

when you accept a position like this you can't casually toss it aside whenever you feel like it. But for a few days I can easily manage. My asylum is wound up like an eight-day clock, and will run until a week from next Monday at 4 P.M., when my train will return me. Then I shall be comfortably settled again before you arrive, and with no errant fancies in my brain.

Meanwhile Master John is in a happily chastened frame of mind and body. And I rather suspect that Sandy's moralizing had the more force because it was preceded by my pancake-turner! But one thing I know — Suzanne Estelle is terrified whenever I step into her kitchen. I casually picked up the potato-masher this morning while I was commenting upon last night's over-salty soup, and she ran to cover behind the woodshed door.

To-morrow at nine I set out on my travels, after preparing the way with five telegrams. And, oh! you can't imagine how I'm looking forward to being a gay, care-free young thing again — to canoeing on the lake and tramping in the woods and dancing at the clubhouse. I was in a state of delirium all night long at the prospect. Really, I had n't realized how mortally tired I had become of all this asylum scenery.

"What you need," said Sandy to me, "is to get away for a little and sow some wild oats."

That diagnosis was positively clairvoyant. I can't think of anything in the world I'd rather do than sow

a few wild oats. I'll come back with fresh energy, ready to welcome you and a busy summer.

As ever,

SALLIE.

P.S. Jimmie and Gordon are both going to be up there. How I wish you could join us! A husband is very discommoding.

CAMP McBRIDE,

July 29.

*Dear Judy:*

This is to tell you that the mountains are higher than usual, the woods greener, and the lake bluer.

People seem late about coming up this year; the Harriman's camp is the only other one at our end of the lake that is open. The club-house is very scantily supplied with dancing-men, but we have as house guest an obliging young politician who likes to dance, so I am not discommoded by the general scarcity.

The affairs of the nation and the rearing of orphans are alike delegated to the background while we paddle about among the lily-pads of this delectable lake. I look forward with reluctance to 7:56 next Monday morning, when I turn my back on the mountains. The awful thing about a vacation is that the moment it begins your happiness is already clouded by its approaching end.

I hear a voice on the veranda asking if Sallie is to be found within or without.

*Addio!*

S.

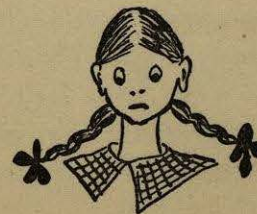
August 3.

*Dear Judy:*

Back at the John Grier, reshouldering the burdens of the coming generation. What should meet my eyes upon entering these grounds but John Cobden, of pancake-turner memory, wearing a badge upon his sleeve. I turned it to me and read "S. P. C. A." in letters of gold! The doctor, during my absence, has formed a local branch of the Cruelty to Animals, and made Johnnie its president.

I hear that yesterday he stopped the workmen on the foundation for the new farm cottage and scolded them severely for whipping their horses up the incline! None of all this strikes any one but me as funny.

There's a lot of news, but with you due in four days, why bother to write? Just one delicious bit I am saving for the end. So hold your breath. You are going to receive a thrill on page 4. You should hear Sadie Kate squeal! Jane is cutting her hair. Instead of wearing it in two tight braids like this, our



little colleen will in the future look like this:



"Them pigtales got on my nerves," says Jane.

You can see how much more stylish and becoming the present coiffure is. I think somebody will be wanting to adopt her. Only Sadie Kate is such an independent, manly little creature; she is eminently fitted by nature to shift for herself. I must save adopting parents for the helpless ones.

You should see our new clothes! I can't wait for this assemblage of rosebuds to burst upon you. And you should have seen those blue ginghamed eyes brighten when the new frocks were actually given out — three for each girl, all different colors, and all perfectly private personal property, with the owner's indelible name inside the collar. Mrs. Lippett's lazy system of having each child draw from the wash a promiscuous dress each week, was an insult to feminine nature.

Sadie Kate is squealing like a baby pig. I must go to see if Jane has by mistake clipped off an ear.

Jane has n't. Sadie's excellent ears are still intact. She is just squealing on principle; the way one does in a dentist's chair, under the belief that it is going to hurt the next instant.

