



**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 4oz. 4d.; not exceeding 4oz. 1d.; for every additional 2oz or fractional part thereof, 4d. 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 4d 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.

Dear Cousin Kate,—I am not going to write you a very long letter just now. It has been rather windy weather this last few days; have you not found it so? though I think we must not grumble, for very likely it will turn to rain. I think it will be a good thing if it does, for water is getting very scarce, and we need it. I enjoyed my Christmas holidays very much, and when they were ended I wished I had some more. I am still collecting, but cannot go on without a badge; please would you send me one, as I was collecting one day and lost mine. Have you had a cold yet? we have; but we are all well again. How is the little one in the cot? I hope it is getting on well. I must now come to a close, sending best love to you and all the cousins.—Vera.

Enclosed please find 6d for the badge.

[Thank you very much for your nice letter, Vera. How neatly you write. I have no badges left just to-day, but am having some very pretty ones made and will send you yours in a few days. It is good of you to go on collecting. I hope all the cousins will do so too. Very soon I hope to tell you of some prizes I am going to offer. You must be sure to try for them. I am glad you had nice holidays, and know how hard it seems to go back to work. But of course if we didn't work we would not enjoy holidays, would we? Write and tell me if you like the badge when you get it.—Cousin Kate.]

**THE REAL HERO.**

Sanny's horse was dancing around the hitching-post at the gate, tugging impatiently at his halter, while Sanny was loling in the hammock on the porch. After a while he was going to ride around the mountain to the lower pasture, to see the fellows break in broncos.

He was in no hurry; they would be at it all the afternoon. Besides, he was tired, and had eaten a hearty dinner. He had spent the morning chopping off chickens' heads and dressing the fowls for market, and he had eaten a double portion of dumpling at dinner because his uncle did not want his.

This uncle, his mother's brother, William Sanford, had come up into the Colorado mountains to be cured of lung trouble. He was a hearty and

jolly fellow, but unlearned in mountain ways, and very restless. He had made up his mind to drive down to Denver that afternoon, and since he was bound to go, Sanny's mother had decided to take advantage of his trip and go with him, to sell her butter and eggs and chickens, although it was only Friday, and her usual market day was Saturday.

Sanny's father, who had lived in the mountains all his life and knew the weather-signs, said to her:

'I advise you to wait until the drought is broken. It's likely to break before many hours, in my opinion. It's the closest day I've ever known in these parts, and any one with ears can hear trouble brewing over yonder mountains. You may be caught by a cloudburst.'

William Sanford laughed. 'See here, John,' he said, 'you've been expecting this drought to break for the last month, and it's still as dry as ashes. There is no more sign of rain to-day than there was yesterday. It was just as sultry, and I heard the same rumbling over the mountain. I've business that I must attend to by telegraph. I couldn't sleep last night for thinking of it. If you can spare the team I'm going this afternoon.'

'If he's going, I'm going, too,' declared Sanny's mother, whisking around to get ready. 'Of course the horses can't make the trip to-morrow if they are driven down to-day. Now, don't you worry, John. If it rains hard, we'll just stop somewhere overnight and go on to-morrow. I've done so lots of times, you know. Sanny, don't forget to feed the chickens, and help grandma with the dishes, now, son.'

Mrs Lane twitched on her sun-bonnet, climbed into the wagon and took the reins from her brother.

'I'm the best driver,' she laughed. 'Besides, I know the horses and I know the mountains, and I'm not going to risk having my eggs spilled over a precipice. Get up!'

John Lane sat down on the step and watched them as they drove down the hill and out of sight. Then his gaze turned to the green valley before him. The house was backed securely into a hillside, half-way up a spruce ridge. In front, the ground sloped away across the road and down to the spring, whence it swelled up again in beautiful, cultivated fields. Up the valley to the right, down the valley to the left and climbing the opposite mountain, green crops glistened and waved in the sunshine.

'It's the best crop I've raised since I went to farming,' remarked John Lane, with satisfaction. 'I declare, we've snapped up the best farming strip in the mountains, son.'

