



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 wail 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 XV.

THE ANGEL GOES FOR HELP.

"I SEE now you aren't the same man," said the angel. "You know, we were in Colorado last year, and there was a cowboy that was the handsomest man about. He'd come riding into town every night, and all we girls just adored him! Oh, but he was a beauty! I thought at first glance you were really he, but I see now he wasn't nearly so tall nor so broad as you and only half as handsome."

The men burst into a roar of laughter, and Jack flushed crimson. The angel joined in the laugh.

"Well, I'll leave it to you! Isn't he handsome?" she challenged. "As for that cowboy's face, it couldn't be compared with yours. The only trouble with you is that your clothes are spoiling you. It's the dress those cowboys wear that makes half their looks. If you were properly dressed you could break the heart of the prettiest girl in the country."

With one accord the other men focused on Black Jack and for the first time realized that he was a superb specimen of manhood, for he stood six feet tall, was broad, well rounded and had dark, even skin, big black eyes and full red lips.

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed the angel. "I'd just love to see you on horseback. Nothing sets a handsome man off so splendidly. Do you ride?"

"Yes," said Jack, and his eyes were burning on the angel as if he would fathom the depths of her soul.

"Well," said the angel winsomely. "I know what I just wish you'd do. I wish you would let your hair grow a little longer. Then wear a blue flannel shirt a little open at the throat, a red tie and a broad brimmed felt hat and ride past my house of evenings. I'm always at home then and almost always on the veranda, and oh, but I would like to see you! Will you do that for me?"

The angel was looking straight into Jack's face, coarse and hardened with sin and careless living, which was now taking on a wholly different expression. The evil lines of it were softening and fading out under her clear gaze. A dull red flamed into his bronze cheeks, and his eyes were growing brightly tender.

"Yes," he said, and the glance he shot at the men was of such a nature that no one saw fit even to change countenance.

looked him over rapturously. "My, but you're tall!" she gurgled. "Do you suppose I will ever grow to reach your shoulders?"

"Lariat Bill used always to have a bunch of red flowers in his shirt pocket, and the red lit up his dark eyes and olive cheeks and made his splendid. May I put a bunch of red flowers on you?"

Freckles' eyes popped, and he wheezed for breath. He wished that the earth would open and swallow him up. Was he dead or alive? Since his angel had set eyes on Black Jack she had never even glanced his way. Was she completely bewitched? Would she throw herself at the man's feet before them all? Couldn't she give him even one thought? Hadn't she seen he was gagged and bound? Did she truly think that these were McLean's men? Why, she couldn't. It was only a few days ago that she had been near enough this man and angry enough with him to peel the hat from his head with a shot. Suddenly a thing she had jestingly said to him one day came back with startling force. "You must take angels on trust." Of course you must! She was his angel. She must have seen. His life and what was far worse, her own were in her hands. There was nothing he could do but trust her. Surely she was working out some plan.

The angel knelt beside his flower-bed and recklessly tore up by the roots a big bunch of foxglove.

"These stems are so tough and sticky," she said. "I can't break them. Lend me your knife," she ordered Freckles.

As she reached for the knife her back was one second toward the men. She looked into his eyes and deliberately winked.

She severed the stems, tossed the knife back to Freckles and, walking up to Jack, laid the flowers over his heart.

Freckles broke into a sweat of agony. He had said she would be safe in a herd of howling savages. Would she? If Black Jack even made a motion toward touching her Freckles knew that from somewhere he would muster the strength to kill him. He mentally measured the distance to where his club lay and set his muscles for a spring. But, no! The big fellow was barring his head with a hand that was unsteady. The angel pulled one of the long silver pins from her hat and fastened her flowers securely.

Freckles was quaking. What was to come next?

As the angel stepped back from Jack she turned her head to one side and peered up at him. Just as Freckles had seen the little yellow fellow do on the line a hundred times, and said: "Well, that does the trick! Isn't that fine? See how it sets him off, boys! Don't you forget the tie is to be red and the first ride soon. I can't wait very long. Now I must go. The Bird Woman will be ready to start, and she will come here hunting me next, for she is busy today. What did I come here for anyway?"

She glanced inquiringly about, and several of the men laughed. Oh, the delight of it! She had forgot her errand for him! Jack had a second increase in height. The angel glanced helplessly about as if seeking a clew. Then her eyes fell, as if by accident, on Freckles.

"It's mighty risky for you to be crossing the swamp alone," he said. "I know it's a little farther, but it's begging you I am to be going back by the trail."

The angel laughed merrily.

"Oh, stop your nonsense!" she cried. "I'm not afraid—not in the least!"

Freckles turned to Jack imploringly. "You tell her!" he pleaded. "Tell her to go by the trail. She will for you."

The implication of this statement was so gratifying to Black Jack that he seemed again to expand and take on increase before their very eyes.

"You bet!" exclaimed Jack. And to the angel: "You better take Freckles' word for it, miss. He knows the old swamp better than any of us, except me, and if he says go by the trail you'd best do it."

