LITTLE PEOPLE'S LETTERS

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—Our brother and us have a dear little pony called Balintine. It bucks awfully when we get on it. He is very fond of sugar. We have got six white rats called Trix, Nell, Pinch, Joe, Nan, and Jim. They are very playful, but sometimes bite. I got bitten by a dog the other day. My word, I did squeal. We think you ought to get lots of letters, your paper is so nice. My brother and I always read it. Don't you think it's getting cold? Our father teaches us school. He growls awful if we don't know our lessons.—Yours truly, BILLY AND TOMMY SNOOKS, aged 8. Blenheim, April 1st.

P.S.—We are twins.

[When I read your letter first I said: 'This is an April joke,' and was going to put it in the waste paper basket behind my chair. Then I thought it had made me laugh, perhaps it would amuse someone else, and laughing is very good for all people, you know. So here it is.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—We have got three dear little dogs named Tiny, Nip, and Top. They are very good rabbit dogs. They have been up country for about six weeks now. I have got another little pet lamb now, as our other one died. We call it Amy. It is such a dear little one; it follows me all over the place. Last week I thought it was lost. It went up the hills with all the other sheep, but it soon got tired. It found it did not get enough to eat, so it came home yesterday half starved. We live up country, and we do not go to school. Mother teaches us at home, but we often go out for a ride to town and stay two or three nights. We might go down on Tuesday and stay till Friday. I hope we do, for I like having a change sometimes, but I love the dear old place where we live. It is a very pretty place. Everybody admires it that passes.—I am, etc., JIM NORWAY, aged 10. Blenheim, April.

[How do your dogs like the lamb? I hope you had a pleasant trip. A change is always pleasant—for a time. I hope you and your brother will write again.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—As my brother has written to you I thought I would write. I have four dogs. Their names are Snuff, Pinch, Toby, and Hector. My cousin Winny is very hard at work painting. My cousin Alfred has a little pony; its name is Tiny Pig. We are going away soon, I think. Will you put my letter in the GRAPHIC? We have got such a nice orchard. We have apples, plums, peaches, and other lots of fruit. We have three horses. One is so nice and quiet; it does not buck or run away ever. We also have a very pretty parrot. It says, 'Pretty Poll! Feed the baby! Come quick.' My Uncle Dick gave it to us last month. I suppose my brother is going to tell you about the lamb we have got. I was five years old last month, and I had a birthday party.—TIM NORWAY. April.

[Thank you for your nice little letter. It is very good for your age.—COUSIN KATE.]

BOY'S TELEGRAPH.

THE present generation is so accustomed to the electro magnetic telegraph that it is hardly remembered that there were various forms of telegraphing, that is, of communicating messages instantly to a distance, before the Morse telegraph was invented. Perhaps it will interest the readers of THE GRAPHIC to be told how two boys reinvented one of these forms of telegraphing when they could not put up a wire to be worked by a battery.

These boys, Tom and Eugene, were sons of a physician, and lived in the backwoods of North Carolina, far from railroads and towns. Eugene attended a school in the neighbourhood, while Tom was older, and a clerk in a country store near by. There was often a need of a means of communication between the store and the doctor's residence, especially after dark, and as the distance was nearly a mile, these boys conceived the idea of constructing a telegraph line between the two places.

As a preliminary to this work, they learned to write in the telegraphic alphabet, which, as every boy knows, is composed of dots and dashes, thus:

— . . . . . — . . — .

This is called the Morse code, because it was invented by Prof. S. F. B. Morse, and they soon became quite expert in writing it and in spelling sentences to each other by the sound of rapping on a table with a key or pocket-knife. They were now ready for the wires and instruments, but were astonished to find that the necessary outfit, at that time, would cost them upwards of £5, a sum far beyond their means.

Since their leisure time was mainly after dark, they concluded to try some means of signalling to each other by using a lamp. The apparatus they finally made was so simple and effective that any boy, handy with a jack-knife, can easily make one.

It consists of a lamp inside a small box, with a hole on the side at the height of the flame, and a means of opening or closing the hole easily and rapidly. The box was an ordinary cigar box, and the lamp a small one burning kerosene oil. Several small holes were made in the bottom of the box to admit air, and a large one in the top just over the lamp-chimney.

