

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,

June 9.

Dear Judy:

You are an awful family for an impressionable young girl to visit. How can you expect me to come back and settle down contentedly to institution life after witnessing such a happy picture of domestic concord as the Pendleton household presents?

All the way back in the train, instead of occupying myself with the two novels, four magazines, and one box of chocolates that your husband thoughtfully provided, I spent the time in a mental review of the young men of my acquaintance to see if I could n't discover one as nice as Jervis. I did! (A little nicer, I think.) From this day on he is the marked-down victim, the destined prey.

I shall hate to give up the asylum after getting so excited over it, but unless you are willing to move it to the capital, I don't see any alternative.

The train was awfully late. We sat and smoked on a siding while two accommodations and a freight dashed past. I think we must have broken something, and had to tinker up our engine. The conductor was soothing, but uncommunicative.

It was 7:30 when I descended, the only passenger,

at our insignificant station in the pitch darkness and *rain*, without an umbrella, and wearing that precious new hat. No Turnfelt to meet me; not even a station hack. To be sure, I had n't telegraphed the exact time of my arrival, but, still, I did feel rather neglected. I had sort of vaguely expected all *one hundred and thirteen* to be drawn up by the platform, scattering flowers and singing songs of welcome. Just as I was telling the station man that I would watch his telegraph instrument while he ran across to the corner saloon and telephoned for a vehicle, there came whirling around the corner two big search-lights aimed straight at me. They stopped nine inches before running me down, and I heard Sandy's voice saying:

"Weel, weel, Miss Sallie McBride! I'm thinking it's ower time you came back to tak' the bit bairns off my hands."

That man had come three times to meet me on the off chance of the train's getting in some time. He tucked me and my new hat and bags and books and chocolates all in under his waterproof flap, and we splashed off. Really, I felt as if I was getting back home again, and quite sad at the thought of ever having to leave. Mentally, you see, I had already resigned and packed and gone. The mere idea that you are not in a place for the rest of your life gives you an awfully unstable feeling. That's why trial marriages would never work. You've got to feel you're in a thing irrevocably and forever in order to buckle down



and really put your whole mind into making it a success.

It's astounding how much news can accrue in four days. Sandy just could n't talk fast enough to tell me everything I wanted to hear. Among other items, I learned that Sadie Kate had spent two days in the infirmary, her malady being, according to the doctor's diagnosis, half a jar of gooseberry jam and Heaven knows how many doughnuts. Her work had been changed during my absence to dish-washing in the officers' pantry, and the juxtaposition of so many exotic luxuries was too much for her fragile virtue.

Also, our colored cook Sallie and our colored useful man Noah have entered upon a war of extermination. The original trouble was over a little matter of kindling, augmented by a pail of hot water that Sallie threw out of the window with, for a woman, unusual accuracy of aim. You can see what a rare character the head of an orphan-asylum must have. She has to combine the qualities of a baby nurse and a police magistrate.

The doctor had told only the half when we reached the house, and as he had not yet dined, owing to meeting me three times, I begged him to accept the hospitality of the John Grier. I would get Betsy and Mr. Witherspoon, and we would hold an executive meeting, and settle all our neglected businesses.

Sandy accepted with flattering promptness. He likes to dine outside of the family vault.

But Betsy, I found, had dashed home to greet a visiting grandparent, and Percy was playing bridge in the village. It's seldom the young thing gets out of an evening, and I'm glad for him to have a little cheerful diversion.

So it ended in the doctor's and my dining tête-à-tête on a hastily improvised dinner,—it was then close upon eight, and our normal dinner hour is 6:30,—but it was such an improvised dinner as I am sure Mrs. McGurk never served him. Sallie, wishing to impress me with her invaluableness, did her absolutely Southern best. And after dinner we had coffee before the fire in my comfortable blue library, while the wind howled outside and the shutters banged.

We passed a most cordial and intimate evening. For the first time since our acquaintance I struck a new note in the man. There really is something attractive about him when you once come to know him. But the process of knowing him requires time and tact. He's no' very gleg at the uptak. I've never seen such a tantalizingly inexplicable person. All the time I'm talking to him I feel as though behind his straight line of a mouth and his half-shut eyes there were banked fires smoldering inside. Are you sure he has n't committed a crime? He does manage to convey the delicious feeling that he has.

