



FRAN

BY
JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

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A New Year Evangel

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TEXT—Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.



The blessed assurance proclaimed in the text is indeed an evangel for the new year; it opens a door into a large place, in which Christ is everything to the soul; and its appropriation will mean a happy New Year for saint and sinner.

Two recent experiences have fixed the text in my mind and heart for the work and need of the year. One day I was in the office of a Christian business man and when he told me of his up-and-down experiences and his fear of failure I gave him this verse and asked him to put it on his desk. Before the day was over I was engaging in personal work in an evangelistic meeting, and to a man who said he was afraid to confess Christ for fear he could not hold out, I said, Take Philippians 1:6, and count on God holding out. He made the venture on faith, and finds Christ meeting every need with sufficient grace.

How Can I Get Through?

How many Christians are fearful and doubtful about the continuance and completion of that new life which began in them when they took Christ as their Savior. To them the Christian life is not only difficult, it is a daily struggle, and a daily fear of collapse and defeat. They began well, but something has hindered them, or they stand in dread of some spiritual calamity. Service for Christ is irksome. Prayer has little meaning and less blessing or power. The Bible is neglected or forgotten. Joy has fled from the soul, and gladness from the life. Some days are bright and others gloomy. Some days are happy, but on others you wonder whether God is still alive. You begin to question the reality of your conversion, you wonder how you will ever get through, and you despair of winning heaven at last.

Remember the assurance of the text. It takes two to live the Christian life—Christ and the believer; and every day you may have all of him you need. Always remember that the Christian life is not a matter of attainment, but of maintenance—take it from Christ. This is a truth that needs to be magnified. When God moves into the heart of a man, and a man yields up his life to the instruction and guidance of God, God will take him through. There may be disappointments—days when everything goes wrong; there may be temptations—days when the devil presents the strongest and most alluring appeals to eye-gate or ear-gate or to other avenues of the life, seeking to get your consent to some enticement and to bring you into subjection to the powers of darkness; there will be days of sorrow—days when friends fall you, when loved ones leave you, when you look into an open grave and reach out after help; there will be days when you doubt—when you think your Christian life is a thing of no consequence to yourself and no contribution to the cause of Christ of the coming of his kingdom. But—and be sure of this—God will see that he wins in the end. This is his will; this is what he loves to do; this is what he has begun in you; and nothing is too hard for him—he will perfect it. Always he is working to perfect in us the very image of Jesus Christ.

In all our need we may count upon the persistence, patience and perfection of Christ's work.

The All-Sufficient Savior.

The text is also an evangel for the sinner, and he who hesitates to begin the Christian life may be assured here and now that "he which hath begun . . . will perfect." All he waits for is his faith, your surrender, your obedience; then you will enter upon a new year which by the grace of the mighty God of Jacob will go on into an eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He says, "My son, give me thine heart." When you do that he will enter in and take possession of that throne and from it rule every region of the life just so far as you yield it to him. Do not hesitate to do it. You will find Christ an all-sufficient Savior. As your substitute he will deal with the guilt of sin; as your Righteousness he will deal with the defilement of sin; and as your Lord he will deal with the power of sin. Nothing is too hard for God.

There is a three-fold card in the New Year evangel. 1. Prophecy—"Until the day of Christ"—when you will be complete in him. 2. Promise—"He which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it." God will not rest until his work is done; and when it is done he will call it good. 3. Persuasion—"Being confident of this very thing." May you have the confidence which says, "I know when I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day."

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. During the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of schools, suggests Gregory had married. 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 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 spring away at once. Fran hints at a twenty-year-old secret, and Gregory in agitation asks Grace to leave the room. Gregory had married the girl to whom Gregory married a young girl at Springfield while attending college and then deserted her. Fran is the child of that marriage. 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 declares 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 on a bridge telling her fortune by cards. She tells Abbott that she is the famous lion tamer, Fran Nonpareil. She tired of circus life and sought a home. 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 declares that she must leave the house at once. To Gregory's consternation he learns of Clinton's intention to marry. Gregory 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 he marries Clinton. Gregory's infatuation leads him to seek Grace at the grocery. He finds her alone and tells her the story of his past. Grace points out that as he married the president's daughter before the death of Fran's mother, he is not now legally married. They decide to flee at once.

