



FRECKLES

By
Gene Stratton-Porter

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were invited to stay for dinner and that they had accepted the invitation. She was having the time of her life when McLean came back, jolting from his trip to the tree. How jubilant he only told the angel, for he had been obliged to lose faith in some trusted men of late and had learned discretion by what he suffered. He



"EVERYBODY LISTEN!" CRIED THE ANGEL.

planned to begin clearing out a road to the tree that same afternoon and to set two guards every night, for it promised to be a rare treasure. "I am coming to see it felled," cried the angel.

"Tell me, angel," the boss said jestingly; "I think I have a right to know. Who really did locate that tree?" "Freckles," she answered promptly and emphatically.

The boss smiled significantly at Freckles, who had just come up, for they had planned that they would instruct the company to reserve enough of the veneer from that very tree to make the most beautiful dressing table they could design for the angel's share of the discovery.

"What will you have for yours?" asked McLean of Freckles. "If it's all the same to you, I'll be taking mine out in music lessons—beginning your pardon—voice culture," said Freckles with a grimace.

The angel gave McLean the head of the table. She took the foot, with Freckles on her right, and the lumber gang, washed, brushed and straightened until they felt unfamiliar with themselves and each other, filled the sides.

It was several days before they completed a road to the noble, big tree and were ready to fell it. When the saw was well in Freckles began watching down the road where it met the trail leading from Little Chicken's tree. He had gone to the tree ahead of the gang and taken down the blue ribbon. Carefully folded, it now lay over his heart. He was promising himself a good deal of comfort with that ribbon when he should go to the city next month to begin his studies and dream the summer over again. It would help to make things tangible. When he was dressed as other men and about his work he knew where he meant to home that precious bit of blue. It should be his good luck token, and he would wear it always to keep bright in memory the day on which the angel had called him her knight.

How he would study, and oh, how he would sing! If he could fulfill McLean's expectations, and make the angel proud of him! If he could only be a real knight!

He could not understand why the angel had failed to come. She had wanted to see their tree felled. She would be too late if she did not arrive soon. The men were sending ringing blows into the felling side of the tree when the boss rode up.

His first word was to inquire for the angel. When Freckles said she had not yet come McLean gave orders to stop work on the tree until she arrived. As the men stepped back a stiff morning breeze caught the top that towered high above its fellows. There was an ominous grinding at the base, a shiver of the mighty trunk, and directly in line of its fall the bushes swung apart and the laughing face of the angel looked in on them.

A groan of horror burst from the dry throats of the men, and, reading the agony in their faces, she stopped short, glanced up and understood. "South!" shouted McLean. "Run south!" The poor child was helpless. It was patent that she did not know which way south was. There was another

slow shiver of the tree. The rest of the gang stood as if rooted, but Freckles sprang past the trunk and went leaping in great bounds. He caught up the angel and dashed through the thicket for safety. The swaying trunk was half over when, just for an instant, a nearby tree stayed its fall, and with the angel he plunged headlong.

A cry broke from the men, and McLean covered his face. Instantly Freckles was up, with the angel in his arms plunging on again. The outer limbs were on them when they saw Freckles hurl the angel, face down, in the muck, as far from him as he could send her. Springing after in an attempt to cover her body with his own, he whirled to see if they were still in danger, and with outstretched arms braced himself for the shock. The branches shut them from sight, and the awful crash rocked the earth.

McLean and Duncan ran with axes and saws. The rest of the gang followed, and they worked like madmen. It seemed an age before they caught a glimpse of the angel's blue dress, and it renewed their vigor. Duncan fell on his knees beside her and tore the muck from underneath her with his hands. In a few seconds he dragged her out, choking and stunned.

Freckles lay a little farther under the tree, a big limb pinning him down. Duncan began mining beneath him, but Freckles stopped him. "You can't be moving me," he said. "You must cut off the limb and lift it. I know."

Two men ran for the big saw. A number of them laid hold of the limb and bore up. In a little time it was off, and Freckles lay free. The men bent over him to lift him, but he motioned them away. "Don't be touching me until I rest a bit," he pleaded.

Then he twisted his head until he saw the angel, who was digging muck from her eyes and wiping it off her face on the skirt of her dress. "Try to get up," he begged. McLean heaped the angel to her feet. "Do you think any bones are broken?" gasped Freckles. "You see if you can find any, sir."

McLean assured Freckles that she was not seriously injured. Freckles settled back with a smile of ineffable tenderness on his face. "Thank the Lord!" he hoarsely whispered. The angel broke from McLean. "Now, Freckles, you" she cried. "It's your turn. Please get up!" A pitiful spasm swept Freckles' face. The angel took hold of his hand.

"Freckles, get up!" It was half command, half entreaty. "Easy angel, easy. Let me rest a bit first," implored Freckles. She knelt beside him. He reached his arm about her and drew her up closely. He looked at McLean in an agony of entreaty that brought the boss to his knees on the other side.

"Oh, Freckles!" McLean cried. "Not that! Surely we can do something! We must! Let me see!" He tried to unfasten Freckles' neckband, but his fingers shook so clumsily that the angel pushed them away and herself laid Freckles' chest bare. With just one hasty glance she gazed



WITH THE ANGEL IN HIS ARMS PLUNGING ON AGAIN.

ered the clothing together and slipped her arm under his head. Freckles lifted eyes of agony to hers. "You see?" he said. The angel nodded dumbly. Freckles turned to McLean. "Thank you for everything," he panted. "Where are the boys?"

