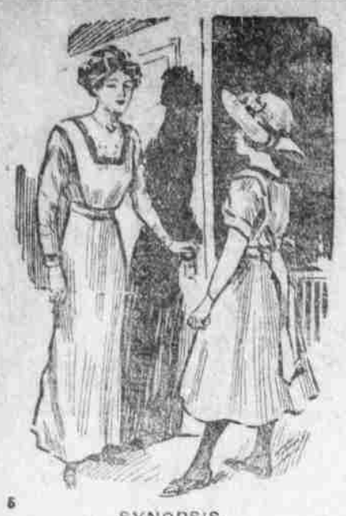
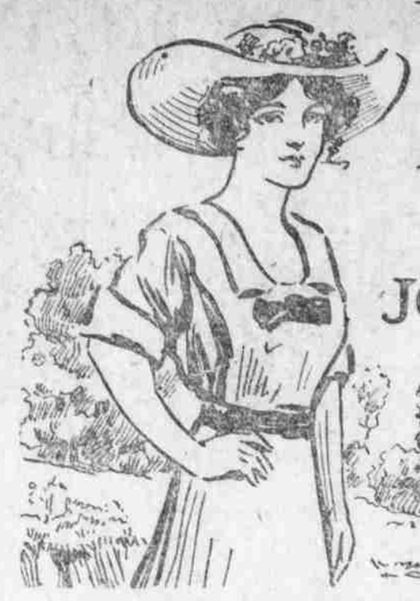


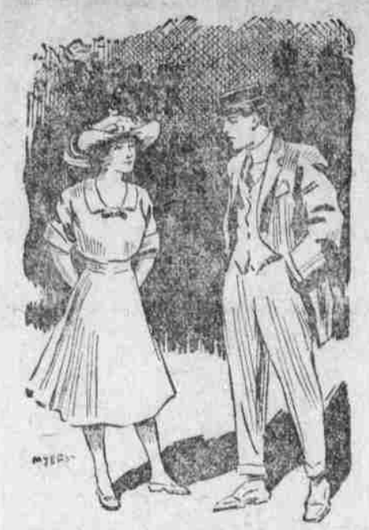
FRAN

BY

JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O·IRWIN·MYERS





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 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 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 agrees to the story. Mrs. Gergory insists on her making her home with them and takes her to her arms.

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

In the meantime old Mrs. Jefferson had been looking on with absorbed attention, desperately seeking to triumph over her enemy, a deaf demon that for years had taken possession of her. Now, with an impatient hand, she bent her wheel-chair to her daughter's side and proffered her ear trumpet.

"Mother," Mrs. Gregory called through this ebony connector of souls. "This is Fran Derry, the daughter of Mr. Gregory's dear friend, one he used to know in New York, many years before he came to Littleburg. Fran is an orphan, and needs a home. We have asked her to live with us."

Mrs. Jefferson did not always hear aright, but she always responded with as much spirit as if her hearing were never in doubt. "And what I'd like to know," she cried, "is what you are asking her to give us."

Grace Noir came forward with quiet resolution. "Let me speak to your mother," she said to Mrs. Gregory.

Mrs. Gregory handed her the tube, somewhat surprised, since Grace made it a point of conscience seldom to talk to the old lady. When Grace Noir disapproved of any one, she did not think it right to conceal that fact. Since Mrs. Jefferson absolutely refused to attend religious services, alleging as excuse that she could not hear the sermon, refusing to offer up the sacrifice of her fleshly presence as an example to others—Grace disapproved most heartily.

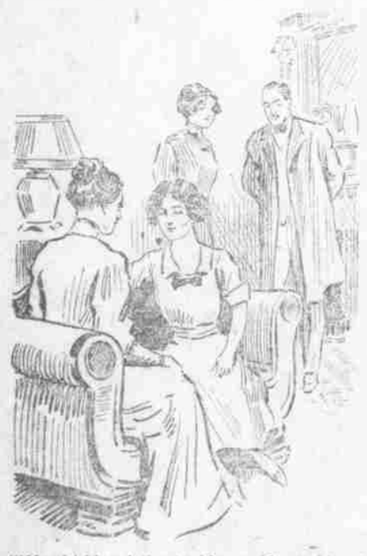
Mrs. Jefferson held her head to the trumpet shrinkingly, as if afraid of getting her ear tickled.