When closed the light was entirely concealed, except when the cover to the opening on the side was pushed back. This cover was shaped and made of thin cigar-box wood also. It had a single screw at the bottom, and a small knob to push by. The movement of the cover or shutter was from side to side, like an inverted pendulum. There was a tack on each side, one to keep the shutter from going too far one way, and the other to stop it exactly over the hole, when closed. A small spring of whalebone or a rubber band served to hold the shutter in its closed position.

When this box and lamp were used at night, the opening and closing of the shutter served to show the light as a succession of quick or long flashes, which look at a distance exactly like a firefly. To open and close the shutter very quickly makes a spark to represent a *dot*, and to make a dash the shutter is held open about half a second. For a long dash, representing an I, the shutter is simply kept open a trifle longer than for the regular dash.

A little practice will soon enable one to make the short and long flashes corresponding to the characters of the Morse code, and the signals are easily read, even at a distance of several miles. Of course the operations must take place between stations visible from each other, and the box must be turned in the direction of the distant observer. For very long distances a larger lamp and reflector will be better.

With such a box under his arm, while out of doors, or at a table near a window looking in the proper direction, Tom would telegraph long conversations to Eugene, and read his replies in the distant sparks. On cold, dark or rainy nights these boys were able to talk with each other, and were sometimes able to send messages of importance, which saved them many steps.

The main drawback to the system was the want of a means of attracting the other's attention, or to 'call,' as the telegraph men say. This was done by setting the box open, and showing the light till noticed at the other station. The 'call' would soon be seen by the other boy, because he would occasionally glance in that direction.

They also agreed upon a system of signals meaning 'Repeat,' 'Do not understand your last word,' 'All right,' 'Go ahead,' etc.

Many a boy or girl may thus find a means of amusement in communicating with friends, even across wide rivers, or at long distances in a hilly or mountainous country, with such a home made telegraph. There are situations where a couple of enterprising boys might make considerable money out of it.

T. C. HARRIS.

DON ALPHONSO.

THE little King of Spain is very frank and unrestrained in his expression of opinions, and sometimes makes personal remarks about his subjects of a sort seldom indulged in by older and more diplomatic kings. He is very mischievous, but his attendants, in keeping him out of scrapes, have to take great care not to 'impair the dignity of his Most Catholic Majesty.' The paper, from which this sketch is taken, says that a footman who put out his arms and caught the King one day when the little fellow tripped and was about to fall headlong downstairs, was dismissed from his post for having dared to touch, with his plebeian hands, the royal person. True, the Queen rewarded the man with a large sum of money, and gave him another situation, but even she could not retain him in the household.

On Good Friday, according to a custom which has prevailed in Spain since the sixteenth century, seven criminals received pardon. As soon as vespers were over in the chapel of the royal palace, the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo stepped down from the high altar, and approached a table on which were laid seven rolls of parchment.

Each roll contained the full pardon of a prisoner lying under sentence of death, and had, a few hours previously, received the regent's signature. Placing his hand on these rolls, according to custom, the chaplain asked the Queen:

'Senora, does your Majesty grant pardon to these criminals?'

With a tender glance at the little boy, whose hand she held, she replied:

'In the name of the King, my son, I pardon these persons, as I look to God to grant His pardon and mercy to us. Amen.'

The rolls were then placed on the high altar, and after a prayer and benediction, delivered to the Minister of Justice.

Edna was looking at the sunset one evening. It was very beautiful; above the golden glow hung a heavy, purplish cloud. The little girl's brown eyes shone with wondering delight. 'O auntie,' she whispered, 'hasn't God got pretty curtains!'

Mrs Mumble: 'I wonder how people got the idea that porous plasters would be beneficial?'

Mr Mumble: 'From the fact that they are hole-some.'

MRS CHING-LING'S MAID.

(A SEQUEL TO AN AFTERNOON CALL.)

WE had arranged that Mrs Ching-Ling's maid should bring the children to see me some day.

The maid had hesitated at first, saying as she was the cook it was not her place to take the children out. At last, however, she consented to bring three of them.

The hour for the visit came. I had lemonade and cake on my tea table, and was all ready when the knock sounded at the door.

There stood the maid and the three children—the oldest Miss Ching-Ling, a little boy called Jimmy and the baby.

I was rather sorry the baby had been brought because, being very young and small, it kept getting lost.

However, I welcomed them all heartily and asked them in.

