

brothers make their own powder, dry of course, and a fine time they have of it. After filling a tin with powder they light it, and the fountain of sparks has such a pretty effect. I have a large black cat called Spot. He weighs ten pounds. I very seldom see letters from the boy cousins now. I wonder why they don't write. I expect they are shy. There was a concert here on Friday, and while some one was singing a lamp fell over and burnt all the scenery. —I am your loving COUSIN IDA No. 2.

[I expect we shall have some of the boy cousins writing to ask how your brothers make their gunpowder. My brother nearly blew us all up. I forget what he used, and he is over in Perth (W.A.), so I cannot easily ask him. They say black cats are lucky. What a beauty Spot must be. Is he perfectly black, or spotted with white? Were you at the concert when the lamp fell? Were you frightened? How very fortunate that the whole piece was not destroyed. I am sorry you did not remember to send your story. Will you try to collect for the Cot Fund. If you answer on a post-card it will do. Thanks for riddles.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I meant to write to you before, but I seem now to have so little time. Will you please send cousin Laura and me each a collecting card in aid of the Hospital Cot. In answer to one of your questions in my last letter I reply, Madame Cope is not an amateur touring the country, but a professional teacher of music, with a great number of pupils. There has been a large number of fires in Wellington lately. One in Willis street, which broke out in a restaurant, threatened to destroy the whole block. As it was the upstairs of two shops were burnt, and the furniture and other things, which were in the lower rooms, were completely destroyed by water. There was also one at Lambton Quay, and another in Newtown, in which two houses were burnt to the ground. We have now got the croquet set, about which I told you some time ago, and of course, as the novelty has not yet worn off, all the girls are mad on it. The Tennis Tournaments have now begun, but I will tell you about them when they are over. Our school breaks up in six weeks, but I am not quite sure where I am going for my Christmas holidays. Last year I went to Christchurch, and although I enjoyed myself very much, I should not care to live there. Last Saturday I went to Island Bay, and had a long chat with the hermit. He told us that he had been fifteen years in the cave, but as he also told us about six months ago that he had been seventeen years there, we are not quite sure which it is, but think it is something between the two. His cave is not half as comfortable as it used to be. About two feet have been taken off it by making the Queen's Drive, and it is not half so sheltered as it used to be, because the big rocks which faced the opening of the cave have been cut down. The Wellington College held their annual sports yesterday afternoon, and according to report they went off very well. Did I tell you that we play cricket at school? Some of our girls are quite experts at the game. What do you think of it? Do you think it is nice for girls to play it or do you think that it should be left for the boys? I must now close, with much love from COUSIN ELISIE.

[Thank you for your encouraging letter. I will send you and cousin Laura a card as soon as I get a few more promises. I have not had the card printed, because I could not tell as all how many would be required (see 'Cot' notice). When I write that word in a hurry I am always afraid that when I see it in print it will have turned into 'cat', and it will look as if we were getting up a fund to provide homes for left behind cats when people have gone away for the holidays. I thought when you mentioned the 'hermit' before, that it was a joke, but now I see that he is a live (and lively) person. Does he rent his cave, or merely live there by permission of the City Council or Harbour Board, or whoever owns the island. Concerning cricket, I need to play myself, and would have no objection to handling a bat now, just amongst the cousins, of course, and in private. Later we played 'ladies cricket'; I do not care much for it. But I do not approve of football for girls.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I ought to have written before, but I had nothing to tell you. I received the badge safely, and I think it is very pretty. I have never collected before, but I will try and help the 'Cot.' Last Saturday I went out ferning in the morning, and in the afternoon I went out fishing with father. As it was my birthday today, and it was Sunday, I had a picnic yesterday. We went to Petone, as there is a nice beach. Shortly after we arrived some of us had a nice bathe. It was the first bathe I have had this season. Then we had dinner, and afterwards another girl and I went out on the jetty to fish for about a quarter of an hour. We also saw the Naval's cutter race. Then we went and had tea. Afterwards we went home by the quarter past five train. I must now say good-bye from your loving cousin PHEBE.

P.S.—Will you send me a card for the 'cot fund'? [I will send the card as soon as I have them. Thank you for saying you will try to collect. I have not bathed in the sea yet. It has been so cold, and I have not had the chance either. You seem to have enjoyed your picnic. Many happy returns of the day! Have your ferns lived? It seems a little late for them. What fish, if any, do you usually catch? Crabs? Down South my brother caught some lobsters and left them on the kitchen table, and my cat went in and picked out the largest and ran off with it.—COUSIN KATE.]

TWO DAYS' CYCLE RIDE THROUGH CHESHIRE.

I HAVE received the following interesting letter from a very distant cousin, Newell L. Nicholson, Sessforth, Liverpool. It is so long that I must give it in detachments, as it would swallow up a whole page or perhaps more, if put in at once. Many thanks, Cousin Newell.