Grace spoke quietly, but distinctly, as she indicated Fran—"You know how hard it is to get a good servant in Littleburg." Then she returned the ear trumpet. That was all she had to say.

Fran looked at Mr. Gregory.

He bit his lip, hoping it might go at that.

The old lady was greatly at sea. Much as she disliked the secretary, her news was grateful. "Be sure to stipulate," she said briskly, "about wheeling me around in the garden. The last one wasn't told in the begin



"Would You Like to Know More About Me?"

ning, and had to be paid extra, every time I took the air. There's nothing like an understanding at the beginning."

Fran walked up to Grace Noir and shook back her hair in the way that Grace particularly disliked. She said: "Nothing like an understanding at the beginning; yes, the old lady's right. Good thing to know what the trouble is, so we'll know how it'll hit us. I guess I'm the trouble for this house, but I'm going to hit it as the daughter of an old friend, and not as a servant. I'm just about as independent as Patrick Henry, Miss Noir. I'm not responsible for being born, but it's my outlook to hold on to my equality."

"Fran!" exclaimed Mrs. Gregory, in mild reproof.

Grace looked at Mrs. Gregory and nothing could have exceeded the saintliness of her expression. Insulted, she was enjoying to the full her pious satisfaction of martyrdom.

"Dear Mrs. Gregory," said Fran kindly, "I'm sorry to have to do this, but it isn't as if you were adopting a penniless orphan. I'm adopting a home. I want to belong to somebody, and I want people to feel that they have something when they have me."

"I reckon they'll know they've got something," remarked Simon Jefferson, shooting a dissatisfied glance at Fran from under bushy brows.

Fran laughed outright. "I'm going to like you, all right," she declared. "You are so human."

It is exceedingly difficult to maintain satisfaction in silent martyrdom. Grace was obliged to speak, lest any one think that she acquiesced in evil. "Is it customary for little girls to roam the streets at night, wandering about the world alone, adopting homes according to their whims?"

"I really don't think it is customary," Fran replied politely, "but I'm not a customary girl." At that moment she caught the old lady's eye. It was sparkling with eloquent satisfaction; Mrs. Jefferson supposed terms of service were under discussion. Fran laughed, grabbed the ear-trumpet and called, "Hello. How are you?"

When an unknown voice entered the large end of the tube, half its meaning was usually strained away before the rest reached the yearning ear. Mrs. Jefferson responded eagerly. "And will you wheel me around the garden at least twice a day?"

Fran patted the thin old arm with her thin young hand, as she shouted, "I'll wheel you twenty times a day if you say so!"

"But I do not see-saw," retorted the old lady with spirit.

Gregory, finding Grace's eyes fixed on him searchingly, felt himself pushed to the wall. "Of course, he said coldly, "it is understood that the daughter of—er—my friend, comes here as a—as an equal." As he found himself forced into definite opposition to his secretary, his manner grew more assured. Suddenly it occurred to him that he was, in a way, atoning for the past.

"As an equal, yes!" exclaimed his wife, again embracing Fran. "How else could it be?"

"This is going to be a good thing for you, if you only knew it," Fran said, looking into her face with loving eyes.

Hamilton Gregory was almost able to persuade himself that he had received the orphan of his own free choice, thus to make reparation. "It is my duty," he said; "and I always try to do my duty, as I see it."

"Would you like to know more about me?" Fran asked confidentially of Mrs. Gregory.

Gregory turned pale. "I don't think it is neces—"

"Do tell me!" exclaimed his wife.

