



FRECKLES

By
Gene Stratton-Porter

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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.

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 XI.

THE MAN OF AFFAIRS.

"Why don't you take it yourself?" questioned the man of affairs.

Freckles' clear gray eyes met those of the angel's father squarely, and he said, "If you were in my place would you take it to her yourself?"

"No, I would not," said that gentleman quickly.

"Then why ask why I did not?" came Freckles' lamblike query.

"Bless me!" said the angel's father. He stared at the package, then at the lifted chin of the boy and then at the package again and muttered, "Excuse me."

Freckles bowed. "It would be favoring me greatly if you would deliver the hat and the message. Good morning, sir," and he turned away.

"One minute," said the angel's father. "Suppose I give you permission to return this hat in person and make your own acknowledgments."

Freckles stood one moment thinking intently, and then he lifted those eyes of unswerving truth and asked: "Why should you, sir? You are kind indeed to mention it, and it's thanking you I am for your good intentions, but my wanting to go or your being willing to have me ain't proving that your daughter would be wanting me or care to bother with me."

The angel's father looked keenly into the face of this extraordinary young man, and he found it to his liking.

"There's one other thing I meant to say," said Freckles. "Every day I see something and at times a lot of things that I think the Bird Woman would be wanting pictures of hadly if she knew. You might be speaking of it to her, and if she'd want me to I can send her word when I find things she wouldn't likely get elsewhere."

"If that's the case," said the angel's father, "and you feel under obligations for her assistance the other day you can discharge them in that way. She is spending all her time in the fields and woods searching for subjects. By all means let her know if you find subjects you think she could use, and we will do anything we can for you if you will give her what help you can and see that she is as safe as possible."

"It's hungry for human beings I get," said Freckles, "and it's like heaven to me to have them come. When it comes to protecting them I'd risk my life, to be sure, but even that mightn't do any good in some cases. There's a good many dangers to be reckoned with in the swamp, sir."

There was no way in which Freckles

ing me before the people, and not a finger would I lift to stay him."

The angel's eyes snapped. "If you think my father cares about my doing anything that is right and kind and that makes me happy to do, why, then you completely failed in reading my father, and I'll ask him and just show you."

She dropped Freckles' arm and turned toward the entrance to the building. "Why, look there!" she exclaimed.

Her father stood at a window, watching the scene with eyes that comprehended quite as thoroughly as if he had heard every word. The angel made a despairing gesture toward Freckles. The man of affairs answered her with a look of infinite tenderness. He nodded his head, and the veriest dolt could have read the words his lips formed. "Take him along!"

A sudden trembling seized Freckles. The angel turned on him with triumphant eyes. She was highly strung and not accustomed to being thwarted. "Did you see that?" she demanded. "Now are you satisfied? Will you come?" Freckles went.

On every hand she was kept busy giving and receiving the cheeriest greetings. She walked into the parlors exactly as if she owned them. A long row of people stared with varying degrees of insolence and curiosity as Freckles had felt they would. He glanced at the angel. Now would she see?

"On my soul!" he muttered under his breath. "They don't even touch her!" She turned the full battery of her eyes on the attendant.

"I want to mix a drink for my friend," she said. "He has a long, hot ride before him, and I don't want him started off with one of those old palate-teasing sweetwaters that you mix just on purpose to drive a man back in ten minutes. I want a clear, cool, sparkling drink that has a tang of acid in it."

The angel compounded the drink and carried the brimming glass to Freckles. He said in the mellowest of all the mellow tones of his voice, "I'll be drinking it to the Swamp Angel."

And as he had said to her that first day the angel now cautioned him, "Be drinking slowly."

As the screen door swung behind them one of the men at the counter asked of the attendant, "Now, what did that mean?"

"Exactly what you saw," replied he rather curtly. "We're accustomed to it in here. Hardly a day passes this hot weather but she's picking up some poor, god-forsaken mortal and bringing him in. Then she comes behind the counter herself and fixes up a drink to suit the occasion."

"Mighty queer specimen she had this time," volunteered another. "Wonder who he is?"

"I think," said a third, "that he's McLean's Limberlost guard, and I suspect she's gone to the swamp with the Bird Woman for pictures and knows him that way."

Out on the street the angel walked beside Freckles to the first crossing, and there she stopped.

"Did you insist on fixing that drink because you knew how intoxicating 'would be'?" asked Freckles.

There was subtlety in the compliment, and the angel laughed gleefully.

"Next time maybe you won't take so much coaxing," she said.

"I wouldn't this if I had known your father and been understanding you better. Do you really think the Bird Woman will be coming again?"

The angel jeered. "Wild horses couldn't drag her away," she cried. "She will have hard work to wait the week out. I shouldn't be in the least surprised to see her start any hour."

Freckles couldn't bear the suspense; it had to come.