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

"We'd better separate," Gregory whispered. "We'll meet at . . ."
If he sees us, what would be the use? Anyway, he'll have to know tomorrow! No," said Grace, overcoming a slight indecision, "the important thing is not to be stopped, whoever stops me this way."
"But there's no chance out that way," Gregory returned, with the obstinacy of the weak. "And if he does see us, it won't do to be seeming to try to hide."
"But we are hiding," Grace said definitely. "Possibly we can keep moving about, and he will go away."
"Why should we hide, anyhow?" demanded Gregory, with sudden show of spirit.
To that, she made no reply. If he didn't know, what was the use to tell him?
Gregory moved on, but glanced back over his shoulder. "Now, he's getting down," he said in agitation. "He's making his way right toward us. . . . All right, let him come!"
"In here—quick!" cried Grace, dragging him to one side. Quick!
A voice stopped them with, "Your tickets, please."
"Oh, no," wailed Gregory, "not into a show, Grace. We can't go into a show. It's—It's impossible."
She spoke rapidly: "We must. We'll be safe in there, because no one would ever suppose we'd go into such a place."
"But Grace," said Gregory firmly, "I cannot—I will not go into a show." The voice addressed him again: "It's first-class in every particular. . . . There is nothing here to bring blush of shame to the cheek of the fastidious. See those fierce mandarin lions that have been captured in the remotest jungles of Africa—"
Gregory looked back.
Robert Clinton was drawing nearer. Yet he had not discovered them, his eyes, grown fiercer and more impatient, were never at rest.
With a groan, Gregory thrust some money into the showman's hand, and Grace mingled with the noisy sight-seers flocking under the black tent.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Street Fair.
Littleburg was trembling under the awful din of a carnival too big for it, when Abbott Ashton, after his weeks' absence returned to find himself at Hamilton Gregory's door. He discovered old Mrs. Jefferson in the front room—this July night—because old Mrs. Jefferson was on friendly terms with falling dew; but every window was open.
"Come in," she cried, delighted at sight of his handsome, smiling face—he had been smiling most of the time during his drive from Simmtown with Robert Clinton. "Here I sit by the

window, where sometimes I imagine I hear a faint, far-away sound. I judge it's from some carnival band. Take this chair and listen attentively; your ears are younger—now!"

Abbott did not get all of this because of the Gargantuan roar that swept through the window, but he gravely tilted his head, then took the proffered ear-trumpet: "You are right," he said, "I hear something."
"It's the street fair," she announced triumphantly. "But sometimes it's louder. How fine you look, Abbott—just as if your conscience doesn't hurt you for disappearing without leaving a clue to the mystery. You needn't be looking around, sir—Fran isn't here."

"I wonder where she is?" Abbott smiled. "I'm dreadfully impatient to tell her the good news. Mrs. Jefferson, I'm to teach in a college—it's a much bigger thing than the position I lost here. And I have a chance to work out some ideas that I know Fran will like. I used to think that everything ought to be left precisely as it is, because it's been that way so long—I mean the church; and schools; and—society. But I've made up my mind that nothing is right, unless it works right."

Mrs. Jefferson listened in desperate eagerness. "A watch?" she hazarded. "Exactly," he responded hastily. "If a watch doesn't run, what's the use of its being pretty? And if churches develop a gift of tongue instead of character, what's the value of their prayers and songs? And I've concluded that if schools don't teach us how to live, they have the wrong kind of springs and wheels. Where is Fran, Mrs. Jefferson?"

"Still," she temporized, "we can't get along without watches, Abbott." "No, no schools, nor churches. But they must have good works. Is Fran down at the fair, do you think?"

The other bent toward him stealthily. "Ask where Mrs. Gregory is," she said, wonderfully significant.

"Well?"

"Abbott, listen: She's gone a-visiting!"

"Visiting?" Abbott was surprised. "Yes, visiting, she that hasn't been off this place to visit a soul for ages. I tell you, boy, times have changed here. Maybe you think nobody'd be left at home to visit; but Fran has found that there is a woman in town that she used to know, and the woman has a mighty sick child, and Lucy has gone to sit by it, so the mother can rest. Think of that, Abbott, think of Lucy going anywhere. My! Have you heard that we've lost a secretary at this place? I mean the future Mrs. Bob. Yes, she's gone. I'd as soon have thought of the courtesan being picked up and set in the parlor."

