



FRECKLES

By
Gene Stratton-Porter

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You rascal," raved Freckles, "be fighting before I forget the laws of a gentleman's game and split your dirty head with me stick!"

"Oh, don't you!" raged the boy. "Well, you ain't resembling me none, for I'm itchin' like death to git me fingers in the face of you."

He danced up and, as Wessner lunged out in self-defense, ducked under his arm like a bantam and punched him in the pit of the stomach, so that he doubled up with a groan. Before Wessner could straighten himself Freckles was on him, fighting like the wildest fury. The Dutchman dealt thundering blows that sometimes landed and sent Freckles reeling and sometimes missed, while he went plunging into the swale with the impetuosity of a steam engine. Freckles could not strike with half Wessner's force, but he could land three blows to Wessner's one. It was here that Freckles' days of alert watching on the line, the perpetual swinging of the heavy edgell and the endurance of all weather stood him in good stead, for he was as tough as a pine knot and as agile as a panther. He danced, ducked and dodged. For the first five minutes he endured fearful punishment. Then Wessner's breath commenced to whistle between his teeth, when Freckles had only just begun fighting. He sprang back with shrill laughter.

PROLOGUE.

This romance of Freckles and the Angel of the Limberlost is one of the most novel, entertaining, wholesome and fascinating stories that have come from the pen of an American author in many years. The characters in this sylvan tale are:

Freckles, a plucky waif who guards the Limberlost timber leases and dreams of angels.

The Swamp Angel, in whom Freckles' sweetest dream materializes.

McLean, a member of a lumber company, who befriends Freckles.

Mrs. Duncan, who gives mother love and a home to Freckles.

Duncan, head teamster of McLean's timber gang.

The Bird Woman, who is collecting camera studies of birds for a book.

Lord and Lady O'More, who come from Ireland in quest of a lost relative.

The Man of Affairs, brusque of manner, but big of heart.

Wessner, a timber thief who wants rascality made easy.

Black Jack, a villain to whom thought of repentance comes too late.

CHAPTER VI.

WESSNER GETS A THRASHING.

THE boss crouched among the bushes like a tiger ready to spring, but as Freckles' voice reached him he held himself with the effort of his life to see what mettle was in the boy.

"Don't you be wasting of me good time in the numbering of me hands," howled Freckles. "The strength of me cause will make up for the weakness of me members, and the size of a cowardly thief don't count. You'll think all the wildcats of the Limberlost is turned loose on you whin I come against you, and as for me cause, I slept with you, Wessner, the night I come down the corduroy like a dirty, friendless tramp, and the boss was for taking me up, washing, clothing and feeding me and giving me a home full of love and tenderness, and a master to look to, and good, well-earned money in the bank. He's trusting me, his beautiful, and here comes you, you spotted toad of the big road, and insults me, as is an honest Irish gentleman, by hinting that you conceive I'd be willing to shut me eyes and hold fast while you rob him of the thing I was set and paid to guard and then

repare the performance." Again an awful wrenching seized McLean. Freckles stepped back as Wessner, tottering and reeling like a thoroughly drunken man, came toward the path, looking indeed as if wildcats had taken their fill of him.

The edgell spun high in air, and, catching it with an expertness acquired by long practice on the line, the boy twirled it a second and, stepping out into the trail, followed Wessner. Because Freckles was Irish it was impossible to do it silently, and presently his clear tenor rang out, though there were bad catches where he was hard pressed for breath:

"It was the Dutch! It was the Dutch. Do you think it was the Irish noisier help? Not much!"

It was the Dutch! It was the Dutch! Wessner turned and mumbled: "What you following me for? What are you going to do with me?"

Freckles called the Limberlost to witness. "How's that for the ingratitude of a beast? And me troubling myself to show him off me territory with the honors of war!"

Then he changed his tone completely and added: "Belike it's this, Freddy. You see, the boss might come riding down this trail any minute, and the little mare's so wheedlesome that if she'd come on to you in your present state all of a sudden she'd stop that short she'd send Mr. McLean out over the ears of her. No disparagement intended to the sinse of the mare;" he added hastily.

