

CHILDREN'S CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

Any boy or girl who likes to become a cousin can do so, and write letters to 'COUSIN KATE, care of the Lady Editor, GRAPHIC Office, Auckland.'

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DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I am writing to you once more. The last week of our holidays I went to the breaking up of the children's dancing class. It was a plain and fancy dress ball, and all the little girls and boys were very excited. It began at half past seven, because the little children had to go home at half past ten, and the others stayed on till 12 o'clock. Most of them went in fancy dresses, and the little ones looked very bright and cheerful. One little girl, who was about five years old, went as a fairy, and was really the belle of the evening. All the little boys danced with her, which was more than they did with the others. Some of the dresses were: Grecian slave girl, many were fairies, Shepherdesses, Early Morning, Night, Dresden China, Fish-girl, Baby, Clown, Tennis, Sailors, Cricket, Nigger, New Woman, and Gipsy. The New Woman was very good, so also was the (Babal) baby. Charley's Aunt hit the baby with her umbrella, and of course made the baby cry. The New Woman took it up in her arms and hugged and comforted the poor little thing. I went as a Scotch girl, and enjoyed myself very much. We had supper about ten o'clock, and then the little ones went home. We did not get a holiday on Demonstration day, which I think was a great shame. We had to be in school when the other people were out enjoying the procession and sports. There was a concert held in the Central Hall at school on Friday and Saturday, but I think Cousin Laura is telling you about it, so I will not tell you. The Prince of Wales' Birthday comes on a Saturday so we are going to have a holiday on Monday. I will tell you about it when it comes. I think I am going for a picnic to the Upper Hut. With love from COUSIN JESSIE. Wellington.

[I am glad to hear from you again. Some of you seem pleased you did not get the holiday, others sorry. I do not think we shall keep Monday here for the Prince of Wales' Birthday; but as Aucklanders are very fond of holidays, we may do so. The fancy dress ball must indeed have been nice. I am glad you enjoyed yourself. I think a masked ball great fun. I know of one lately where a gentleman danced with his own sister and did not know her. He said a lot of pretty things to her, and looked very foolish when she at length unmasked! Does it not generally rain on the ninth? How about the 'cot.'—COUSIN KATE]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—You know that I promised to finish my story about the Maoris, but I have so far forgotten it that I am going to begin a new chapter altogether. My brothers, Dick and Tom, had promised to take my sister and myself and Florence for a row in their boat. Well, about five o'clock on Saturday evening Dick and Tom went down to launch their pair-oar racing gig, while Florence and I ran on before them. We had no hats on, as we did not think it would be necessary for us to have them for such a short distance as we supposed we were going. When we got down to the point we got into the boat and were having quite a nice row round the creek, when my sister expressed a wish to go out further. We were lying lazily in the bottom of the boat half asleep, and every now and then I was brought to my senses by one of my brothers calling out, 'You are steering us right into the rocks; or just the reverse.' We passed the Maori Settlement and right on to Kohimarama, where we landed on the beach. I must have told you that our brothers had very generously lent us their coats, as we were now quite cold with sitting still so long. Soon we wanted to go home, that is, Florence and I, for I admit that we were now very sleepy. Of course you know, Cousin Kate, that salt water makes you feel sleepy, so that you must not think me a baby. When we got out well into the middle of the sea we could see all round Lake Takapuna and the North Shore, etc. It was highly diverting to watch the little fish at their play. Once, while in an ecstasy of delight, a little fish, quite un-mindful of what it was doing, jumped right into the boat, where it lay flapping its fins in a very frightened manner. But as soon as I had courage I picked the poor little thing up and put it into the water, where it rejoined its companions. An excursion steamer, which we thought to be coming down our way, to our great disappointment turned down by the Great Barrier reef, and we saw no more of it. The steamer was so brilliantly lighted that what with that and the phosphorescent lights it was a sight worth beholding. We reached our landing-point, and after diligently attending to the wants of the pair oar, we clambered up the steep cliff and were soon racing down the road at about 11.30 at night. Reaching home, we had some refreshments, and after quenching our thirst, we tumbled into bed to have our well-earned sleep. I was soon in the midst of a beautiful dream about the little fish. With love to all the other cousins, I remain, your loving COUSIN KATHERINE.

[Tell your sister 'yes,' and if possible I will reproduce them in the paper. I did not notice what you mention, and think your story very nice and neat, and extremely interesting. What fun you must have had, but did you not catch colds without your hats so late at night? It was thoughtful of your brothers to give you their coats. I like to hear of such nice little fraternal acts. I wonder you did not dream that the fishes came and held a waltz-dance over your sleeping body! I hope you can all swim, can you? Have you thought about the 'cot' ?—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I have waited for my badge to come before I wrote to you again, so as to be able to tell you I had received it, but it has not come. It is some time since you wrote to say you had sent it. I wonder what has happened to it? It has been wet to day, but we have been having lovely weather for the last few days. I hope you have received my story safely. My ferns are still growing nicely. We have a splendid cactus plant in our conserva-

tory; it has grown very large, and in the season is always covered with flowers. I do not know its name, but it is very pretty, being red on the end and middle part of the leaf, and pink in the centre. As I have nothing more to write about, I remain your loving cousin BERYL.

