

# MICHAEL O'HALLORAN

By Gene Stratton-Porter

**SYNOPSIS**  
Mickey O'Halloran is a newsboy who finds and adopts a little lame girl, Lily Peaches. His life at once becomes a struggle to supply the comforts of life to the little girl.

Mickey, while on a trip in the country finds a family who want to entertain some poor girl from the city for two weeks and Mickey makes arrangements to take Lily Peaches to the farm.

Bruce is engaged in an investigation of the city officers and the working hard checking over accounts. Leslie rents a cabin with her father and Bruce they move out of the city for the summer.

(Continued From Yesterday.)  
"What are you going to do?" she questioned. "What's all the bundles? My, they look exciting!"  
"And so they are!" triumphed Mickey. "Where are all the folks? Do they leave you alone like this?"  
"No, they don't leave me alone only when I'm asleep in the room," said Peaches. "They saw you coming and went away 'cause they know families like to be alone, sometimes. Ain't they smart to know that?"  
"They are!" said Mickey. "First, you come to your bed a little while. I got something for you."  
"Ook Mickey! Those bundles jus' look—"

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the little girl in the glass, while the image smiled back. Peaches thought of letting go of Mickey to touch her hat and straighten her skirt, but felt so lost without him, that she handed Peter the parasol, and used that hand, while the other clung to her refuge. When Mickey saw the treasure go in his favor, he swallowed lumps of emotion so big that the Hardings could see them running down his throat. Peaches intent on the glass smiled, grimaced, tilted her head, and finally began flitting outrageously with herself, until all of them laughed and recalled her. She looked at Peter, smiled her most winsome smile and exclaimed: "Well ain't I the—"

"Now you go easy, Miss Chicken," warned Mickey.  
"Mickey, if you hadn't stopped me I'd done it sure!" sobbed Peaches, collapsing against him. "If I had, would you atone these beautiful things 'way from me?"  
"No, I wouldn't!" said Mickey. "I couldn't save me. But I should."  
"Mickey, I'm so tired," she said. "Take my hat and put it where I can see it, and my parasol, and my coat; see, I don't have to be wrapped in sheets no more, an' lay me down. Quick Mickey, I'm sick-like."  
"Well I ought to had the sense not to spring so much all at once," said Mickey, "but it all seemed to be long. Sure I will, you poor kid!"  
"And Mickey, you won't forget the lesson and the poetry piece?" she panted.  
"No, I won't," promised Mickey, as he stretched her sitting her treasures back to the porch, placing her in a pillow-placed big chair. Then he put the gloves on her hands, set a hat on her head and tied the pink ribbons. Peaches both laughed and cried at that, while the Harding family came in because they could not wait. Mickey raised and put in Peaches' shaking fingers the crown of glory of any small girl; a wonderful little parasol. Peaches appeared for a minute as if a faint were imminent.

"Now do you see why I couldn't do with a poetry piece when my head was so full of these things?"  
"Yes, Mickey, but you will before night!" she begged.  
"You want it, even now?" he marvelled.  
"More 'an the parasol, even!" she declared.  
"Well you fool little sweet kid!" cried Mickey and choked. He fled around the house as Peter came out. In his ears as he went sounded Peter's big voice and the delighted cries of the family.  
"I want Mickey," wailed Peaches. "I heard her call and ran back fast for fear he might be so slow reaching her that Peter would serve. But to his joy he found that he alone would answer."  
"I want to see me!" demanded Peaches.  
"Sure you do!" cried Peter. "I'll just hand down the big hall mirror so you can see all of you at once."  
He brought it and set it before her. Peaches stared and drew back. She cried, "Aw—ah!" in a harsh, half-scared voice. She gripped Mickey with one hand and the parasol with the other; she leaned and peeped, and marveled, and smiled at a fully cloth-

lips and then clapped both hands over them, to smother the ejaculation at her tongue's end. To distract Peter she stuck out her foot and moved it for him to see.  
"Ain't that pretty, an' jus' as soft and fine?" she asked.  
"Yes," said Peter. "They remind me of a flower called 'Lady Slipper,' that grows along the edge of the woods. It's about that shape and the prettiest gold yellow, but little, they'd about fit your doll."  
"Oh, Peter, could you get me one? I want to see."  
"Why I would, but they are all gone now, honey," answered Peter. "Next year I'll remember and bring you some when they bloom. But it's likely by that time you can go yourself, and see them."  
"Do you honest think it Peter?" asked Peaches, leaning forward eagerly.  
"Yes, I honest think it," repeated Peter emphatically.  
"But I won't be here then," Peaches reminded him.  
"Well it won't be my fault, if you're not," said Peter.

