

MICHAEL O'HALLORAN

By Gene Stratton-Porter

(Continued from Yesterday.)

"No, I won't," said Junior, "because there's nothing you can do that will be half what I deserve."

When the little folks were asleep, and Mickey had helped Mrs. Harding finish the work, and Jack Jason had been paid \$5 for his contract and gone home, Junior lay in the hammock on the front porch, while his mother, mother and Mickey sat close. When he started to speak, Peter said: "Now, Junior, just a minute! You've been gone a week, and during that time I've used my brains more than I ever did in a like period, even when I was courting your ma, and the subject I labored on was what took you away from us. I've found out why you were not satisfied, and what made you dissatisfied. The guilty party is Peter Harding, aided and abetted by one Nancy Harding, otherwise known as ma—"

"Why, father?" interrupted Junior.

"Silence," said Peter. "I've just found out that it's going to be a man's job to be the head of this family, and I'm going to be the head of mine after this, and like Mickey here, I'm going to keep it. Let me finish. I've spent this week thinking, and all the things I've thought would make a bigger book than the dictionary if they were set down. Why should you be forgiven for a desire to go to Multiopolis when I carried you there as a baby, led you as a toddler, and went with you every chance I could tramp up as a man? Who bought and fed you painted, adulterated candy as a child, when your ma should have made you pure, clean taffy at home from our maple syrup or as good sugar as we could buy? Often I've spent money that should now be on interest, for fruit that looked fine to you here, and proved to be grainy, too mellow, sour or not half so good as what you had at home."

"I never took you hunting, or fishing, or camping, or swimming, in your life; but I haven't had a mite of trouble to find time and money to take you to circuses, which I don't regret, I'll do again; and picture shows, which I'll do also; and other shows. I'm not condemning any form of amusement we ever patronized so much, we'll probably do all of it again; but what gets me now, is how I ever came to think that the only interesting things and those worth taking time and spending money on, were running to Multiopolis, to eat, to laugh, to look, and getting little to show for it but disappointment and suffering for all of us. You haven't had the only punishment that's struck the Harding family this week, Junior. Your ma and I have had our share, and I haven't asked her if she had got enough, but speaking strictly for myself, I have."

"I wouldn't live through it again for the farm," sobbed Mrs. Harding. "I see what you are getting at, pa, and it's we who are the guilty parties, just as you say."

Junior sat up and stared at them.

"I don't so much regret the things I did," said Peter, "as I condemn myself for the things I haven't done. I

haven't taught you to ride so you don't look a spectacle on a horse, and yet horses should come as natural as breathing to you. You should be a skilled marksman; you couldn't hit a washtub at 10 paces. You should swim like a fish, with a hundred lakes in your country; you'd drown if you were thrown in the middle of one and left to yourself. You ought to be able to row a boat as well as it can be done, and cast a line with all of the skill that any lad of your age possesses. That you can't make even a fair showing at any sport, results from the fact that every time your father had a minute to spare he took you and headed straight for Multiopolis. Here's the golf links at our door, and if ever any game was a farmer's game, and if any man has a right to hold up his head, and tramp his own hills, and swing a strong arm and a free one, it's a land owner. There's no reason why plowing and tilling should dull the brains, bend the back, or make a peckhorse of a man. Modern methods show you how to do the same thing a better way, how to work one machine instead of ten men, how to have time for a vacation, just as city men do, and how to have two for one for books, and music, and school. Instead of loading with so much land it's a burden to pay the taxes, I have quite a bunch of land for sale, and I see a way open to make three times the money I ever did, with half the hard work. We've turned over a new leaf at this place, from start to finish, including the house, barn, land and family. A year from now you won't know any of us; but that later. Just now, it's this: I'm pointing out to you, Junior, exactly how you came to have your hankering for Multiopolis. I can see you followed the way we set you thinking, that all the amusing things were there, the smart people, the fine clothes, the wealth, and the freedom—"

"Yes, you ought to see the amusing things and the 'happy people' when your stomach's cramping and your head splitting!" cried Junior. "I tell you down among them it looks different from riding past in an automobile."

"Exactly!" conceded Peter. "Exactly what I'm coming at. All your life I've been giving you the wrong viewpoint. Now you can busy yourselves planning how to make our share of the world over, so it will bring all the joy of life right to the front door. I guess the first big thing is to curvycomb the whole place, and fix it as it should be to be most convenient for us. Then we'll take a course of training in making up our minds to be satisfied with what we can afford. Junior, does some look better to you than it did this time last week?"

"Father," began Junior, and sobbed aloud.

"The answer is sufficient," said Peter dryly. "Never mind son! When with our heads put together, we get our buildings and land fixed right, I suggest that we also fix our clothes and our belongings right. I can't see any reason why a woman as lovely as ma should be told from any other pretty woman, by her walk or dress. I don't know why a man as well set up as I am shouldn't wear his clothes as easy as the men at the club house. I can't see why we shouldn't be at that same club house for a meal once in a while, just to keep us satisfied with home cooking, and that game looks interesting. Next trip to Multiopolis I make, I'm going to get saddles for Junior and Mickey and teach them what I know about how to sit and handle a horse properly; and it needn't be a plow horse, either. Next day off I have, I'm going to spend hauling lumber to one of these lakes we decide on, to build a house for a launch and fishing boat for us. Then when we have a vacation, we'll drive there, shelter our car, and enjoy ourselves like the city folks by the thousands, since we think that they do so right and fine. They've showed us what they like, flocking five thousand at a clip, to Red Wing lake, a few miles from us. Since we live among what they are spending their thousands every summer to enjoy, let's help ourselves to a little pleasure. I am going to buy each of us a fishing rod, and get a box of tackle, soon as I reach it, and I'm going fast. I've wasted six teen years, now I'm on the home stretch, and it's going to be a home

wagon. Peter didn't want him to, but there was a change in Junior. He was no longer a wilful, discontented boy. He was a partner, who was greatly interested in a business and felt dissatisfied if he were not working at furthering it. He had little to say, but his eyes were looking far ahead in deep thought. The first morning he started out, while Junior unhitched his horse, Peter filled the wagon and went back to the barn where Mickey was helping him.

(Continued in Monday Morning Bee.)

Farmers Near Bloomfield to Pay 6 Cents for Husking

Bloomfield, Neb., Oct. 26.—Six cents a bushel for picking corn was the agreement reached at a meeting of farmers held at the city hall here. The meeting was well attended. With the price of new corn to start at about 55 cents a bushel, it was the general sentiment that 6 cents was as much as could be paid. This includes board. According to reports, this would make it cost the farmer at least 15 cents a bushel to market his crop. A reasonably good picker can make from \$5 to \$6 a day and board at the 6 cent price. The corn here is the best for a good many years and stands up well.

Newspaper Publisher Has Fortune of \$25,000,000

New York, Oct. 26.—William Randolph Hearst, newspaper publisher, has a personal fortune exceeding \$25,000,000, it was declared by Tillotson and Wolcott, bankers, who made the announcement in declaring a new bond issue bore the unconditional guarantee and endorsement of Mr. Hearst.

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