



FRECKLES

By
Gene Stratton-
Porter

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"ME MOTHER! OH, ME MOTHER!"

a prescription tablet wrote, "Terence Maxwell O'More, Dunderry House, County Clare, Ireland."

Before she had finished came Freckles' voice, "Angel, are you hurrying?" "Yes," said the angel, "I am. But there is a good deal of it. I have to put in your house and country, so that you will feel located."

"Me house?" marveled Freckles. "Of course," said the angel. "Your uncle says your grandmother left your father her dower house and estate, because she knew his father would cut him off. You get that, and all your share of your grandfather's property besides. It is all set off for you and waiting. Lord O'More told me so. I suspect you are richer than McLean, Freckles."

She closed his fingers over the slip and straightened his hair. "Now you are all right," dear Limerlost said, "you go to sleep and don't think of a thing but just pure joy, joy, joy! I'll keep your people until you wake up." Freckles caught her skirt as she turned from him. "I'll go to sleep in five minutes," he said, "if you will be doing just one thing more for me. Send for your father. Oh, angel, send for him quick!"

One instant the angel stood looking down on him. The next a crimson wave darkly stained her lovely face. Her chin began a spasmodic quivering and tears sprang into her eyes. Her hands caught at her chest as if she were stifling. Freckles' grasp on her tightened until he drew her up to and then down beside him. He slipped his arm about her and drew her face to his pillow.

"Don't angel; for the love of mercy don't be doing that," he implored. "I can't be bearing it. Tell me. You must tell me."

The angel shook her head. "That and I am, angel," said Freckles. "You made me ten years when it was like tearing the heart raw from me. And you was for making everything heaven-just heaven and nothing else for me. I'm so much more now than I was an hour ago, maybe I can be thinking of some way to fix things. You will be telling me?" he coaxed softly, moving his cheek against her hair.

The angel's head moved in negation. Freckles did a moment of intent thinking. "Maybe I can be guessing," he whispered. "Will you be giving me three chances?"

There was just the faintest possible assent. "You didn't want me to be knowing me name," guessed Freckles. The angel's head sprang from the pillow and her tear-stained face flamed with outraged indignation. "Why, I did, too!" she burst out angrily.

"One gone," said Freckles calmly. "You didn't want me to have relatives, a home, and money." "I did!" screamed the angel. "Didn't I go myself, all alone, into the city, and find them when I was afraid as death? I did too!"

"Two gone," said Freckles. "You didn't want the beautiful girl in the world to be telling me." "Down went the angel's face, and a heavy sob shook her. Freckles' clasp tightened about her shoulders, and his face, in its conflicting emotions, was a study. Despite all it meant to him to know at last his name and that he was of honorable birth—knowledge without which life was an eternal disgrace and burden—the one thing that was hammering in Freckles' heart and beating in his brain past any attempted expression was the fact that, while he might really have been nameless, the angel had told him that she loved him. He could find no word with which to begin to voice the rapture of his heart over that. But if she regretted it, if it had been a thing done out of her pity for his condition or her feeling of responsibility, if it killed him after all, there was only one thing left to do.

"Angel," whispered Freckles with his lips against her hair, "you haven't learned your history book very well, or you've forgotten." "Forgotten what?" sobbed the angel.

"Forgotten about the real knight, ladybird," breathed Freckles softly. "Don't you know that if anything happened that made his lady sorry a

real knight just simply couldn't be remembering it? Angel, darling little Swamp Angel, you be listening to me. There was one night on the trail, one solemn, grand, white night that there wasn't ever any other like before or since, when the dear boss put his arm about me and told me that he loved me, but if you care, angel, if you don't want it that way, why, I ain't remembering that anybody else ever did—not in the whole life."

The angel lifted her head and looked into the depths of Freckles' honest gray eyes, and they met hers unwaveringly, but the pain in them was pitiful.

"Do you mean," she demanded, "that you don't remember that a braven, forward girl told you, when you hadn't asked her, that she—the angel choked on it a second, but she gave a gulp and brought it out bravely—that she loved you?"

"No!" thundered Freckles. "No! I don't remember anything of the kind." But all the song birds of his soul burst into melody over that one little clause, "When you hadn't asked her."

"But you will," said the angel. "You may live to be an old, old man, and then you will."

"I will not!" cried Freckles. "How can you think it, angel?" "You won't even look as if you remember!"

"I will not!" persisted Freckles. "I'd rather give it all up now and go out into eternity alone, without ever seeing a soul of me same blood or me home or hearing another man call me by the name I was born to than to remember anything that would be hurting you, angel."

