

June 19th.

My dearest Judy:

Listen to the grandest innovation of all, and one that will delight your heart.

NO MORE BLUE GINGHAM!

Feeling that this aristocratic neighborhood of country estates might contain valuable food for our asylum, I have of late been moving in the village social circles, and at a luncheon yesterday I dug out a beautiful and charming widow who wears delectable, flowing gowns that she designs herself. She confided to me that she would have loved to have been a dressmaker, if she had only been born with a needle in her mouth instead of a golden spoon. She says she never sees a pretty girl badly dressed but she longs to take her in hand and make her over. Did you ever hear anything so apropos? From the moment she opened her lips she was a marked man.

"I can show you fifty-nine badly dressed girls," said I to her, "and you have got to come back with me and plan their new clothes and make them beautiful."

She expostulated; but in vain. I led her out to her automobile, shoved her in, and murmured, "John Grier Home" to the chauffeur. The first inmate our eyes fell upon was Sadie Kate, just fresh, I judge, from

hugging the molasses-barrel; and a shocking spectacle she was for any esthetically minded person. In addition to the stickiness, one stocking was coming down, her pinafore was buttoned crookedly, and she had lost a hair-ribbon. But — as always — completely at ease, she welcomed us with a cheery grin, and offered the lady a sticky paw.

"Now," said I, in triumph, "you see how much we need you. What can you do to make Sadie Kate beautiful?"

"Wash her," said Mrs. Livermore.

Sadie Kate was marched to my bathroom. When the scrubbing was finished and the hair strained back and the stocking restored to seemly heights, I returned her for a second inspection — a perfectly normal little orphan. Mrs. Livermore turned her from side to side, and studied her long and earnestly.

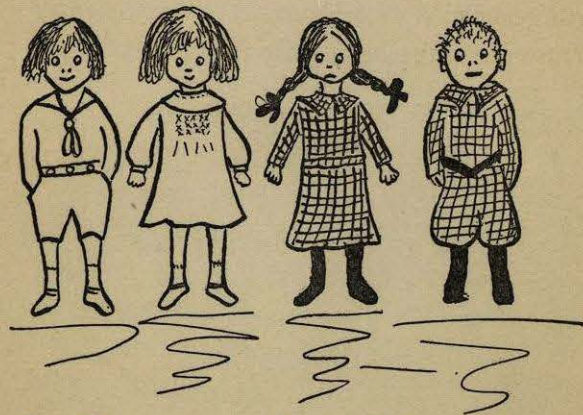
Sadie Kate by nature is a beauty, a wild, dark, Gipsyish little colleen; she looks fresh from the wind-swept moors of Connemara. But, oh, we have managed to rob her of her birthright with this awful institution uniform!

After five minutes' silent contemplation, Mrs. Livermore raised her eyes to mine.

"Yes, my dear, you need me."

And then and there we formed our plans. She is to head the committee on CLOTHES. She is to choose three friends to help her; and they, with the two dozen best sewers among the girls and our sewing-

teacher and five sewing-machines, are going to make over the looks of this institution. And the charity is all on our side. We are supplying Mrs. Livermore with the profession that Providence robbed her of. Was n't it clever of me to find her? I woke this morning at dawn and crowed!



A Study in Clothes

Lots more news,— I could run into a second volume, — but I am going to send this letter to town by Mr. Witherspoon, who, in a very high collar and the blackest of evening clothes, is on the point of departure for a barn dance at the country club. I told him to pick out the nicest girls he danced with to come and tell stories to my children.

It is dreadful, the scheming person I am getting to

be. All the time I am talking to any one, I am silently thinking, "What use can you be to my asylum?"

There is grave danger that this present superintendent will become so interested in her job that she will never want to leave. I sometimes picture her a white-haired old lady, propelled about the building in a wheeled chair, but still tenaciously superintending her fourth generation of orphans.

Please discharge her before that day!