Mrs. Jefferson drew back and said succinctly: "Fran did it!"

Her cap quivered as she leaned forward again. "Get her to tell you all about it. We darsen't speak about it."

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Fran gave up fight, and stopped to look at him. A smile slipped from the corner of one eye, to get caught at the corner of her demure mouth. "When you disappeared, you left me yourself. A friend always does. I've had you all the time."

Abbott glowed. "Still, it isn't exactly the same as if I had been able to touch your hand. Suppose we shake hands, little friend; what do you say?"

"I don't say anything," Fran retorted; "I just shake."

Her handclasp was so hearty that he was slightly disconcerted. Was her friendship so great that it left no room in her heart for something greater?

"I want to talk to you, Fran, talk and talk, oh, just about all the long night through! Come, let me take you back home—"

"Home? Me? Ridiculous! But I'll tell you the best place that ever was, for the kind of talking you and I want to do to each other. Abbott, it won't matter to you—will it?—at what place I say to meet me, at about half-past nine?"

"Why, Fran! It's not eight o'clock," Abbott remonstrated, glancing toward the courthouse clock to find it stopped, and then consulting his watch. "Do you think I am going to wait till—"

"Till half-past nine," said Fran, nonchalantly. "Very well, then."

"But what will we do in the meantime, if we're not to talk till—"

"We?" she mocked him. "Listen, Abbott, don't look so cross. I've a friend in town with a sick daughter, and she's a real friend so I must go to help her, a while."

He was both mystified and disappointed. "I didn't know you had any such friends in Littleburg," he remonstrated, remembering how unkind tongues had set the village against her.

Fran threw back her head, and her gesture was full of pride and confidence. "Oh!" she cried, "the town is full of my friends."

He could only stare at her in dumb amazement.

"All right, then," she said with the greatest cheerfulness, "at half-past nine. You understand the date—nine-thirty. Of course you wouldn't have me desert a friend in trouble. Where shall we meet, Abbott—at nine-thirty? Shall we say, at the Snake-Eater's?"

"Go, Fran," he exclaimed, "I'll wait for you as long as I must, even if it's the eternity of nine-thirty; and I'd go anywhere in the world to meet you, even to the den of the Snake-Eater."

"That's the way for a friend to talk!" she declared, suddenly radiant—a full Fran-sun, now, instead of the slender penetrating Fran-beam.

Seeing a leg-lined lane opening before her, she darted forward.

Abbott called—"But I can't promise to talk to you as a friend, when we meet—I mean, just as a friend."

Fran looked back at him, still dazing. "I only ask you to treat me as well," she said with assumed humility, "as we are told we ought to treat our—enemies."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Conqueror.

After the extinguishment of the Fran-beam, Abbott wanted to be alone, to meditate on stellar and solar brightness, but in this vociferous wilderness, reflection was impossible. One could not even escape recognition, one could not even detach oneself from a Simon Jefferson.

"Got back to town again, hey?" said Simon. That was enough about Abbott; Simon passed at once to a more interesting theme: "Taken in the Lion Show, yet?"

"I'm just waiting for nine-thirty. . . . I have an engagement." Futile words, indeed, since it was now only eight o'clock.

"You come with me, then, I know all the ropes. Hey? Oh, yes, I know mother thinks me in bed—for goodness' sake don't tell on me, she'd be scared to death. But actually, old man, this carnival is good for my heart. Tisn't like going to church, one bit. Preaching makes me feel oppressed, and that's what scares me—feeling oppressed." He rubbed his grizzled hair nervously. "Just for fear somebody'd go tell, I've had to sneak into all these shows like I'd been a thief in the night."

Simon urged Abbott along in the direction taken, but a few minutes before, by Hamilton Gregory and Grace Noir. "You see," Simon panted, "when the girl fell off the trapeze—heard about that, hey? Mother was overjoyed, thinking I'd missed the sickening sight. But bless your soul!—I was right at the front, hanging on to the railing, and I saw it all. Why, she pretty near fell on me. Her foot slipped just so—" Simon extended his leg with some agility.