(To Be Continued.)

LOCAL NEWS

From Friday's Daily.

R. L. Probst was in the city for a short time today, en route from Council Bluffs to his home at Mynard.

M. J. Loos of Weeping Water was in the city this morning and placed his name on the guest book at the Perkins hotel.

Mrs. Masters of Louisville, one of the witnesses in the Doud safe blowing case last term of court, was in the city today.

Elmer Boedeker and wife and babe drove in from their home this morning and boarded the early train for Omaha.

Mrs. Louis Rainard of Murray visited the metropolis this morning, where she spent the day looking after matters of business.

Guy Kirkpatrick of Nebraska City and Dave West motored to Plattsmouth this afternoon to play a game of tennis with some of Plattsmouth's crack players.

L. G. Todd of Nehawka drove home a fine Matheson automobile purchased of the Duff garage yesterday. The car is a six-cylinder, 1912 model, and is one of the largest turned out of the agency for some time.—Nebraska City Press.

Henry Engelkemeier of Murray and A. B. Kraker of Mynard were attending to some business matters in this city yesterday. Both gentlemen called at this office, Mr. Engelkemeier renewing his subscription to this paper for another year.

W. J. Patridge, from near Weeping Water, was a Plattsmouth visitor Monday of this week. "Billy" has a great many friends in the county seat that are always glad to see him, and also to know that he is doing fine in his present home. He is living on the E. J. Schneider place, down near Weeping Water.

County Surveyor Fred Patterson has just completed a blue print map of the road recently purchased from Messrs. Nord, Born and the Burlington Railway company leading to the Pollock-Duff bridge. The Omaha-Plattsmouth-Kansas City Scenic Route will soon be in commission, as the bridge has been in use several days.

From Saturday's Daily.

George P. Meisinger and family from near Cedar Creek were visiting with county seat friends today.

John Stones from near Murray was a county seat visitor today, driving up from his home this morning.

J. H. Burton of Murray drove in from his home this morning and boarded the early train for Omaha, where he spent the day.

Ex-County Commissioner L. D. Switzer arrived from Omaha and Weeping Water last evening and looked after business matters at the court house.

Mrs. B. W. Livingston and daughter, Miss Rachel, went to Omaha on the morning train today to spend the day and look after some items of business.

Mrs. William Stewart of St. Joseph, Missouri, arrived today and will visit her parents, Judge Newell and wife, for a few days, and witness the graduation of her daughter, Mildred.

John Hartman called at this office yesterday afternoon and renewed the subscription of the paper which he is sending to his daughter, Mrs. Alice Keyler, at York, Pennsylvania.

F. P. Sheldon, Dave West and Guy Kirkpatrick motored to the county seat from Nehawka Friday afternoon, Mr. Sheldon coming on business and Messrs. West and Kirkpatrick for pleasure.

Jason Fountain, from Sidney, Iowa, came over this morning for a brief visit with Plattsmouth friends. He reports everything over in Iowa in good condition at this season of the year and all crops are looking good.

Our old friend, C. Bengen, from near Mynard, was in the city a few hours today, looking after some business matters and shaking hands with his many county seat friends. This is Mr. Bengen's first trip to the city for several months. He is sure one of the good men of this county and we would like to see him more often.

Earl Mayfield of the Louisville Courier was in the city a few hours today, coming down on the Schuyler, returning this afternoon. He tells us that his father, L. J., and uncle, O. E. (Gene) are having a grand time out in California and that Gene is regaining his health quite rapidly. This will be good news to his numerous friends in Plattsmouth.

Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Schleifert and little sons, Aaron and Frederick, jr., of the vicinity of Louisville, motored to this city yesterday to do some shopping and attend to some business matters. Mr. Schleifert and son, Aarop, were pleasant callers at this office, renewing their subscription to this paper for another year.

Exhibit of Pupils' Work.

Mrs. Howland, supervisor of drawing, announces a free exhibit of the work done in drawing and colors by the pupils of the public schools during the past year, in the room formerly occupied by the postoffice in the Riley block, on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons, May 22, 23 and 24. Patrons, teachers, high school pupils, the board of education, and friends are invited to spend a few minutes in examining the progress our children have made. This is not an art exhibit; it is simply some representative work done in the regular routine of daily instruction and with no idea of exhibition purposes.

N. C. Abbott, Superintendent.

Tested Fire Hose Today.

Chairman of the fire and water committee, Councilman John Vondran, Fire Chief Manners, Superintendent Burnie of the water company and others tested the fire hose this afternoon to ascertain whether it would stand the pressure in case of fire.

