

dining-room for the superintendent, which I, being a social soul, at first scorned, has been my salvation. When I am dead tired I dine alone, but in my live intervals I invite an officer to share the meal; and in the expansive intimacy of the dinner-table I get in my most effective strokes. When it becomes desirable to plant the seeds of fresh air in the soul of Miss Snaith, I invite her to dinner, and tactfully sandwich in a little oxygen between her slices of pressed veal.

Pressed veal is our cook's idea of an acceptable *pièce de résistance* for a dinner party. In another month I am going to face the subject of suitable nourishment for the executive staff; meanwhile there are so many things more important than our own comfort that we shall have to worry along on veal.

A terrible bumping has just occurred outside my door. One little cherub seems to be kicking another little cherub downstairs. But I write on undisturbed. If I am to spend my days among orphans, I must cultivate a cheerful detachment.

Did you get Leonora Fenton's cards? She's marrying a medical missionary and going to Siam to live! Did you ever hear of anything so absurd as Leonora presiding over a missionary's menage? Do you suppose she will entertain the heathen with skirt dances?

It is n't any absurder, though, than me in an orphan-asylum, or you as a conservative settled matron, or Marty Keene a social butterfly in Paris. Do you suppose she goes to embassy balls in riding-clothes, and

what on earth does she do about hair? It could n't have grown so soon; she must wear a wig. Is n't our class turning out some hilarious surprises?

The mail arrives. Excuse me while I read a nice fat letter from Washington.

Not so nice; quite impertinent. Gordon can't get over the idea that it is a joke, S. McB. in conjunction with one hundred and thirteen orphans. But he would n't think it such a joke if he could try it for a few days. He says he is going to drop off here on his next trip North and watch the struggle. How would it be if I left him in charge while I dashed to New York to accomplish some shopping? Our sheets are all worn out, and we have n't more than two hundred and eleven blankets in the house.

Singapore, sole puppy of my heart and home, sends his respectful love.

I also,

S. McB.

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,

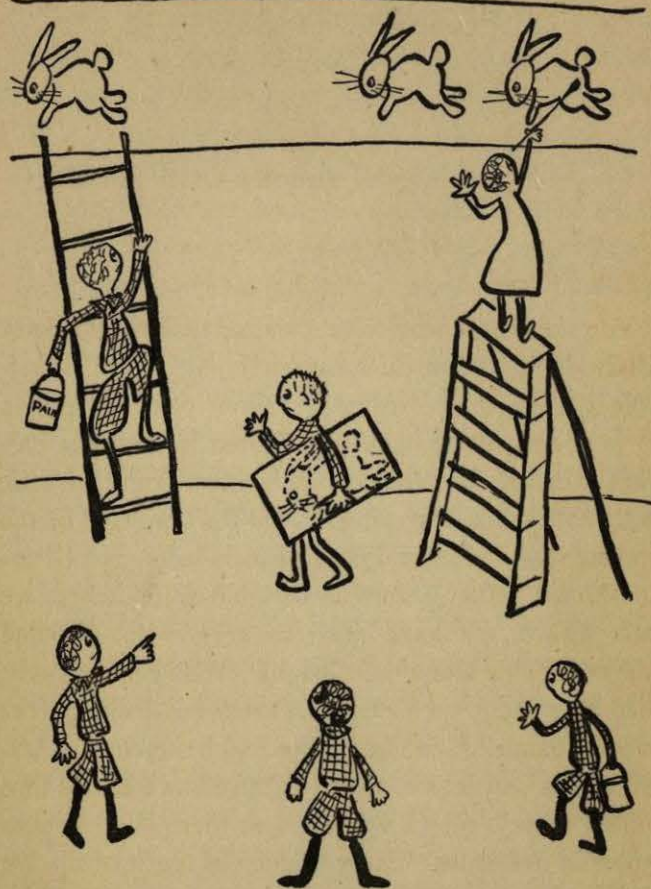
Friday.

My dearest Judy:

You should see what your hundred dollars and Betsy Kindred did to that dining-room!

