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.

Write on one side of the paper only.

All purely correspondence letters with envelope ends turned in are carried through the Post Office as follows:—Not exceeding ½oz, ½d; not exceeding 4oz, 1d; for every additional 2oz or fractional part thereof, ½d. It is well for correspondence to be marked 'Press Manuscript only.'

Please note, dear cousins, that all letters addressed to Cousin Kate must now bear the words 'Press Manuscript only.' If so marked, and the flap turned in, and not overweight, they will come for a ½d stamp in Auckland, but a 1d from every other place.

THE 'GRAPHIC' COUSINS' COT FUND.

This fund is for the purpose of maintaining a poor, sick child in the Auckland Hospital, and is contributed to by the 'Graphic' cousins—readers of the children's page. The cot has been already bought by their kind collection of money, and now £25 a year is needed to pay for the nursing, food and medical attendance of the child in it. Any contributions will be gladly received by Cousin Kate, care of the Lady Editor, 'New Zealand Graphic,' Shortland street, or collecting cards will be sent on application.

THE 'GRAPHIC' COUSINHOOD.

PHOTO NO. 14.

COUSIN BELLE.

Cousin Belle, Picton, is one of our early cousins, and though she does not often write, I know she sees this page, and likes to read the letters of other cousins. She belongs to a clever family, and ought to be able to send us most delightful descriptions of Picton picnics, and other amusements at that charming marine town.

SHARP THRUST.

In France, too, it appears that lawyers have the reputation of juggling with words.

A French lawyer was put into the witness-box where he gave his testimony in a very halting and confused manner. The president of the court suddenly interrupted him.

'Maitre X.,' said he, 'forget your profession for a moment, and tell us the truth.'

Mrs Morris Park: Mr Rives is out a great deal at night, isn't he? My husband always spends his evenings at home. Mrs Riverside Rives: How kind of him! But then, you see, Riverside and I have such perfect confidence in each other.

SHELLS AS MONEY.

BY G. T. FERRIS.

Many things beside the precious metals have been used as money in the history of the world, as for example, cattle, wheat, tobacco, salt, human slaves, elephants' tusks, whales' teeth, skins, cocoanuts, red feathers, etc. Of this primitive currency none has survived so extensively as shells. This measure of traffic has probably played a larger part, too, in the commercial transactions of savage and barbarian races than any other. The two most interesting examples of the use of shells as money are found in the wampum of the North American Indians and the cowries which still measure exchange over extensive sections of Africa, and in some portions of the Asiatic coast of the Indian Ocean.

When European settlers came to America they found the red men from Massachusetts to Florida buying and selling with strong of wampum. This was not only the case on the coast, but far in the interior. For the wampum shells, though found only on the sea-shore and manufactured there, found currency as far west as the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. The wampum shells, used as an ornament as well as money—for they were strung as a necklace on fibres of deer sinew—were made of the interior coat of the hard-shell clam so common on the Atlantic coast. Those made from the purple-coloured lining were double the value of the white. They were in the form of cylindrical beads about a quarter-inch long and drilled lengthwise. These strings of beads, of both colours, were sometimes arranged too on leather belts in patterns or pictures to mark important transactions or perpetuate events

So important a factor in Indian life involved considerable labour and skill in manufacturing. The writer has seen among the great shell piles along the banks of Long Island Sound, which the scientists call 'kitchen middens,' evidences of this. While the oyster shells are found whole in these heaps, often extending fifty feet deep, the clam shells are broken up, with the purple parts absent. To round the beads and pierce them evenly with a rude flint awl required patience and dexterity. Anything used for money must, of course, represent a certain amount of labour and skill in manufacture, or must be in some way hard to obtain, or else it would have no value. Other shells, only found on the Pacific coast, were also used by the Indians of the extreme West. It shows how complete the communication across the continent must have been from a very early period in the fact that both kinds of shell money have been found in the mound-builders' tombs, for this curious race preceded the Indians on our continent. As soon as the white men began to people the country, and with better tools made wampum much easier to manufacture, thus making shell money cheap, it speedily lost value and went out of use. This illustrates an interesting principle in the science of all money. During early colonial times three of the blue beads or six of the white ones were counted as the value of an English penny.

