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Children's Page

COUSINS' BADGES.

Cousins requiring badges are requested to send an addressed envelope, when the badge will be forwarded by return mail.

COUSINS' CORRESPONDENCE.

Dear Cousin Kate,—For a long time now I have read the cousins' letters in the "Graphic," and been very interested. I am 17 years old now; but if you don't think I am too old to begin, I should like to join your band. Apia is quite a small town, but the scenery in our little island is lovely. Although this is my birthplace, I was in Auckland for over 9 years at school, also in Sydney for a year. Just at present the weather here is very hot, and although I have been home a year now, I still feel rather limp. I expect you have heard all about our volcano. Savaii is 60 miles from this island. My sister and I went to see the eruption at the beginning of this year, and it was a lovely sight from the boat. When we were there, the crater was quite inaccessible, the lava having completely covered up the track. A few months later a couple of men got to the crater by walking over the partially cooled lava. But that is a feat I should not have cared to attempt, for it was very risky. A party of us walked amongst the lava for three-quarters of a mile. It was not pleasant, for there was a breeze blowing in from the sea over the lava, and the heat was intense. Next morning the path we had taken was covered with lava. I have not been there since, but they say that the lava is destroying everything. A little while ago, I made an expedition, with some friends, to R. L. Stevenson's grave. It was a long and steep climb, and I don't think I shall attempt it again for a good while. The view from the grave is magnificent, and that alone is worth seeing. We decorated the tomb with hibiscus blossoms and ferns. Coming down, was, of course, easy. With the help of long sticks, we just tumbled down as fast as we liked. If you care to hear about this little place, I shall be glad to tell you more in my next letter. I am sending a few post cards which may be of interest to you.—Cousin PHYLLIS.

P.S.—I send the money to post the badge, for a Samoan stamp would be of no use. I should like a red one.

[Dear Cousin Phyllis,—I should like you to join us very much, especially as we have no cousin to tell us all the news from your part of the world. I have already posted you a badge, and I hope you will like it. As you were so long in Auckland, I should think it would seem more like home to you than Apia, though not so interesting if you were at school all the time. I really think the heat has been worse than usual everywhere this year. I know we all feel very limp too, and I heard some Sydney people yesterday say that it was every bit as hot here as in Sydney. Of course, we have heard about the eruption, and seen photographs of it, too, but they don't give one a very good idea of it, somehow. I wish I had been with you when you went to see it,

though, like you, I would not have cared to go too close to the crater. Thank you so much for the post cards; they are delightfully pretty.—Cousin KATE.]

* * *

Dear Cousin Kate,—As I have not very long for writing my letter to you, I had better devote the time to answering the questions you have asked me since I came South. First, I did not miss the kowhai, it was still gloriously gold when I returned from Fiji, and as Philippa's clematis bloomed late, I even had the pleasure of seeing it in full bloom. We came South immediately, by Taupo and Wanganui. We had a delightful time, but I cannot wait to tell you of it now. But, oh! that lovely, lovely bush drive! And the glorious time I have had among the lakes down here! You asked me if I had seen the Waitomo caves. I have not yet, but my guardian says if it is not a long trip we can go before we leave Auckland finally. We have to see Otira yet, too. Wasn't it a splendid compliment Constance's grandfather paid me, to choose a book on my recommendation. I was so pleased, but I am sure he will like it—it is such an interesting biography. And I am sure Constance will enjoy Jane Barlow. I like best "Irish Idylls," but I am fond of "Strangers at Liscannel," too. Then there are "Mrs. Martin's Company"—a sweet little story—"From the Land of the Shamrock," and others. I cannot tell her if Rostand's plays are to be had in English; my "L'Aiglon" is in French, and I read "Cyrano de Bergerac" in French, too. On my birthday I was given Seton Thompson's latest book, "Animal Stories." I do love his books, and I have been enjoying myself over this. The carrier-pigeon and little war-horse I think I loved best in it—oh, I was so glad he got away! Thank you so much for the kowhai legend. It is very pretty, isn't it? I hope we shall find some more. Shall you be coming South to see the Exhibition? The gallery and fernery are what I like best. Winnie has already sent you a splendid description of the fernery, hasn't she? They have Millais' "Dr. Vernon" in the gallery—a picture I am very fond of. I have an engraving of it framed at home. I love Dr. Vernon in the book, and this is the only picture I have that would really do for my beloved Di. To-morrow we are off again to Otira. I have been having a glorious time; the lakes are so wonderfully beautiful. You know, this is the loveliest country in the world. Another month in the lake district, three months in town for the Brough-Flemming season, and then north again; and after that home to Ireland again for three months. Canada for the next nine or ten, and the next three or four years we have planned to spend wandering about Europe. Yours sincerely, HERO.

P.S.—The Waitemata is about the loveliest of them all.

[Dear Cousin Hero,—I am glad you came back in time to see the kowhai and the clematis, they were both lovely this year, especially the clematis. I don't remember having seen it bloom so freely before. I am afraid I don't know any more legends, though I know there is one about the rata, but I can't think

of it just now, but I will see if I can find out about it again. I hope you will find time to visit the Waitomo caves, they are really wonderful, and I should like to hear what you think of them. I went to see the Brough-Flemming Company the night before last, and enjoyed myself immensely. It is such a treat to see a play well acted, I mean when the whole company are really good, and not one or two good ones and the rest dummies. I am so busy this week that I won't be able to discuss books, or even try to be interesting. I hope next week's letter will be better.—Cousin KATE.]

* * *

Dear Cousin Kate,—I have been such a lazy girl lately. We have six more little ducks. It is such fun to see them catching the flies. We are having such lovely weather now; it is so hot that I have to go into the river to keep cool. I am not going anywhere for Christmas. Are you? We have one waterfall here. It is called the Waiki Waterfall. I have not very much to say this time, so will stop now, because it is so hot. Give my love to all the cousins. I hope you will enjoy your Christmas. With love from Cousin OLIVE.

[Dear Cousin Olive,—You have indeed been very lazy; you have not written since the holidays commenced. However, I don't expect many letters during the holidays. It is much better for you to be out of doors enjoying yourselves; you have quite enough writing in school times. We haven't got any little ducks this year, but this morning we found a hen with five lovely little chicks, and two or three more of the eggs were chipped. I think the only way to keep cool this weather would be to stay in the water all the time, don't you? I have not been away yet, but I hope to go for a holiday soon. I had a very happy Christmas indeed, thank you. I hope you had, too.—Cousin KATE.]

* * *

Dear Cousin Kate,—I received your badge. Thank you very much for sending it so quickly. I showed it to a friend of mine. She would like one too; so I think she is going to join the Cousins also. We are having lovely weather for the holidays; such beautiful fine days, with a deep blue sky. I am having such a good time, and will be sorry when it is time to return to school. This morning my brother and I went for a drive out past Onata to see some friends, who are camping out for a few weeks. We did enjoy it, as all the way we drove along the sea coast. We saw where the famous battle of Waiteka was fought, and the cemetery where many of its heroes are buried. I go down to the baths nearly every day. Next Tuesday I am going to a picnic at the Breakwater. Mother is going to take us. Dear Cousin Kate I have lots to tell you, but will keep it for next time. Your loving Cousin, RATA.

[Dear Cousin Rata,—I am glad you were pleased with your badge. If your friend joins us, and gets one too, she will be expected to write quite often. We are having the most lovely weather here now, but, oh, so hot. I want to just sit still, and do nothing all day. Really, I think we should sleep all day and go out at night this time of year, though it isn't very cool at night either. I can