



CHILDREN'S CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—Will some of the cousins please tell me if they have tried fastening their stamps into the album with a flap? And how do they manage it?—JACK C.
[I hope some one of the stamp-collectors will answer Jack.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I hope I may write to you, and you will put it in. We had such a bad time for a picnic last Saturday. We all went to the beach with some friends, and had dinner on the sand. At least we were just going to begin when a great black cloud which no one had minded suddenly burst just over us! We each grabbed something, and rushed up the cliff to some trees. We had to wait half-an-hour, and when it was fine we found a lot of the things had got eaten, somehow.—KATIE LINTON.

[Thank you for your interesting letter. I hope you did not starve.—COUSIN KATE.]

A DOG'S STORY.

I AM a white French poodle, and as I cannot write, my master's sister is writing this letter in my name. My life has been one of adventures. When but a puppy of four weeks old some wicked boys tried to drown me, but my master came up and made them give me up to him. He fought hard before he got me, but saved the poor doggie's life. I have crossed the ocean twice, and have been seasick both times. I now live in England in a pretty town on a broad river. In the winter time my master goes skating and I go with him, and we have such fun. If ever you go to W.— look out for a snowy poodle, and I will be with my master, a handsome boy of fifteen, with dark hair. I know a great many tricks. I beg, open doors with my paws, and lots of other things. I got lost in London one day, but a boy who knew my master found me and brought me home again. My master washes me in the river often, and I generally manage to pull him in too. There! he whistles for me. Good-bye.—ROVER.

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—Would you kindly put my story in the GRAPHIC?
[I must request you not to write on both sides of the paper.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I have never written to you before. Some of the cousins write very nice letters. The answer to the puzzle 'cousin Ivy' sent is 'an egg.' I go to Mrs Hallett's school every day, and I am in the fourth class. I hope you will put this letter in the GRAPHIC. I will be eleven years old next May.—ADA JACKSON, Newmarket.

[You have guessed the puzzle right. I think the cousins write capital letters. I am glad to welcome you amongst them.—COUSIN KATE.]

THE BULL AND THE BICYCLE.

ONE early autumn C. and I were riding our good wheels through the Canterbury province. We were rolling lazily along a well-kept, level highway, and blessing the efficient road-makers. To our left, and behind us, rose fair, rounded hills, some thickly wooded, others with orchards and meadows on their slopes, away in the distance the sea. Though another race now held these lovely regions, we felt that the landscape, through whatever vicissitudes, must lie changelessly under the spell of one enchantment. We felt that something more than mere beauty of scene, however wonderful, was needed to explain the exalted mood which had taken possession of two hungry and athletic wheelmen like ourselves; and we acknowledged that additional something in the romance of history and song. Presently we came to a stretch of road which had been treated to a generous top-dressing of loose sand. Such ignorance of the principles of good road-making soon brought us down both from our lofty mood and from our laboring wheels. We trudged toilsomely for nearly half a mile, saying unkind things now of the road-makers. Then we came to the village and were much solaced by the sight of the village hotel. In the porch of the unpretentious hostelry we found a fellow cyclist in a sorely battered condition. Several strips of court-plaster, black and pink, distributed artistically about his forehead, nose and chin gave a mightily grotesque appearance to his otherwise melancholy countenance. One

of his stockings was rolled down about his ankle, and he was busy applying arnica to a badly-bruised shin. Against the bench on which he was sitting leaned a bicycle which looked as if it had been in collision with an earthquake.

The poor fellow's woebegone countenance brightened up as we entered, and we made ourselves acquainted. He was a solitary tourist, and a principal in the important case of Bull versus Bicycle, which had just been decided very much in the favour of Bull. We dined together, and as our appetites diminished our curiosity increased.

Presently Caldwell, as the woebegone cyclist called himself, detailed to us his misadventure as follows:—

"It wasn't more than an hour before you fellows came that I got here myself. I was in a nice mess, I can tell you. But plenty of cold water and Mrs Briggs' arnica and court-plaster have pulled me together a lot. I only hope we can do as much after dinner for that poor old wheel of mine!"

"This morning I had a fine trip pretty nearly all the way from Hanston. Splendid weather, wasn't it, and a good hard road most of the way, eh? You remember that long smooth hill about two miles back from here, and the road that crosses it at the school, nearly at right angles? Well, as I came coasting down that hill, happy as a clam, my feet over the handles, I almost ran into a party of men, with ropes and a gun, moving along that cross-road."

