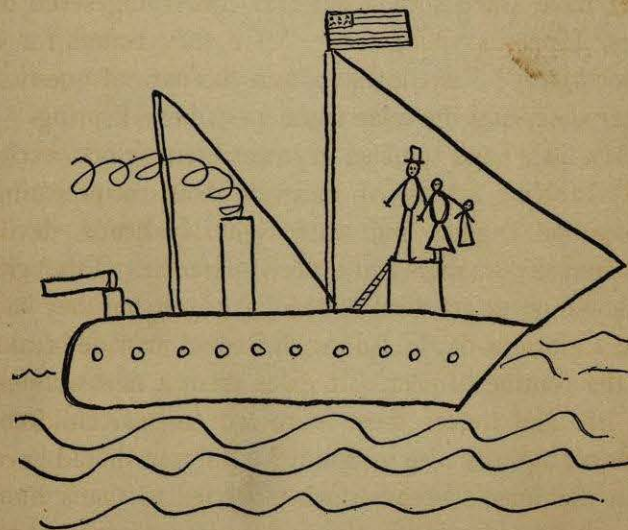


car. They inquired with great particularity how much it was costing, and when they heard that it was the same, no matter how much you ate, they drew deep breaths and settled quietly and steadily to the task of not allowing their host to be cheated. The railroad made nothing on that party, and all the tables around stopped eating to stare. One traveler asked the doctor if it was a boarding-school he had in charge; so you can see how the manners and bearing of our lads have picked up. I don't wish to boast, but no one would ever have asked such a question concerning seven of Mrs. Lippett's youngsters. "Are they bound for a reformatory?" would have been the natural question after observing the table manners of her offspring.

My little band tumbled in toward ten o'clock, excitedly babbling a mess of statistics about reciprocating compound engines and water-tight bulkheads, devil-fish and sky-scrapers and birds of paradise. I thought I should never get them to bed. And, oh, but they had had a glorious day! I do wish I could manage breaks in the routine oftener. It gives them a new outlook on life and makes them more like normal children. Was n't it really nice of Sandy? But you should have seen that man's behavior when I tried to thank him. He waved me aside in the middle of a sentence, and growlingly asked Miss Snaith if she could n't economize a little on carbolic acid. The house smelt like a hospital.

I must tell you that Punch is back with us again,

entirely renovated as to manners. I am looking for a family to adopt him. I had hoped those two intelligent spinsters would see their way to keeping him forever, but they want to travel, and they feel he's too consuming of their liberty. I inclose a sketch in colored chalk of your steamer, which he has just completed. There is some doubt as to the direction in which it is going; it looks as though it might progress backward and end in Brooklyn. Owing to the loss of my blue pencil, our flag has had to adopt the Italian colors.



The three figures on the bridge are you and Jervis and the baby. I am pained to note that you carry your daughter by the back of her neck, as if she were

a kitten. That is not the way we handle babies in the J. G. H. nursery. Please also note that the artist has given Jervis his full due in the matter of legs. When I asked Punch what had become of the captain, he said that the captain was inside, putting coal on the fire. Punch was terribly impressed, as well he might be, when he heard that your steamer burned three hundred wagon-loads a day, and he naturally supposed that all hands had been piped to the stoke-hole.

BOW! WOW!

That's a bark from Sing. I told him I was writing to you, and he responded instantly.

We both send love.

Yours,
SALLIE.

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,

Saturday.

Dear Enemy:

You were so terribly gruff last night when I tried to thank you for giving my boys such a wonderful day that I did n't have a chance to express half of the appreciation I felt.

What on earth is the matter with you, Sandy? You used to be a tolerably nice man — in spots, but these last three or four months you have only been nice to other people, never to me.

We have had from the first a long series of misunderstandings and foolish contretemps, but after each one we seemed to reach a solider basis of understanding, until I had thought our friendship was on a pretty firm foundation, capable of withstanding any reasonable shock.

And then came that unfortunate evening last June when you overheard some foolish impolitenesses, which I did not in the slightest degree mean; and from then on you faded into the distance. Really, I have felt terribly bad about it, and have wanted to apologize, but your manner has not been inviting of confidence. It is n't that I have any excuse or ex-

planation to offer; I have n't. You know how foolish and silly I am on occasions, but you will just have to realize that though I'm flippant and foolish and trivial on top, I am pretty solid inside; and you've got to forgive the silly part. The Pendletons knew that long ago, or they would n't have sent me up here. I have tried hard to pull off an honest job, partly because I wanted to justify their judgment, partly because I was really interested in giving the poor little kiddies their share of happiness, but mostly, I actually believe, because I wanted to show you that your first derogatory opinion of me was ill founded. Won't you please expunge that unfortunate fifteen minutes at the portecochère last June, and remember instead the fifteen hours I spent reading the Kallikak Family?