And I must add that Sandy's not so bad a talker when he lets himself go. He has the entire volume of Scotch literature at his tongue's end.



"Little kens the auld wife as she sits by the fire what the wind is doing on Hurly-Burly-Swire," he observed as a specially fierce blast drove the rain against the window. That sounds pat, does n't it? I have n't, though, the remotest idea what it means. And listen to this: between cups of coffee (he drinks far too much coffee for a sensible medical man) he casually let fall the news that his family knew the R. L. S. family personally, and used to take supper at 17 Heriot Row! I tended him assiduously for the rest of the evening in a

Did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak to you?

frame of mind.

When I started this letter, I had no intention of filling it with a description of the recently excavated charms of Robin MacRae; it's just by way of remorseful apology. He was so nice and companionable last night that I have been going about to-day feeling conscience-smitten at the thought of how mercilessly I made fun of him to you and Jervis. I really did n't mean quite all of the impolite things that I said. About once a month the man is sweet and tractable and engaging.

Punch has just been paying a social call, and during the course of it he lost three little toadlings an inch long. Sadie Kate recovered one of them from under the bookcase, but the other two hopped away; and I'm

so afraid they've taken sanctuary in my bed! I do wish that mice and snakes and toads and angleworms were not so portable. You never know what is going on in a perfectly respectable-looking child's pocket.



I had a beautiful visit in Casa Pendleton. Don't forget your promise to return it soon.

Yours as ever,

SALLIE.

P.S. I left a pair of pale-blue bedroom slippers under the bed. Will you please have Mary wrap them up and mail them to me? And hold her hand while she writes the address. She spelt my name on the place-cards "Mackbird."



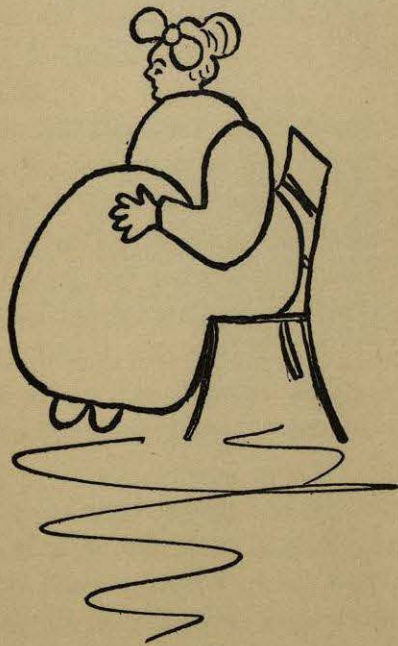
Tuesday.

*Dear Enemy:*

As I told you, I left an application for an accomplished nurse with the employment bureau of New York.

Wanted! A nurse maid with an ample lap suitable for the accommodation of seventeen babies at once.

She came this afternoon, and this is the fine figure of a woman that I drew!



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We could n't keep a baby from sliding off her lap unless we fastened him firmly with safety-pins.

Please give Sadie Kate the magazine. I'll read it to-night and return it to-morrow.

Was there ever a more docile and obedient pupil than

S. McBRIDE?



Thursday.

*My dear Judy:*

I've been spending the last three days busily getting under way all those latest innovations that we planned in New York. Your word is law. A public cooky-jar has been established.

Also, the eighty play-boxes have been ordered. It is a wonderful idea, having a private box for each child, where he can store up his treasures. The ownership of a little personal property will help develop them into responsible citizens. I ought to have thought of it myself, but for some reason the idea didn't come. Poor Judy! You have inside knowledge of the longings of their little hearts that I shall never be able to achieve, not with all the sympathy I can muster.

We are doing our best to run this institution with as few discommoding rules as possible, but in regard to those play-boxes there is one point on which I shall have to be firm. The children may not keep in them mice or toads or angleworms.

I can't tell you how pleased I am that Betsy's salary is to be raised, and that we are to keep her permanently. But the Hon. Cy Wykoff deprecates the step. He has been making inquiries, and he finds that her

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people are perfectly able to take care of her without any salary.

"You don't furnish legal advice for nothing," say I to him. "Why should she furnish her trained services for nothing?"

"This is charitable work."

"Then work which is undertaken for your own good should be paid, but work which is undertaken for the public good should not be paid?"

"Fiddlesticks!" says he. "She's a woman, and her family ought to support her."