"Was she killed?" Abbott asked, concealing his astonishment over Simon's evident acquaintance with the black tent before which they had paused.

"Well," Simon reluctantly conceded, "n-n-no, she wasn't to say killed—but dreadfully bruised up, Abbott, very painful. I saw it all; this carnival has put new life into me—here! Get your ticket in a jiffy, or all the seats'll be taken. You can't stand there like that—give me your quarter, I know how to jump in and get first place. That ticket agent knows me; I've been in five times."

From a high platform before the black tent, a voice came through a megaphone: "The Big Show. The Big Show. See those enormous lions riding in baby carriages while La Gonzetti makes other lions dance the fandango to her violin. See those—"

"Here, Abbott, follow!" called the breathless Simon Jefferson. "Of course we'll see what's there—no use listening to him, like an introduction in a novel of Scott's telling it all first. You follow me."

Abbott laughed aloud at Simon's ability as they pushed their way under the tent.

"Uh-huh, now see that!" groaned Simon reproachfully, as he looked about. "Every seat taken. I tell you, you've got to lift your feet to get into this show. Well, hang on to the rope—don't let anybody gouge you out of standing room."

At least two-thirds of the space under the tent was taken up by tiers of seats formed of thin, and apparently fragile, blue planks, springy to the foot and deafening to the ear. From hardened ground to fringed tent-ceiling, these overlapping rows of narrow boards were brimming with men, women and children who, tenacious of their holdings, seemed each to contain in his pockets the feet of him who sat immediately behind.

The seats faced an immense cage which rose almost to the roof. As yet, it was empty, but smaller adjoining cages promised an animated arena when the signal should be given.

Gregory and Grace Noir had sought refuge on the highest seat, where they might overlook the crowd; here, with heads bent forward as if to avoid the canvas, they hoped to escape observation. Thanks to the influx of country folk, Littleburg citizens were rarely to be seen at such shows until a later and more fashionable hour. Gregory was relieved to find his topmost plank filled with strangers.

"All goes well," he said, pressing Grace's hand. "Nobody will find out that we have been in here."

"Watch for Mr. Clinton," Grace counseled cautiously. "If he comes in, stoop lower."

"They're all strangers, Grace. Providence is with us—there's Simon Jefferson!" He was too amazed to think of concealment.

"Hush! Yes—and Abbott Ashton." Gregory pulled his hat over his eyes.

Into the tent streamed a fresh body of sight-seers. Simon, swinging to the

stands in front of the tree and gives a long moan, which sounds familiar to the siren at Sandy Hook. Then he points to a particular bunch with his tail.

"The scent of the hound is unerring. It has never been known to fail. "And you never heard of them?"

No Joy Visit.

A Glasgow journalist who was careless of his personal appearance was assigned to write something about a show at a leading Glasgow theater. He presented his card at a box-office.

The manager came out and looked at the disheveled visitor dubiously.

"Did you come here to write something about the play—to work?" he asked.

"Do you think I'd come to your theater for amusement?" asked the journalist as he stalked out.—Saturday Evening Post.

Paris Dress Expert.

In Paris the authors have a woman who sets them right as to the dress of the women they write about. She tells them whether they have used the right words to describe the dress and whether the colors that are fashionable are named. The woman who does this is always anonymous, and no one but herself and the author is aware of her existence.

TRULY A VALUABLE HOUND

Visitor From Costa Rica Tells Story Which Some People Might Find It Hard to Believe.

At last the existence of the banana hound has been shown to be a fact! A man who just arrived in this country from Port Limon, Costa Rica, not only knows all about the banana hound, but has a drove of them himself. The gentleman is Ezekiah Spottiswood, and for many years the owner of a banana plantation in Costa Rica.

"Is the banana hound a new discovery up here?" he asked in surprise. "My word, how singular! Why, we always have them. They are a very essential adjunct to a banana plantation; indispensable almost, I should say. What is the breed? They are a cross between a pointer and a South American tapir."

"It's a very necessary thing to know when to pick the bananas from the trees, you know. When they have attained a certain shade of green, then is the time. Now it's very difficult to have a man so thoroughly up in color that he can determine this matter. That is where the banana hound comes in. He trots the groves with a man behind him, and scents the bunches which should be picked. He

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