Wessner belched a fearful oath, and Freckles laughed merrily. "That's a sample of the thanks a generous act's always for getting," he continued. "Here's me neglectin' me work to eschort you out proper, and you saying such awful words, Freddy," he demanded sternly, "do you want me to soap out your mouth? You don't seem to be realizing it, but if you was to buck into Mr. McLean in your present state without me there to explain matters the chance is he'd cut the liver out of you, and I shouldn't think you'd be wanting such a fine gentleman as him to see that it's white."

Wessner grew ghastly under his grime and broke into a staggering run. Freckles twirled the baton and stood like a soldier at "attention" until Wessner left the clearing, but it was the last scene of that performance. When the boy turned there was a deathly illness in his face, and his legs wavered like reeds beneath his weight. He staggered back to the case, and opening it, he took out a piece of cloth. He dipped it into the water and, sitting on a bench, he wiped the blood and grime from his face, while his breath sucked between his clenched teeth. He was shivering with pain and excitement in spite of himself. He unbuttoned the band of his right sleeve, and, turning it back, exposed the blue line, outlined whiteness of his maimed arm, now vividly streaked with contusions, while in a series of circular dots the blood oozed slowly. Here Wessner had succeeded in setting his teeth. When Freckles saw what it was he forgave himself the kick in the pit of Wessner's stomach.

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"Excuse me, sir," he said. "You'll surely be belayin' I thought meself alone."

McLean unshed him carefully to the seat and, bending over him, opened a pocket case that he carried as regularly as his revolver and watch, for cuts and bruises were of daily occurrence among the gang.

Taking the hurt arm, he turned back the sleeve and bathed and bound up the wounds. He examined Freckles' head and body and convinced himself that there was no permanent injury.

Then he sat down beside Freckles. All the indescribable beauty of the place was strong about him, but he saw only the bruised face of the suffering boy, who had hedged for the information he wanted like a diplomat, argued like a judge, fought like a sheik and triumphed like a devil.

As the pain lessened and breath caught up with Freckles' pounding heart he watched the boss from the tail of his eye. How had McLean got there, and how long had he been there? Freckles did not dare ask. At last he arose and, going to the case, took out his revolver and the wire mending apparatus and locked the door. Then he turned to McLean.

"Have you any orders, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," said McLean, "I have, and you are to follow them to the letter. Turn over that apparatus to me and go straight home. Soak yourself in the hottest bath your skin will bear and go to bed at once. Now, hurry."

"Mr. McLean," said Freckles, "it's sorry I am to be telling you, but the afternoon's walking of the line ain't done. You see, I was just for getting to me feet to start, and I was on good time when up came a gentleman, and we got into a little heated argument. It's either settled or it's just begun, but between us I'm that late I haven't started for the afternoon yet. I must be going at once, for there's a tree I must find before the day's over."

"You plucky little idiot," growled McLean, "you can't walk the line! I doubt if you can get to Duncan's. Don't you know when you are done up? You go to bed. I'll finish your work."

"Niver!" protested Freckles. "I was just a little done up for the present a minute ago. I'm all right now. Riding boots are away too low. The day's hot and the walk a good seven miles, sir. Niver!"

As he reached for the outfit he pitched forward and his eyes closed. McLean stretched him on the moss and applied restoratives. When Freckles returned to consciousness McLean ran to the cabin to tell Mrs. Duncan to get

a hot bath ready and to bring Nellie. That worthy woman promptly filled the wash boiler and set a roaring fire under it. She pushed the horse trough off its base and rolled it up to the kitchen.

By the time McLean came again, lending Nellie and holding Freckles on her back, Mrs. Duncan was ready for business. She and the boss laid Freckles in a trough and poured on hot water until he squirmed. They soaked, rubbed and scoured him. Then they let the hot water off and closed his pores with cold. Lastly they stretched him on the floor and chafed, rubbed and kneaded him until he cried out for mercy. As they rolled him into bed his eyes dropped shut, but a little later they flared open.