It's a dazzling dream of yellow paint. Being a north room, she thought to brighten it; and she has. The walls are kalsomined buff, with a frieze of little molly cottontails skurrying around the top. All of the woodwork — tables and benches included — is a cheerful chrome yellow. Instead of table-cloths, which we can't afford, we have linen runners, with stenciled rabbits hopping along their length. Also yellow bowls, filled at present with pussy-willows, but looking forward to dandelions and cowslips and buttercups. And new dishes, my dear — white, with yellow jonquils (we think), though they may be roses; there is no botany expert in the house. Most wonderful touch of all, we have *napkins*, the first we have seen in our whole lives. The children thought they were handkerchiefs, and ecstatically wiped their noses.

To honor the opening of the new room, we had ice-cream and cake for dessert. It is such a pleasure to see these children anything but cowed and apathetic,



Betsey and five
husky Orphans decorate
the dining-room

that I am offering prizes for boisterousness — to every one but Sadie Kate. She drummed on the table with her knife and fork and sang, "Welcome to dem golden halls."

You remember that illuminated text over the dining-room door — "The Lord Will Provide." We've painted it out, and covered the spot with rabbits. It's all very well to teach so easy a belief to normal children, who have a proper family and roof behind them; but a person whose only refuge in distress will be a park bench must learn a more militant creed than that.

"The Lord has given you two hands and a brain and a big world to use them in. Use them well, and you will be provided for; use them ill, and you will want," is our motto, and that with reservations.

In the sorting process that has been going on I have got rid of eleven children. That blessed State Charities Aid Association helped me dispose of three little girls, all placed in very nice homes, and one to be adopted legally if the family likes her. And the family will like her; I saw to that. She was the prize child of the institution, obedient and polite, with curly hair and affectionate ways, exactly the little girl that every family needs. When a couple of adopting parents are choosing a daughter, I stand by with my heart in my mouth, feeling as though I were assisting in the inscrutable designs of Fate. Such a little thing turns the balance! The child smiles, and a loving home is hers for life; she sneezes, and it passes her by forever.

Three of our biggest boys have gone to work on farms, one of them out West to a RANCH! Report has it that he is to become a cow-boy and Indian fighter and grizzly-bear hunter, though I believe in reality he is to engage in the pastoral work of harvesting wheat. He marched off, a hero of romance, followed by the wistful eyes of twenty-five adventurous lads, who turned back with a sigh to the safely monotonous life of the J. G. H.

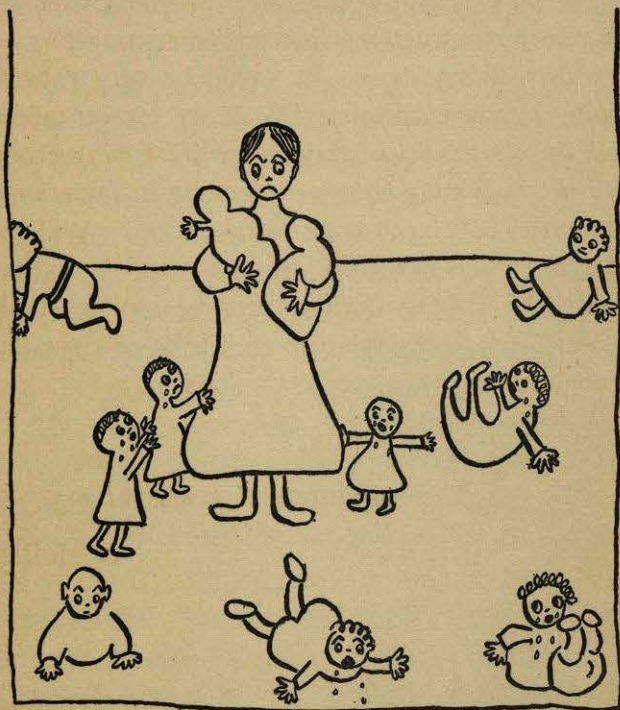
Five other children have been sent to their proper institutions. One of them is deaf, one an epileptic, and the other three approaching idiocy. None of them ought ever to have been accepted here. This is an educational institution, and we can't waste our valuable plant in caring for defectives.

Orphan-asylums have gone out of style. What I am going to develop is a boarding-school for the physical, moral, and mental growth of children whose parents have not been able to provide for their care.

"Orphans" is merely my generic term for the children; a good many of them are not orphans in the least. They have one troublesome and tenacious parent left who won't sign a surrender, so I can't place them out for adoption. But those that are available would be far better off in loving foster-homes than in the best institution that I can ever make. So I am fitting them for adoption as quickly as possible, and searching for the homes.