The maid looked very nice in her cap and apron, but the children—well—the less said about the children the better.

I gave Jimmy a little cotton shawl to cover his bare shoulders. I tried not to see Miss Ching-Ling's knees sticking through the holes in her poor old skirt.

'How is your mamma, my dear?' I asked this young lady after she was seated.

'She's no better,' answered the maid, in her usual way, laying the baby on the tea-table.

'That is hardly the place for a child,' I said, as I took it up and held the poor thing while I passed the cake and lemonade.

Miss Ching-Ling and Jimmy refused to taste anything. I never saw such bashful children. All my urging had no effect.

'They always act like that,' said the maid, with her mouth full of cake. She had two large slices in her lap and was drinking her third glass of lemonade.

'Poor little souls, I said. 'Perhaps if you would induce their mother to make some clothes for them they would not be so shy and silent. I don't wonder they look ashamed.'

'Oh, what's the use?' said the maid, indifferently. Now that the cake was all eaten the maid seemed rather restless and tired, I thought.

Just then I lost the baby. I was much alarmed because I was afraid I should tread on it, so I began to hunt anxiously under the tables and chairs, calling on the children to help; but they never stirred from their seats, and the maid was looking at something she had taken from her pocket and did not seem to hear.

I found the baby at last (it was under the sofa), and had turned back to my guests when I saw a strange sight. *The maid was spinning a top.*

So delighted was she with this toy she did not appear to care for anything else, and was dancing up and down, her cap awry and her apron flying in the air.

'Don't stop it; don't stop it!' she cried out, wildly, as I approached. 'It's going to hum!'

'It seems to me,' I said, as soon as I had caught my breath, 'that this is very strange conduct for a nursemaid.

The maid did really blush a little.

'I only bought it this morning, mamma,' she explained. 'I couldn't help spinning it. Oh, it's humming! Do hear it!'

I drew myself up stiffly. 'I think you had better go now,' I said.

The maid looked very confused.

'Perhaps I had,' she said, meekly, picking up the top and putting it in her pocket.

'And the children? Do you mean to leave them behind?' I asked, as she went slowly out of the room.

'Oh, I forgot,' faltered she, coming back.

'Yes,' I said, looking down into that maid's blue eyes and quoting his own words. '"I did my part all right, but you forgot, you know you—"'

But the maid was holding me tight round the neck and kissing all my words away.

NORMAN HUMOUR.

SUPERSTITIONS about rocks, which were once popular among the peasant classes of Europe, are dying out. The familiar legend is of a rock which, moved at a certain time by some strange witch-craft, revolves or rolls aside, and discloses treasure hidden beneath, the time usually being specially inconvenient for witnesses, as for instance, 'on the stroke of twelve on Christmas Eve.' A peculiar story of this kind is still told in Normandy. M. Julien Tiersot writes of it in the *Revue des Traditions Populaires*:

In the neighbourhood of Caudbec-en-Caux there is a stone which, the country people say, revolves while the bells ring the Angelus at noon on Good Friday. A walk in the country in the spring at the hour of noon is an agreeable diversion, and the sceptical stranger readily consents to go and see the alleged magical stone.

The stranger and his escort reach the stone and wait. Time passes. It is afternoon.

'But the stone has not moved!' he says.

'Wait, you have not heard the Angelus rung yet,' is the smiling reply, and one might wait for ever, for on Good Friday the Angelus is never rung.

CHILDREN'S SAYINGS.

A TEACHER was giving a lesson on the human body to a bright class of six-year-olds. She began by asking about the school-house, then let them tell something about the houses they lived in. Then she told them that God had made a little house for each of us alone. They quickly understood, and eyes were shining and hands raised. 'Oh, Miss M, that house wears clothes,' cried one. 'And it's shingled with hair,' said another. 'The windows are the eyes,' said dear little Lenore. 'Mamma says she can look right into my heart through my eyes.' 'The door is the mouth,' cried a round little fellow, putting his fingers between his rosy lips. Little Willie jumped quite out of the seat with the suddenness of his idea: 'And the nose is the porch over the door, and the buttons on my coat are the steps up to my front door!'

'I know,' said a tiny maiden, 'I know how to be polite. You must say "yes, ma'am" to a lady, and "no, ma'am" to a gentleman.'

On hearing the humming of a bee, Florence asked, 'Mamma, is it grinding its honey?'