"Father and mother married secretly," Fran said, solely addressing Mrs. Gregory, but occasionally sending a furtive glance at her husband. "He was a college-student, boarding with his cousin, who was one of the professors. Mother was an orphan and lived with her half-uncle—a mighty crusty old man. Uncle Ephraim was, who didn't have one bit of use for people's getting married in secret. Father and mother agreed not to mention their marriage till after his graduation; then he'd go to his father and make everything easy, and come for mother. So he went and told him—father's father was a millionaire on Wall street. Mother's uncle was pretty well fixed, too, but he didn't enjoy anything except religion. When he wasn't at church—he went 'most all the time—he was reading about it. Mother said he was most religious in Hebrew, but he enjoyed his Greek verbs awfully."

Grace Noir asked remotely, "Did you say that your parents eloped?"

"They didn't run far," Fran explained; "they were married in the county, not far from Springfield—"

"I thought you said," Grace interrupted, "that they were in New York."

"Did you?" said Fran politely. "So father graduated, and went away to tell his father all about being married to Josephine Derry. I don't know what happened then, as he didn't come back to tell. My mother waited and waited—and I was born—and then Uncle Ephraim drove mother out of his house with her tiny baby—that's me—and I grew to be—as old as you see me now. We were always hunting father. We went all over the United States, first and last—it looked like the son of a millionaire ought to be easy to find. But he kept himself close, and there was never a clew. Then mother died. Sometimes she used to tell me that she believed him dead, that if he'd been alive he'd have come for her, because she loved him with all her soul, and wrecked her whole life because of him. She was happiest when she thought he was dead, so I wouldn't say anything, but I was sure he was alive, all right, as big and strong as you please. Oh, I know his kind. I've had lots of experience."

"So I'd suppose," said Grace Noir quietly. "May I ask—if you don't mind—if this traveling about the United States didn't take a great deal of money?"

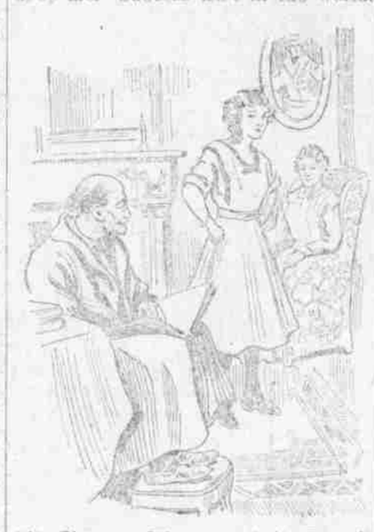
"Oh, we had all the money we wanted," Fran returned easily.

"Indeed? And did you become reconciled to your mother's uncle?"

"Yes—after he was dead. He didn't leave a will, and there wasn't anybody else, and as mother had just been taken from me, the money just naturally came in my hands. But I didn't need it, particularly."

"But before that," Grace persisted; "before, when your mother was first disinherited, how could she make her living?"

"Mother was like me. She didn't stand around folding her hands and crossing her feet—she used 'em. Bless you, I could get along wherever you'd drop me. Success isn't in the world.



"It Pleases Others, and It Doesn't Hurt Me."

It's in me, and that's a good thing to know—it saves hunting."

"Do you consider yourself a 'success'?" inquired the secretary with a chilly smile.

"I had everything I wanted except a home," Fran responded with charming good-humor, "and now I've got that. In a New York paper, I found a picture of Hamilton Gregory, and it told about all his charities. It said he had millions, and was giving away everything. I said to myself, 'I'll go there and have him give me a home'—you see, I'd often heard mother speak of him—and I said other things to myself—and then, as I generally do, what I told myself to do—it keeps up confidence in the general manager—I came."

"Dear child," said Mrs. Gregory, stroking her hair, "your mother dead, your father—that kind of a man—you shall indeed find a home with us, for life. And so your father was Mr. Gregory's friend. It seems—strange."

"My father," said Fran, looking at Mr. Gregory inscrutably, "was the best friend you ever had, wasn't he? You loved him better than anybody else in the world, didn't you?"