Yours,

SALLIE.

Friday.

Dear Judy:

Yesterday morning, without the slightest warning, a station hack drove up to the door and disgorged upon the steps two men, two little boys, a baby girl, a rocking-horse, and a Teddy bear, and then drove off!

The men were artists, and the little ones were children of another artist, dead three weeks ago. They had brought the mites to us because they thought "John Grier" sounded solid and respectable, and not like a public institution. It had never entered their unbusinesslike heads that any formality is necessary about placing a child in an asylum.

I explained that we were full, but they seemed so stranded and aghast, that I told them to sit down while I advised them what to do. So the chicks were sent to the nursery, with a recommendation of bread and milk, while I listened to their history. Those artists had a fatally literary touch, or maybe it was just the sound of the baby girl's laugh, but, anyway, before they had finished, the babes were ours.

Never have I seen a sunnier creature than the little Allegra (we don't often get such fancy names or such fancy children). She is three years old, is lisping funny baby-talk and bubbling with laughter. The tragedy she has just emerged from has never touched

her. But Don and Clifford, sturdy little lads of five and seven, are already solemn-eyed and frightened at the hardness of life.

Their mother was a kindergarten teacher who married an artist on a capital of enthusiasm and a few tubes of paint. His friends say that he had talent, but of course he had to throw it away to pay the milkman. They lived in a haphazard fashion in a rickety old studio, cooking behind screens, the babies sleeping on shelves.

But there seems to have been a very happy side to it — a great deal of love and many friends, all more or less poor, but artistic and congenial and high-thinking. The little lads, in their gentleness and fineness, show that phase of their upbringing. They have an air which many of my children, despite all the good manners I can pour into them, will forever lack.

The mother died in the hospital a few days after Allegra's birth, and the father struggled on for two years, caring for his brood and painting like mad — advertisements, anything — to keep a roof over their heads.

He died in St. Vincent's three weeks ago, — overwork, worry, pneumonia. His friends rallied about the babies, sold such of the studio fittings as had escaped pawning, paid off the debts, and looked about for the best asylum they could find. And, Heaven save them! they hit upon us!

Well, I kept the two artists for luncheon, — nice

creatures in soft hats and Windsor ties, and looking pretty frayed themselves,— and then started them back to New York with the promise that I would give the little family my most parental attention.

So here they are, one little mite in the nursery, two in the kindergarten-room, four big packing-cases full of canvases in the cellar, and a trunk in the store-room with the letters of their father and mother. And a look in their faces, an intangible spiritual *something*, that is their heritage.

I can't get them out of my mind. All night long I was planning their future. The boys are easy; they have already been graduated from college, Mr. Pendleton assisting, and are pursuing honorable business careers. But Allegra I don't know about; I can't think what to wish for the child. Of course the normal thing to wish for any sweet little girl is that two kind foster-parents will come along to take the place of the real parents that Fate has robbed her of; but in this case it would be cruel to steal her away from her brothers. Their love for the baby is pitiful. You see, they have brought her up. The only time I ever hear them laugh is when she has done something funny. The poor little fellows miss their father horribly. I found Don, the five-year-old one, sobbing in his crib last night because he couldn't say good night to "daddy."

But Allegra is true to her name, the happiest young miss of three I have ever seen. The poor father man-

aged well by her, and she, little ingrate, has already forgotten that she has lost him.

Whatever can I do with these little ones? I think and think and think about them. I can't place them out, and it does seem too awful to bring them up here; for as good as we are going to be when we get ourselves made over, still, after all, we are an institution, and our inmates are just little incubator chicks. They don't get the individual, fussy care that only an old hen can give.

There is a lot of interesting news that I might have been telling you, but my new little family has driven everything out of my mind.

Bairns are certain joy, but nae sma' care.

Yours ever,

SALLIE.

P.S. Don't forget that you are coming to visit me next week.