The angel hesitated. One last glance at Freckles showed her the agony in his eyes. She would follow the trail.

"All right," she said, giving Jack a killing glance. "If you say so I'll go back by the trail to please you. Good-by, everybody."

She lifted the bushes and started for the entrance.

"Stop her!" growled Wessner. "Keep her till we're loaded anyhow. Can't you see that when this thing is found out there she'll be to ruin all of us. If you let her go every man of us has got to cut, and some of us will be caught sure."

Jack sprang forward. Freckles' heart muffled up in his throat. The angel seemed to divine Jack's coming. She was humming a little song. She deliberately stopped and began pulling the heads of the curious grasses that grew all about her. When she straight-

ened she took a step backward and called: "Ho, Freckles, the Bird Woman wants that natural history pamphlet returned. It belongs to a set she is going to have bound."

Then the angel shot a parting glance at Jack, and she was bewitchingly lovely.

"You won't forget that ride and the red tie," she half asserted, half questioned.

Jack lost his head entirely. Freckles was his captive, but he was the angel's, soul and body. With head held well up the angel walked slowly away, and Jack wheeled on the men.

"Drop your staring and saw wood!" he shouted. "Don't you know anything at all about how to treat a lady?"

The men muttered and threatened among themselves, but they fell to working with a vengeance.

Freckles sat down on one of his benches and waited. In their haste to get the tree down and loaded so that the teamsters could start with it and leave them free to attack another they had forgotten to rebind him.

The angel was on the trail and safely started.

Freckles wondered what she would say to the Bird Woman and how long it would take them to pack and get started. He knew now that they would understand and the angel would try to get the boss there in time to save his wager. She could never do it, for the saw was over half through and Jack and Wessner cutting into the opposite side of the tree. It looked as if they could get at least that tree out before McLean could come.

When it was down would they rebind him and leave him for Wessner to wreak his insane vengeance on, or would they take him along to the next tree and dispose of him when they had stolen all the timber they could? Jack had said that he should not be touched until he left. Surely he would not run all that risk for one tree when he had many others of far greater value marked.

Once Jack came over to Freckles and asked if he had any water. Freckles rose and showed him where he kept his drinking water. Jack drank in great gulps, and as he passed the bucket back he said: "When a man's got a chance of catching a fine girl like that he ought not to be mixed up in any dirty business. I wish I was out of this."

Freckles answered heartily, "I wish I was too."

Jack stared at him a minute and then broke into a roar of rough laughter.

"Blest if I blame you," he said. "But you had your chance. We offered you a fair thing, and you gave Wessner his answer. I ain't envying you when he gives you his."

"You're six to one," answered Freckles. "It will be easy enough for you to be killing the body of me, but, curse you all, you can't blacken me soul!"

"I'd give anything you could name if I had your honesty," said Jack.

When the mighty tree fell the Limberlost shivered and screamed with the echo. Freckles groaned in despair, but the sang took heart. That was so much accomplished. Now, if they could get it out quickly they knew where to dispose of it safely with no questions asked. Before the day was over they could remove three others worth far more than this.

On the line, the angel gave one backward glance at Black Jack to see that he had returned to his work. Then she gathered her skirts above her knees and leaped forward on the run. In the first three yards she passed Freckles' wheel. Instantly she imagined that was why he had insisted on her coming by the trail. She seized it and sprang on. The saddle was too high, but she was an expert rider and could catch the pedals as they came up. She stopped at Duncan's cabin long enough to get out the wrench and lower the saddle, telling Mrs. Duncan the while what was happening and that she must follow the east trail until she found the Bird Woman to tell her she had gone for McLean and to leave the swamp as quickly as possible.

The angel saw Mrs. Duncan started and then flew.

Those awful miles of corduroy! Would they never end? The bushes claimed her hat, and she did not stop for it.

At last she lifted her head. Surely it could not be more than a mile now. She had covered two of corduroy and at least three of pike, and it was only six in all. She was reeling in the saddle, but she gripped the bars with new energy and raced desperately. The sun blistered down on her bare head and hands. Just when she was choking with dust and almost prostrate with heat and exhaustion—crash, she ran into a broken bottle! Snap! went the tire. The wheel swerved and pitched over. The tired angel rolled into the thick yellow dust of the road and lay still.

From afar Duncan began to notice a strange, dust covered object in the road as he headed for town with the first load of the day's felling. As he neared the angel he saw it was a woman and a broken wheel. Many of the farmers' daughters rode wheels, but this face was a stranger's. He glanced at the angel's tumbled clothing, the sickness of her hair, with its pale satin ribbon, and noticed that she had lost her hat. His lips tightened in an ominous quiver. He left her and poked up the wheel. As he had surmised, he knew it. This, then, was Freckles' Swamp Angel.