I would like to feel that we're friends again.

SALLIE MCBRIDE.

THE JOHN GRIER HOME,

Sunday.

Dear Dr. MacRae:

I am in receipt of your calling card with an eleven-word answer to my letter on the back. I did n't mean to annoy you by my attentions. What you think and how you behave are really matters of extreme indifference to me. Be just as impolite as you choose.

S. MCB.

December 14.

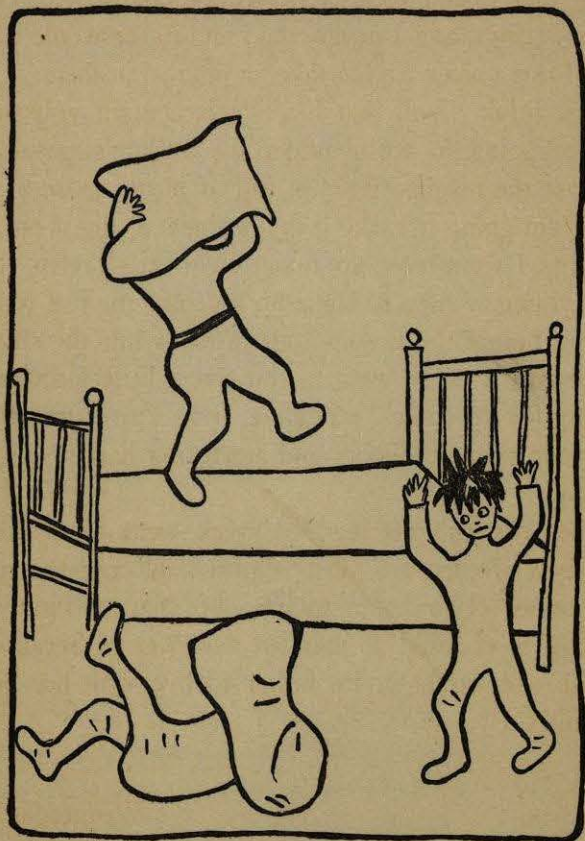
Dear Judy:

Please pepper your letters with stamps, inside and out. I have thirty collectors in the family. Since you have taken to travel, every day about post-time an eager group gathers at the gate, waiting to snatch any letters of foreign design, and by the time the letters reach me they are almost in shreds through the tenacity of rival snatchers. Tell Jervis to send us some more of those purple pine-trees from Honduras; likewise some green parrots from Guatemala. I could use a pint of them!

Is n't it wonderful to have got these apathetic little things so enthusiastic? My children are getting to be almost like real children. B dormitory started a pillow-fight last night of its own accord; and though it was very wearing to our scant supply of linen, I stood by and beamed, and even tossed a pillow myself.

Last Saturday those two desirable friends of Percy's spent the whole afternoon playing with my boys. They brought up three rifles, and each man took the lead of a camp of Indians, and passed the afternoon in a bottle-shooting contest, with a prize for the winning camp. They brought the prize with them — an atrocious head of an Indian painted on leather.

Dreadful taste; but the men thought it lovely, so I admired it with all the ardor I could assume.



When they had finished, I warmed them up with cookies and hot chocolate, and I really think the men enjoyed it as much as the boys; they undoubtedly en-

joyed it more than I did. I could n't help being in a feminine twitter all the time the firing was going on for fear somebody would shoot somebody else. But I know that I can't keep twenty-four Indians tied to my apron-strings, and I never could find in the whole wide world three nicer men to take an interest in them.

Just think of all that healthy, exuberant volunteer service going to waste under the asylum's nose! I suppose the neighborhood is full of plenty more of it, and I am going to make it my business to dig it out.

What I want most are about eight nice, pretty, sensible young women to come up here one night a week, and sit before the fire and tell stories while the chicks pop corn. I do so want to contrive a little individual petting for my babies. You see, Judy, I am remembering your own childhood, and am trying hard to fill in the gaps.

The trustees' meeting last week went beautifully. The new women are most helpful, and only the nice men came. I am happy to announce that the Hon. Cy Wykoff is visiting his married daughter in Scranton. I wish she would invite father to live with her permanently.

Wednesday.