"I—I—yes," the other stammered, looking at her wildly, and passing his agitated hand across his eyes, as if to shut out some terrible vision, "yes, I—I was—er—fond of—him."

"I guess you were," Fran cried emphatically. "You'd have done anything for him."

"I have this to say," remarked Simon Jefferson, "that I may not come up to the mark in all particulars, and I reckon I have my weaknesses; but I wouldn't own a friend that proved himself the miserable scoundrel, the weak cur, that this child's father proved himself!"

"And I agree with you," declared Grace, who seldom agreed with him in anything. How Mr. Gregory, the best man she had ever known, could be fond of Fran's father, was incomprehensible. Ever since Fran had come knocking at the door, Grace's exalted faith in Mr. Gregory had been perplexed by the foreboding that he was not altogether what she had imagined.

Hamilton Gregory felt the change in her attitude. "That friend," he said quickly, "was not altogether to be censured. At least, he meant to do right. He wanted to do right. With all the strength of his nature, he strove to do right."

"Then why didn't he do right?" snapped Simon Jefferson. "Why didn't he go back after that young woman, and take care of her? Huh? What was holding him?"

"He did go back," exclaimed Gregory. "Well—not at first, but afterward. He went to tell his father, and his father showed him that it would never do, that the girl—his wife—wasn't of their sphere, their life, that he couldn't have made her happy—that it wouldn't—that it just wouldn't do. For three years he stayed in the mountains of Germany, the most miserable man in the world. But his conscience wouldn't let him rest. It told him he should acknowledge his wife. So he went back—but she'd disappeared—he couldn't find her—and he'd never heard—he'd never dreamed of the birth of a—of the—of this girl. He never knew that he had a daughter. Never!"

"Well," said Simon Jefferson, "he's dead now, and that's one comfort. Good thing he's not alive; I'd always be afraid I might come up with him and then, afterward, that I might not get my sentence commuted to life-imprisonment."

"Who is exciting my son?" demanded the old lady from her wheel-chair. Simon Jefferson's red face and staring eyes told plainly that his spirit was up.

"After all," said Fran cheerfully, "we are here, and needn't bother about what's past. My mother wasn't given her chance, but she's dead now, blessed soul—and my father had his chance, but it wasn't in him to be a man. Let's forget him as much as we can, and let's have nothing but sweet and peaceful thoughts about mother. That's all over, and I'm here to take my chance with the rest of you. We're the world, while our day lasts."

"What a remarkable child!" murmured Grace Noir, as they prepared to separate. "Quite a philosopher in short dresses."

"They used to call me a prodigy," murmured Fran, as she obeyed Mrs. Gregory's gesture inviting her to follow upstairs.

"Now it's stopped raining," Simon Jefferson complained, as he wheeled his mother toward the back hall.

"That's a good omen," said Fran, pressing Mrs. Gregory's hand. "The moonlight was beautiful when I was on the bridge—when I first came here."

"But we need rain," said Grace Noir reprovingly. Her voice was that of one familiar with the designs of Providence. As usual, she and Hamilton Gregory were about to be left alone.

"Who needs it?" called the unabashed Fran, looking over the banisters. "The frogs?"

"Life," responded the secretary somberly.

CHAPTER VIII.

War Declared.

The April morning was brimming with golden sunshine when Fran looked from the window of her second-story room. Eager for the first morning's view of her new home, she stared at the half-dozen cottages across the street, standing back in picket-fenced yards with screens of trees before their window-eyes. They showed only as bits of weather-boarding, or gleaming fragments of glass, peeping through the boughs. She thought everything homelike, neighborly. These houses seemed to her closer to the earth than those of New York, or, at any rate, closer in the sense of brotherhood. She drew a deep breath of pungent April essence and murmured: "What a world to live in!"

Fran had spoken in all sincerity in declaring that she wanted nothing but a home; and when she went down to breakfast it was with the expectation that every member of the family would pursue his accustomed routine, undeflected by her presence. She was willing that they should remain what they were, just as she expected to continue without change; however, not many days passed before she found herself seeking to modify her surroundings. If a strange mouse be imprisoned in a cage of mice, those already inured to captivity will seek to destroy the new-comer. Fran, suddenly thrust into the bosom of a family already fixed in their modes of thought and action, found adjustment exceedingly difficult.