I really can't think of anything else to write except my news,— so here it is,— and I hope you'll like it.

I am engaged to be married.

My love to you both.

S. McB.

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,

November 15.

*Dear Judy:*

Betsy and I are just back from a *giro* in our new motor-car. It undoubtedly does add to the pleasure of institution life. The car of its own accord turned up Long Ridge Road, and stopped before the gates of Shadywell. The chains were up, and the shutters battened down, and the place looked closed and gloomy and rain-soaked. It wore a sort of fall of the House of Usher air, and did n't in the least resemble the cheerful house that used to greet me hospitably of an afternoon.

I hate to have our nice summer ended. It seems as though a section of my life was shut away behind me, and the unknown future was pressing awfully close. Positively, I'd like to postpone that wedding another six months, but I'm afraid poor Gordon would make too dreadful a fuss. Don't think I'm getting wobbly, for I'm not. It's just that somehow I need more time to think about it, and March is getting nearer every day. I know absolutely that I'm doing the most sensible thing. Everybody, man or woman, is the better for being nicely and appropriately and cheerfully married; but oh dear! oh dear! I do hate upheavals, and

this is going to be such a world-without-end upheaval! Sometimes when the day's work is over, and I'm tired, I have n't the spirit to rise and meet it.

And now especially since you've bought Shadywell, and are going to be here every summer, I resent having to leave. Next year, when I'm far away, I'll be consumed with homesickness, thinking of all the busy, happy times at the John Grier, with you and Betsy and Percy and our grumbly Scotchman working away cheerfully without me. How can anything ever make up to a mother for the loss of 107 children?

I trust that Judy, Junior, stood the journey into town without upsetting her usual poise. I am sending her a bit giftie, made partly by myself and chiefly by Jane. But two rows, I must inform you, were done by the doctor. One only gradually plumbs the depths of Sandy's nature. After a ten-months' acquaintance with the man, I discover that he knows how to knit, an accomplishment he picked up in his boyhood from an old shepherd on the Scotch moors.

He dropped in three days ago and stayed for tea, really in almost his old friendly mood. But he has since stiffened up again to the same man of granite we knew all summer. I've given up trying to make him out. I suppose, however, that any one might be expected to be a bit down with a wife in an insane asylum. I wish he'd talk about it once. It's awful having such a shadow hovering in the background of your thoughts and never coming out into plain sight.

I know that this letter does n't contain a word of the kind of news that you like to hear. But it's that beastly twilight hour of a damp November day, and I'm in a beastly uncheerful mood. I'm awfully afraid that I am developing into a temperamental person, and Heaven knows Gordon can supply all the temperament that one family needs! I don't know where we'll land if I don't preserve my sensibly stolid, cheerful nature.

Have you really decided to go South with Jervis? I appreciate your feeling (to a slight extent) about not wanting to be separated from a husband; but it does seem sort of hazardous to me to move so young a daughter to the tropics.

The children are playing blindman's-buff in the lower corridor. I think I'll have a romp with them, and try to be in a more affable mood before resuming my pen.

*A bientôt!*

SALLIE.

P.S. These November nights are pretty cold, and we are getting ready to move the camps indoors. Our Indians are very pampered young savages at present, with a double supply of blankets and hot-water bottles. I shall hate to see the camps go; they have done a lot for us. Our lads will be as tough as Canadian trappers when they come in.

November 20.

*Dear Judy:*

Your motherly solicitude is sweet, but I did n't mean what I said. Of course it's perfectly safe to convey Judy, Junior, to the temperately tropical lands that are washed by the Caribbean. She'll thrive as long as you don't set her absolutely on top of the equator. And your bungalow, shaded by palms and fanned by sea-breezes, with an ice-machine in the back yard and an English doctor across the bay, sounds made for the rearing of babies.

My objections were all due to the selfish fact that I and the John Grier are going to be lonely without you this winter. I really think it's entrancing to have a husband who engages in such picturesque pursuits as financing tropical railroads and developing asphalt lakes and rubber groves and mahogany forests. I wish that Gordon would take to life in those picturesque countries; I'd be more thrilled by the romantic possibilities of the future. Washington seems awfully commonplace compared with Honduras and Nicaragua and the islands of the Caribbean.