I am in the most childish temper with the doctor, and for no very definite reason. He keeps along his even, unemotional way without paying the slightest

attention to anything or anybody. I have swallowed more slights during these last few months than in the whole of my life before, and I'm developing the most shockingly revengeful nature. I spend all my spare time planning situations in which he will be terribly hurt and in need of my help, and in which I, with the utmost callousness, will shrug my shoulders and turn away. I am growing into a person entirely foreign to the sweet, sunny young thing you used to know.

Evening.

Do you realize that I am an authority on the care of dependent children? To-morrow I and other authorities visit officially the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society's Orphan Asylum at Pleasantville. (All that's its name!) It's a terribly difficult and roundabout journey from this point, involving a daybreak start and two trains and an automobile; but if I'm to be an authority, I must live up to the title. I'm keen about looking over other institutions and gleaning as many ideas as possible against our own alterations next year. And this Pleasantville asylum is an architectural model.

I acknowledge now, upon sober reflection, that we were wise to postpone extensive building operations until next summer. Of course I was disappointed, because it meant that I won't be the center of the ripping-up, and I do so love to be the center of ripping-ups! But, anyway, you'll take my advice, even

though I'm no longer an official head? The two building details we did accomplish are very promising. Our new laundry grows better and better; it has removed from us that steamy smell so dear to asylums. The farmer's cottage will finally be ready for occupancy next week. All it now lacks is a coat of paint and some door-knobs.

But, oh dear! oh dear! another bubble has burst! Mrs. Turnfelt, for all her comfortable figure and sunny smile, hates to have children messing about. They make her nervous. And as for Turnfelt himself, though industrious and methodical and an excellent gardener, still, his mental processes are not quite what I had hoped for. When he first came, I made him free of the library. He began at the case nearest the door, which contains thirty-seven volumes of Pansy's works. Finally, after he had spent four months on Pansy, I suggested a change, and sent him home with "Huckleberry Finn." But he brought it back in a few days, and shook his head. He says that after reading Pansy, anything else seems tame. I am afraid I shall have to look about for some one a little more up-and-coming. But at least, compared with Sterry, Turnfelt is a scholar!

And speaking of Sterry, he paid us a social call a few days ago, in quite a chastened frame of mind. It seems that the "rich city feller" whose estate he has been managing no longer needs his services; and Sterry has graciously consented to return to us and let the chil-

dren have gardens if they wish. I kindly, but convincingly, declined his offer.

Friday.

I came back from Pleasantville last night with a heart full of envy. Please, Mr. President, I want some gray stucco cottages, with Luca della Robbia figures baked into the front. They have nearly 700 children there, and all sizable youngsters. Of course that makes a very different problem from my hundred and seven, ranging from babyhood up. But I borrowed from their superintendent several very fancy ideas. I'm dividing my chicks into big and little sisters and brothers, each big one to have a little one to love and help and fight for. Big sister Sadie Kate has to see that little sister Gladiola always has her hair neatly combed and her stockings pulled up and knows her lessons and gets a touch of petting and her share of candy — very pleasant for Gladiola, but especially developing for Sadie Kate.

Also I am going to start among our older children a limited form of self-government such as we had in college. That will help fit them to go out into the world and govern themselves when they get there. This shoving children into the world at the age of sixteen seems terribly merciless. Five of my children are ready to be shoved, but I can't bring myself to do it. I keep remembering my own irresponsible silly young

self, and wondering what would have happened to me had I been turned out to work at the age of sixteen!

I must leave you now to write an interesting letter to my politician in Washington, and it's hard work. What have I to say that will interest a politician? I can't do anything any more but babble about babies, and he would n't care if every baby was swept from the face of the earth. Oh, yes, he would, too! I'm afraid I'm slandering him. Babies — at least boy babies — grow into voters.

Good-by,

SALLIE.

Dearest Judy:

If you expect a cheerful letter from me the day, don't read this. The life of man is a wintry road. Fog, snow, rain, slush, drizzle, cold — such weather! such weather! And you in dear Jamaica with the sunshine and the orange-blossoms!

We've got whooping-cough, and you can hear us whoop when you get off the train two miles away. We don't know how we got it — just one of the pleasures of institution life. Cook has left,—in the night,—what the Scotch call a "moonlight flitting." I don't know how she got her trunk away, but it's gone. The kitchen fire went with her. The pipes are frozen. The plumbers are here, and the kitchen floor is all ripped up. One of our horses has the spavin. And, to crown all, our cheery, resourceful Percy is down, down, down in the depths of despair. We have not been quite certain for three days past whether we could keep him from suicide. The girl in Detroit,— I knew she was a heartless little minx,— without so much as going through the formality of sending back his ring, has gone and married herself to a man and a couple of automobiles and a yacht. It is the best thing that could ever have happened to Percy, but it will be a long, long time before he realizes it.

