



Do not give to your friends the most agreeable counsels, but the most advantageous.—Tuckerman

## The Road to Providence

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MARIA THOMPSON DAVIES

(Continued from last week)

SYNOPSIS OF "THE ROAD TO PROVIDENCE"

Mrs. Mayberry, a country physician's widow, has taken into her home Elmore Wingate, a famous singer, who has mysteriously lost his voice. Mrs. Mayberry is much loved throughout the countryside, her son, Tom, is a young doctor in the city, but among the home neighbors there is a humorous preference for "Mother Mayberry's remedies." Miss Wingate becomes happier than she has been at any time since the loss of her voice. Mother Mayberry takes into her home Martin Luther Hathaway, the little son of a poor missionary. Miss Wingate discovers she is coming to care for young Mayberry, and he realizes that his strongest desire is to be able to restore her power to sing. Dr. Mayberry is told by Miss Wingate upon one occasion that she is so happy, it does not matter if she should never sing again, and upon hearing this Dr. Mayberry tells her that although he does not know why she is going to give her back her voice, many calls for Mother Mayberry's remedies are made, but she always up and ready to respond to them. The sewing circle meets with Mother Mayberry, whose table and philosophic kindness are as usual heartily served to her guests. Miss Wingate tells Tom the story of her early years. Tom goes off to the city early in the morning without letting Miss Wingate know. Every one in the Providence neighborhood attends the wedding of pretty Bettie Pratt the preparations for which were supervised by Mother Mayberry. That night Tom confesses to Miss Wingate that he loves her.

"THEN, too, I believe he'll give it to little Sister Pike to tend on the prophets, and maybe I'll be there to see?"

This is the first time I ever could take—take any interest in Heaven at all," confessed Miss Wingate, lifting large, comfortable eyes to Mother Mayberry's face. "When I was so desperate and didn't know what to do, before I came and found but that there was a place for me in this world even if I couldn't sing any more. I used to dread the thought of Heaven, even if I might some day be good enough to go there."

"Well, a stand-around set-around kind of Heaven may be good for some people as wants it, but a come-over-and-help-us kind is what I am hoping for. I want to have a good lot of honest acts to pack up and take into the judgment seat to prove my character by and then be honored with some kind of telling labor to do. I'm looking for something white to put at Miss Bostick's neck, for we are going to lay her in her grave in the old dress with its honorable patches, but with a little piece of fine white to match her sweet soul. Here it is."

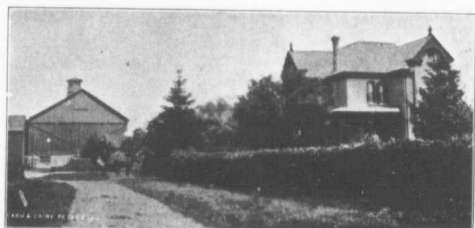
"Will you let me know if I can do anything for anybody or the Deacon later?" asked the singer lady gently.

"I know you'll be a comfort to him, child, after my never forget dinner, and don't you never forget that you are the apple-core of your Mother Mayberry's heart and she's a-going to hold you to her tender, even unto them Glory days we've been a-planning for with Death here in the midst of Life."

### CHAPTER X. THE SONG OF THE MASTER'S GRAIL

"In all my long life I have never been grieved to me to see anything like Deacon Bostick and his Providence children," said Mother Mayberry, as she stood on the end of the porch with the singer girl's hand in her hand. "The singer girl's hand in her hand under the tree right by her window, like he always did, to listen for her, and every child in the Road is a-huddled up

against him like a forlorn lot of little motherless chickens. He got out little Bettie and Martin Luther on his knees and the rest are just crowded up all around him. He don't seem to notice any of the rest of us, but looks to 'Liza for everything. She got him to go to bed at nine o'clock and when Buck and Mr. Petway went to set up for the night, they found she'd done made 'Lias and Henny and Bud all lie down by him, one on each side and



One of Many Fine Farm Homes in Wentworth.

Many evidences of good farming on good soil are to be seen about this place, the home of Mr. Jas. Vanslick, Wentworth Co., Ont. There is a worth not to be estimated in money in having a home like this.—Photo by E. Miller.

Bud across the foot. He wanted 'em to stay and the men let 'em do it. Judy says she were up by daylight, and gone down the Road to see about his breakfast and things. And now she are just a-standing by him waiting for the bell to toll for the funeral. The Deacon have surely followed his Master in the suffering of little children to draw close to him in this life, and now he are becoming as one of 'em before entering the Kingdom."