I'll be down to wave good-by.

*Addio!*

SALLIE.

November 24.

*Dear Gordon:*

Judy has gone back to town, and is sailing next week for Jamaica, where she is to make her headquarters while Jervis cruises about adjacent waters on these entertaining new ventures of his. Could n't you engage in traffic in the South Seas? I think I'd feel pleasanter about leaving my asylum if you had something romantic and adventurous to offer instead. And think how beautiful you'd be in those white linen clothes! I really believe I might be able to stay in love with a man quite permanently if he always dressed in white.

You can't imagine how I miss Judy. Her absence leaves a dreadful hole in my afternoons. Can't you run up for a week-end soon? I think the sight of you would be very cheering, and I'm feeling awfully down of late. You know, my dear Gordon, I like you much better when you're right here before my eyes than when I merely think about you from a distance. I believe you must have a sort of hypnotic influence. Occasionally, after you've been away a long time, your spell wears a little thin; but when I see you, it all comes back. You've been away now a long, long time; so, please come fast and bewitch me over again!

S.

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December 2.

*Dear Judy:*

Do you remember in college, when you and I used to plan our favorite futures, how we were forever turning our faces southward? And now to think it has really come true, and you are there, coasting around those tropical isles! Did you ever have such a thrill in the whole of your life, barring one or two connected with Jervis, as when you came up on deck in the early dawn and found yourself riding at anchor in the harbor of Kingston, with the water so blue and the palms so green and the beach so white?

I remember when I first woke in that harbor; I felt like a heroine of grand opera surrounded by untruly beautiful painted scenery. Nothing in my four trips to Europe ever thrilled me like the queer sights and tastes and smells of those three warm weeks seven years ago. And ever since, I've panted to get back. When I stop to think about it, I can hardly bring myself to swallow our unexciting meals; I wish to be dining on curries and tamales and mangos. Is n't it funny? You'd think I must have a dash of Creole or Spanish or some warm blood in me somewhere, but I'm nothing on earth but a chilly mixture of English and Irish and Scotch. Perhaps that is why I hear the South calling. "The palm dreams of the pine, and the pine of the palm."

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After seeing you off, I turned back to New York with an awful wander-thirst gnawing at my vitals. I, too, wanted to be starting off on my travels in a new blue hat and a new blue suit with a big bunch of violets in my hand. For five minutes I would cheerfully have said good-by forever to poor dear Gordon in return for the wide world to wander in. I suppose you are thinking they are not entirely incompatible — Gordon and the wide world — but I don't seem able to get your point of view about husbands. I see marriage as a man must, a good, sensible workaday institution; but awfully curbing to one's liberty. Somehow, after you're married forever, life has lost its feeling of adventure. There are n't any romantic possibilities waiting to surprise you around each corner.

The disgraceful truth is that one man does n't seem quite enough for me. I like the variety of sensation that you get only from a variety of men. I'm afraid I've spent too flirtatious a youth, and it is n't easy for me to settle.

I seem to have a very wandering pen. To return: I saw you off, and took the ferry back to New York with a horribly empty feeling. After our intimate, gossipy three months together, it seems a terrible task to tell you my troubles in tones that will reach to the bottom of the continent. My ferry slid right under the nose of your steamer, and I could see you and Jervis plainly leaning on the rail. I waved frantically, but you never blinked an eyelash. Your gaze was

fixed in homesick contemplation upon the top of the Woolworth Building.

Back in New York, I took myself to a department store to accomplish a few trifles in the way of shopping. As I was entering through their revolving-doors, who should be revolving in the other direction but Helen Brooks! We had a terrible time meeting, as I tried to go back out, and she tried to come back in; I thought we should revolve eternally. But we finally got together and shook hands, and she obligingly helped me choose fifteen dozen pairs of stockings and fifty caps and sweaters and two hundred union suits, and then we gossiped all the way up to Fifty-second Street, where we had luncheon at the Women's University Club.

