playing between the rails of the G. R. & I. road, back of her home, with her dolls, and did not hear the approaching train, and would have been ground to pieces had not the dog rushed to the child, grabbed her in his teeth and dragged her to the door of the Haveman home, 50 feet away.

Earl Warner, engineer of the King Paper mill, at Kalamazoo, is dead of burns he sustained when a flue in a boiler exploded. The man was frightfully scalded by escaping steam.

The police commissioners of Saginaw have decided to purchase a fast auto as a starter for what will eventually be a flying squadron.

After deciding to hold the next convention in Holland, the state aerie of Eagles, at Hancock, elected the following officers: President, Leonard Clapp, Traverse City; vice president, H. Boyle, Kalamazoo; secretary, M. H. Graham, Lansing, no opposition; treasurer, E. G. Goff, Battle Creek; trustees, James F. Jewell, Gubbell; M. W. Ryan, Alpena; B. McSweeney, Mt. Clemens.