**CHAPTER XVII**  
**Initiations in an Ancient and Honorable Brotherhood.**  
"Now father, you said if I'd help him after harvest, I could go to Multopolis and hunt a job," Junior reminded Peter. "When was I?"  
"I remember," said Peter. "You may start Monday morning if you want to. Ma and I have talked it over, and if you're bound to leave us, I guess there'd never be a better time. I can get Jud Jason to drive the cream wagon for me, and I'll do the best I can at the barn. I had hoped that we'd be partners and work together all our days; but if you have decided upon leaving us, of course you won't be satisfied till you have done it."  
"Well I can try," said Junior, "and if I don't like it I can come back."

"I don't know about that," objected Peter. "Of course I'd have other help hired; your room would be occupied and your work contracted for."  
"Well I hadn't figured on that," he said. "I supposed I could go and try it, and if I didn't like it I could come home. Couldn't I come home, Ma?"  
Nancy slowly became a greenish white, color; but the situation had been discussed so often, it worried her dreadfully; now that it had to be met, evasion would do no good. Peter grimly watched her. He knew she was struggling with a woman's inborn impulse to be the haven of her children, her son, her first-born, especially. He was surprised to hear her saying: "Why, I hardly think so. Junior, it wouldn't be a right start in life. You must figure that what ever kind of work you find, or who ever you work for, there will be things you won't like or think fair, but if you are going to be your own man, you must begin like a man; and of course a man doesn't go into business with his mind made up to run for his mother's petticoats, the first thing that displeases him. No, I guess if you go, you must start with your mind made up to stay till the October term of school opens, anyway."  
"Then we'll that settled," said Peter. "You may go with Mickey on the Monday morning car and we probably won't see you again till you are one of the leading business men of Multopolis, and drive out in your automobile. Have you decided which make you'll get?"  
"Well from what I've learned driving yours, if I were buying one myself, I'd get a Glade-by," said Junior. "They strike me as the best car on the market."  
Peter glanced sharply at his son. When he saw that the answer was perfectly sincere, his heart almost

played him the trick he had expected from his wife.  
"All right Ma, gather up his clothes and get them washed, and have him ready," said Peter.  
"I thought maybe you'd take me in the car and sort of look around with me," said Junior.  
"I don't see how I am going to do it, with both our work piled on me," said Peter. "And besides, I'm a farmer born and bred, I wouldn't have a job in the city or what he ought to do or have. Mickey is on to all that; he'll go with you, won't you, Mickey?"  
"Sure!" said Mickey. "And you can save a lot by using my room. It is high, but it's clean—Junior scowled but Mickey proceeded calmly—"and while it gets hot in the daytime, if you open the door at night, and soon cools off, while very hottest times I always take to the fire escape. It's nice and cool there."  
"Of course! That will be the ticket," said Peter heartily. "A boy starting with everything to learn couldn't expect to earn much, and when you haven't Ma and me to depend on for your board you'll be glad to have the bed free." Thank you, Mickey, that's fine."  
Junior did not look as if he thought it were. Presently he asked: "How much money ought I to take to start on, Mickey?"  
"Hully gee!" said Mickey. "Why, your fare in! You're going to make money, kid, not to spend it. If I was turned loose there with just one cent I'd be flying by night, and if I didn't, so cent, I'd soon earn it."  
"How could you Mickey?" asked Junior eagerly.  
"With or without?" queried Mickey. "Both!" exclaimed Junior.  
"Well, without," said Mickey. "I'd keep my lamps trimmed and burning, and I'd catch a lady falling off a car, or pick up a purse, or a kid, or

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