I always liked Helen. She's not spectacular, but steady and dependable. Will you ever forget the way she took hold of that senior pageant committee and whipped it into shape after Mildred had made such a mess of it? How would she do here as a successor to me? I am filled with jealousy at the thought of a successor, but I suppose I must face it.

"When did you last see Judy Abbott?" was Helen's first question.

"Fifteen minutes ago," said I. "She has just set sail for the Spanish main with a husband and daughter and nurse and maid and valet and dog."

"Has she a nice husband?"

"None better."

"And does she still like him?"

"Never saw a happier marriage."

It struck me that Helen looked a trifle bleak, and I suddenly remembered all that gossip that Marty Keene told us last summer; so I hastily changed the conversation to a perfectly safe subject like orphans.

But later she told me the whole story herself in as detached and impersonal a way as though she were discussing the characters in a book. She has been living alone in the city, hardly seeing any one, and she seemed low in spirits and glad to talk. Poor Helen appears to have made an awful mess of her life. I don't know any one who has covered so much ground in such a short space of time. Since her graduation she has been married, has had a baby and lost him, divorced her husband, quarreled with her family, and come to the city to earn her own living. She is reading manuscript for a publishing house.

There seems to have been no reason for her divorce from the ordinary point of view; the marriage just simply did n't work. They were n't friends. If he had been a woman, she would n't have wasted half an hour talking with him. If she had been a man, he would have said: "Glad to see you. How are you?" and gone on. And yet they *married*. Isn't it dreadful how blind this sex business can make people?

She was brought up on the theory that a woman's only legitimate profession is home-making. When

she finished college, she was naturally eager to start on her career, and Henry presented himself. Her family scanned him closely, and found him perfect in every respect — good family, good morals, good financial position, good-looking. Helen was in love with him. She had a big wedding and lots of new clothes and dozens of embroidered towels. Everything looked propitious.

But as they began to get acquainted, they did n't like the same books or jokes or people or amusements. He was expansive and social and hilarious, and she was n't. First they bored, and then they irritated, each other. Her orderliness made him impatient, and his disorderliness drove her wild. She would spend a day getting closets and bureau drawers in order, and in five minutes he would stir them into chaos. He would leave his clothes about for her to pick up, and his towels in a messy heap on the bath-room floor, and he never scrubbed out the tub. And she, on her side, was awfully unresponsive and irritaitng,— she realized it fully,— she got to the point where she would n't laugh at his jokes.

I suppose most old-fashioned, orthodox people would think it awful to break up a marriage on such innocent grounds. It seemed so to me at first; but as she went on piling up detail on detail, each trivial in itself, but making a mountainous total, I agreed with Helen that it was awful to keep it going. It was n't really a marriage; it was a mistake.



So one morning at breakfast, when the subject of what they should do for the summer came up, she said quite casually that she thought she would go West and get a residence in some State where you could get a divorce for a respectable cause; and for the first time in months he agreed with her.

You can imagine the outraged feelings of her Victorian family. In all the seven generations of their sojourn in America they have never had anything like this to record in the family Bible. It all comes from sending her to college and letting her read such dreadful modern people as Ellen Key and Bernard Shaw.

"If he had only got drunk and dragged me about by the hair," Helen wailed, "it would have been legitimate; but because we did n't actually throw things at each other, no one could see any reason for a divorce."

The pathetic part of the whole business is that both she and Henry were admirably fitted to make some one else happy. They just simply did n't match each other; and when two people don't match, all the ceremonies in the world can't marry them.

Saturday morning.

I meant to get this letter off two days ago; and here I am with volumes written, but nothing mailed.

We've just had one of those miserable deceiving nights — cold and frosty when you go to bed, and warm and lifeless when you wake in the dark, smoth-

ered under a mountain of blankets. By the time I had removed my own extra covers and plumped up my pillow and settled comfortably, I thought of those fourteen bundled-up babies in the fresh-air nursery. Their so-called night nurse sleeps like a top the whole night through. (Her name is next on the list to be expunged.) So I roused myself again, and made a little blanket-removing tour, and by the time I had finished I was forever awake. It is not often that I pass a *nuît blanche*; but when I do, I settle world problems. Is n't it funny how much keener your mind is when you are lying awake in the dark?