The shells of the cowry family, found in nearly all tropical waters, but most profusely of all in the Indian Ocean and the eastern Pacific, still constitute currency for many millions of the human race. This is an extensive genus, of great beauty of tint and richness of polish, white and straw coloured without and blue within, elegantly marked with dots, zigzag lines, stripes, etc. Many of the larger shells are in demand for cameo cutting, and by collectors as specimens; but the money cowries must be small and of even size in the string. They are mostly collected on the east African coast, and thence sent to the west coast, either shipped by European traders around the cape or sent across the continent by caravan. It is curious that on the east coast, where the shells can be easily had, they do not constitute currency to any great extent, trade being carried on by barter for the most part. But west of Lake Tanganika, over the vast stretches of Central Africa to the Atlantic Ocean, cowry money is the regular standard of exchange.

The relative value of cowry money varies. In British India and Siam about 4,000 pass for a shilling. The ordinary gradation in Central and Western Africa, the true home of cowry-trading, is as follows:—Forty cowries make a string; two and one-half strings equal a penny; fifty strings, a head; and ten heads one bag. A bag of 20,000 cowries just before the founding of the Congo Free State was worth 17s 6d English money. Yet this value was not uniform, varying slightly according to locality. Slaves and elephants' tusks, however, have always been settled for in barter, not in cowries. Prints and cotton cloth, iron spikes, and brass wire have proved the most acceptable payments for such articles of merchandise. But with a few exceptions of this kind, which belong to export commerce, cowries have for ages furnished the money medium. Barth, the traveller, tells us that in Mumyoma, Western Africa, the king's revenue was reckoned at 30,000,000 shells, each male adult being assessed so many shells poll-tax, so many for every slave and pack animal. There was no evading the tax collector either. It was either prompt payment, or else the headsman collected a poll-tax in his fashion, and the victim's property was confiscated.

The establishment of the Congo Free State, with its railways, steamboats, trading-posts, and the opening up of this enormous territory to commerce on a great scale will probably before many years exterminate cowry currency in all but the remoter regions. Such money ceases to be of use with the coming of civilised usages.

WILD ZEBRAS.

The zebra when wild is a ferocious animal, and an unwary hunter is likely to suffer from its teeth and hoofs. The author of 'Kloof and Karoo' says that a Boer in Cape Colony had once forced a zebra to the brink of a precipice, when the desperate creature turned upon him, attacked him with its teeth, and actually tore one of his feet from the leg.

Another author writes of a soldier who mounted a half-domesticated zebra. The creature, after making the most furious attempts to get rid of its rider, plunged over a steep bank into the river, and threw the soldier as it emerged.

While the man lay half-stunned upon the ground, the zebra quietly walked up to him and bit off one of his ears. Zebras can never be tamed, unless the process is begun while they are still very young. H. A. Bryden gives an instance of a tragic fate which befell one of them, captured when he was seven or eight years old.

He had joined a troop of horses belonging to one of the author's friends, and finally allowed himself to be driven with them into a kraal, or enclosure. It was then determined to keep him, and if possible to domesticate him.

For this purpose he was lassoed and tied to a tree; but so ferocious was he in the presence of man that the greatest precautions had to be observed in approaching him. All possible means were taken to induce him to feed. When captured he was in splendid condition, and his coat shone in the sun. Herbage was brought from the mountain tops where he had been used to graze, and every conceivable food placed before him, but in vain; he steadily refused to eat.

Water he drank greedily, and would dispose of three bucketeful at a time.

At length, after three weeks of vain endeavour to tame the noble creature, during which time he subsisted entirely on water, he died.

AN ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS AN INJURY.

At the inquest on the body of Allen Alfred Baker, aged twenty-seven, who was killed by an elephant belonging to Mr George Sanger, circus proprietor, Mr Sanger said:—I have had to complain of Baker's treatment of the elephant, and elephants do not forget injuries or kindnesses. I remember several remarkable instances. On one occasion when I had been separated from an elephant for two and a-half years, the elephant, on seeing me, seized me round the waist with its trunk and would not let me go until it had hugged and caressed me for a long time. Tears of pleasure ran down the brute's cheeks. I can mention an instance of sagacity on the part of this particular elephant. Some years ago a nephew of mine, then a child of three, was playing round 'Charlie' and climbing up his legs. 'Charlie' gently resented this, but the child went back to his play. 'Charlie' then took the child up by his trunk, shook him gently, and put him down some yards away. If unkindness is shown an elephant will nurse the injury for years. The Coroner—Is this the usual mode of attack? Witness—Yes, if an elephant is really angry it will use its tusks; if, however, the animal simply means to insult a person he will brush him aside with his trunk. 'Charlie' has appeared in twenty-three pantomimes and in five Lord Mayor's shows. This seems to me to be sufficient to show that the disposition of the elephant must have been quiet and docile. I wish to spare the parents, but I must say that the elephant was not well treated when Baker had charge.