White Plymouth Rock Eggs.

White Plymouth Rock eggs for sale at \$3.00 per hundred. Mrs. Geo. A. Kaffenberger, R. F. D. No. 2, Plattsmouth.

For Sale.

New piano. Cash or payments. Must sell. Going away. Mrs. E. Emmet, Plattsmouth, Neb. 5-9-21-wkly.

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GENEVA MAN NAMED DEPARTMENT HEAD

Fremont Selected as Place for Holding Next Encampment.

Beatrice, Neb., May 17.—At the closing session of the Grand Army encampment Fremont was selected as the place for holding the next encampment.

Resolutions were passed indorsing Captain C. E. Adams of Superior for commander in chief of the Grand Army in 1913.

The following Grand Army officers were elected: Department commander, M. V. King of Geneva; senior vice commander, George G. Humphrey of Grand Island; junior vice commander, S. A. Isaacs of Tecumseh; medical director, Fred Brother of Beatrice; chaplain, P. E. Johnson of Tecumseh.

Officers of the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic: Department counsellor, Mrs. Caroline H. Putnam of Lincoln; president, Mrs. Nora Kieffer of Scribner; senior vice president, Mrs. Maggie Hopper of Omaha; junior vice president, Mrs. Louisa Fisher of Greenwood; treasurer, Mrs. Ora Dier of Syracuse; chaplain, Mrs. M. Bertha Putnam of Lincoln.

Woman's Relief corps officers: Department president, Miss Eleanor Ackerman of Alasworth; senior vice president, Miss Mary Kimmery of Beatrice; junior vice president, Mrs. Cameron of Falls City; treasurer, Miss Josie Bennett of Harvard; chaplain, Mrs. Nettie Johnson of Fullerton.

RECEIVERSHIP THREATENED

Equitable Endowment Association Must Improve Finances.

Lincoln, May 17.—State Auditor Barton has notified the officers of the Equitable Endowment association of Omaha that they must get the affairs of the company in shape by June 1 or he will apply for a receiver for the company. The auditor refused the company a license last year, and it has written no new business since that time, but its officers were given time to get affairs in shape either to go ahead on a sound basis, reinsure and close up or settle its affairs without the expense of a receivership.

According to the auditor satisfactory progress along this line has not been made and he will not delay longer than June 1. W. H. Wigton is the active official of the company, and a number of prominent Nebraskans have been connected with it. It has net book assets of \$98,578.16, but the auditor takes exceptions to many of them, among them some of the notes from policyholders and some loans of company funds. The company started May 4, 1905, to do a mutual life insurance business.

Ryan-Pivonka Case Set.

Lincoln, May 17.—The Ryan-Pivonka case has been set by the supreme court for argument at the sitting of June 5. The court asks the attorneys to discuss this time two legal points, first, whether the law extending the terms of office of South Omaha officials was legally adopted. The district court has declared this section of the charter invalid, but the supreme court has not passed on it. Second, if the section extending the terms of office is invalid what effect does the expiration of the terms of office of the defendants have on the ouster proceedings brought against them as police commissioners? Briefs in the case are to be served May 25.

Humboldt Man Dies of Lockjaw.

Humboldt, Neb., May 17.—John Melster, who was seriously hurt in a runaway accident on May 3, was taken suddenly with lockjaw and died. In the accident Mr. Melster was dragged by the team about half a mile, when his head struck with such force against the ground as to render him unconscious.

PROLOGUE.

This romance of Freckles and the Angel of the Limerlost 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 Limerlost 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 XXIII.

THREE GUESSES.

WHEN the younger son found that she had left London, he ran off and followed her," continued the angel. Freckles was listening most attentively now. "When she got here all alone and afraid," the angel went on, "and saw him coming to her, why, she was so glad she up and married him. Just like anybody else would have done. He didn't want her to travel with the troupe, so when they got to Chicago they thought that would be a good place, and they stopped, and he hunted work. It was slow business, because he had never been taught to do a useful thing, and he didn't even know how to hunt work, least of all to do it when he found it; so pretty soon things were going wrong. But if he couldn't nod work, she could always sing, so she sang at night, and made little things in the daytime. He didn't like her to sing in public, and he wouldn't let her when he could help himself; but winter came, it was very cold, and fire was expensive. Rents went up, and they had to move farther out to cheaper and cheaper places; and I you were coming—I mean, the boy that is lost was coming—and they were almost distracted. Then the man wrote and told his father all about it, and his father sent the letter back unopened and wrote him to never write again.

