

FRECKLES

By Gene Stratton-Porter

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SYNOPSIS.

Freckles, a homeless boy, is hired by Boss McLean to guard the expensive timber in the Lumberlost from timber thieves. Freckles does his work faithfully, makes friends with the birds and yearns to know more about nature. He lives with Mr. and Mrs. Duncan.

He resolves to get books and educate himself. He becomes interested in a huge pair of vultures and calls his bird friends his "chickens."

Some of the trees he is guarding are worth \$1,000 each. Freckles' books arrive. He receives a call from Wessner.

Wessner attempts to bribe Freckles to betray his trust, and Freckles whips him. McLean overhears them and witnesses the fight.

Freckles' honesty saves a precious tree. He finds the nest of the vultures and is visited by a beautiful young girl.

She calls Freckles McLean's son. Freckles calls her "the angel" and helps the Bird Woman in taking photographs. McLean promises to adopt Freckles.

Freckles and the angel become very friendly. Assisted by the Bird Woman, they drive Wessner and Black Jack, timber thieves, from the Lumberlost.

McLean fears more trouble, but Freckles insists upon being the sole guard of the timber. Freckles calls upon the angel's father.

The angel receives him as her equal, and her father is kind. Mrs. Duncan has exciting adventures in the Lumberlost.

The Bird Woman and the angel again visit Freckles, and Freckles falls in love with the angel. The angel kisses him.

Freckles is bound and gagged by Black Jack's gang, and the timber thieves start felling a very valuable tree.

[Continued from last week.]

CHAPTER XV.

THE ANGEL GOES FOR HELP.

"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 the 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 whimsely, "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 in the 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 it even to change countenance.

"Oh, goody!" she cried, tilting on her toes. "I'll ask the girls to come to see, but they needn't stick in. We can get along without them, can't we?" Jack leaned toward her. He was the charmed, fluttering bird, and the angel was the snake.

"Well, I rather guess!" he cried. The angel drew a deep breath and 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 foxfire.

"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 baring 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 clue. 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 straightened 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 cut-

ting 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 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."

The Legend of St. Dymphna.

Some 1,300 years ago, so runs the tale, the beautiful daughter of a heathen king of Ireland fled from her father's court and, crossing the seas, took refuge at Gheel. Dymphna had been converted to Christianity by the teaching of a monk named Gerebern, and it was under his protection that she sought deliverance from her unnatural father, who strove to force upon her an incestuous union. The infuriated King followed the fugitives and discovered their retreat. Gerebern was cruelly put to death by the savage soldiery, and the King himself, regardless of his daughter's pleading for mercy, seized her long hair, and with one blow cut off her head; then, without waiting to give his victims burial, he returned to Ireland. After a time it began to be rumored that strange miracles of healing from sickness and disease were brought on the scene of this horrible crime; and, curiously enough, it was those afflicted mentally who derived especial benefit. The spot came to be considered holy ground, and soon a church was built and dedicated to St. Dymphna, within which the bones of the martyrs were laid to rest in a vault prepared for their reception beneath the high altar.—Alice Isaacson in the Atlantic.

A woman needs to give double care to the preservation of her health—once for her own happiness and once for the health and happiness of the children she may have. How often does she take this care of herself? Rarely, indeed, until she has entered upon a course of suffering, and has learned from experience the necessity of care. It ought to be a part of the mother's duty to instruct her daughter in the necessity of preserving her womanly health. The budding girl ought to be taught that the high office of motherhood, with its weighty obligations and responsibilities, and that if there is peril in motherhood it is chiefly due to the neglect of the necessary laws of health. The best way for young women to protect and preserve their womanly health is to use Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription on the first symptom of irregularity. Irregularity is the beginning often, of complicated and painful feminine disorders. "Favorite Prescription" regulates the periods, cures inflammation, ulceration and female weakness, soothes and strengthens the nerves and enriches the entire body with vigor and vitality. It contains neither alcohol, nor narcotic.

Every man believes as a part of his natural creed, that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made," yet he has no more real appreciation of the fact in which he believes than in many another fact fundamental to his creed. He protects his watch, wraps it in chamois, winds it regularly, carefully shields it from magnetic influences, and will allow no undue shock to jar its mechanism. But how does he care for the far finer mechanism of his body? It should be fed with the same regularity that the watch is wound, it should be properly protected from exterior influences or sudden shocks, instead of which it is fed irregularly, indifferently protected, and subject to every stress which indifference permits or hard-ship invites. The result is that the machinery of the body, the heart, liver, lungs, blood and stomach get "out of order." There is nothing that will so quickly readjust these organs and start them in healthy action as Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It cures ninety-eight per cent. of all who use it.

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RE-ENDORSEMENT. Mr. McClellan was interviewed on November 23, 1909 and he said: "I have taken Doan's Kidney Pills once or twice during the past two years, while suffering from backache, and they have given me prompt relief. You are welcome to publish my testimonial at any time you desire."

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