



It is astonishing what a lot of odd minutes one can catch during the day, if one really sets about it.

—Molock.

The Road to Providence

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(Continued from last week.)

"MIS' Mayberry! Oh, Mis' Mayberry!" came a high, quavering odd voice from around the corner of the house, and Squire Tutt here in sight. He was panting for breath and trembling with rage as he ascended the steps and stood in the kitchen door. Mother hastened to bring him a chair into which he wheezingly subsided.

"Why, Squire," she questioned anxiously, "have anything happened?" Is Mis' Tutt taken with luggage again?"

"No!" exploded the Squire, "she's well—always is! I'm the only really sick folk in Providence, though I don't get no respect for it. In pain all the time and no respect—no respect!"

"Now, Squire, everybody in Providence have got sympathy for you tise, and just yesterday Mis' Pike was a-asking me—"

"Tise! I ain't talking about tise now! It's this pain in my stonik that that young limb of satan of you'n insulted me about not a hour ago. Me a-writing in torment with nothing less'n a cancer—insulted me!" As the Squire projected his remark toward Mother Mayberry he bent double and peered expectantly up into her sympathetic face.

"Why, what did he do, Squire?" demanded Mother, with a glance at Miss Wingate, who still stood at the biscuit block cutting out her dough. She regarded the old man with alarmed wonder.

"Told me to drink two cups of hot water and lie down a hour—me in torment!" The Squire fairly spit his complaint into the air.

"Dearie me, Tom had oughter known better than that about one of your spells," said Mother. "Why, I've been a-curing them for years for you myself with nothing more'n a little drop of spirits, red pepper and mint. He had oughter told you

to take that instead of hot water. I'm sorry."

"Oughter told me to take spirits—told me to take spirits! Don't you know, Mis' Mayberry, a man with a sanctified wife can't take no spirits; they must be pure to him by somebody not a member of the family. Me a-suffering torments torments—two cups of hot water—torments, torments!"

The old man's voice rose to a perfect wail, but came down to note or two as Mother hastily reached in the press and drew out a tall, old demijohn, and poured a liberal dose of the desired medicine into a glass. She added a dash of red pepper and a few drops of peppermint. This treatment of the Squire's dram in Mother's estimation turned a sinful beverage into a useful medicine and served to soothe her conscience while it disturbed the Squire's appreciation of her treatment not at all. He swallowed the fiery dose without as much as the blink of an eyelid and on the instant subsided into comfortable complacency.

"Please forgive Tom for not having gumption, Squire, and next time right over to me same as usual. Course I know all the neighbors feel as how Tom is young and have just hung out his shingle here, and I hold this mistake against Tom."

"Well," said the Squire, in a mollified tone of voice, "I won't say no more, but you must tell him to stop fooling with these here Providence people. Stopped Ezra Pike's wife feeding her baby on pot-luker and give it liled milk watered with lime juice. It'll die—it'll die!"

"Oh, no, Squire, it's a-getting well—just as hearty as can be," Mother said in a mollifying tone of voice.

"It'll die—it'll die! Cut one or the lights outen Sam Mosley's side—called it a new fangled impendix name—but he'll die—he'll die!"

"Sam's a-working out there on the

bar roof right this minute, Squire, good and alive," said Mother Mayberry with a good-humored smile while Miss Wingate cast a restrained though indignant glance at the doubting old magistrate.

"An old Deacon Bostick drinking cow-hot milk and sucking raw eggs! He looks like a mixed calf and shagbait rooster! So old he'd oughter die—and he'll do it! Hot water and me in torment! Het water on his middle in a rubber bag and nothing inside or him! He'll die—he'll die!"

"Oh no, Squire, the good Lord have gave Deacon Bostick back to us from the edge of the grave; Tom a-working day and night but under His guidance. He have gained ten pounds and walks everywhere. It were loo typhus, six weeks running, too! I'm glad it were gave to me to see my son bring back a saint to earth from the gates themselves. Have you been by to see him?"