"When the baby came, there was mighty little left to pawn for food and a doctor, and nothing at all for a nurse, so an old neighbor woman went in and took care of the young mother and the little baby, just because she was so sorry for them. By that time they were away out in the suburbs on the top floor of a little wooden house, among a lot of factories, and it kept getting colder, with less to eat. Then the man got desperate, and he went out to just find something to eat; and the woman was desperate, too. She got up, left the old woman to take care of her baby and went into the city to sing for some money. The woman got so cold she put the baby in bed and went home. Then a boiler blew up in a factory beside the little house and set it on fire. A piece of iron was pitched across the little house and broke through the roof. It came down smash, and cut just one little hand off the poor baby. It screamed and screamed, and the fire kept coming closer and closer.

"The old woman ran out with the rest of the people and saw what had happened. She knew there wasn't going to be time to wait for the firemen or anything, and she ran into the building. She could hear the poor little baby screaming, and she couldn't stand that, so she worked her way up

to it. There it was, all hurt and bleeding. Then she was scared almost to death over thinking what its mother would do to her for going off and leaving it, so she ran to a home for little friendless babies that was near and banged on the door. Then she hid across the street until the baby was taken in, and then she ran back to see if her own house was burning up. The factory and the little house and a lot of others were all gone. The people there told her that the beautiful lady came back and ran into the house to find her baby. She had just gone in when her husband came, and he went in after her, and the house went down over both of them."

Freckles lay rigid, with his eyes on the angel's face, and she talked rapidly to the ceiling. "Then the old woman was just sick about that poor little baby. She was afraid to tell them at the home, because she knew she never should have left it, but she wrote a letter and sent it to where the beautiful woman, when she was ill, had said her husband's people lived. She told all about the little baby that she could remember; when it was born, how it was named for the man's elder brother, that its hand had been cut off in the fire, and where she had put it to be doctored and taken care of. She told them that its mother and father were both burned, and she begged and implored them to come and get it.

"You think it would have melted a heart of ice, but that old man hadn't any heart to melt, for he got that letter and read it. He hid it away among his papers and never told a soul. A few months ago he died. When his elder son went to settle up his business he found that letter almost the first thing. He dropped everything, and came, with his wife, to hunt that baby, because he had always loved his brother dearly, and wanted him back. He had hunted for him all he dared all these years, and when he got here you were gone—I mean the baby was gone—and I had to tell you, Freckles, for you see it might have happened to you like that just as easy as to that other lost boy."

Freckles reached up and turned the angel's face until he compelled her eyes to meet his.

"Angel," said Freckles at last, catching her wrist, "are you trying to tell me that there is somebody wanting a boy that you're thinking might be me? Are you beavin' you've found me relations?"

Then the angel's eyes came home. The time had come. She pinioned Freckles' arms to his sides and bent above him.

"How strong are you, dear heart?" she breathed. "How brave are you? Can you bear it? Dare I tell you that?"

"No!" gasped Freckles. "Not if you're sure! I can't bear it! I'll die if you do!"

The day had been one unremitting strain with the angel; Nerve tension was drawn to the finest thread. It snapped suddenly.

"Die?" she flamed. "Die, if I tell you that! You said this morning that you would die if you didn't know your name, and if your people were honorable. Now I've gone and found you a name that stands for ages of honor, a mother that loved you enough to go into the fire and die for you, and the nicest kind of relatives, and you turn round and say you'll die over that! You just try dying and you'll get a good sleep!"

The angel stood glaring at him. One second Freckles lay paralyzed and dumb with astonishment. The next the Irish in his soul rose above everything. A roar of laughter burst from him. The terrified angel caught him in her arms and tried to stifle the sound. She implored and commanded. The tears rolled from Freckles' eyes and he wheezed on. When he was too worn out to utter another sound, his eyes laughed silently.

When he was quiet and rested the angel commenced talking to him softly. "Dear Freckles," she was saying, "across your knees there is the face of the mother that went into the fire for you, and I know the name—old and full of honor—to which you were born. Dear heart, which will you have first?"

"Me mother!"

She lifted the lovely pictured face and set it in the nook of his arm. Freckles caught her hand and drew her down beside him, and together they gazed at the picture.

"Me mother! Oh, me mother! Can you ever be forgiving me? Oh, me beautiful little mother!" chanted Freckles over and over in exalted wonder.

"Wait!" cried the angel to the mute question she could no more answer than he could ask. "Wait, I will write it!"

She hurried to the table, caught up the nurse's pencil and on the back of