We have our twenty-four Indians back in the house with us. I was sorry to have to bring them in, but the

shacks were scarcely planned for winter quarters. I have stowed them away very comfortably, however, thanks to the spacious iron verandas surrounding our new fire-escape. It was a happy idea of Jervis's having them glassed in for sleeping-porches. The babies' sun-parlor is a wonderful addition to our nursery. We can fairly see the little tots bloom under the influence of that extra air and sunshine.

With the return of the Indians to civilized life, Percy's occupation was ended, and he was supposed to remove himself to the hotel. But he did n't want to remove himself. He has got used to orphans, he says, and he would miss not seeing them about. I think the truth is that he is feeling so miserable over his wrecked engagement that he is afraid to be alone; he needs something to occupy every waking moment out of banking hours. And goodness knows we're glad enough to keep him! He has been wonderful with those youngsters, and they need a man's influence. But what on earth to do with the man? As you discovered last summer, this spacious château does not contain a superabundance of guest-rooms. He has finally fitted himself into the doctor's laboratory, and the medicines have moved themselves to a closet down the hall. He and the doctor fixed it up between them, and if they are willing to be mutually inconvenienced, I have no fault to find.

Mercy! I've just looked at the calendar, and it's the eighteenth, with Christmas only a week away.

However shall we finish all our plans in a week? The chicks are making presents for one another, and something like a thousand secrets have been whispered in my ear.

Snow last night. The boys have spent the morning in the woods, gathering evergreens and drawing them home on sleds; and twenty girls are spending the afternoon in the laundry, winding wreaths for the windows. I don't know how we are going to do our washing this week. We were planning to keep the Christmas-tree a secret, but fully fifty children have been boosted up to the carriage-house window to take a peep at it, and I am afraid the news has spread among the remaining fifty.

At your insistence, we have sedulously fostered the Santa Claus myth, but it does n't meet with much credence. "Why did n't he ever come before?" was Sadie Kate's skeptical question. But Santa Claus is undoubtedly coming this time. I asked the doctor, out of politeness, to play the chief rôle at our Christmas-tree; and being certain ahead of time that he was going to refuse. I had already engaged Percy as an understudy. But there is no counting on a Scotchman. Sandy accepted with unprecedented graciousness, and I had privately to unengage Percy!

Tuesday.

Is n't it funny, the way some inconsequential people have of pouring out whatever happens to be churning

about in their minds at the moment? They seem to have no residue of small talk, and are never able to dismiss a crisis in order to discuss the weather.

This is apropos of a call I received to-day. A woman had come to deliver her sister's child — sister in a sanatorium for tuberculosis; we to keep the child until the mother is cured, though I fear, from what I hear, that will never be. But, anyway, all the arrangements had been made, and the woman had merely to hand in the little girl and retire. But having a couple of hours between trains, she intimated a desire to look about, so I showed her the kindergarten-rooms and the little crib that Lily will occupy, and our yellow dining-room, with its frieze of bunnies, in order that she might report as many cheerful details as possible to the poor mother. After this, as she seemed tired, I socially asked her to walk into my parlor and have a cup of tea. Doctor MacRae, being at hand and in a hungry mood (a rare state for him; he now condescends to a cup of tea with the officers of this institution about twice a month), came, too, and we had a little party.

The woman seemed to feel that the burden of entertainment rested upon her, and by way of making conversation, she told us that her husband had fallen in love with the girl who sold tickets at a moving-picture show (a painted, yellow-haired thing who chewed gum like a cow, was her description of the enchantress), and he spent all of his money on the girl, and never

came home except when he was drunk. Then he smashed the furniture something awful. An easel, with her mother's picture on it, that she had had since before she was married, he had thrown down just for the pleasure of hearing it crash. And finally she had just got too tired to live, so she drank a bottle of swamp-root because somebody had told her it was poison if you took it all at once. But it did n't kill her; it only made her sick. And he came back, and said he would choke her if she ever tried that on him again; so she guessed he must still care something for her. All this quite casually while she stirred her tea.

I tried to think of something to say, but it was a social exigency that left me dumb. But Sandy rose to the occasion like a gentleman. He talked to her beautifully and sanely, and sent her away actually uplifted. Our Sandy, when he tries, can be exceptionally nice, particularly to people who have no claim upon him. I suppose it is a matter of professional etiquette — part of a doctor's business to heal the spirit as well as the body. Most spirits appear to need it in this world. My caller has left me needing it. I have been wondering ever since what I should do if I married a man who deserted me for a chewing-gum girl, and who came home and smashed the bric-à-brac. I suppose, judging from the theaters this winter, that it is a thing that might happen to any one, particularly in the best society.