You ought to run across a lot of pleasant families

in your travels; can't you bully some of them into adopting children? Boys by preference. We've got an awful lot of extra boys, and nobody wants them. Talk about anti-feminism! It's nothing to the anti-



masculism that exists in the breasts of adopting parents. I could place out a thousand dimpled little girls with yellow hair, but a good live boy from nine to thirteen is a drug on the market. There seems to be a general feeling that they track in dirt and scratch up mahogany furniture.

Should n't you think that men's clubs might like to adopt boys, as a sort of mascot? The boy could be boarded in a nice respectable family, and drawn out by the different members on Saturday afternoons. They could take him to ball-games and the circus, and then return him when they had had enough, just as you do with a library book. It would be very valuable training for the bachelors. People are forever talking about the desirability of training girls for motherhood. Why not institute a course of training in fatherhood, and get the best men's clubs to take it up? Will you please have Jervis agitate the matter at his various clubs, and I'll have Gordon start the idea in Washington. They both belong to such a lot of clubs that we ought to dispose of at least a dozen boys.

I remain,

The ever-distracted mother of 113.

S. McB.

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,

March 18.

Dear Judy:

I have been having a pleasant respite from the 113 cares of motherhood.

Yesterday who should drop down upon our peaceful village but Mr. Gordon Hallock, on his way back to Washington to resume the cares of the nation. At least he said it was on his way, but I notice from the map in the primary room that it was one hundred miles out of his way.

And dear, but I was glad to see him! He is the first glimpse of the outside world I have had since I was incarcerated in this asylum. And such a lot of entertaining businesses he had to talk about! He knows the inside of all of the outside things you read in the newspapers; so far as I can make out, he is the social center about which Washington revolves. I always knew he would get on in politics, for he has a way with him; there's no doubt about it.

You can't imagine how exhilarated and set-up I feel, as though I'd come into my own again after a period of social ostracism. I must confess that I get lonely for some one who talks my kind of nonsensical talk. Betsy trots off home every week-end, and the

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doctor is conversational enough, but, oh, so horribly logical! Gordon somehow seems to stand for the life I belong to,— of country clubs and motors and dancing and sport and politeness,— a poor, foolish, silly life, if you will, but mine own. And I have missed it. This serving-society business is theoretically admirable and compelling and interesting, but deadly stupid in its working details. I am afraid I was never born to set the crooked straight.

I tried to show Gordon about and make him take an interest in the babies, but he would n't glance at them. He thinks I came just to spite him, which, of course, I did. Your siren call would never have lured me from the path of frivolity had Gordon not been so unpleasantly hilarious at the idea of my being able to manage an orphan-asylum. I came here to show him that I could; and now, when I *can* show him, the beast refuses to look.

I invited him to dinner, with a warning about the pressed veal; but he said no, thanks, that I needed a change. So we went to Brantwood Inn and had broiled lobster. I had positively forgotten that the creatures were edible.

This morning at seven o'clock I was wakened by the furious ringing of the telephone bell. It was Gordon at the station, about to resume his journey to Washington. He was in quite a contrite mood about the asylum, and apologized largely for refusing to look at my children. It was not that he did n't like

orphans, he said; it was just that he did n't like them in juxtaposition to me. And to prove his good intentions, he would send them a bag of peanuts.

I feel as fresh and revived after my little fling as though I'd had a real vacation. There's no doubt about it, an hour or so of exciting talk is more of a tonic to me than a pint of iron and strychnine pills.

You owe me two letters, dear Madam. Pay them *tout de suite*, or I lay down my pen forever.

Yours, as usual,

S. McB.

Tuesday, 5 P.M.

My dear Enemy:

I am told that during my absence this afternoon you paid us a call and dug up a scandal. You claim that the children under Miss Snaith are not receiving their due in the matter of cod-liver oil.

I am sorry if your medicinal orders have not been carried out, but you must know that it is a difficult matter to introduce that abominably smelling stuff into the inside of a squirming child. And poor Miss Snaith is a very much overworked person. She has ten more children to care for than should rightly fall to the lot of any single woman, and until we find her another assistant, she has very little time for the fancy touches you demand.