CAPTAIN-GENERAL.

When President Lincoln, in 1861, called for troops to serve for three months, one of the first to respond was a young schoolmaster in an obscure village in southern Pennsylvania. Because of his educational qualifications he was chosen captain of his company. For a week he was busy organising, and after his own ideas, disciplining his command.

That he might present an appearance sufficiently martial, he ordered from the village tailor a uniform. Neither he nor the tailor had any idea of the distinguishing badges of rank so important in the outer make-up of a soldier, and an old print of General Worth, which had decked the wall of the tailor's parlour since the days of the war with Mexico, was resorted to for hints. The result was a faultless copy of the garments of the hero of Cerro Gordo.

The captain was delighted, and donning the suit, he set out with his command for the state capital. On the way he stopped for a day to gather ideas in tactics at Carlisle Barracks, then a regular army post.

The sight of a round hundred of bumpkins as inharmoniously clad as the army of Falstaff or the soldiers of the Sultan of Morocco, headed by a major-general in full regimentals and marching on foot up to the barracks, was a novel one to the regulars, who, taking in the situation, gravely saluted the general at every opportunity. One old sergeant spent about the entire day in a charitable donation of information on company movements.

When the next morning came the 'captain-general' marshalled his host, and footed it eighteen miles to Harrisburg, where, at high noon, to spirited music, the company, with its glittering leader, tramped into the city. For two days the captain strutted about, wondering at the salaams that greeted him from all quarters, until an acquaintance met him and said:

'When did you become a major-general?'

'A major-general! I am a captain,' he replied.

'I will tell you what you are,' said the acquaintance. 'You are the greatest sensation in camp, and the sooner you take off that major-general's coat the better; the boys think you are a drum-major.'

As the captain's pocket was light and his wardrobe limited, no course was open to him but to cut down the coat. By back alleys he was guided to a tailor's shop, where, rushing up to the astonished proprietor, he whispered:

'My friend, what will you charge to reduce my rank and make a captain of me?'

MODIFIED PRESCRIPTION.

Mr Oscanyan, in his book, 'The Sultan and his People,' says that a Turkish physician was called to visit a man who was very ill of typhus fever. The doctor considered the case hopeless, but prescribed for the patient, and took his leave. The next day, in passing by, he inquired of a servant at the door if his master was dead.

'Dead!' was the reply; 'no, he is much better.'

The doctor hastened up-stairs to obtain the solution of the miracle.

'Why, said the convalescent, 'I was consumed with thirst, and I drank a pailful of the juice of pickled cabbage.'

'Wonderful!' quoth the doctor; and out came the tablets, on which he made this inscription: 'Cured of typhus fever, Mehemed Agha, an upholsterer, by drinking a pailful of pickled cabbage juice.'

Soon after, the doctor was called to another patient, a yaghlikgee, or dealer in embroidered handkerchiefs, who was suffering from the same malady. He forthwith prescribed 'a pailful of pickled cabbage juice.'

On calling the next day to congratulate his patient on his recovery, he was astonished to be told that the man was dead.

In his bewilderment at these phenomena, he came to the safe conclusion, and duly noted it in his memoranda, that 'Although in case of typhus fevor pickled cabbage juice is an efficient remedy, it is not to be used unless the patient be by profession an upholsterer.'

SCOTCH LOGIC.

A Scotch minister was startled by the original views of a not very skilful ploughman whom he had just hired. He noticed that the furrows were far from straight, and said:

'John, yer drills are no near straucht ava, that is no like Tammie's wark'—'Tammie' being the person who had previously plowed the glebe.

'Tammie didna ken his wark,' observed the man, coolly, as he turned his team about; 'ye see, when the drills is crookit, the sun gets in on a' sides, an' so ye get early tatties.'