[I am sorry you did not receive your badge. I have ticked it off in my book as having been sent some weeks ago. However, I have posted you another. Please tell me as soon as you get it. Will you help with the 'Cot Fund'? A shilling a year is not a very large sum to ask, and you may know five people who would give it. Your cactus must indeed be pretty. The weather may have been lovely when you wrote to me, but as I sit writing to you, I can only say that if the rain goes on like this I must build me an ark. But perhaps when you read this it may again be fine and sunny.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I think it is a capital and very good idea about the cot, and I will be very glad to do anything I can to help with it. I do not like taking round lists, but I will do anything else I can. Once we got up a bazaar for a poor widow and got £1 clear. If I did so again it would pay for four years. I am in the Fifth Standard and find it rather difficult. I like both football and cricket, but more especially football. When shall we know the result of the story competition? I hope the weather will be fine for the Agricultural show on Saturday. I must stop now, with love to you and all the cousins.—From COUSIN BOB. Auckland.

[I do not mind how you get the 5s, so long as it's not stolen or borrowed! Perhaps some of the cousins can earn it. But I want it soon, or at all events enough for the first expenses and the first quarter. Until I get that promised I will not start it. I would much prefer to have £20 in the Bank before buying a 'cot.' I hope I shall have that. Thank you for promising to help. Lovely weather indeed for the show! Did you go in a boat?—WEATHER KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I have never written to you before. May I join your list of cousins? I have no pets, as I live in town. I go to school, and learn arithmetic, geography, and a great many other things, and I learn the piano. Do you like music? I go up to the Albert Park every afternoon after school. We do not get the GRAPHIC, but I can see it at a friend's. What a large place the Herald office is!—MARIE MCCULLOUGH.

P.S.—I am enclosing six penny stamps for a badge and my address.

[I am glad to add you to my list of cousins, and have sent you a badge. Do you think you could promise to collect 5s a year for the 'cot fund'? Will you try? The Albert Park is a charming place to walk or lounge in, is it not? What flowers do you like best to see in it? I am very fond of good music. I heard three charming violin solos lately by Miss Celia Dampier, of the North Shore. Have you heard her? She is quite a child, and plays so cleverly. I hope you will often write to COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—Thank you so much for your refreshing answer to my last letter. You have made me feel quite happy for some time to come. I shall have much pleasure in doing all I can to promote the success of the Cot Fund. You ask how many boys there are. Well, I have five brothers and one like unto a brother. We always count him as one of 'our boys'. This last-mentioned brother has given his subscription towards the cot. I wonder if you would call them 'boys'; four of them are almost six-footers. Now for the long-mentioned 'Shadow Play'. Last year I had a book lent to me which contained the well-known story of Cinderella arranged as a shadow play, with full directions as to costumes, scenes, actions, etc. Mother having granted us permission to use our hall, my friends and I decided to try our powers in this direction. We met several times for rehearsal, but somehow we did not attend to business very strictly, so as usual there was a terrible rush at the last. When the eventful evening arrived we started operations by stretching a web sheet tightly across the hall, fastening at the top, and nailing it down at intervals to the floor. We managed the gas so that the audience sat in semi-darkness, while what we grandly called the stage was brightly lighted. We had to be so careful to stand with our profile only towards the audience, also to keep as near to the sheet as possible, without touching it. As length all was satisfactorily fixed, and the play commenced. There were six characters and four acts in it. Of course the costumes did not make much difference, colour being immaterial, but lace we found particularly effective. I represented Cinderella, but as my hair is noted for its ungainly length, I was obliged to plait some dried flax and fasten it on. My feet also are not at all fairy like, and I think a pair of ferry boats would have been more suitable than a pair of fairy boots, but we managed successfully. The audience, I am sorry to say, was a considerably noisy one, especially if I delayed long between the scenes, but on the whole I fancy they enjoyed themselves. Be that as it may, the folk behind the curtain had a 'splendid time'. Three people from the audience insisted upon coming behind the scenes to act as stage managers, but, as to relate their acts on the staircase and laughed at our 'get ups,' as they rudely termed our stylish costumes. Thus you see that Cinderella and her proud sisters had to rush about and attend to the various things themselves. Well, Cousin Kate, I must own I felt much relieved when the play ended and the poor actresses were entertained at a select supper in the kitchen!!! No doubt you also will feel relieved when this rambling letter concludes. Please bear in mind I have endeavoured to be as explicit as possible without entering into minute details. Whether I have succeeded or not I leave you to judge. I fear my letter is much too long, so I now bid adieu.—From yours affectionately, COUSIN TRILMA.