P.S. II. The doctor, who is ordinarily so scientific and unsentimental, has fallen in love with Allegra. He did n't so much as glance at her tonsils; he simply picked her up in his arms and hugged her. Oh, she is a little witch! Whatever is to become of her?

June 22.

My dear Judy:

I may report that you need no longer worry as to our inadequate fire protection. The doctor and Mr. Witherspoon have been giving the matter their gravest attention, and no game yet devised has proved so entertaining and destructive as our fire-drill.

The children all retire to their beds and plunge into alert slumber. Fire-alarm sounds. They spring up and into their shoes, snatch the top blanket from their beds, wrap it around their imaginary night-clothes, fall into line, and trot to the hall and stairs.

Our seventeen little tots in the nursery are each in charge of an Indian, and are bundled out, shrieking with delight. The remaining Indians, so long as there is no danger of the roof falling, devote themselves to salvage. On the occasion of our first drill, Percy in command, the contents of a dozen clothes-lockers were dumped into sheets and hurled out of the windows. I usurped dictatorship just in time to keep the pillows and mattresses from following. We spent hours resorting those clothes, while Percy and the doctor, having lost all interest, strolled up to the camp with their pipes.

Our future drills are to be a touch less realistic. However, I am pleased to tell you that, under the able direction of Fire-chief Witherspoon, we emptied the building in six minutes and twenty-eight seconds.

That baby Allegra has fairy blood in her veins. Never did this institution harbor such a child, barring one that Jervis and I know of. She has completely subjugated the doctor. Instead of going about his visits like a sober medical man, he comes down to my library hand in hand with Allegra, and for half an hour at a time crawls about on a rug, pretending he's a horse, while the bonnie wee lassie sits on his back and kicks.

You know, I am thinking of putting a card in the paper:

Characters neatly remodeled.
S. McBride.

Sandy dropped in two nights ago to have a bit of conversation with Betsy and me, and he was *frivolous*. He made three jokes, and he sat down at the piano and sang some old Scotch, "My luve's like a red, red rose," and "Come under my plaidie," and "Wha's at the window? Wha? Wha?" not in the least educational, and then danced a few steps of the strathspey!

I sat and beamed upon my handiwork, for it's true, I've done it all through my frivolous example and the books I've given him and the introducing of such lightsome companions as Jimmie and Percy and Gor-

don Hallock. If I have a few more months in which to work, I shall get the man human. He has given up purple ties, and at my tactful suggestion has adopted a suit of gray. You have no idea how it sets him off. He will be quite distinguished-looking as soon as I can make him stop carrying bulgy things in his pockets.

Good-by; and remember that we're expecting you on Friday.

SALLIE.

P.S. Here is a picture of Allegra, taken by Mr. Witherspoon. Isn't she a love? Her present clothes do not enhance her beauty, but in the course of a few weeks she will move into a pink smocked frock.

Wednesday, June 24, 10 A. M.

MRS. JERVIS PENDLETON.

Madam:

Your letter is at hand, stating that you cannot visit me on Friday per promise, because your husband has business that keeps him in town. What clishmaclaver is this! Has it come to such a pass that you can't leave him for two days?

I did not let 113 babies interfere with my visit to you, and I see no reason why you should let one husband interfere with your visit to me. I shall meet the Berkshire express on Friday as agreed.

S. MCBRIDE.

June 30.

My dear Judy:

That was a very flying visit you paid us; but for all small favors we are grateful. I am awfully pleased that you were so delighted with the way things are going, and I can't wait for Jervis and the architect to get up here and really begin a fundamental ripping-up.

You know, I had the queerest feeling all the time that you were here. I can't make it seem true that you, my dear, wonderful Judy, were actually brought up in this institution, and know from the bitter inside what these little tots need. Sometimes the tragedy of your childhood fills me with an anger that makes me want to roll up my sleeves and fight the whole world and force it into making itself over into a place more fit for children to live in. That Scotch-Irish ancestry of mine seems to have deposited a tremendous amount of *fight* in my character.