I began thinking about Helen Brooks, and I planned her whole life over again. I don't know why her miserable story has taken such a hold over me; it's a disheartening subject for an engaged girl to contemplate. I keep saying to myself, What if Gordon and I, when we really get acquainted, should change our minds about liking each other? The fear grips my heart and wrings it dry. But I am marrying him for no reason in the world except affection. I'm not particularly ambitious. Neither his position nor his money ever tempted me in the least; and certainly I am not doing it to find my life-work, for in order to marry I am having to give up the work that I love. I really do love this work; I go about planning and planning their baby futures, feeling that I'm constructing the nation. Whatever becomes of me in after life, I am sure I'll be the more capable for having had this tremendous

experience. And it *is* a tremendous experience, the nearness to humanity that an asylum brings. I am learning so many new things every day that when each Saturday night comes I look back on the Sallie of last Saturday night, amazed at her ignorance.

You know I am developing a funny old characteristic; I am getting to hate change. I don't like the prospect of having my life disrupted. I used to love the excitement of volcanoes, but now a high level plateau is my choice in landscape. I am very comfortable where I am; my desk and closet and bureau drawers are organized to suit me; and, oh, I dread unspeakably the thought of the upheaval that is going to happen to me next year! Please don't imagine that I don't care for Gordon quite as much as any man has a right to be cared for. It is n't that I like him any the less, but I am getting to like orphans the more.

I just met our medical adviser a few minutes ago as he was emerging from the nursery — Allegra is the only person in the institution who is favored by his austere social attentions. He paused in passing to make a polite comment upon the sudden change in the weather, and to express the hope that I would remember him to Mrs. Pendleton when I wrote.

This is a miserable letter to send off on its travels, with scarcely a word of the kind of news that you like to hear. But our bare little orphan-asylum up in the hills must seem awfully far away from the palms and

orange-groves and lizards and tarantulas that you are enjoying.

Have a good time, and don't forget the John Grier Home

and

SALLIE.

December 11.

*Dear Judy:*

Your Jamaica letter is here, and I'm glad to learn that Judy, Junior, enjoys traveling. Write me every detail about your house, and send some photographs, so I can see you in it. What fun it must be to have a boat of your own that chugs about those entertaining seas! Have you worn all of your eighteen white dresses yet? And are n't you glad now that I made you wait about buying a Panama hat till you reached Kingston?

We are running along here very much as usual without anything exciting to chronicle. You remember little Maybelle Fuller, don't you—the chorus girl's daughter whom our doctor does n't like? We have placed her out. I tried to make the woman take Hattie Heaphy instead,—the quiet little one who stole the communion-cup,—but no, indeed! Maybelle's eyelashes won the day. After all, as poor Marie says, the chief thing is to be pretty. All else in life depends on that.

When I got home last week, after my dash to New York, I made a brief speech to the children. I told them that I had just been seeing Aunt Judy off on a big ship, and I am embarrassed to have to report that

the interest—at least on the part of the boys—immediately abandoned Aunt Judy and centered upon the ship. How many tons of coal did she burn a day? Was she long enough to reach from the carriage-house to the Indian camp? Were there any guns aboard, and if a privateer should attack her, could she hold her own? In case of a mutiny, could the captain shoot down anybody he chose, and would n't he be hanged when he got to shore? I had ignominiously to call upon Sandy to finish my speech. I realize that the best-equipped feminine mind in the world can't cope with the peculiar class of questions that originate in a thirteen-year boy's brain.

As a result of their seafaring interest, the doctor conceived the idea of inviting seven of the oldest and most alert lads to spend the day with him in New York and see with their own eyes an ocean-liner. They rose at five yesterday morning, caught the 7:30 train, and had the most wonderful adventure that has happened in all their seven lives. They visited one of the big liners (Sandy knows the Scotch engineer), and were conducted from the bottom of the hold to the top of the crow's-nest, and then had luncheon on board. And after luncheon they visited the aquarium and the top of the Singer Building, and took the subway up-town to spend an hour with the birds of America in their habitats. Sandy with great difficulty pried them away from the Natural History Museum in time to catch the 6:15 train. Dinner in the dining-