You ought to be thankful you've got Jervis. There

is something awfully certain about a man like him. The longer I live, the surer I am that character is the only thing that counts. But how on earth can you ever tell? Men are so good at talking!

Good-by, and a merry Christmas to Jervis and both Judies.

S. McB.

P.S. It would be a pleasant attention if you would answer my letters a little more promptly.

JOHN GRIER HOME,

December 29.

Dear Judy:

Sadie Kate has spent the week composing a Christmas letter to you, and it leaves nothing for me to tell. Oh, we've had a wonderful time! Besides all the presents and games and fancy things to eat, we have had hay-rides and skating-parties and candy-pulls. I don't know whether these pampered little orphans will ever settle down again into normal children.

Many thanks for my six gifts. I like them all, particularly the picture of Judy, Junior; the tooth adds a pleasant touch to her smile.

You'll be glad to hear that I've placed out Hattie Heaphy in a minister's family, and a dear family they are; they never blinked an eyelash when I told them about the communion-cup. They've given her to themselves for a Christmas present, and she went off so happily, clinging to her new father's hand!

I won't write more now, because fifty children are writing thank-you letters, and poor Aunt Judy will be buried beneath her mail when this week's steamer gets in.

My love to the Pendletons.

S. MCB.

P.S. Singapore sends his love to Togo, and is sorry he bit him on the ear.

JOHN GRIER HOME,

December 30.

O, dear, Gordon, I have been reading the most upsetting book!

I tried to talk some French the other day, and not making out very well, decided that I had better take my French in hand if I did n't want to lose it entirely. That Scotch doctor of ours has mercifully abandoned my scientific education, so I have a little time at my own disposal. By some unlucky chance I began with "Numa Roumestan," by Daudet. It is a terribly disturbing book for a girl to read who is engaged to a politician. Read it, Gordon dear, and assiduously train your character away from Numa's. It's the story of a politician who is disquietingly fascinating (like you). Who is adored by all who know him (like you). Who has a most persuasive way of talking and makes wonderful speeches (again like you). He is worshiped by everybody, and they all say to his wife, "What a happy life you must lead, knowing so intimately that wonderful man!"

But he was n't very wonderful when he came home to her — only when he had an audience and applause. He would drink with every casual acquaintance, and be gay and bubbling and expansive; and then return mo-

rose and sullen and down. "Joie de rue, douleur de maison," is the burden of the book.

I read it till twelve last night, and honestly I did n't sleep for being scared. I know you'll be angry, but really and truly, Gordon dear, there's just a touch too much truth in it for my entire amusement. I did n't mean even to refer again to that unhappy matter of August 20,—we talked it all out at the time,—but you know perfectly that you need a bit of watching. And I don't like the idea. I want to have a feeling of absolute confidence and stability about the man I marry. I never could live in a state of anxious waiting for him to come home.

Read "Numa" for yourself, and you'll see the woman's point of view. I'm not patient or meek or long-suffering in any way, and I'm a little afraid of what I'm capable of doing if I have the provocation. My heart has to be in a thing in order to make it work, and, oh, I do so want our marriage to work!

Please forgive me for writing all this. I don't mean that I really think you'll be a "joy of the street, and sorrow of the home." It's just that I did n't sleep last night, and I feel sort of hollow behind the eyes.

May the year that's coming bring good counsel and happiness and tranquillity to both of us!

As ever,
S.

January 1.

Dear Judy:

Something terribly sort of queer has happened, and positively I don't know whether it did happen or whether I dreamed it. I'll tell you from the beginning, and I think it might be as well if you burned this letter; it's not quite proper for Jervis's eyes.

You remember my telling you the case of Thomas Kehoe, whom we placed out last June? He had an alcoholic heredity on both sides, and as a baby seems to have been fattened on beer instead of milk. He entered the John Grier at the age of nine, and twice, according to his record in the Doomsday Book, he managed to get himself intoxicated, once on beer stolen from some workmen, and once (and thoroughly) on cooking brandy. You can see with what misgivings we placed him out; but we warned the family (hard-working temperate farming-people) and hoped for the best.

Yesterday the family telegraphed that they could keep him no longer. Would I please meet him on the six o'clock train? Turnfelt met the six o'clock train. No boy. I sent a night message telling of his non-arrival and asking for particulars.

I stayed up later than usual last night putting my desk in order and — sort of making up my mind to