

# Orders Are Orders, Even for Masks

## Wise Doctors Know What Is Best

### Mosquito Theory Once Was a Joke

BY ANNIE LAURIE.

TWO young persons stood just outside the garden wall, talking of shoes and ships and sealing wax, and cabbages and kings, of dolls and toy airplanes, and puppies and kittens. And all at once a shrill cry of horror arose like a tocsin and sent all the mothers in the neighborhood to their windows in a trice, whatever a trice may be, when it's in plain English.



"Put on your mask," ordered the young person in petticoats.

"Shan't neither," retorted the small person in overalls. "Can't nobody livin' make me wear a mask when I don't want to."

"The doctor says," began the petticoated one.

"Doctor—phoo. Who's the doctor, I'd like to know? He ain't no doctor for me. I don't need none. I tell you what I'm going to do this minute. I'm going to get a match and set fire to my mask and burn it up every bit. And that will show you how much I care about doctors—or—or—anybody."

Whereupon the skirted one scuttled swiftly to the top of a long flight of steps and started to the door of her own house. But as she opened that door she called: "Burn your old mask if you want to; I shan't play with you anyhow. I hate Smarties worse than I hate anything."

"Bing" went the door and sad to tell when "Smarty" went into the house after the match he was met by one who had heard his dire threat and took steps to prevent the carrying out of it and I much suspect that the next time we see "Smarty" abroad he'll have a mask of double thickness—just for that, "Smarty."

"I've found the name for the people who won't wear masks. I'm almost one myself. I hate the things so bitterly. They don't let you breathe and they make you feel secret and stealthy and Jack the Ripperish; and then they keep reminding you that you can't have your own way, whenever you want it. But still, orders are orders, and he who knows so much better than the whole community what is good for him and for the community—isn't he really a good deal of a "Smarty" after all?

Courage? It doesn't take courage to go without a mask. It takes obstinate self-will and stubborn self-esteem and a good deal of determined ignorance into the bargain.

In the Spanish war we lost thousands of men who "had no use for boiled water" and would not drink it when it was served to them. They wanted water "pure and straight from the ground" and when they got a chance they drank it so, and they sickened and cost the country thousands and thousands of dollars and many of them died—just because they knew so much better what to do than the men knew who had made a study of such things all their lives.

When the yellow fever was quarantining the South every year as regularly as the rising and setting of the sun, almost, the doctors who went down there to study conditions were the joke of the whole South.

In New Orleans the people nearly mobbed a plain-spoken old fellow who dared to say that Yellow Jack came from the open sewers and the stagnant pools of water.

He wanted the cisterns drained and oil put in the gutters—think of that—said fever was carried by mosquitos—imagine it. And every self-sufficient man and every easy-going woman in the place laughed contemptuously even to think of it.

"Mosquitos, why they'll be saying flies are dangerous next," they said, and went into gales of laughter at the very idea.

But the doctors went to work and cleaned up the cities and made the people keep them clean, and Yellow Jack was dead and buried and has never come to life again—to amount to anything since.

But the last time I spent a week in the old French Quarter in New Orleans I noticed strange nicks on the balustrade of the little winding stair that led to the gallery where my quaint old fashioned delightful room was.

One day I asked Madame Tout Suite about it. Madame Tout Suite raised her black eyebrows, lifted her plump shoulders, smiled deliciously and said:

"I thing id is dose fiver; de stair not wide enough for dose coffin." And I found with a shudder of interest that down that narrow, winding stair which I found so full of local color and charm—had been carried scores and scores of coffins, for the old house was in the very center of the yellow fever district, year in and year out.

I asked Madame what she thought of the yellow fever and why it came no more.

"Ah," said Madame Tout Suite, smiling again, and this time so entrancingly like an innocent child and a mischievous coquette, all at once, that I would blame no mere man for following her or the like of her around the world and back again—"Ah I-ting it is perhaps the moon; she does not shine so bright in dis day, dey say."

"A mosquito—figure to your self—a liddle mosquito—buz, buz, can keel him wid de finger alone—'ow is he to mag de fiver dat keel de strong man." And Madame threw back her glossy head and laughed and laughed.

Here in San Francisco the other day in the crowded quarters of the town I saw a group of ten or twelve children all playing in the dirty street, all unmasked and all eating ice cream cones that looked none too inviting. They screamed with laughter when I asked them about their masks.

"Masks are for scare cats," they said. Poor little things, I wonder if they are blood brothers to a man I know, who won't wear a mask because he doesn't believe in the germ theory and besides he doesn't intend to let any doctor bulldoze him.

No, he doesn't know anything about the germ theory. He just doesn't believe in it, that's all. Law, example, what are tucy to him?

I'm glad I heard what the young person in petticoats said to the young person in overalls.

"Smarty," what a strange old-fashioned word; and yet somehow there are times when it does seem to suit the occasion, aren't there?