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—The other day I received the NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC from my uncle who lives in Te Kuiti, near Auckland, and was much interested in the letters you receive from your numerous cousins. Some time ago, my cousin, Edith Tanner, related in the GRAPHIC her experiences of a Snag Ride, so I made up my mind to write and tell my New Zealand cousins of the interesting bicycle ride I had through Cheshire. It was Saturday, 24th of August, when Dr. Braine and myself examined our machines, and finding them in excellent condition for a hard day's work,

started on our journey. It was nine o'clock in the morning when we left our little village of Sessforth, which is situated on the banks of the river Mersey, and five miles north of Liverpool. We struck directly inland over the Canal, which divides Sessforth from Litherland. The latter place has a commanding view of the mouth of the Mersey, the Irish Sea and the Welsh Mountains. From Litherland we take the main road, which leads us to Runcorn Bridge, where we cross to get to Cheshire. We are in Lancashire now, so we make our machines go a little faster, as we have a good many miles to go before we reach home to-night. (On our right we pass Aintree race course, where the Grand National is run—one of England's greatest races. We soon leave this far behind us, but the grandstand can be seen for miles off.) Our next village was West Derby, and a short distance from this place is the Everton football ground, where last year at one of their matches they had more people in the enclosure than there are in the whole of New Zealand. At West Derby we dismounted, and the doctor pulled the cycling map out of his pocket, laid it gently on a bread and cheese hedge properly called a thorn hedge (most of the fields in England are divided by this kind of hedge). He ran his little fingers along the map, and then exclaimed that we were only eighteen miles from Runcorn Bridge, and that we ought to do it in seventy-five minutes, so we mounted and rode at the rate of one mile in four minutes. An hour's riding brought us to the dirty smoky town of Widnes, which is noted for its soap making and tanneries. In some parts of the town we have to hold our hands to our noses as the stench is something frightful. We ask our way to Runcorn Bridge from one of the natives, and pointing with his grimy hand, he says, 'Doab thou see that there street? Well, you man turn up to ye left and ye cannot 'elp but see it.' We follow his directions, and turning to the left, we come to a footpath leading up on to the bridge. It is an enormous bridge, built of iron and stone, and is supported by enormous pillars which rise from the bed of the River Mersey. The bridge connects Lancashire and Cheshire. We wheeled our machines up this narrow footpath, which brings us to the toll gate, where we had to pay threepence for each machine and one penny for each of ourselves before we could get across. On the bridge itself there is only one narrow path for pedestrians. The other part of the bridge is used for the London trains. An express passed over as we were on the bridge, and it shook it like a leaf. The wind it made nearly blew our hats off. The bridge commands a view of the ship canal, which has just been cut from Eastm to Manchester. It is about thirty miles long, and some of the largest ships can go up it, principally cotton loaded ships for the great spinners of Manchester. When we got to the other end we had about one hundred steps to go down. Our 'cycles being light, we shouldered them and ran down the steps into one of the main streets of Runcorn. Runcorn is not a large place, but every old one. It is known to have existed in the year 913, when Ethelfleda, sister of King Edward the Elder, and widow of Ethelred, Earl of Mercia, built a town and Castle on a huge rock projecting out into the river, but the water has so gained upon the land that now the Castle is nowhere to be seen; not a stone is visible of it. There is a very interesting old church in Runcorn. We were told that it was built before the Norman Conquest. It has been altered and improved since, but the old windows and pillars are the same, and the old style of carving is most interesting. The church was closed in the year 1846 by an appropriate sermon from the vicar. His text was, 'Arise, let us go hence, and all the people arose and went.' It was not opened again for three years. We were unable to spend any more time at this interesting old church, because we had many more miles to go yet, and so it was advisable for us not to linger longer than we could possibly help, although we were loth to leave it.

Some distance before us, standing majestically on a high hill, is Halton Castle. We asked a woman who was on her way to market what castle it was. She told us it was Bulton Court, and that Holiver Cromwell had something to do with it, but that was all we could get out of her. It was really built soon after the Norman Conquest, and Oliver Cromwell stormed it. Finally it was used as a prison for debtors, but the road that led up to it was too steep for us to ride, so we were obliged to dismount and walk. A lot of blackberries grew on either side of this road, which we picked and ate as we walked along. At last we reached the top, and the doctor espied an old inn, where he very soon made his way in and brought out a jug of shandy gaff that is, beer and ginger beer mixed—which makes a very cooling drink. We did not have anything to eat, as it is not a good thing to ride directly after eating. Besides, we wanted to reach a place called Antrobus before one o'clock, as we had, a day or two previously, ordered lunch. Before we left Halton we had a look at the old castle which Cromwell destroyed with fire and sword. From its battlements the views are most beautiful. To the north is again seen the Mersey pursuing its course through fertile plains; to the west are the Welsh hills sloping down to the wooded dales of Cheshire. I think I could have stood on these battlements for hours, looking at the beautiful scenery which spread as far as the eye could see, but we could not stay any longer, as the doctor was anxious about the time. He wanted to reach home again that night, as he expected a letter of some importance, so we made our way out on to the main road, where we enquired of some labourers which was the way to Antrobus. One said one was, another said another, but as we had no time to lose we rode on, leaving them to argue who was right or who was wrong. The road led us to the brink of a hill, at the bottom of which was a narrow valley, and then the ground rose again on the opposite side. We could see the white road which we would have to go along winding its way in and out of the soil roads and up the next hill until it was lost from sight over the brow of the hill. Riding down hill on a bicycle is very different from riding up hill. Riding down you have merely to take your feet off the treadle, and away you go at the rate of sixty miles an hour; but going up hill you have to put your feet very much on the treadle, and you go at the rate of a mile in sixty hours (more or less). It is very easy going down hill, and comparatively safe if the road is straight, and you can see the ending of it, but if it is not so, I advise you to come down gently. We were just about going down hill, when I shouted to the Doctor, 'I'll go first, Doctor,' so he said 'All right,' and away I went. It was not very steep at first, but halfway down it became so steep I could not see the bottom of the road, because it turned to the left. I

