

FRECKLES

By Gene Stratton-Porter

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(Continued from last week.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

THREE GUESSES.

WHEN the younger son found that she had left London, he ran off and followed her.

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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.

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

"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.

"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.

"Me mother!" she cried. "Me mother! Can you ever be forgiving me? Oh, me beautiful little mother!"

"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

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."

"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 guard," she 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 bear hearing it. Tell me. You must tell me."

The angel shook her head. "That ain't fair, angel," said Freckles. "You made me tell you when it was like tearing the heart raw from me breast. And you was for making everything heaven—just heaven and nothing else for me. If 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 beautifullest girl in the world to be telling me."

Down went the angel's face, and a heavy sob shook her. Freckles' elasp 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 me 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 brazen, 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 elouse. "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 I, 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."

CHAPTER XXIV. RINGS AND A FEATHER. THE angel's tear-stained face flashed into dazzling beauty.

"Oh, Freckles, forgive me!" she cried. "I've been through so much that I'm scarcely myself or I wouldn't be here bothering you when you should be sleeping. Of course you couldn't. You're too good a knight to remember a thing like that. Of course you are! And when you don't remember, why, then it's the same as if it never happened. Oh, Freckles, I'm so glad! I'm so happy! It's dear of you to not remember, Freckles; perfectly dear! It's no wonder I love you so. The wonder would be if I did not. I should like to know how I'm ever going to make you understand how much I love you!"

Pillow and all, she caught him to her breast, and then she was gone.

Freckles lay dazed with astonishment. At last his battling eyes rolled about the room, searching for something approaching the human to which he could appeal, and falling on his mother's portrait, he set it up before him.

"For the love of life! Me little mother," he panted, "did you hear that? Did you hear it? Tell me, am I living or am I dead and all heaven

come true this minute? Did you hear it? You are only a pictured face, and of course you can't talk, but the soul of you must be somewhere, and surely in this hour you are near enough to be hearing. Tell me, did you hear that? I can't ever be telling a living soul; but, darling little mother, that gave your life for mine. I can always be talking of it to you! Every day we'll talk it over and try to understand the miracle of it. Tell me, are all women like that? Were you like me Swamp Angel? If you were then I'm understanding why me father followed across the ocean and went into the fire after you."

Freckles' voice trailed off, his eyes dropped shut, and his head rolled back from sheer exhaustion. Later in the day he insisted on seeing Lord and Lady O'More, but he fainted before the look of his own face on that of another man.

[Concluded next week.]

State's Interests Should Be Protected at the Same Time Companies' Powers Are Increased, Says President of Water Conservation Association.

Pittsburgh, Pa., Oct. 31.—In a statement given out here today Morris Knowles, president of the Water Conservation Association of Pennsylvania, outlined some of the difficulties that confront those who desire the wise utilization of the state's water resources as well as those interested primarily in conservation and the prevention of floods.

Mr. Knowles urges the construction of storage reservoirs for various beneficial purposes and declares an effort will be made to induce the next legislature to pass adequate laws governing the use of water in its natural state.

"It is but a proper tribute to far seeing, conservative investors of capital," said Mr. Knowles, "to say that they have for some time realized that, although the state of Pennsylvania has had boundless resources in oil, gas and coal, the time is coming when these will be exhausted and the cost of power for the great industries of this state will correspondingly increase. It is also true that the great resources of 'white coal,' so called, that is the ability of falling water to develop power, is inexhaustible and is always usable from day to day and from year to year; because while rainfalls vary to some extent with the seasons, there is an average dependable amount and with proper conservation by storage and utilization, this may be made a never ending source of power and wealth to this state. Thus I say water power companies, not to say water supply companies, have realized the great benefits that will come from the building of vast storage reservoirs and regulating the flow of streams to make water power more continuous and water supply more pure.

"There is, however, a great stumbling block in the Act of 1905, that the right of eminent domain to appropriate waters and the underlands for these purposes does not exist with the new companies at the present time. Thus the development of new resources cannot go on, for it is within the power of any farmer who does not fully comprehend the needs of water power companies or of any antagonistic owner to hold up any company and prevent its acquiring the necessary and proper rights to do this work. The representatives of capital have very properly stated that these resources of the state should be developed, but not exploited and if these necessary rights are given to companies it is also just that there should be enacted new and greater legislative powers to the Water Supply Commission.

"Thus an opportunity will be given to make these great developments, but under the guidance of wise state regulation and reserve to the people such rights as may be necessary to protect them even to the generations to come; also at the same time to derive all benefits that will come from stored water, such as relief from floods and many advantages due to increased low water stages."

New River Wall will be Built.

Pittsburgh, Pa., Nov. 7.—Decided impetus to the plans of the water conservationists in the state was given by the action of the people of Pittsburgh at Tuesday's election when they approved a bond proposal of \$900,000 for the purpose of constructing a flood sea wall and a modern dock with adequate terminal facilities.

The bond issue was proposed by the Flood Commission of Pittsburgh, which estimated that the \$900,000 together with a former bond issue of \$100,000, which is still available, will be sufficient to construct the modern dock recommended by the commission's expert, Kenneth C. Grant, who spent the entire summer studying the docks and terminals of Europe.

The success of this bond proposal is the first step toward the realization of the Flood Commission's comprehensive plans for regulating the flow of the Monongahela, Allegheny and upper Ohio rivers. The Commission is recommending the construction of storage reservoirs to hold back a large volume of the flood waters and urges the utilization of this stored supply for the benefit of navigation and for developing water power. In these objects the Commission is co-operating with the Water Conservation Association of Pennsylvania, which desires the regulation of rivers throughout the state.

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