Also, my dear Enemy, she is very susceptible to abuse. When you feel in a fighting mood, I wish you would expend your belligerence upon me. I don't mind it; quite the contrary. But that poor lady has retired to her room in a state of hysterics, leaving nine babies to be tucked into bed by whomever it may concern.

If you have any powders that would be settling to her nerves, please send them back by Sadie Kate.

Yours truly,

S. McBRIDE.

Wednesday morning.

Dear Dr. MacRae:

I am not taking an unintelligent stand in the least; I am simply asking that you come to me with all complaints, and not stir up my staff in any such volcanic fashion as that of yesterday.

I endeavor to carry out all of your orders — of a medical nature — with scrupulous care. In the present case there seems to have been some negligence; I don't know what did become of those fourteen unadministered bottles of cod-liver oil that you have made such a fuss about, but I shall investigate.

And I cannot, for various reasons, pack off Miss Snaith in the summary fashion you demand. She may be, in certain respects, inefficient; but she is kind to the children, and with supervision will answer temporarily.

Yours truly,

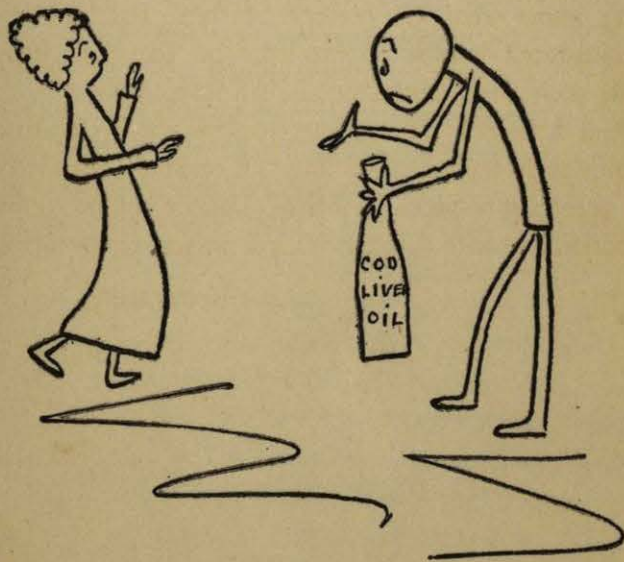
S. McBRIDE.

Thursday.

Dear Enemy:

Soyez tranquille. I have issued orders, and in the future the children shall receive all of the cod-liver oil that by rights is theirs. A wilfu' man maun hae his way.

S. McB.



March 22.

Dear Judy:

Asylum life has looked up a trifle during the past few days—since the great Cod-Liver Oil War has been raging. The first skirmish occurred on Tuesday, and I unfortunately missed it, having accompanied four of my children on a shopping trip to the village. I returned to find the asylum teeming with hysterics. Our explosive doctor had paid us a visit.

Sandy has two passions in life: one is for cod-liver oil and the other for spinach, neither popular in our nursery. Some time ago—before I came, in fact—he had ordered cod-liver oil for all of the { ænemic } — Heavens! there's that word again! — { anæmic } children, and had given instructions as to its application to Miss Snaith. Yesterday, in his suspicious Scotch fashion, he began nosing about to find out why the poor little rats were n't fattening up as fast as he thought they ought, and he unearthed a hideous scandal. They haven't received a whiff of cod-liver oil for three whole weeks! At that point he exploded, and all was joy and excitement and hysterics.

Betsy says that she had to send Sadie Kate to the laundry on an improvised errand, as his language was

not fit for orphan ears. By the time I got home he had gone, and Miss Snaith had retired, weeping, to her room, and the whereabouts of fourteen bottles of cod-liver oil was still unexplained. He had accused her at the top of his voice of taking them herself. Imagine Miss Snaith,—she who looks so innocent and chinless and inoffensive—stealing cod-liver oil from these poor helpless little orphans and guzzling it in private!

Her defense consisted in hysterical assertions that she loved the children, and had done her duty as she saw it. She did not believe in giving medicine to babies; she thought drugs bad for their poor little stomachs. You can imagine Sandy! Oh, dear! oh, dear! To think I missed it!