"I stopped for a little talk with them, and asked what they were up to. It appeared that a very dangerous bull had got loose from a farm up the river, and had taken to the road. They were afraid it would gore somebody before they could recapture it. I asked them if they knew which way it had gone, and they told me the creature was sure to make right for the flat lands, where it used to pasture in its earlier and more amiable days."

"That cross-road was the way to the flats, and they pursued it confidently. I took it into my head that it would be a lark to go along with them, and see the capture of the obstreperous animal; but the men, who were intelligent fellows and knew what they were talking about, told me I should find the road too heavy and too rough for my wheels. Rather reluctantly, I bade them good morning and continued my journey by the highway."

"Now, as a fact, that bull had no notion of going to the flats. He had turned off the crossroad and sauntered along the highway, just where he could get most fun and see the most of life. But I'll venture to say he hadn't counted on meeting a bicycle."

"I hadn't gone more than half a mile, or perhaps less, when a little distance ahead of me I noticed some cattle feeding by the roadside. I thought nothing of that, of course; but presently one of the cattle—a tremendous animal, almost pure white—stepped into the middle of the road and began to paw the mud. Certain anxious questionings arose within me."

"Then the animal put his great head to the earth and uttered a mighty bellow. With much perturbation of spirit I concluded that the angry bull had not betaken himself to the flats after all."

"I felt very bitter toward those men for this mistake, and for not having suffered me to go along with them on their futile errand. They wanted the bull and wouldn't find him. I, on the other hand, had found him, and I didn't want him at all."

"I checked my course, pedalling very slowly, uncertain what to do. The bull stood watching me. If I turned and made tracks he would catch me on the hill or on the soft cross-road. If I took to the woods there was little to gain, for there were no fences behind which to take refuge; and if I should climb a tree I knew the beast would demolish my wheel."

"Straight ahead, however, as far as I could see, the road was level and good, and in the distance I saw farms and fences. I decided to keep right on."

"The road along there is wide and hard, as you know, and bordered with a deep ditch. I put on good speed; and the bull, as he saw me approaching, looked a little puzzled. He took the wheel and me. I presume, for some unheard of monster. I guessed his meditations, and concluded he was getting frightened."

"But there I was mistaken. He was only getting in a rage. He suddenly concluded that it was his mission to rid the world of monsters; and with a roar he charged down to meet me."

"Now," thought I, "for a trick! and then a race, in which I'll show a pretty speedy pair of heels!" I rode straight at the bull, who must have had strange misgivings, though he never flinched. At the last possible moment I swerved sharply aside, and swept past the baffled animal in a fine, triumphant curve. Before he could stop himself and turn I was away down the road, at a pace that I knew would try his mettle."

"But the brute had a most pernicious energy. He came thundering and pounding along my tracks at a rate that kept me quite busy. I stayed ahead easily enough, but I did not do much more than that for fear of getting winded."

"There's where I made the mistake, I think. I ought to have done my utmost in order to discourage and distance my pursuer. I didn't allow for contingencies ahead, but just pedalled along gaily and enjoyed the situation. Of course I kept a sharp lookout in order that I shouldn't take a header over a stone; but I felt myself master of the situation."

"At last, and in an evil hour, I came to where they had been mending the road with all that abominable sand. Let us pass over my feelings at this spot. They were indescribable. My wheel almost came to a standstill. Then I called up fresh energies, and bent forward and strained to the task. I went ahead, but it was like wading through a feather-bed; and the bull began to draw nearer."

"A little in front the fences began. The first was a high board fence, with a gate in it, and a hay road leading by a rough bridge into the highway. My whole effort now was to make that gate."

"The perspiration was rolling down my face, half-blinding me. My mighty pursuer was getting closer and closer; and I was feeling pretty well pummed. It was as much a bargain which would win the race. I dared not look behind, but my anxious ears kept me all too well informed."

"I reached the bridge and darted across it. Immediately I heard my pursuer's feet upon it. I had no time to dismount. I rode straight at the gate, ran upon it, and shot over it head first in a magnificent header, landing in a heap of stones and brambles."