'I know it,' said Sanny, sitting up in the hammock. 'But farming's awfully hard work, pa. Why don't you stick to horses?'

'I guess we'll stick to both,' smiled John Lane. 'You'd better tend to Prince; he's chafing himself with that halter. Now I'm going back up the wood road,' he added, rising and stretching his long legs, 'to see how the men are coming on with the timber. You had better wait here with grandma until I come back. I tell you I don't like the way the weather is boiling around the mountain.'

Sanny unwound his horse from the halter; then he went around the horse and filled the woodbox for grandma. He mixed corn-meal for the newest chicks, and fed it to the downy little things from the tips of his fingers. Then he went down cellar and took a big drink of buttermilk to settle his dinner.

'Sanford, Sanford!' called his grandmother to him, in a frightened voice. Sanny rushed up-stairs. Coming out of the dark cellar, the whole world seemed ablaze. The storm-brewing mountain was hooded in black, but from beneath the seething clouds burst a lurid light that burned over the valley with portentous glare. Chasing streaks of lightning cracked the black cloud-mass, and terrific roars of thunder echoed from the mountain's sides. But above them

the sky was blue, and the sun shone steadily upon the fields of waving grain.

'Did you ever see the like!' gasped grandma. 'It's a cloudburst, as sure as you're born. Your mother and that crazy Will Sanford—mercy on us! Come in and shut the door! The waters will—Sanford, Sanford! Where are you? Sanford! Come back, come back this minute! Sanford!'

'Go in and shut the door, grandma,' yelled Sanny, from the gate. He had jerked Prince's halter loose; he was on the horse's back—he was off down the road. He could ride Prince as well with a halter as with a bridle.

The awful light faded out. The aspens trembled tranquilly in the sunshine that climbed the steep walls of the canon, and the tall columbines waved their stately heads. Sanny swept by the familiar scenes without a glance. He dug his heels into the horse, his elbows slapped his sides, he whooped his fiercest cowboy yell; a cloud of dust rolled back from his horse's feet.

New and then Sanny gave a fearful glance over his shoulder. The canon walls cut off sight of the storm-brewing mountain, but above the clatter of Prince's feet broke the crashing of thunderbolts, and beneath all Sanny's keen ears detected a low, continuous roar that caused his brown face to pale.

Already the slender mountain steam that threaded the roadside had risen in its bed, and was lashing itself to white foam.

A lone man was cultivating a valley that broke from the canon. Sanny checked Prince a trifle, by hard work. 'Hun!' he yelled. 'A cloud-burst on the mountain!'

The man caught up his hoe and ran.

Sanny stopped at the lower pasture. The bronco tamers were tossing hilariously.

'A cloudburst, a flood!' shrieked Sanny.

The horse-tamers paused, listened and whipped their horses up the mountain's sides.

A 'mountain schooner' crept slowly up the mountain road, bearing a party of jolly campers.

'A flood! A cloudburst! Turn back! Drive up the divide! Hurry for your lives!'

'A flood!' The campers looked up at the cloudless sky and laughed. 'A flood in your eye!' they shouted; but Sanny was out of hearing, and they went gaily onward to their doom.

Five miles from home Prince overtook the team. Sanny's mother looked back at the sound of hoofs; she recognised Sanny—she looked beyond him.

'A flood! A flood!' She pushed Will Sanford from the wagon, sprang to the ground and gave the horses a stinging lash. She scrambled up the mountainside, her brother tugging behind her.

'Sanny!' she screamed. But Sanny and Prince had sped on. They had one more message to deliver.

For a week two campers had been loitering in the beautiful valley. They had pitched their tent close to the trickling mountain stream beneath a cluster of pines, tethering their horses among the aspens. They were city-worn and weak—men who were breathing in health and strength before climbing farther into the mountains. One of them lay in a hammock, gazing into the fathomless blue of the sky. The other sprawled listlessly in the sunshine, watching chipmunks steal oats from the fodder bag.

