

MICHAEL O'HALLORAN

By Gene Stratton-Porter

SYNOPSIS

Michael O'Halloran, an orphan newsboy, has a dream of becoming a writer. He is in an orphanage, and his mother has just died. Mickey is sympathetic and takes the child to his home and attempts to care for him.

Douglas Bruce, a corporation lawyer, has seen Mickey and wants to adopt him as his little brother. However, before he can make the adoption, Mickey must appear in court. Mickey is sympathetic and takes the child to his home and attempts to care for him.

Mickey is in the meantime struggling to get things for Lily Peaches, little sister girl. He finds that it is impossible to get things for her for fear that she will find Mickey yet.

One woman threatens this and Mickey leaves her, determined to help no one for fear that in the conversation he will tell about the girl. He has had a good block when a woman falls over his head, losing consciousness. He helps take her to a hospital where he meets a nurse, who gives him things for Peaches and tells him to go to the hospital to see her.

Douglas Bruce and Leslie Winton become engaged and are to be married in a few days.

The trip to the hospital is made and the Wintons are called in to act as judges of the matter. Mickey is called in and he expresses mutual dislike for each other and shock Bruce and Leslie Winton.

Mickey is found by Leslie Winton and offers of brotherhood, but agrees to continue in his orphanage. Leslie Winton tells Bruce he tells her she dislikes Mickey and how he happens to know him.

(Continued from Yesterday)

Peaches took the mirror, studying the face intently. She glanced over her shoulder as Mickey piled the pillows high. Then she looked at him. Mickey bent to scrutinize her closely.

Peaches sighed as she returned the mirror. Mickey replied that the pillows and ribbons in reach, washed the dishes, then the sheets he had removed, and their soiled clothing. Peaches folding and unfolding the while Mickey worked, or with the pencil tracing her best imitations of the name on the slate. By the time she had finished everything to be done and drawn a chair beside the bed, to see if she had learned her lesson for the day, it was cool evening. She knew all the words he had given her, so she proceeded to write them on the slate. Then told her about the big man named Douglas Bruce and the lovely girl named Leslie Winton, also every word he could remember about the house she lived in; then he added: "Lily, do you like to be surprised when I do you like to think things over?"

"I don't know," said Peaches.

"Well, before long, I'll know," said Mickey. "When you think in the night, you are going to have something. I just wondered whether you'd rather know it was coming, or have me walk in with a surprise you." Mickey, who just walk in," she decided.

"All right!" said Mickey.

CHAPTER VI

The Song of a Bird.

"Leslie," said the voice of Mrs. James Minton over the telephone, "is there any particular time of the day when that bird of yours sings better than at another?"

"Morning, Mrs. Minton; five, the latest. At that time one hears the

At last she said: "I don't know what is the matter with my Leslie. He is planning something, I have an idea what; but his grim, reproachful face is slowly driving me wild. I'm getting so I can't sleep. You saw him come home as I left. He talked positively crazy, as if he had the crack of doom in his hands and was prepared to crack it. He said he would see me when I came back. Indeed he will—to his sorrow! He will be as he used to be, or we will separate. The idea, with scarcely a cent to his name, of him undertaking to dictate to me, to me! Do you blame me Leslie? You heard him one day! You know how he insulted me!"

Leslie leaned forward, laying a firm hand in a grip on Mrs. Minton's arm.

"Since you ask me," she said, "I will answer. If you find life with Mr. Minton insufferable, an agony to both of you, I would separate, and if you can't see each other or speak without falling into unpleasantness, then I'd keep apart."

"Send what I should have. I'd ride a llama through a sea of champagne for a new experience!"

Mrs. Minton turned from the telephone with a contemptuous sneer on her face; but Leslie's gay laugh persisted in coming in.

"I'm going to take a bath, go to bed early and see if I can sleep," she muttered. "I don't know what it is that James and I don't stop you. He doesn't care more civil, and stop his morose gloom when I do see him. I'll put him or myself where we won't come in contact."

She rang for her maid and cancelling two engagements for the eve following, went to bed, but not to sleep. When she was called early in the morning, she gladly arose, and was dressed in Leslie Winton's short skirt, a waist of khaki, and high shoes. Her bath had refreshed her, a cup of hot coffee stimulated her, and despite the lack of sleep she felt better than she had that spring as she went down to the car. On the threshold she met her husband. Evidently he had been out all night on some business. His face was haggard, his eyes blood-shot, while in both hands he gripped a small, square paper-wrapped package. They looked at each other a second, then seemed long to both, then the woman laughed.

"You've gone mad!" she cried.