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How had the boy conceived it? What a picture he had wrought in living colors! He had the heart of a painter; he had the soul of a poet. The boss stepped carefully over the velvet carpet and touched the walls of crisp verdure with gentle fingers. He stood long beside the flower bed and gazed at the banked wall of bright flowers as if he could never leave off.

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Mrs. William Henriksen and little daughter, who have been in Omaha for the past several weeks keeping house for the former's sister's children, returned home today on the noon train.

J. F. Clement, superintendent of the Clover Leaf Railway company, arrived from his home at Frankfort, Indiana, today, and will be a guest of his brother, William Clement, of this city, for a few days.

S. L. Furlong of Rock Bluffs was in the city today looking after business matters. According to Mr. Furlong's measurement, the last snow which fell was five inches, making over five feet of snowfall this winter.

Miss Lena Young came down from Cedar Creek to visit her parents, Dave Young and wife, over Sunday at their home near Murray. Mr. Young met his daughter at the Burlington station. He found the road between his home and Plattsmouth almost impassable in places.

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Children Cry for Fletcher's CASTORIA

The Kind You Have Always Bought, and which has been in use for over 30 years, has borne the signature of *Chas. H. Fletcher* and has been made under his personal supervision since its infancy. Allow no one to deceive you in this. All Counterfeits, Imitations and "Just-as-good" are but experiments that trifle with and endanger the health of Infants and Children—Experience against Experiment.

What is CASTORIA
Castoria is a harmless substitute for Castor Oil, Paregoric, Drops and Soothing Syrups. It is Pleasant. It contains neither Opium, Morphine nor other Narcotic substance. Its age is its guarantee. It destroys Worms and allays Feverishness. It cures Diarrhoea and Wind Colic. It relieves Teething Troubles, cures Constipation and Flatulency. It assimilates the Food, regulates the Stomach and Bowels, giving healthy and natural sleep. The Children's Panacea—The Mother's Friend.

GENUINE CASTORIA ALWAYS
Bears the Signature of
Chas. H. Fletcher
The Kind You Have Always Bought
In Use For Over 30 Years
THE CENTAUR COMPANY, 77 MURRAY STREET, NEW YORK CITY.

LOCAL NEWS

From Thursday's Daily.

Ed Lohnes and wife of near Cedar Creek visited Plattsmouth friends for the day, coming down on No. 4 this morning.

Jacob Tritsch and wife were Omaha visitors this morning, where they called on Miss Emma Albert at Immanuel hospital.

Mrs. E. H. Spangler and Miss Elizabeth Spangler boarded the early train for Omaha this morning, where they went to spend the day.

John Meisinger, jr., and son, of Cedar Creek, visited his father, Jacob Meisinger, for the day yesterday, returning on the afternoon train.

George Lohnes and son, Henry, of Eight Mile Grove precinct, came in on No. 4 this morning and transacted business for a few hours.

M. G. Meisinger and son of Cedar Creek were in the city looking after business matters for a few hours today, returning home on No. 33.

Mrs. Philip Tritsch drove in from her home this morning and boarded the early train for Omaha, where she looked after business matters for a time.

Fred Kehne was looking after some business matters in this city yesterday afternoon and called at this office and renewed his subscription to the Daily.

Henry Inhelder and wife of Cedar Creek were in the city yesterday visiting friends and looking after business matters, returning home on the afternoon train.

Mrs. Mark Iles was a visitor in this city Saturday and called at this office and renewed her subscription to this paper and ordered one sent to Albert Murray at Weeping Water.

George Heil, jr., from near Cedar Creek, drove in from his home this morning for the transaction of some business matters. Mr. Heil paid the Journal office a brief call, and while here renewed for his paper. He tells us that the roads are in very bad condition for traveling.

Henry Sasse, one of the Journal's good German friends, from near Louisville, was in the city today, coming down on the Schuyler to look after some county seat business, which trip he has been trying to make for the past several weeks. He paid the Journal office a brief call, renewing for his paper.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Wiles of the vicinity of Weeping Water were visitors in this city Saturday, being guests at the home of the latter's parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Martin. Mr. Wiles called at this office and renewed his subscription and ordered his paper changed from Weeping Water to Mynard, as they have moved from the vicinity of Weeping Water.

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