She did not care to mingle with the people of the village—which was fortunate, since her laughing in the tent had scandalized the neighborhood; she would have been content never to cross the boundaries of the homestead, had it not been for Abbott Ashton. It was because of him that she acquiesced in the general plan to send her to school. It was on the fifth day of her stay, following her startling admission that she had never been to school a day in her life, that unanimous opinion was fused into expressed command—

"You must go to school!"

Fran thought of the young superintendent, and said she was willing.

When Mr. Gregory and the secretary had retired to the library for the day's work, Mrs. Gregory told Fran, "I really think, dear, that your dresses are much too short. You are small, but your face and manners and even your voice, sometimes, seem old—quite old."

Fran showed the gentle lady a soft docility. "Well," she said, "my legs are there, all the time, you know, and I'll show just as much of them, or just as little, as you please."

Simon Jefferson spoke up—"I like to see children wear short dresses—" and he looked at this particular child with approval. That day, she was really pretty. The triangle had been broadened to an oval brow, the chin was held slightly lowered, and there was something in her general aspect, possibly due to the arrangement of folds or colors—heaven knows what, for Simon Jefferson was but a poor male observer—that made a merit of her very thinness. The weak heart of the burly bachelor tingled with pleasure in nice proportions, while his mind attained the esthetic outlook of a classic age. To be sure, the skirts did show a good deal of Fran; very good—they could not show too much.

"I like," Simon persisted, "to see young girls of fourteen or fifteen dressed, so to say, in low necks and high stockings in—er—in the airy way such as they are by nature . . ." It was hard to express.

"Yes," Fran said impartially, "it pleases others, and it doesn't hurt me."

"Fran!" Mrs. Gregory exclaimed, gazing helplessly at the girl with something of a child's awe inspired by venerable years. It was a pathetic appeal to a spirit altogether beyond her comprehension.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ONE IDEA OF PHILANTHROPY

Carmen Sylva Says If She Had a Million She Would Build Vast Cathedral.

What curious ideas some people have on the subject of philanthropy. Carmen Sylva, queen of Roumania, is the latest to answer that ancient question, "What would you do if you were a millionaire?" She would build a vast cathedral with chapels in it for every religion, and she would also build an art school. As it is only a very small minority of people who ever go to church or chapel, and these that do go are usually of the more comfortable classes, it is to be feared that Carmen Sylva's million would not go very far to lessen human misery. Most people have asked themselves what they would do if they were millionaires, but the wiser among them have contented themselves with saying what they would not do. A resolution to give nothing to any religious or charitable organizations, with a very few exceptions, is a fairly safe one, since both religion and charity are incompatible with organization. The greatest delight of wealth is in its opportunities for individual and beneficent contact with one's fellowmen, for there can be little true charity without individual contact between giver and receiver. Among the schemes for spending a million we should be disposed to place that of Carmen Sylva at the bottom of the list—and then some.

Language Intricacies.

Richard Grant White in his "Words and Their Uses," says. "Transpire means to breathe through, and so to pass off insensibly. The identical word exists in French, in which language it is equivalent of our perspire, which also means to breathe through, and so to pass off insensibly. The Frenchman says J'ai beaucoup transpire (I have much perspired)—in fact, transpire and perspire are etymologically as near perfect synonyms as the nature of language permits; the latter, however, has by common consent been set apart in English to express the passage of a watery secretion through the skin, while the former is properly used only in a figurative sense to express the passage of knowledge from a limited circle to publicity."

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Director of Evening Department, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.)

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 21

THE GOLDEN CALF.

LESSON TEXT—Ex. 32:15-20, 30-35.
GOLDEN TEXT—"My little children, guard yourself from idols."—I John 5:21.

