

LETTERS TO PATTY

nursery was in a deserted wing of the old Manor House, long passages away from the drawing-room, where grown-ups sat. (Do you remember how we wondered what they did after dinner? It was as mysterious as "staying behind" at church!) And Clémentine was down at supper, the nursery clock "tick-tocked" with a loud, unfamiliar sound, bedclothes became like lead pressing Baby through her mattress—and suddenly she would begin to scream and scream . . .

(You will understand, Patty, for in spite of the six little Patties, it's only last summer when Jim was away that you begged me not to go to sleep very quickly for you were terrified of being "last awake!")

Then hurrying footsteps, lights, Father, Mother, Miss Hurdle, perhaps a brother or two; Clémentine, with her mouth still full; you, Patty, sitting up, talking excitedly; Baby, wild-eyed, hiccoughing, and gulping down a glass of cold water in which a lump of sugar was melting. How disgusting was the taste! But Mother was murmuring, "Eau sucrée—what everyone drank in France when Mother was a little girl, Kitten." And the "white kitten" gulped it down, too, hoping to drown her excited terror in its sickly flood.