This opened up vistas of argument which I did not care to enter with the Hon. Cy, so I asked him whether he thought it would be nicer to have a real lawn or hay on the slope that leads to the gate. He likes to be consulted, and I pamper him as much as possible in all unessential details. You see, I am following Sandy's canny advice: "Trustees are like fiddle-strings; they maunna be screwed ower tight. Humor the mon, but gang your ain gait." Oh, the tact that this asylum is teaching me! I should make a wonderful politician's wife.

Thursday night.

You will be interested to hear that I have temporarily placed out Punch with two charming spinsters who have long been tottering on the brink of a child. They finally came last week, and said they would like



to try one for a month to see what the sensation felt like.

They wanted, of course, a pretty ornament, dressed in pink and white and descended from the *Mayflower*. I told them that any one could bring up a daughter of the *Mayflower* to be an ornament to society, but the real feat was to bring up a son of an Italian organ-grinder and an Irish washerwoman. And I offered Punch. That Neapolitan heredity of his, aristically speaking, may turn out a glorious mixture, if the right environment comes along to choke out all the weeds.

I put it up to them as a sporting proposition, and they were game. They have agreed to take him for one month and concentrate upon his remaking all their years of conserved force, to the end that he may be fit for adoption in some moral family. They both have a sense of humor and *accomplishing* characters, or I should never have dared to propose it. And really I believe it's going to be the one way of taming our young fire-eater. They will furnish the affection and caresses and attention that in his whole abused little life he has never had.

They live in a fascinating old house with an Italian garden, and furnishings selected from the whole round world. It does seem like sacrilege to turn that destructive child loose in such a collection of treasures. But he has n't broken anything here for more than a month, and I believe that the Italian in him will respond to all that beauty.

I warned them that they must not shrink from any profanity that might issue from his pretty baby lips.

He departed last night in a very fancy automobile, and maybe I was n't glad to say good-by to our disreputable young man! He has absorbed just about half of my energy.

Friday.

The pendant arrived this morning. Many thanks! But you really ought not to have given me another; a hostess cannot be held accountable for all the things that careless guests lose in her house. It is far too pretty for my chain. I am thinking of having my nose pierced, Cingalese fashion, and wearing my new jewel where it will really show.

I must tell you that our Percy is putting some good constructive work into this asylum. He has founded the John Grier Bank, and has worked out all the details in a very professional and businesslike fashion, entirely incomprehensible to my non-mathematical mind. All of the older children possess properly printed check-books, and they are each to be paid five dollars a week for their services, such as going to school and accomplishing housework. They are then to pay the institution (by check) for their board and clothes, which will consume their five dollars. It looks like a vicious circle, but it's really very educative; they will comprehend the value of money before we dump them



into a mercenary world. Those who are particularly good in lessons or work will receive an extra recompense. My head aches at the thought of the book-keeping, but Percy waves that aside as a mere bagatelle. It is to be accomplished by our prize arithmeticians, and will train them for positions of trust. If Jervis hears of any opening for bank officials, let me know; I shall have a well-trained president, cashier, and paying-teller ready to be placed by this time next year.

Saturday.

Our doctor does n't like to be called "Enemy." It hurts his feelings or his dignity or something of the sort; but since I will persist, despite his expostulations, he has finally retaliated with a nickname for me. He calls me "Miss Sally Lunn," and is in a glow of pride at having achieved such an imaginative flight.

He and I have invented a new pastime: he talks Scotch, and I answer in Irish. Our conversations run like this:

"Good afthernoon to ye, docther. An' how's yer health the day?"

"Verra weel, verra weel. And how gaes it wi' a' the bairns?"

"Shure, they're all av thim doin' foin."

"I'm gey glad to hear it. This saft weather is hard on folk. There's muckle sickness aboot the kintra."

"Hiven be praised it has not lighted here! But sit

down, docther, an' make yersilf at home. Will ye be afther havin' a cup o' tay?"

"Hoot, woman! I would na hae you fash yoursel', but a wee drap tea winna coom amiss."

"Whist! It's no thruble at all."

You may not think this a very dizzying excursion into frivolity; but I assure you, for one of Sandy's dignity, it's positively riotous. The man has been in a heavenly temper ever since I came back; not a single cross word. I am beginning to think I may reform him as well as Punch.

This letter must be about long enough even for you; I've been writing it bit by bit for three days, whenever I happened to pass my desk.