"This soft, misty sun-veiled day seems just made for Mrs. Bostick," said Miss Wingate with unshed tears in her voice. "It may be just a notion of mine, honey-bird, but it looks like up here in Harpeth Hills the weather have got sympathy with us folks. Look how Providence Nob have drawn a mist of tears 'twixt it and the faint sun. When roubles are with us I've seen

clouds boil up over the Ridge and on the other hand we ain't scarcely ever had rain on a wedding or church-soul day. I like to feel that maybe the good Lord looks special after all of his children living out in the open fields and we have got His word that He tempests the winds. People in the big cities can crowd and keep care of one another, but out here we are all just in the hollow of His word. Here comes Miss Peavey. I asked her to go along to the funeral with me and you. It are almost time now."

"Howdy, all," said Mrs. Peavey in an utterly gray tone of voice. "Miss Mayberry, that Circuit Rider have never come from Bolivar yet. Do you reckon his horse have thrown him or is it just he don't care for us Providence folks and don't think it worth while to come say the words over Sister Bostick?"

"Oh, he come 'most a half-hour ago, Bettie Ann," answered Mother Mayberry quickly. "Bettie had a little sack laid out for him 'count of his having to make such a early start to get here. He was most kind to the Deacon and professed 'most sorrow for us all. How are your side this morning?"

"I got out that foolish dry plaster Tom made me more'n a month ago and put it on last night, 'cause I didn't want to disturb you, and to my surprise they ain't a mite of pain hit me since. But I guess it are mostly the clearing weather that have stopped it."

"Maybe a little of both," answered the Doctor's mother with a smile. "but anyway, it's good that you ain't a-suffering none. We must all take good care of each other's pains from now on, 'cause we are most valuable one to another. Friends is one kind of treasure, you don't want to lay up in Heaven."

"I spend most of my time thinking about folks' accidents and hurts and pains," answered Mrs. Peavey in a low tone. "Miss Elmore, did you gargle your throat with that slippery-ellum tea I thought about to make for you last week?"

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hind the little cabinet organ in a few

of the Deacon's favorite hymns. Then the little procession was on its way among the graves over to a corner under an old cedar tree, where the stout young farmers laid the frail burden down for its long rest. The Deacon stood close by and the children clung around his thin legs up to his hands, and reached to grasp a corner of his coat. Eliza held her head against his shoulder and the side, while Bud held the old black hat he had taken from off his white hair, in careful, shaking little hands. The singer lady, with the Deacon at her side and her hand in Mother Mayberry's stood just opposite, and the others came near.

The simple service that the Church has instituted for the committing of its dead to the grave had been read by the Circuit Rider, the last prayer offered, and as a long ray of sunlight came through the mist and fell across the little assembly, he turned expectantly to Pattie Hoover, who stood between her father and Buck at the far end of the group. He had read the first lines of the hymn and he expected her to raise the tune for the others to follow. But when a woman's heart is very young and tender, and attuned to that another which is throbbing emotionally close by, her own feelings are apt to rise in a tide wave of tears, regardless of consequences, and as Buck Peavey choked off a sob, Pattie turned and buried her head on her father's arm. There was a long pause and nobody attempted to start the singing. They were accustomed to depend on Pattie or the organ and their own throats were thick with tears. The unassuming young preacher was helpless and looked from one to another then was about to raise his voice for the benediction, when a little voice came across the grave.

"Ain't nobody going to sing for Miss Bostick?" wailed Eliza, as her head went down to the Deacon's arm in a shudder of sobs.

Then suddenly a very wonderful and beautiful thing happened in that old churchyard of Providence. Meeting-house under Harpeth Hills, for the great singer lady stepped toward the Deacon a little way, paused, looked across at the old Nob in the sun-light and high and clear and free-swinging like that of an archangel rose her glorious voice in the

"Hail, holy, holy, holy Lord,"

which she had set for him and the gentle invalid to the wonderful music of the Song of the Master's Grail. Love and sorrow and a flood of tears had relieved a pressure somewhere; the balance had been recovered; and her muted voice freed. And as through the verses to the very end she sang it, while the little group of people held their breath in amazement. Then, when they had bowed heads for the benediction, she turned and walked away through the graves, out of the churchyard and up Providence Road, with an instinct to hide from them all for a moment.

"And here I have to come and hum the little skinned miracle out of my own feather pillows," exclaimed Mother Mayberry to the little group of tears, tears and joy in her voice, as she bent over the broad expanse of her own bed and drew the singer girl in her strong arms. "Daughter, she said, with her cheek pressed in the flushed one against her shoulder, 'what the Lord hath given and take away we bless Him for and none the less what He giveth back, blessed be His name.' That's the way He understands me. You don't feel in ways peculiar, do you," and as she asked the question the Doctor's mother clasped the slender throat of one of her strong hands.

(Continued Next Week)