was going at an enormous rate. I never experienced such a rate before, and I never wish to again. The air nearly took my breath away. At last I saw the turn of the road, but it was a very narrow and short one. However, bracing myself well up to it, I leaned well over to the left so as to keep my machine straight. I should have got around the bend quite safely but for a narrow path which ran at the side of the road, and was made very slippery by the drippings from the over-hanging branches of some trees which grew on the banks above. My wheels got on this path, and the alarm which my bicycle was sure to have in turning so sharp a corner, slipped clean from underneath me, and I found myself lying on my back, with my head on this path, which was the cause of all this upset, and my feet in the ditch. All at once I thought of the doctor. If he is coming down with his feet off the treadle, he will certainly be killed, for he is a man of fourteen stone. I shouted to him at the top of my voice to put his brake on and back treadle. He soon came in sight riding as gently as possible down the hill. He saw me shoot forward suddenly, and he thought that the hill must drop near the bottom. He blamed me very much for not going down gently until I saw the bottom of the hill. I have not had the experience that he has had, as this was my first long ride, but I shall know what to do in the future. I was afraid of looking at my machine for fear of seeing it smashed up, but on examining it I found that the steel rod that holds the treadles was completely twisted, and that was the only damage it had sustained, whilst I came off with less, not even a mark. Of course I was very much shaken. Riding with a twisted rod was anything but comfortable, as my toe would turn from one side to another. To go fast was absolutely impossible. The only thing that could be done was to look out for the nearest smithy. By this time we had mounted the opposite hill, and were just about to descend another, equally steep, when I heard the sound of a smith's hammer beating something on his anvil. We listened again, but there was no mistake, for down a narrow lane on our left was the smithy. We were very fortunate in catching two men working there, for in another half hour they would have been gone, as they only work half a day on Saturday. I took my lambs home and requested them to do their best at it which they did, and made a very good job of it indeed. It only took them a quarter of an hour, so we did not waste much time. They told us that last year a man was killed at the very same place where I fell, so I certainly had a very narrow escape.

(To be continued.)

PUZZLE COLUMN.

- (1) If you get up on a horse where do you get down from? A riddle, a riddle, a farmer's riddle. Alive at both ends and dead in the middle. (2) Why is a loaf of bread on a post like a racehorse? [No. 4 we have had before.—COUSIN KATE.] COUSIN IDA No. 2.

ANSWERS.

Answer to Cousin Monica's riddle: Because you find it increases (in creases). Answers to Cousin Fergus' puzzles: (1) When it is a drift. (2) Columbus. (3) Because it makes oil boil. Answers to buried boys' names: (1) James. (2) Bertie. (3) Edgar. (4) Robert. (5) Noel.—COUSIN GUYBY.

GUESSES.

Cousin Ida No. 2 answers Cousin Lilla's riddle thus: E T H E L O V E R T O A B E R D E E N N A N L I N G G O 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.

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TRICKY LIONS.

SOME of the most dangerous tricks of animals are those simulating kindness. Charles Montague, in 'Tales of a Nomad,' says that hyenas often follow lions, and finish a carcass the moment the lions have left it. Sometimes, however, the hyenas are too eager, and steal bits of meat while the lions are still at their meal. I have been told that the lion rids himself of the nuisance in the following way: he throws a piece of meat aside. When the lion is looking the other way the hyena dodges in and rushes off with the meat. Presently the lion throws another piece of meat, this time a little nearer. The hyena takes that also. At last the lion throws a piece very near indeed. The hyena, having become reckless, makes a dash at this also; but the lion wheels round and lays him low with a pat of his paw and a growl of annoyance. I remember at the Usutu on one occasion hearing at night the cries of a hyena in pain, mingled with an occasional short growl from a lion. This went on for about twenty minutes. The next morning we found the carcass of a hyena bitten across the neck, and marked by the claws of lions. They had evidently caught it and played with it some time before killing it. I suppose this was done in revenge for the annoyance they had sustained from the hyenas.

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