'Have you noticed,' remarked he, 'how noisy the brook is all of a sudden? Why, I declare, it's full to the bridle. It's running over. By George! We've got to get out of this; we're going to be flooded.'

'Hi!'

An empty wagon bounded by the horses blind with fright. A bare-headed rider dashed across the bridge. The bridge melted away from beneath the very horse's hoofs. Behind the boy came a seething wall of water ten, twenty,—thirty feet high. 'Come!'

Sanny spurred Prince up a steep mountain path. The terrified campers scrambled after him. They clung to bushes, they clutched at rocks, up, up, up!

The water caught them, but one got upon a rock and pulled the other after him. The canon was narrowed

here; the rush of water mounted high; it beat the mountainside, it tore trees, it wrenched rocks. And Sanny was beneath; Prince had stumbled and fallen, and the cruel wave had passed.

When the storm-washed valley looked up again at the unchanged sky, the campers found Sanny's body jammed into the fissure of a rock. Just as they had managed to get his headen weight down the mountain-side, his mother came running down the road. She crossed the boiling stream on a fallen pine; she snatched Sanny out of the strangers' arms. 'Sanny! Son!'

The men who heard that terrible cry never forgot it, nor did they forget the scene that followed.

After that first cry of distress, Mrs Lane collected her energies and went to work. She turned Sanny face downward; she raised his body and let the water flow from his mouth. She pressed and inflated his lungs; she bade the campers strip off his wet garments, to slip him, to rub him, to wrap him in their own coats.

William Sanford came panting down the canon. He bent over the boy: 'No use, sister, he's dead.'

'No!' ejaculated Sanny's mother. 'You've got brandy. Let me have it.'

John Lane galloped down the road as pale as a ghost. 'Thank God!' he cried when he saw his wife. But when he saw Sanny, he dropped on his knees, shuddering from head to foot.

'The boy is dead. Our boy is dead,' he groaned.

'John Lane,' cried his wife, 'take hold here. Do as I am doing. If you love Sanny, take hold and help. We've got to get the breath back into his body.'

The horse-tamers galloped down the road, and stood a little way off with sober faces. They had just helped to drag from the gulch above the bodies of the six foolish campers, who had gone up in the wagon. The horses and the mountain schooner had been hung by the flood twenty feet up on the mountainside.

The farmer whom Sanny had warned from his field came in a long wagon. His wife had sent blankets. He brought them over the stream in his arms.

'Better let me put him into the wagon and carry him home,' Mrs Lane, said the man, with great pity. Sanny's mother lifted a grim face. 'If you think you came to carry back a corpse, go home.'

For two hours and ten minutes she kept them at work. They thought her mad. Even John Lane relaxed his efforts. But she made him work; she made him rub, she made him give his own warmth to the boy's cold body. And at last Sanny gasped and shuddered.

His mother cast a triumphant look around, and sank down unweaved. But when the men carried Sanny to the wagon, she clambered in beside him.

'Ma?' murmured Sanny, inquiringly.

'Hush, Sanny; it's all right. You've saved your lives. My boy is a hero.' Sanny made a sick grimace. 'If being a hero feels like this!—'

It was all right a week later, and had to accept much gratitude and other things.

Seventeen people had perished under that awful flood. Sanny Lane had saved ten lives at risk of his own. The horse, Prince, had been carried seven miles by the flood, and there they buried him. The bronco-tamers rolled a boulder over the horse's grave, and on it one of the campers whom Sanny had saved—the engraver at Denver—carved the epitaph:

'Sanford Lane's Horse, Prince,—A Real Hero, with a brief notice of the event.'

'I wish you'd written, "The Real Hero,"' said Sanny, with a lump in his throat.

MARY BREWSTER DOWNS.

**GETTING THROUGH THE LIST.**

'What does your Majesty intend to do next?' inquired the German Emperor's friend.

'I don't know,' was the answer, with a suppressed yawn. 'I'm afraid the field is pretty near exhausted. When you get time I wish you'd try to think up something more for me to excel in.'