Well, the tempest raged for three days, and Sadie Kate nearly ran her little legs off carrying peppery messages back and forth between us and the doctor. It is only under stress that I communicate with him by telephone, as he has an interfering old termagant of a housekeeper who "listens in" on the down-stairs switch; I don't wish the scandalous secrets of the John Grier spread abroad. The doctor demanded Miss Snaith's instant dismissal, and I refused. Of course she is a vague, unfocused, inefficient old thing, but she does love the children, and with proper supervision is fairly useful.

At least, in the light of her exalted family connections, I can't pack her off in disgrace like a drunken

cook. I am hoping in time to eliminate her by a process of delicate suggestion; perhaps I can make her feel that her health requires a winter in California. And also, no matter what the doctor wants, so positive and dictatorial is his manner that just out of self-respect one must take the other side. When he states that the world is round, I instantly assert it to be triangular.

Finally, after three pleasantly exhilarating days, the whole business settled itself. An apology (a very dilute one) was extracted from him for being so unkind to the poor lady, and full confession, with promises for the future, was drawn from her. It seems that she could n't bear to make the little dears take the stuff, but, for obvious reasons, she could n't bear to cross Dr. MacRae, so she hid the last fourteen bottles in a dark corner of the cellar. Just how she was planning to dispose of her loot I don't know. Can you pawn cod-liver oil?

LATER.

Peace negotiations had just ended this afternoon, and Sandy had made a dignified exit, when the Hon. Cyrus Wykoff was announced. Two enemies in the course of an hour are really too much!

The Hon. Cy was awfully impressed with the new dining-room, especially when he heard that Betsy had put on those rabbits with her own lily-white hands.

Stenciling rabbits on walls, he allows, is a fitting pursuit for a woman, but an executive position like mine is a trifle out of her sphere. He thinks it would be far wiser if Mr. Pendleton did not give me such free scope in the spending of his money.

While we were still contemplating Betsy's mural flight, an awful crash came from the pantry, and we found Gladiola Murphy weeping among the ruins of five yellow plates. It is sufficiently shattering to my nerves to hear these crashes when I am alone, but it is peculiarly shattering when receiving a call from an unsympathetic trustee.

I shall cherish that set of dishes to the best of my ability, but if you wish to see your gift in all its uncracked beauty, I should advise you to hurry North, and visit the John Grier Home without delay.

Yours as ever,

SALLIE.

March 26.

My dear Judy:

I have just been holding an interview with a woman who wants to take a baby home to surprise her husband. I had a hard time convincing her that, since he is to support the child, it might be a delicate attention to consult him about its adoption. She argued stubbornly that it was none of his business, seeing that the onerous work of washing and dressing and training would fall upon her. I am really beginning to feel sorry for men. Some of them seem to have very few rights.

Even our pugnacious doctor I suspect of being a victim of domestic tyranny, and his housekeeper's at that. It is scandalous the way Maggie McGurk neglects the poor man. I have had to put him in charge of an orphan. Sadie Kate, with a very housewifely air, is this moment sitting cross-legged on the hearth rug sewing buttons on his overcoat while he is upstairs tending babies.

You would never believe it, but Sandy and I are growing quite confidential in a dour Scotch fashion. It has become his habit, when homeward bound after his professional calls, to chug up to our door about four in the afternoon, and make the rounds of the house to make sure that we are not developing cholera morbus or infanticide or anything catching, and then

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present himself at four-thirty at my library door to talk over our mutual problems.

Does he come to see me? Oh, no, indeed; he comes to get tea and toast and marmalade. The man hath a lean and hungry look. His housekeeper does n't feed him enough. As soon as I get the upper hand of him a little more, I am going to urge him on to revolt.

Meanwhile he is very grateful for something to eat, but oh, so funny in his attempts at social grace! At first he would hold a cup of tea in one hand, a plate of muffins in the other, and then search blankly for a third hand to eat them with. Now he has solved the problem. He turns in his toes and brings his knees together; then he folds his napkin into a long, narrow wedge that fills the crack between them, thus forming a very workable pseudo-lap; after that he sits with tense muscles until the tea is drunk. I suppose I ought to provide a table, but the spectacle of Sandy with his toes turned in is the one gleam of amusement that my day affords.

The postman is just driving in with, I trust, a letter from you. Letters make a very interesting break in the monotony of asylum life. If you wish to keep this superintendent contented, you'd better write often.

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Mail received and contents noted.

