



CHILDREN'S CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

DEAR COUSIN KATE—I hope you will have room for this. I live in the country, and have such a pretty garden of my own. I grow potatoes and some flowers. I sell new potatoes at twopence a pound (when mine are ready first) to my mamma. But when hers are ready she won't pay so much for mine, so I cook them for myself. My little dog is so sharp. When I say 'cats' he runs and looks all over for them. His name is Bob.—Your loving cousin, JACK HIDDEN.

[You must be kind to your cat, Jack, and not allow the dog to chase it. How would you like a big animal to chase you? I am very fond of new potatoes, and had some a fortnight ago.—COUSIN KATE.]

DEAR COUSIN KATE.—I think the cousins' letters great fun. Here is a riddle for them: 'When is a door not a door?' Are you fond of riddles? I wonder if the cousins can guess it. It seems nice having so many cousins all over New Zealand. I wish we could all meet and have a party. We should like to see some of the nice, amusing letter-writers who tell us such nice things about their homes. Hoping this is not too long.—I am, yours affectionately, COUSIN MARY B.

[No, your letter is not too long. Yes, it would be very nice to see all the cousins. I wanted them to send their photographs to put in the GRAPHIC, but they have not done so.—COUSIN KATE.]

buttons, and the hundreds of other articles for which 'mother-of-pearl' is used.

Another fact concerning the pearl-oyster and the pearl itself is very little understood. I have seen in books of instruction both in this country and in England the statement that 'the formation of the pearl in the oyster-shell is caused by a disease of the oyster'; and this statement is more or less generally believed, as is also the erroneous inference to be drawn from it, that the oyster referred to is the edible oyster. The mother-of-pearl is nothing more than a series of layers of nacreous matter deposited by the oyster upon the interior of the shell, and the pearl itself is a perfectly accidental formation. It is caused by a similar deposit of nacre around some foreign object. This foreign substance may be a grain of sand, a parasite, or some similar object; but most authorities agree that it is more usually an undeveloped egg of the oyster around which this natural deposit is thrown.

The largest pearl ever found measures two inches long, and weighs three ounces. This is of Eastern origin. The largest found in the Gulf of California did not exceed an inch and a quarter long, and was somewhat larger than the egg of a thrush. Many of the Californian pearls are black and speckled. These are considered more valuable than the white pearls in Europe, but the most highly prized pearls of all are pink.

ROBERT F. WALSH.

HIPPITY-HOP.

HIPPITY hop, hippity hop,
To the corner and back without ever a stop;
Little sister and brother with arms round each other
Do errands for mother at market and shop.

Hippity hop, hippity hop,
Look out, little brother, or sister will trip;
Be nimble and sprightly, take hold of hands tightly,
And laugh as you lightly go hoppity skip.

WHY THE DUCKS DIED.

THE author of 'Sketches of Native Life' says that most European residents of India keep large poultry yards. He followed the general custom, but for some time found it very unprofitable. His first brood of ducks died one after another in a most orderly manner, one at a time, at intervals of twenty-four hours.

The sweeper who took care of them assured us that he could cure them if we would give him two annas' worth of garlic, black pepper and chillies. The cure was certainly worth the money, and we gave it to him accordingly; but, alas! it was spent in vain—the ducks continued to die.

We were new to the country, and equally new to the raising of ducks. We had no suspicion of the cause of the excessive mortality; but at last we received a visit from a friend.

We mentioned the extraordinary fatality to which our ducks were subject, and asked him if he could suggest a cure. Our innocence was greeted with a peal of laughter.

'Yes,' he replied. 'I can. Call the sweeper, and tell him that for every duck that dies from this date he will have to pay four annas.'

We did so; not another duck died. The truth was that the sweeper had been killing the ducks for his own use, and relying on our ignorance, had been so audacious as to ask, in the name of medicine, for money to buy condiments for seasoning.

SHARPWATCH.

THE author of 'Out of Doors in Tsarland' says that no person can live in Russia without being well known to the secret police, in whose records there is certain to be a long and exhaustive account of his personal history, including a list of his friends and associates, a description of his occupations and amusements, and a general sketch of his character. The author is disposed to think that the police are not unnecessarily suspicious, and that they seldom commit the blunder of arresting innocent people. On the other hand, he gives them credit for marvellous acuteness in the detection of crime.

A foreign firm in St. Petersburg had in their employ a Russian clerk. He had been with them for many years, and enjoyed the best of reputation as an honest and faithful man. One day, to the boundless astonishment of the foreign merchant and his staff, the office was visited by a *pristaf*, or chief officer of the police force.

'I have called to inquire,' he said, 'whether you have lately been robbed by any of your clerks?'

The merchant answered that nothing of the kind had happened. Why was the question asked?

The *pristaf* explained that, although the firm might have felt no uneasiness about the proceedings of their clerk, Mr V—, yet the police had long had their suspicions, which suspicions had culminated in his arrest at the railway station that very morning. Would the gentleman please give



WHAT PEARLS ARE MADE OF, AND WHERE THEY ARE FOUND.

VERY few people are aware that the pearl-oyster is not in any way like the oysters which we eat. It is of an entirely different species, and, as a matter of fact, the shells of the so-called pearl oyster are of far more value to those engaged in 'pearl-fishing' than the pearls. There are extensive pearl fisheries in the Gulf of California, and some of the finest pearls have been taken from these waters. In 1881 one pearl, a black one, was sold for £2,000, and every year since that time many pearls have been taken from the beds in the Californian Gulf valued at over £1,000 each. But such finds are very rare, and, as a rule, the pearls which are brought up are of very little value. The shells, however, are very valuable; most of them are shipped to Europe, where they are manufactured into ornaments, knife handles,

THREE LITTLE FOLKS.

THREE little folks at play are we,
And we're as happy as we can be,
We're dressed to receive our guests you see,
And we're waiting for them patiently,
No. 1 is in white and her spots are pink;
No. 2 is in grey with stockings of ink;
No. 3 is in blue. I'm the prettiest, I think.

In my language class in school one day, the sentence 'He earns his livelihood "by hook or by crook"' occurred, and I asked the class what 'by hook or by crook' meant, and only one boy raised his hand. 'What does it mean?' I asked of him. 'Oh, catching fish or catching sheep, I'm sure!'

orders to have the books of the firm carefully gone over, to see whether there had been any defalcation?

With strong protests on the part of the merchant against this unjust treatment of his trusty clerk, an examination was begun; and it soon transpired that the firm had been plundered to the extent of more than twenty thousand roubles!

Then, of course, the merchant begged to know how the police had become aware of what was going on. The officer explained that it was all simple enough. Mr V— had been seen to be spending more money than a man in his position could be presumed honestly to have. Watch had been kept upon him accordingly. His champagne suppers, his boxes at the opera, and all such expenditures had been recorded. It was known also that he had made a large remittance to a 'friend' in Paris, and so, when he went to the railway station to buy his ticket to that city he was arrested.