Yours as ever,

SALLIE.

P.S. I don't think much of your vaunted prescription for hair tonic. Either the druggist did n't mix it right, or Jane did n't apply it with discretion. I stuck to the pillow this morning.



THE JOHN GRIER HOME,  
Saturday.

*Dear Gordon:*

Your letter of Thursday is at hand, and extremely silly I consider it. Of course I am not trying to let you down easy; that is n't my way. If I let you down at all, it will be suddenly and with an awful bump. But I honestly did n't realize that it had been three weeks since I wrote. Please excuse!

Also, my dear sir, I have to bring you to account. You were in New York last week, and you never ran up to see us. You thought we would n't find it out, but we heard — and are insulted.

Would you like an outline of my day's activities? Wrote monthly report for trustees' meeting. Audited accounts. Entertained agent of State Charities Aid Association for luncheon. Supervised children's menus for next ten days. Dictated five letters to families who have our children. Visited our little feeble-minded Loretta Higgins (pardon the reference; I know you don't like me to mention the feeble-minded), who is being boarded out in a nice comfortable family, where she is learning to work. Came back to tea and a conference with the doctor about sending a child with tubercular glands to a sanatorium. Read an ar-

ticle on cottage *versus* congregate system for housing dependent children. (We do need cottages! I wish you'd send us a few for a Christmas present.) And now at nine o'clock I'm sleepily beginning a letter to you. Do you know many young society girls who can point to such a useful day as that?

Oh, I forgot to say that I stole ten minutes from my accounts this morning to install a new cook. Our Sallie Washington-Johnston, who cooked fit for the angels, had a dreadful, dreadful temper and terrorized poor Noah, our super-excellent furnace-man, to the point of giving notice. We could n't spare Noah. He's more useful to the institution than its superintendent, and so Sallie Washington-Johnston is no more.

When I asked the new cook her name, she replied, "Ma name is Suzanne Estelle, but ma friends call me Pet." Pet cooked the dinner to-night, but I must say that she lacks Sallie's delicate touch. I am awfully disappointed that you did n't visit us while Sallie was still here. You would have taken away an exalted opinion of my housekeeping.

Drowsiness overcame me at that point, and it's now two days later.

Poor neglected Gordon! It has just occurred to me that you never got thanked for the modeling-clay which came two weeks ago, and it was such an unusually intelligent present that I should have telegraphed my appreciation. When I opened the box and saw all



that nice messy putty stuff, I sat down on the spot and created a statue of Singapore. The children love it; and it is very good to have the handicraft side of their training encouraged.

After a careful study of American history, I have determined that nothing is so valuable to a future president as an early obligatory unescapable performance of *chores*.

Therefore I have divided the daily work of this institution into a hundred parcels, and the children rotate weekly through a succession of unaccustomed tasks. Of course they do everything badly, for just as they learn how, they progress to something new. It would be infinitely easier for us to follow Mrs. Lippett's immoral custom of keeping each child sentenced for life to a well-learned routine; but when the temptation assails me, I recall the dreary picture of Florence Henty, who polished the brass door-knobs of this institution for seven years — and I sternly shove the children on.

I get angry every time I think of Mrs. Lippett. She had exactly the point of view of a Tammany politician — no slightest sense of service to society; her only interest in the John Grier Home was to get a living out of it.

Wednesday.

What new branch of learning do you think I have introduced into my asylum? Table manners!

I never had any idea that it was such a lot of trouble to teach children how to eat and drink. Their favorite method is to put their mouths down to their mugs and lap their milk like kittens. Good manners are not merely snobbish ornaments, as Mrs. Lippett's régime appeared to believe; they mean self-discipline and thought for others, and my children have got to learn them.

That woman never allowed them to talk at their meals, and I am having the most dreadful time getting any conversation out of them above a frightened whisper. So I have instituted the custom of the entire staff, myself included, sitting with them at the table, and directing the talk along cheerful and improving lines. Also I have established a small, very strict training-table, where the little dears, in relays, undergo a week of steady badgering. Our uplifting table conversations run like this:

"Yes, Tom, Napoleon Bonaparte was a very great man — elbows off the table. He possessed a tremendous power of concentrating his mind on whatever he wanted to have; and that is the way to accomplish — don't snatch, Susan; ask politely for the bread, and Carrie will pass it to you. — But he was an example of the fact that selfish thought just for oneself, without considering the lives of others, will come to disaster in the — Tom! Keep your mouth shut when you chew — and after the battle of Waterloo — let Sadie's cooky alone — his fall was all the greater because —



Sadie Kate, you may leave the table. It makes no difference what he did. Under no provocation does a lady slap a gentleman."