"They are all here," said the boss, "except a couple that have gone for doctors, Mrs. Duncan, and the Bird Woman."

"It's no use trying to do anything," said Freckles. "You won't forget the muff and the Christmas box. The muff especial?"

There was a movement above them so pronounced that it attracted Freckles' attention, even in that extreme hour. He looked up, and a pensive smile flickered into his drawn face. "Why, if it ain't me little chicken!" he cried hoarsely. "He must be making his very first trip from the log. Now Duncan can have his big watering trough."

"It was little chicken that made me late," faltered the angel. "I was so anxious to get here early I forgot to bring his breakfast from the carriage. He must have been very hungry, for when I passed the log he started after me. He was so wabby, and so slow getting from tree to tree and through

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the bushes, I just had to wait on him, for I couldn't drive him back."

A spasm of fierce pain shook Freckles, and a look of uncertainty crossed his face. "All summer I've been thanking God for the falling of the feather and all the delights it's brought me," he muttered. "but this looks like—"

He raised questioning eyes to McLean. "I can't help being Irish, but I can help being superstitious," he said. "I mustn't be laying it to the Almighty, nor to me bird, must I?"

"No, dear lad," said McLean, stroking the brilliant hair. "The choice lay with you. You could have stood a rooted doll like all the rest of us. It was through your great love and your high courage that you made the sacrifice."

"Don't you be so naming it, sir!" cried Freckles. "It's just the reverse if I could be giving me body the hundred times over to save hers from this. I'd be doing it and take joy with every pain."

He turned with a smile of adoring tenderness to the angel. She scarcely seemed to hear or understand what was coming, but she bravely tried to answer that smile.

"Is me forehead covered with dirt?" he asked. She shook her head. "You did once," he gasped. Instantly she laid her lips on his forehead, then on each cheek, and then in a long kiss on his lips.

"Freckles," said McLean brokenly, "you will never know how I love you. You won't go without saying good by to me?"

That word stung the angel to quick comprehension. She started as if rousing from sleep. "Goodby?" she cried sharply. "Goodby! What do you mean? Who's saying goodby? Where could Freckles go when he is hurt like this, but to the hospital? You call up the men. We must start right away."

"It's no use, angel," said Freckles; "I'm thinking ivry bone in me breast is smashed. You'll have to be letting me go!"

"I will not," said the angel dully. "You are alive. You are breathing, and no matter how badly your bones are broken, what are great surgeons for but to fix you up and make you well again?"

"Oh, angel!" moaned Freckles. "I can't! You don't know how bad it is. It's the minute you are for trying

to lift me!" "Of course you will, if you make up your mind to do it," said the angel. "Really you have to do it, Freckles."

no matter how it hurts you, for you did this for me, and now I must save you, so you might as well promise. You will promise, Freckles?"

"Angel, darlin', angel," pleaded Freckles, "you ain't understanding, and I can't for the life of me be telling you, but, indade, it's best to be letting me go."

He appealed to McLean. "Dear boss, you know! You be telling her that, for me, living is far worse pain than dying. Tell her you know death is the best thing could ever be happening to me!"

(To Be Continued.)

Take the Banker's Life. C. G. Mayfield, one of the prominent farmers of Louisville, was in the city this week and made a contract with C. M. Robinson, General Agent of the Old Line Bankers' Life Insurance company of Lincoln for one of their policies. Mr. Mayfield knows a good thing when he sees it, and as he believes in Nebraska as a place to live, he looks upon Nebraska insurance as a safe investment. Mr. Robinson was in Lincoln a few days this week to see the secretary, Mr. J. H. Farley, in regard to the campaign to be made the coming season. The coming year seems very bright, and their rapidly increasing business will be greatly stimulated, is the opinion of the officers and all those in close business relations of the company.

Missionary Meeting. From Saturday's Daily. The Foreign Missionary society of the Methodist church convened at the church in this city last evening for a two days' session. There are delegates present from Falls City, Auburn and Lincoln and a very interesting session is anticipated, lasting over Sunday.

Henry Thierolf of Cedar Creek came down on No. 4 this morning and took in the circus.

Receives Word of Wife's Illness. From Saturday's Daily. Joe Silence, state organizer for the W. O. W., while doing work for the order at Weeping Water yesterday received a call over the independent telephone to come to Plattsmouth at once, as his wife was at the point of death and Mr. Silence was directed to look out. Mr. Silence secured an automobile at the Philpot garage and was whirled swiftly over the twenty-two miles between Weeping Water and this city, at an expense of \$8. On arriving at his home he was greatly relieved to find his wife much better.

Dance in Murray. The Murray Dancing club will give another dance at Jenkins' hall in Murray on Saturday evening, May 14th. The music will be furnished by the popular Jacobs orchestra of Omaha. A good time is in store for you, so make the date and keep it.

POTATOES FOR SALE.—A car of nice, large, smooth potatoes—New York Rural variety—just received from northern Illinois. Price \$1.25 per bushel. In lots of 5 bushels potatoes will be delivered anywhere in Plattsmouth. R. L. Propst. Phone 3-E. 5-1-1wk-d&w.

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