If you had started me with a modern asylum, equipped with nice, clean, hygienic cottages and everything in running order, I could n't have stood the monotony of its perfect clockwork. It's the sight of so many things crying to be done that makes it possible for me to stay. Sometimes, I must confess, I wake up in the morning and listen to these institution noises,

and sniff this institution air, and long for the happy, care-free life that by rights is mine.

You, my dear witch, cast a spell over me, and I came; but often in the night watches your spell wears thin, and I start the day with the burning decision to run away from the John Grier Home. But I postpone starting until after breakfast. And as I issue into the corridor, one of these pathetic tots runs to meet me, and shyly slips a warm, crumpled little fist into my hand, and looks up with wide baby eyes, mutely asking for a little petting, and I snatch him up and hug him; and then, as I look over his shoulder at the other forlorn little mites, I long to take all 113 into my arms and love them into happiness. There is something hypnotic about this working with children. Struggle as you may, it gets you in the end.

Your visit seems to have left me in a broadly philosophical frame of mind; but I really have one or two bits of news that I might convey. The new frocks are marching along, and, oh, but they are going to be sweet! Mrs. Livermore was entranced with those parti-colored bales of cotton cloth you sent,—you should see our workroom, with it all scattered about,—and when I think of sixty little girls, attired in pink and blue and yellow and lavender, romping upon our lawn of a sunny day, I feel that we should have a supply of smoked eye-glasses to offer visitors. Of course you know that some of those brilliant fabrics are going to be very fadeable and impractical; but Mrs. Liver-

more is as bad as you — she does n't give a hang. She'll make a second and a third set if necessary.
DOWN WITH CHECKED GINGHAM!

I am glad you liked our doctor. Of course we reserve the right to say anything about him we choose, but our feelings would be awfully hurt if anybody else should make fun of him.

He and I are still superintending each other's reading. Last week he appeared with Herbert Spencer's "System of Synthetic Philosophy" for me to glance at; I gratefully accepted it, and gave him in return the "Diary of Marie Bashkirtseff." Do you remember in college how we used to enrich our daily speech with quotations from Marie? Well, Sandy took her home and read her painstakingly and thoughtfully.

"Yes," he acknowledged to-day when he came to report, "it is a truthful record of a certain kind of morbid, egotistical personality that unfortunately does exist; but I can't understand why you care to read it; for, thank God! Sally Lunn, you and Bash have n't anything in common."

That's the nearest to a compliment he ever came, and I feel extremely flattered. As to poor Marie, he refers to her as "Bash" because he can't pronounce her name, and is too disdainful to try.

We have a child here, the daughter of a chorus-girl, and she is a conceited, selfish, vain, posing, morbid, lying little minx, but she has eyelashes! Sandy has taken the most violent dislike to that child; and since

reading poor Marie's diary, he has found a new comprehensive adjective for summing up all of her distressing qualities. He calls her *bashy*, and dismisses her.

Good-by and come again.

SALLIE.

p.s. My children show a distressing tendency to draw out their entire bank-accounts to buy candy.



Tuesday night.

My dear Judy:

What do you think Sandy has done now? He has gone off on a pleasure-trip to that psychopathic institution whose head alienist visited us a month or so ago. Did you ever know anything like the man? He is fascinated by insane people, and can't let them alone.

When I asked for some parting medical instructions, he replied:

"Feed a cowld and hunger a colic and put nae faith in doctors."

With that advice, and a few bottles of cod-liver oil we are left to our own devices. I feel very free and adventurous. Perhaps you had better run up here again, as there's no telling what joyous upheaval I may accomplish when out from under Sandy's dampening influence.

S.

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,
Friday.

Dear Enemy:

Here I stay lashed to the mast, while you run about the country disporting yourself with insane people. And just as I was thinking that I had nicely cured you of this morbid predilection for psychopathic institutions! It's very disappointing. You had seemed almost human of late.

