

# The Left Atrium

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*Illness and metaphor*

## Confidentiality

On the bridge, however, Roberta felt quite safe, because she could look down on the canal, and if any boy showed signs of meaning to throw coal, she could duck behind the parapet.

Presently there was a sound of wheels, which was just what she expected.

The wheels were the wheels of the Doctor's dogcart, and in the cart, of course, was the Doctor.

He pulled up and called out:

"Hullo, head-nurse! Want a lift?"

"I wanted to see you," said Bobbie.

"Your mother's not worse, I hope?" said the Doctor.

"No — but — "

"Well, step in, then, and we'll go for a drive."

Roberta climbed in and the brown horse was made to turn round — which it did not like at all, for it was looking forward to its tea — I mean its oats.

"This is jolly," said Bobbie, as the dogcart flew along the road by the canal.

"We could throw a stone down any one of your three chimneys," said the Doctor, as they passed the house.

"Yes," said Bobbie, "but you'd have to be a jolly good shot."

"How do you know I'm not?" said the Doctor. "Now, then, what's the trouble?"

Bobbie fidgeted with the hook of the driving apron.

"Come, out with it," said the Doctor.

"It's rather hard, you see," said Bobbie, "to out with it; because of what Mother said."

"What *did* Mother say?"

"She said I wasn't to go telling everyone that we're poor. But you aren't everyone, are you?"

"Not at all," said the Doctor cheerfully. "Well?"

From: E. Nesbit, *The Railway Children* (1906), ch. 4