"In a glow of triumph, which at first prevented me feeling my wounds, I picked myself up—and beheld the furious beast in the act of trying to gore my unoffending bicycle."

"At first he had stopped in consternation, naturally amazed at seeing the monster divided into two parts. The portion which had shot over the gate he perceived to be very like a man; but the other part remained all the more mysterious. Presently he plunged his horns tentatively into the big wheel; whereupon my brave bicycle reared and struck him in the eye with a handle, and set the little wheel crawling up his back."

"At this the bull was astonished and alarmed—so much so that he backed off a little way. Then seeing that the bicycle lay motionless on the ground he charged upon it again, mauling it shamefully, and tossing it up on his horns."

"This was too much for me. I ran up, reached over the gate, and laid hold of my precious wheel. By strange good fortune I succeeded in detaching it from the brute's horns and hauling it over the gate. Then I pelted the animal with sticks and stones till he got disgusted and moved away."

"As soon as he was safely off the scene I opened the gate and limped sorrowfully down to this place, dragging my wheel by my side. Do you think we can do anything with it?"

"The first thing necessary," said I, "is to have an examination, and make a diagnosis of its injuries."

"This we forthwith proceeded to do, and found the matter pretty serious. After spending an hour in tinkering at the machines we had to give up the job. Then we set forth on a visit to the village blacksmith who, after being regaled with a full account of Caldwell's misadventure, addressed himself to his task with vast good-will."

"He was a skilful man, and before nightfall the wheel was in better travelling shape than its unlucky owner. But Caldwell was good stuff, and of a merry heart, so that when, on the following day, he became our travelling companion, we found that his scars and his inglorious countenance only heightened the effect of his good fellowship."

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

GREAT MEN'S JOKES.

GREAT men have often been deficient in the sense of humour. This was markedly the case with Napoleon I., whose sense of humour if he possessed it, was of a grim sort. It is recorded, however, that he had a certain sympathy with a pun; and several of his minor appointments were actually made because the appointees' names seemed to indicate their fitness for the place. He made Monsieur Bigot, for instance, his minister of public worship at one time; and when he was looking about for a governor of the pages in the imperial palace, he could think of no one so appropriate for the place as General Gardanne, whose name in French, signifies a keeper of donkeys.

When he came to make Marshal Victor Beau-Soleil a duke, it struck Napoleon that the opportunity was an excellent one to make a sort of reverse or 'back-action' pun on the marshal's name. Beau-Soleil signifies 'beautiful sunshine,' so the emperor created the man the Duc de Bellane—which was very much as if he had made him the Duke Fine Moon.

Prince Bismarck, on the other hand, is one great statesman who is remarkable for the possession of a keen sense of humour. This he has often shown, and it appears in the contents of the youthful memorandum book which Bismarck kept at college. German students are sometimes presented with a blank book of this sort, in which they are expected to make a daily entry of some thought or reflection. Prince Bismarck, at twenty, filled up a book of this sort, the contents of which have lately been published.

Here are some of the sage reflections which young Bismarck put on record in this book:

"Wealth does not bring happiness. Oysters, for instance, obtain very little real joy from the jewel case which providence has sarcastically placed in one corner of their cradle."

"Idleness is the mother of vice. If Eve had been busily sewing a fig-leaf coat for her husband, she would probably not have heard the whispering of the serpent."

"The spectacle of a dentist suffering with an aching molar is rare but consolatory. It is a sight which is, perhaps, vouchsafed to us but once in a lifetime; but its charm remains with us for long years."

FALLIBILITY.

THE necessity which teachers are under of being perfectly sure of their statements, or else of being not too positive in making them, was illustrated recently by an incident of actual occurrence in a public high school. A pupil was reading, during a recitation in English literature, while the teacher, with no book in his hand and with folded arms, walked up and down the recitation-room.

"Hypocrisy," says La Rochefoucauld, is the homage which vice pays to virtue," said the pupil read.

"That is very true," said the teacher, "but don't say homage; say 'omage; the A is not sounded."

"Omage," said the pupil, obediently.

"Read on, now."

"Sir," said the pupil, "may I please read the note at the foot of the page?"

"You may do so."

The pupil read: "Homage: In pronouncing this word, the A is frequently omitted by uneducated persons. It should always be sounded."

In some cases there is absolutely nothing to be said, and on this occasion the teacher said it.