There was trouble in the Limberlost, and she had broken down in racing for McLean. Duncan hurried to the nearest farmhouse to send help to the angel. Then he put the bay to

BARGAIN PRICES ON FENCING

Owin to the late spring we find ourselves greatly overstocked on woven wire fencing, and are making the following prices on stock on hand for SPOT CASH:

780	rods, 6 inch stay, 34 inches high, 9 bar, American fence, weight per 100 rods 1230 lbs, per rd	34½c
80	" 6 " " 36 " " 9 " Kokomo fence " " 1230 " "	34½c
160	" 6 " " 47 " " 10 " American fence " " 1460 " "	38½c
580	" 12 " " 47 " " 10 " " " " " 1080 " "	28c
580	" 6 " " 26 " " 7 " " " " " 960 " "	26c
20	" 12 " " 71 " " 21 " " " " " 3120 " "	\$1.00
35	" " " 50 " " " " " " " 2540 " "	80c
100	" 16 " " 47 " " " " " " " " " "	38½c
100	" 12 " " 47 " " " " " " " " " "	28c
580	" 6 " " 27 " " 7 " " " " " " "	26c
120	" 12 " " 27 " " 7 " " " " " " "	22c
2	12 foot American gates, 50 inches high, each	\$6.50
2	14 foot American gates, 50 inches high, each	\$7.00
1	12 foot, 2 bar Iowa gate	\$7.00
2	14 foot, 2 bar Iowa gates, each	\$7.50
1	15½ foot 2 bar Iowa gate	\$7.75
2	14 foot, 1 bar Iowa gate, each	\$4.00
1	15 foot 1 bar Iowa gate	\$4.25

JOHN BAUER

PLATTSMOUTH

NEBRASKA

speed and raced for camp. The angel, left alone, lay still for a second, then she shivered and opened her eyes.

"Oh, poor Freckles!" she wailed. "They may be killing him by now. Oh, how much time have I wasted?"

She hurried to the bay Duncan had unharnessed, snatched a blacksnake whip that lay on the ground, caught the hames stretched along the horse's neck, and, for the first time, the fine, big fellow felt on his back the quality of the lash that Duncan was accustomed to crack over him.

At the south camp they were loading a second wagon when the angel thundered up on one of Duncan's bays, lathered and dripping, and cried: "Everybody go to Freckles! There are thieves stealing trees, and they have him bound. They're going to kill him!"

She wheeled the horse and headed for the Limberlost. The alarm sounded over camp. McLean sprang to Nellie's back and raced after the angel. As they passed Duncan he wheeled and followed. Soon the pike was an irregular procession of barebacked riders, wildly driving dying horses toward the swamp.

(To Be Continued.)

NEW BARBER SHOP IN CEDAR CREEK.

I wish to announce that I have just opened a new barber shop in Cedar Creek, and hereby solicit the trade of the community in that line. Also notary public work done. S. J. Reames.

Jesse Davis, George E. Stoner, W. A. Cole and R. G. Clover of Weeping Water were in the city today, having brought the returns of the primary election to the county seat. These gentlemen dined at the Perkins and departed for their homes this afternoon.

Mrs. Ida Campbell was an Omaha passenger yesterday, returning on No. 2.

FAREWELL DANCE FOR PAUL MORGAN

One of Most Pleasant Events Every Given and Large Attendance of Youth and Beauty.

From Saturday's Daily.

The F. M. R. ball given at Coates' hall last evening as a farewell to Mr. Paul Morgan, who will depart for California in the near future, was a great success, both socially and financially.

A large crowd of congenial young people were in attendance and the M. W. A. orchestra furnished the music, which was up to the usual high standard of this popular orchestra. The hall was tastefully and beautifully decorated.

Mr. Grovenor Dovey and Miss Beatrice Hasse led the grand march, but owing to the fact of having just returned from the hospital, Mr. Dovey did not participate further in the dance, except as one of the social features of the occasion.

During the evening punch was served by Miss Nora Rosencrans and Miss Marion Mauzy. The out-of-town guests were: Misses Beatrice Hasse of Omaha, Helen Waugh of Lincoln, Fern McBride of Omaha, Ray Frans and Derwood Lynd of Union.

For Sale. Dry Land Geese Eggs, \$1.50 per dozen. B. P. R. eggs 75c per 15 and \$1.25 per 15. Mrs. Wm. Troop, Nehawka, Neb. 4-18-4twkly.

CASTORIA For Infants and Children.

The Kind You Have Always Bought Bears the Signature of *Wm. D. Galt*

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Bears the Signature of *Wm. D. Galt*

FREE HOMESEEEKERS' EXCURSION.

I have arranged to get a rate of \$30.60 round trip to Dermott, Arkansas, on the second day of May, where we have 15,000 acres of fine farm lands for sale. Those buying land while there will have their railroad fare returned. For further particulars apply to our write,

T. L. Amick, Mynard, Neb. See the exhibit at J. L. Russell's Riley Hotel Bar.

Pasture for Rent.

Good pasture for about 30 head of horses and cattle. Three miles east of Cedar Creek.

T. E. Bowers.

For Sale.

Some good first-class prairie hay, on farm eight miles west of Plattsmouth.

R. L. Propst, Mynard.

For Sale.

Charles Freese and wife and son departed for Omaha on the morning train today, where they looked after business matters for a few hours.

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