"Yes," answered the Squire as he rose much more briskly than he had seated himself, and prepared to take his departure. "Yes, and it was you a-cussing of him that did it—muster slipped him calmie—but I ain't a-disputing! Play actor, ain't you, girl?" he demanded as he paused on his way out of the door and peered over at Miss Wingate with his beetling, suspicious eyes.

"Yes," answered the singer lady as she went on putting her biscuit into the pan. If her culinary manoeuvres were slow they were at least sure, and the "riz" biscuits looked promising.

"Dearie me," said Mother as she returned from guiding her guest down the front walk and into the shaded Road, "it do seem that Squire Tutt gets more rantankerous every day. Poor Mis' Tutt is just wore out with contriving with him. It's a wonder she feels like she have got any ease at all, much less a second biscuit. Now I must turn to and make a dish of baked chicken hash for supper to be et with them feather biscuits of you'n. I want to compliment them by the company of a extra nice dish. If they come out the oven in time I want to ask Sam Mosley to stop in and get some, with a little quince preserves. He brought his dinner in a bucket, which troubled me, for who's got foot on my land, two or four, I likes to feed myself. I expected he was some mortified at your being here. He's kinder shy like in the noticing of girls."

"That seems to be a failing with the Providence young—with Providence people," ventured Miss Wingate with ambiguity.

"Oh, country boys is all alike," answered Mother comfortably, only in a measure taking in the tentative observation. "They're all kinder co'ting tongue-tied. They have to be eased along attentive, all 'cept Buck Peavey, who'd like to eat Pattie up same as a cannibal, I'm thinking,

and don't mind who knows it. Now the supper is all on the sinner and can be got ready in no time. Let's me and you walk down to the front gate and watch for Tom to come around the Nob from Flat Rock and then we can run in the biscuits. Maybe we'll hear some news; I haven't hardly seen any folks to-day; and I mistrust some mischief are a-brewing somewhere."

And Mother Mayberry's well-trained intuitions must have been in unusually good working order, for she met her expected complications at the front gate. She was just turning to point out a promise of an unusually large crop of snow-balls on the old shrub by the gatepost when a sullen snuffing made itself heard and caused her to concentrate her attention on the house opposite across the Road. And a sympathizing scene met her eyes. Perched along the fence were all five of the little Pikes clinging to the top board in sternal despondency. On the edge of the porch sat Mr. Pike in his shirt sleeves with his pipe in one hand and the Teether Pike balanced on his knee. His expression matched the gloom, and like them he glanced apprehensively toward the door as if expecting Calamity to issue from his very hearthstone.

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Mother as she hurried to the edge of the sidewalk followed by the singer lady, whose acquaintance with the young Pikes had long before ripened to the stage of intimate friendship. At the sight of her sympathetic face, Eliza, the first Pike, slipped to the ground and buried her head in her new but valued friend's dainty muslin skirt. But, the next rang of the stair steps he licked out his tongue to dispose of a mortifying tear and little Susie sobbed outright. At this juncture, just as Mother was about to demand again an explanation of such united woe, Mrs. Pike came to the door, and a large spoon and a bottle full of amber, liquid grease made further inquiry unnecessary.

"Sakes! Mis' Mayberry, I certainly am glad you have came over to back me up in getting down these doses of oil. Ez," with an indignant and contemptuous glance at her sullen husband, "don't want me to give it to 'em. He'd rather they'd up and die than to stand the ruckus, but I ain't a-going to let my own children perish for a few cherry seeds with a bottle of oil in the house and Doctor Tom Mayberry's prescription to give 'em a spoonful all around." Mrs. Pike was short and stout, but with a martial and determined eye, and as she spoke she began to measure out a first dose with her glance fixed on young Bud, who turned white around his little mouth and clung to the fence. Susie's rose sobs to a wail and Eliza shuddered in Miss Wingate's skirt.

"Wait a minute, Mis' Pike," said



Floor Plans of the Home of Mr. Isaac Holland, Oxford Co., Ont., See illustration of exterior and description, on page 15, this issue.