[Your shadow play must have been excellent fun, and I am sure some of the cousins will like to try it too. I should think Bluebeard would do grandly. If I get time before Christmas I think I will sketch it out for the Christmas number. I should think 'Dumb Crambo' would be excellent done that way, or any dumb charade. Tell the brother who is not a brother, his prompt cash payment is a first-rate example. Thank you for your promise. I cannot do anything till I get a good many more. Carefully keep that shilling and refund it if our scheme comes to nought. I expect in reality you wear No. 2 shoes.—COUSIN KATE.]

PUZZLE COLUMN.

HURLED BOYS' NAMES.

1. Where is the jam, Esther? 2. It is Robert I envy most. 3. Fred gardens very well, much better than Ida. 4. Nero, Bertha, and Ross are going for a ride to-day. 5. He has no elegant ways.—COUSIN GILBY.

PUZZLES.

(1) When is a boat like a heap of snow? (2) What 'bus holds the greatest number of people? (3) Why is the letter 'B' like fire?—COUSIN FERGUS.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES.

Answer to Cousin Ethel's Riddle: Short.

Answer to Cousin Lilla's Transposition Puzzle:

E T H E L  
V E T O  
A B E R D E E N  
N A N L I N G  
G O L F  
E A G L E  
L E A L  
I D O L  
N E R O  
E S C H E W

Evangeline-Longfellow.

Answers to Cousin Amy's Riddles: (1) Yes, when he has got a big hole in it. (2) Absence of body. (3) A drum. (4) One misses the train, and the other trains the missis.

Answers to Cousin Lilla's riddles: (1) A step-father (step farther). (2) Bobby Burns and Robert Browning. (3) When they make twenty-two.

Answers to Cousin Gypsy's Barred Flowers: (1) Red. (2) Green. (3) Yellow. (4) White. (5) Brown.

GREAT PRESENCE OF MIND.

ONE of the 'sights' of Philadelphia, fifty years ago, was a magnificent Chinese Museum, whose treasures, collected by Mr Dann, a magnificent merchant, were displayed in a building erected on the site on which now stands the Continental Hotel. Over the museum was a long, narrow upper room, about thirty-five feet high. It was a public hall, used for lectures and concerts, and with it was associated a most remarkable instance of presence of mind. A correspondent of the London Spectator tells the thrilling story:

In the central part of this immense auditorium were collected one evening about three thousand persons. At about nine o'clock, the manager of the building came to the leader of the meeting, white with fright, and told him that the floor had sunk nearly a foot, and that in a few minutes more the tenons of the joists might be out of their sockets. The floor would then fall through on to the Chinese Museum, and the walls, sixty feet in height, would collapse and be precipitated, with the roof, upon the assembly.

The leader explained to the person whom the audience expected next to hear, that by addressing the assembly from the end of the hall, he could withdraw the company from the untenable part of the floor to that where the front walls strengthened the joists to bear the weight of the people.

The reply to this was that his own family was in the audience, and that he must get them out first. 'You shall not,' said the leader; 'a hint of danger, a rush, and we shall all be under the fallen walls and roof. Five minutes' delay may kill us altogether.'

As a boy in the audience I well remember my surprise at seeing the leader suddenly appear at the far front of the room, and tell the people that they would next be addressed from where he stood—the organ-loft. As the audience turned and moved to the front the flooring rose six inches.

The people were entertained, partly by an impromptu sentimental song in a voice without a quaver, in the very face of death, and as soon as practicable they were quietly dismissed.

Not a single individual in that great assembly was aware that, by the presence of mind of one man, an awful catastrophe had been averted. The imagination sickens at the thought of what would have been the consequence of a panic and sudden alarm by the failure of the courage of that man.

I am confident that, excepting the speaker referred to and the manager of the building, no one outside the immediate family of the man whose courage prevented this catastrophe has known the whole story till now.

The terror of those minutes before the crowd was moved and the floor rose toward its level, was such, that he never, even in his own family, alluded to the scene, though he lived for forty years afterward.

HIS LAST NAME.

'WHAT is your last name?' Inquired a teacher of a new scholar. 'Peter, ma'am,' replied the small boy. 'Peter!' echoed the teacher. 'What is your other name?' 'Fairbanks,' responded the boy. 'Then Fairbanks is your last name of course,' said the teacher, eyeing the round-eyed, vacant-faced Peter with considerable severity. 'No'm,' replied the child, respectfully. 'My name was Fairbanks when I was born, but mother says they didn't name me "Peter" for 'most six months.'

HELPING PAPA.

It seems cruel to laugh at childish obedience, but sometimes the temptation is almost irresistible. What else shall we do in a case like the following?

A minister's wife was starting out for a walk, and invited her little daughter to go with her.

'No, mamma, I can't,' was the very positive reply.

'Why not?'

'I have to help papa.'

'Help papa! In what way?'

'Why, he told me to sit here in this corner and keep quiet while he wrote his sermon, and I don't believe he is half done yet.'