"Contrarily, I have come to my senses after years of insanity, no can't I will see you when you return."

She stood bewildered, watching him go down the hall and enter the library. That and his sleeping room sacred to him. No one entered, no one, not even the incorrigible children, touched anything there. She slowly went to the car, trying to fix her mind on anything pointed out to her as something she might enjoy.

bring him in contact with prominent men, give him big work and a sample of how mercenary I am—it will bring him big pay and he knows how to use the money in a big way. Douglas knows Mr. Minton so well, and respects him so highly, yet no one can know him as you do."

"He surely is an advocate!" Leslie, when did you start making an especial study of Mr. Minton?"

"When Douglas Bruce began speaking to me so frequently of him," answered Leslie. "Then I commenced to watch him and to listen to what people were saying about him, and to ask daddy."

"It's very funny that every one seems so well informed and so enthusiastic just at the time when I feel that life is unendurable with him," said Mrs. Minton. "I can't understand it!"

"Don't let's talk any more, Mrs. Minton," suggested Leslie. "You know your society and what it has to offer. You're making yourself unhappy, while I am helping you, may lose the love of a good man, the respect of the people worth while, and later of your own child. See, how hard it is to be in the car, as close as we can go with this."

"Is this where you found the flowers for your basket?"

"Yes," said Leslie.

"No snakes, no quicksands?"

"Snakes don't like this kind of moss," answered Leslie; "this is an old lake bed grown up with tamaracks and the bog of a thousand years."

"Looks as if ten thousand might come closer!"

"Were you ever in such a place?" asked Leslie.

"Never," said Mrs. Minton.

"Well, do this to perfection," said Leslie. "We should go far enough for you to see the home life of our rarest wild flowers and to set the music full effect. We must look for a high place to spread this waterproof sheet I have brought along, then nestle down and keep still. The birds will see us going in, but if we make ourselves inconspicuous, they will soon forget us. Have you the score?"

"I know that he has!" said Leslie. "Not so fast as he might! Not so much as he could, for he is incorruptible; but money, yes! He is a powerful man, not only in the city, but all over the state. Some of these days you're going to wake up to find him a senator, or governor. You seem to be the only person who doesn't know it, or who doesn't care if you do. But when it comes about as it will, you'll be so proud of him that you'll be glad to see him. Don't you slowly! Don't, oh don't let anything happen that will make a regret for both."

"I'll select the highest places and go as nearly where you were as I can," said Leslie. "I will see in my tracks you'll be all right."

"Why, you're not afraid, are you?" asked Mrs. Minton.

"Not in the least," said Leslie. "Are you?"

Grasping the score she carried, Mrs. Minton unconcernedly plunged after Leslie. Purposely the girl went slowly, stooping beneath branches, skirting too wet places, slipping over the high hummocks, turning to indicate by gesture a moss bed, a flow-er, or glancing upward to try to catch

"There is another than that can do this from Verdi's Traviata." Leslie whistled the notes. "Get the strain in your mind, you may hear him also."

Again they waited. Leslie realized that Mrs. Minton was not listening, and would have to be recalled if the bird sang. Leslie sat silent. The same bird sang, and others, but to the girl had come the intuition that Mrs. Minton was having her hour in the garden, so wisely she remained silent. After an interminable time she arose, making her way forward as far as she could penetrate and still see the figure of the woman, then hunting an old stump, climbed upon it and did some thinking herself. At last she returned to the motionless figure. Mrs. Minton was leaning against the tamarack's scraggy trunk, her head resting on a branch, lightly sleeping. A rivulet staining her cheeks from each eye showed where slow tears had slipped from under her closed lids. Leslie's heart ached with pity. She thought she never had seen any one seem so sad, so alone, so punished for sins of inheritance and bearing. She sat by Mrs. Minton, waiting until she awakened.

"I feel as if I had read soundly a whole night," said Mrs. Minton. "I'm so refreshed. And there you are, that bird again. Verdi to take his notes! Who ever would have thought of it? Leslie, did you bring any lunch? I'm famished."

"We must go back to the car," said Leslie.

They spread the waterproof sheet on the ground where it would be bordered with daintily traced partridge berry, and white-lined plantain leaves, and sitting on it ate their lunch. Leslie did what she could to interest Mrs. Minton and ached with pity. At last that lady said: "Thank you, dear, you are very good to me; but you can't entertain me today. Some other day we'll come back and bring the scores you suggest, and see what we can really hear from these birds. But today I've got the barest of my life to fight. Something is coming, and I should be in a measure prepared, and as I don't know what to expect, it takes all the brains I have to figure things out."

"You don't know, Mrs. Minton?" asked Leslie.

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