May I ask how long you are intending to stay? You had permission to go for two days, and you've already been away four. Charlie Martin fell out of a cherry-tree yesterday and cut his head open, and we were driven to calling in a foreign doctor. Five stitches. Patient doing well. But we don't like to depend on strangers. I would n't say a word if you were away on legitimate business, but you know very well that, after associating with melancholics for a week, you will come back home in a dreadful state of gloom, dead-sure that humanity is going to the dogs; and upon me will fall the burden of getting you decently cheerful again.

Do leave those insane people to their delusions, and

DEAR ENEMY

213

come back to the John Grier Home, which needs you.

I am most fervent'
Your friend and servant,

S. McB.

P.S. Don't you admire that poetical ending? It was borrowed from Robert Burns, whose works I am reading assiduously as a compliment to a Scotch friend.

July 6.

Dear Judy:

That doctor man is still away. No word; just disappeared into space. I don't know whether he is ever coming back or not, but we seem to be running very happily without him.

I lunched yesterday *chez* the two kind ladies who have taken our Punch to their hearts. The young man seems to be very much at home. He took me by the hand, and did the honors of the garden, presenting me with the bluebell of my choice. At luncheon the English butler lifted him into his chair and tied on his bib with as much manner as though he were serving a prince of the blood. The butler has lately come from the household of the Earl of Durham, Punch from a cellar in Houston Street. It was a very uplifting spectacle.

My hostesses entertained me afterward with excerpts from their table conversations of the last two weeks. (I wonder the butler has n't given notice; he looked like a respectable man.) If nothing more comes of it, at least Punch has furnished them with funny stories for the rest of their lives. One of them is even thinking of writing a book. "At least," says she, wiping hysterical tears from her eyes, "we have lived!"

The Hon. Cy dropped in at 6:30 last night, and found me in an evening gown, starting for a dinner at Mrs. Livermore's house. He mildly observed that Mrs. Lippett did not aspire to be a society-leader, but saved her energy for her work. You know I'm not vindictive, but I never look at that man without wishing he were at the bottom of the duck-pond, securely anchored to a rock. Otherwise he'd pop up and float.

Singapore respectfully salutes you, and is very glad that you can't see him as he now appears. A shocking calamity has befallen his good looks. Some bad child — and I don't think she's a boy — has clipped that poor beastie in spots, until he looks like a mangy, moth-eaten checkerboard. No one can imagine who did it. Sadie Kate is very handy with the scissors, but she is also handy with an alibi! During the time when the clipping presumably occurred, she was occupying a stool in the corner of the school-room with her face to the wall, as twenty-eight children can testify. However, it has become Sadie Kate's daily duty to treat those spots with your hair tonic.

I am, as usual,

SALLIE.



P.S. This is a recent portrait of the Hon. Cy drawn from life. The man, in some respects, is a fascinating talker; he makes gestures with his nose.

Thursday evening.

Dear Judy:

Sandy is back after a ten-days' absence,—no explanations,—and plunged deep into gloom. He resents our amiable efforts to cheer him up, and will have nothing to do with any of us except baby Allegra. He took her to his house for supper to-night and never brought her back until half-past seven, a scandalous hour for a young miss of three. I don't know what to make of our doctor; he grows more incomprehensible every day.

But Percy, now, is an open-minded, confiding young man. He has just been making a dinner-call (he is very punctilious in all social matters), and our entire conversation was devoted to the girl in Detroit. He is lonely and likes to talk about her; and the wonderful things he says! I hope that Miss Detroit is worthy of all this fine affection, but I'm afraid. He fetched out a leather case from the innermost recesses of his waistcoat and, reverently unwrapping two layers of tissue-paper, showed me the photograph of a silly little thing, all eyes and ear-rings and fuzzy hair. I did my best to appear congratulatory, but my heart shut up out of pity for the poor boy's future.