Two more days have passed; this is the same kind of meandering letter I write to Judy. At least, my dear man, you can't complain that I have n't been thinking about you this week! I know you hate to be told all about the asylum, but I can't help it, for it's all I know. I don't have five minutes a day to read the papers. The big outside world has dropped away. My interests all lie on the inside of this little iron inclosure.

I am at present,

S. McBRIDE,  
Superintendent of the  
John Grier Home.

Thursday.

*Dear Enemy:*

"Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in." Has n't that a very philosophical, detached, Lord of the Universe sound? It comes from Thoreau, whom I am assiduously reading at present. As you see, I have revolted against your literature and taken to my own again. The last two evenings have been devoted to "Walden," a book as far removed as possible from the problems of the dependent child.

Did you ever read old Henry David Thoreau? You really ought; I think you'd find him a congenial soul. Listen to this: "Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. It would be better if there were but one habitation to a square mile, as where I live." A pleasant, expansive, neeborlike man he must have been! He minds me in some ways o' Sandy.

This is to tell you that we have a placing-out agent visiting us. She is about to dispose of four chicks, one of them Thomas Kehoe. What do you think? Ought we to risk it? The place she has in mind for him is a farm in a no-license portion of Connecticut, where he will work hard for his board, and live in the farmer's family. It sounds exactly the right thing,



and we can't keep him here forever; he'll have to be turned out some day into a world full of whisky.

I'm sorry to tear you away from that cheerful work on "Dementia Precox," but I'd be most obliged if you'd drop in here toward eight o'clock for a conference with the agent.

I am, as usual,

S. McBRIDE.

June 17.

*My dear Judy:*

Betsy has perpetrated a most unconscionable trick upon a pair of adopting parents. They have traveled East from Ohio in their touring-car for the dual purpose of seeing the country and picking up a daughter. They appear to be the leading citizens of their town, whose name at the moment escapes me; but it's a very important town. It has electric lights and gas, and Mr. Leading Citizen owns the controlling interest in both plants. With a wave of his hand he could plunge that entire town into darkness; but fortunately he's a kind man, and won't do anything so harsh, not even if they fail to reelect him mayor. He lives in a brick house with a slate roof and two towers, and has a deer and fountain and lots of nice shade-trees in the yard. (He carries its photograph in his pocket.) They are good-natured, generous, kind-hearted, smiling people, and a little fat; you can see what desirable parents they would make.

Well, we had exactly the daughter of their dreams, only, as they came without giving us notice, she was dressed in a flannellet nightgown, and her face was dirty. They looked Caroline over, and were not impressed; but they thanked us politely, and said they



would bear her in mind. They wanted to visit the New York Orphanage before deciding. We knew well that, if they saw that superior assemblage of children, our poor little Caroline would never have a chance.

Then Betsy rose to the emergency. She graciously invited them to motor over to her house for tea that afternoon and inspect one of our little wards who would be visiting her baby niece. Mr. and Mrs. Leading Citizen do not know many people in the East, and they have n't been receiving the invitations that they feel are their due; so they were quite innocently pleased at the prospect of a little social diversion. The moment they had retired to the hotel for luncheon, Betsy called up her car, and rushed baby Caroline over to her house. She stuffed her into baby niece's best pink-and-white embroidered frock, borrowed a hat of Irish lace, some pink socks and white slippers, and set her picturesquely upon the green lawn under a spreading beech-tree. A white-aproned nurse (borrowed also from baby niece) plied her with bread and milk and gaily colored toys. By the time prospective parents arrived, our Caroline, full of food and contentment, greeted them with cooes of delight. From the moment their eyes fell upon her they were ravished with desire. Not a suspicion crossed their unobservant minds that this sweet little rosebud was the child of the morning. And so, a few formalities having been complied with, it really looks as though baby Caroline would live in the Towers and grow into a leading citizen.

I must really get to work, without any further delay, upon the burning question of new clothes for our girls.

With the highest esteem, I am,

D'r Ma'am,

Y'r most ob'd't and h'mble serv't,

SAL. MCBRIDE.