"And you?" he questioned, but he dared not lift his eyes.

"Wild horses me, too," she laughed. "couldn't keep me away either! Now, goodby."

Freckles was half way to the Limberlost when he dismounted. He could ride no farther, because he could not see the road. He sat down under a tree and, leaning against it, burst into a storm of sobs that shook, twisted and rent him. If they would remind him of his position, speak condescendingly or notice his hand he could bear it, but this—it would surely kill him! His hot, pulsing Irish blood could not bear it. What did they mean? Why did they do it? Were they like that to every one? Was it pity?

It could not be, for he knew that the Bird Woman and the angel's father must know that he was not really McLean's son, and it did not matter to them in the least. In spite of accident and poverty, they evidently expected him to do something worth while in the world. That must be his remedy. He must go to work on his education. He must get away. He must find and do the great thing of which the angel talked. For the first time his thoughts turned anxiously toward the city and the beginning of his studies. McLean and the Duncans spoke of him as "the boy," but he was a man. He must face life bravely and act a man's part. The angel was a mere child. He must not allow her to torture him past bearing with her frank comradeship that meant to him high heaven, earth's richness and all that lay between and just nothing to her.

There was an ominous growl of thunder, and Freckles snatched up his wheel and raced for the swamp. He was worried to find his boots lying at the cabin door. The children playing on the wood pile told him that mither said they were so heavy she couldn't walk in them and she had come back and taken them off. Thoroughly frightened, he stopped only long



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enough to slip them on himself and then sped with all his strength for the Limberlost. To the west the long, black, hard beaten trail lay clear, but far up the east side, straight across the path, he could see what was certainly a limp brown figure.

Face down, Sarah Duncan lay across the trail. When Freckles turned her over his blood chilled at the look of horror frozen on her face. There was a low humming, and something spatting against him. Glancing about, Freckles shivered in terror, for there was a swarm of wild bees settled on a scrub thorn only a few yards away. The air was thick with excited, unsettled bees making ready to lead further in search of a suitable location.

Then he thought he understood, and with a prayer of thankfulness in his heart that she had escaped even so narrowly he caught her up and hurried down the trail until they were well out of danger.

(To Be Continued.)

Secured Contract at Hamburg.

McMaken & Son company were the successful bidders in securing the contract awarded by the city of Hamburg, Iowa, this week for laying 13,000 feet of concrete curbing. George H. Decker, one of the gentlemanly members of the company, was in Hamburg a few days ago and the contract was landed.

Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Meisinger, who have been visiting for the past few days with Mr. Meisinger's brother, P. M. Meisinger, in Benson, returned home this morning. Mrs. P. M. Meisinger accompanied them to Benson, after having spent a few days with friends and relatives here.

LOCAL NEWS

From Thursday's Daily.

Adam Meisinger of Mynard had business at the court house this morning and drove up from his home to look after it.

Mrs. Frank Platzer of Cedar Creek was a Plattsmouth visitor yesterday, having come down on No. 4 in the morning.

N. C. Halmes, the Weeping Water mill owner, transacted business in Plattsmouth yesterday, returning to his home via Louisville.

William Wohlfarth of Mynard was attending to business matters in the city today and took time to call at this office and renew his subscription.

Henry Sanders and son, Andrew, and Willie Pohlman of Cedar Creek were visitors in the city today. Mr. Sanders was a pleasant caller at this office and renewed his subscription to this paper.

Adam Kaffenberger, jr., drove in from his home, nine miles west of Plattsmouth, yesterday and looked after business matters in the county seat. Mr. Kaffenberger found the roads improving rapidly and in fairly good condition except in the low places.

Ferdinand Hennings and wife drove in from their home, ten miles west of Plattsmouth, yesterday and transacted business with the merchants. Mr. Hennings was of the opinion that the road is in no worse condition

than other springs when there were late snows. The roads are rapidly getting good.

From Friday's Daily.

M. C. McQuinn, from Union, was looking after some business matters in the city today.

J. W. Holmes of Murray came up this morning, remaining between trains for the transaction of some business matters.

Roy Upton of Union, as administrator of the Dye estate, sold the residence property in Union at public sale today.

John Kalurens purchased the Ollie Dye property at Union at public sale this morning. There were several bidders and the sale was lively.

John Porter of Murray and Blair Porter of Union were in the city looking after business matters today, and dropped in at the Journal office to renew their allegiance to this family necessity.

The Missouri Pacific is running its trains about on schedule time again, the train for Omaha last evening being the first to cross the Platte since the washout last week.

Edward Heil of Cedar Creek was attending to some business matters in this city yesterday and called at this office and renewed his subscription to this paper for another year. Mr. Heil was somewhat crippled up, he having recently stepped on a rusty nail, and is compelled to get around with the assistance of a pair of crutches.

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