Kindly convey my thanks to Jervis for three alli-

gators in a swamp. He shows rare artistic taste in the selection of his post-cards. Your seven-page illustrated letter from Miami arrives at the same time. I should have known Jervis from the palm-tree perfectly, even without the label, as the tree has so much the more hair of the two. Also, I have a polite bread-and-butter letter from my nice young man in Washington, and a book from him, likewise a box of candy. The bag of peanuts for the kiddies he has shipped by express. Did you ever know such assiduity?

Jimmie favors me with the news that he is coming to visit me as soon as father can spare him from the factory. The poor boy does hate that factory so! It is n't that he is lazy; he just simply is n't interested in overalls. But father can't understand such a lack of taste. Having built up the factory, he of course has developed a passion for overalls, which should have been inherited by his eldest son. I find it awfully convenient to have been born a daughter; I am not asked to like overalls, but am left free to follow any morbid career I may choose, such as this.

To return to my mail: There arrives an advertisement from a wholesale grocer, saying that he has exceptionally economical brands of oatmeal, rice, flour, prunes, and dried apples that he packs specially for prisons and charitable institutions. Sounds nutritious, does n't it?

I also have letters from a couple of farmers, each

of whom would like to have a strong, husky boy of fourteen who is not afraid of work, their object being to give him a good home. These good homes appear with great frequency just as the spring planting is coming on. When we investigated one of them last week, the village minister, in answer to our usual question, "Does he own any property?" replied in a very guarded manner, "I think he must own a corkscrew."

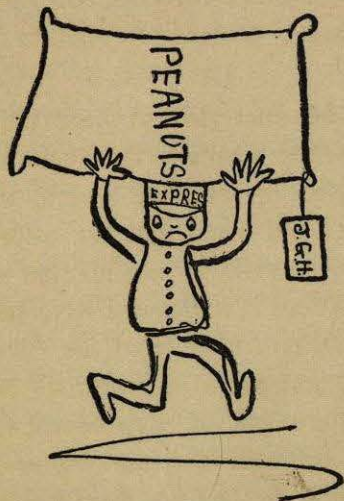
You would hardly credit some of the homes that we have investigated. We found a very prosperous country family the other day, who lived huddled together in three rooms in order to keep the rest of their handsome house clean. The fourteen-year girl they wished to adopt, by way of a cheap servant, was to sleep in the same tiny room with their own three children. Their kitchen-dining-parlor apartment was more cluttered up and unaired than any city tenement I ever saw, and the thermometer at eighty-four. One could scarcely say they were *living* there; they were rather *cooking*. You may be sure they got no girl from us!

I have made one invariable rule—every other is flexible. No child is to be placed out unless the proposed family can offer better advantages than we can give. I mean than we are going to be able to give in the course of a few months, when we get ourselves made over into a model institution. I shall have to confess that at present we are still pretty bad.

But anyway, I am very *choosey* in regard to homes, and I reject three-fourths of those that offer.

LATER.

Gordon has made honorable amends to my children. His bag of peanuts is here, made of burlap and three feet high.



Do you remember the dessert of peanuts and maple sugar they used to give us at college? We turned up our noses, but ate. I am instituting it here, and I assure you we don't turn up our noses. It is a pleasure to feed children who have graduated from a course of Mrs. Lippett; they are pathetically grateful for small blessings.

You can't complain that this letter is too short.

Yours,

On the verge of writer's cramp,
S. McB.

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,

Off and on, all day Friday.

Dear Judy:

You will be interested to hear that I have encountered another enemy—the doctor's housekeeper. I had talked to the creature several times over the telephone, and had noted that her voice was not distinguished by the soft, low accents that mark the caste of "Vere de Vere"; but now I have seen her. This morning, while returning from the village, I made a slight detour, and passed our doctor's house. Sandy is evidently the result of environment—olive green, with a mansard roof and the shades pulled down. You would think he had just been holding a funeral. I don't wonder that the amenities of life have somewhat escaped the poor man. After studying the outside of his house, I was filled with curiosity to see if the inside matched.

Having sneezed five times before breakfast this morning, I decided to go in and consult him professionally. To be sure, he is a children's specialist, but sneezes are common to all ages. So I boldly marched up the steps and rang the bell.

Hark! What sound is that that breaks upon our revelry? The Hon. Cy's voice, as I live, approaching