It is incredible that these Israelites should turn aside after gods made with man's hands in the very midst of such a demonstration of the holiness, majesty and glory of Jehovah. Yet in life it is always but a step from glory to degradation, and one of the easiest moments in which to trip up the saint is at the time of his greatest ecstacies. The human heart is absolutely unreliable, unstable, nay, it is wicked and is desperately deceitful, Jer. 17:9. Following the giving of the decalogue God gave Moses a series of laws and ordinances which are an application of that fundamental law and which form "the book of the covenant." Then the elders of Israel are called up into the mountain, given a vision of God, and given to eat and drink in his presence, symbolizing communion (Ex. 24). After this Moses and his servant Joshua leave Aaron and Hur in charge of the people and go up again into the mountain. On the seventh day Moses entered the cloud and remained for a period of 40 days during which time he received the pattern of the tabernacle and the order of worship. It was during this period of time that the people sinned. The first part of this chapter tells us the fact of the casting of the calf, vv. 1-6. God's righteous anger and Moses' prayer of intercession, vv. 7:14. Israel's boast, 19:8, 24:3, 7, is now revealed as being but utter weakness and illustrates the worthlessness and unreliability of human nature. The drunkard's promised sobriety, the unclean man's promised purity, alike melt in the fierce heat of temptation. Their sin was a direct, positive violation of the first commandment, and in it they also broke the second. They did not want to substitute but rather sought a similitude of God. Aaron here appears in a poor light; he did not like their proposition (vv. 7, 8), but did not have strength of character sufficient to stand against it. Aaron is like those in the church and out of it who prefer to control a movement which is bad rather than to combat the movement in its entirety.

Human Fickleness.

Notice Aaron's attempt to link old ideas with this new-fangled religion, this "modern expression," "tomorrow is the feast of Jehovah," v. 5. Men and women are today attempting to gloss evil teaching and open sin by associating with it the name of Christ. To call such an association scientific is a travesty. The fact, however, that Aaron gave the Israelites what they asked for, shows that he had some idea at least of God's attitude towards his people. We have here presented also the fickleness of human gratitude. Moses is with God on their behalf (Heb. 7:25), yet they forget him and God who had performed such mighty signs on their behalf, and demand new new leadership (v. 1 and Ps. 106:21). Art has a place in religious life, but a spiritual worship alone is acceptable to God, John 4:24.

It was a sacrifice (vv. 2, 3) of gold to make possible this calf which was doubtless a representation of the Egyptian god Apis and may or may not have been life-size, and may have been solid or only veneer, but neither such earnestness nor sacrifice saved them.

God's Word Immutable.

Moses' prayer of intercession, vv. 11-14, is wonderful. It centers about the idea that Israel is "Thy people" (v. 11), and that God's word is immutable, "Remember," etc. (v. 13). Moses was moved with pity and had a passion for the honor of God's name. As Moses and Joshua approached the camp they heard music, v. 17. What a commentary upon the debasing use of one of God's noblest gifts to man, the gift of music. Reaching the camp, they beheld the fullness of iniquity and depravity which was the development of this disobedience, v. 25. See also Rom. 1:21-25, Rom. 6:23, Jas. 1:15. Moses' passion also manifested itself against their sin by breaking the tables, grinding the calf to powder and compelled them to drink the water into which it was flung.

In order to complete this story we should call attention (vv. 30-35) how Moses returned into God's presence, made a confession for the people, truly taking the place of intercession when he desired to be blotted out rather than have their sin go unforgiven. Go on into the next chapter, vv. 13, 14, and read his great heart cry and God's answer of grace.

The Teaching. We have here a story of the frailty of human nature and the feebleness of human resolutions. We see in Aaron the weakness of a religious leader who attempts to compromise or to yield to the clamor of a mistaken people. There is also present in this lesson the possibility of prostituting right things. The Israelites made a proper request in their desire to go forward. They lacked patience, and made the mistake of desiring something that appealed to their senses. We thus see the disaster of disobedience, even though the end desired be a good one.