

Dear Cousin Kate,—I was pleased to see my letter in the "Graphic." I would like a red badge, please. Jim did not fall off Bobs; it was a pony which had been turned out for a long time, and was lent to us to ride at the show. The other day I found a little kitten, it is jet black, and will you give me a name for it please? I have two girl friends; they have got a little black pony called Dot. I often ride to the post office with them; their names are Elsa and Gladys. Dad has got a new horse, which has just been broken in, but it belongs to my grandpa. He owns a lot of horses.—I remain, your loving Cousin MABEL.

[Dear Cousin Mabel,—I am enclosing your badge with Jim's, and I hope you will like it. I am glad it was not Bobs that threw Jim and generally misbehaved himself so badly. You ought to be an exceedingly lucky little girl this year; you know it is supposed to be very lucky indeed to find a black kitten. Do you think Sambo would be a nice name for him? I know lots of people who have called their black cats Smut or Satan, but I don't think those are very nice names, do you?—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I thought it was time to write to you. Since school commenced I have been very busy doing my home work. I never think of writing in the afternoon, I always play. Cousin Myrtle reminded me about writing to you: she said she was going to write to-night, so I thought it was up to me to write to you. We have a little pup now; it is a very tiny thing, but if it sees another dog or cat it runs up to it and tries to bite its legs. One night it saw its own shadow, and it was frightened. We have a little black and white kitten; when we got it it was so very thin you could feel its bones. It would not play very much, but it did after a day or two when he got used to his new home. I went to Wanganui in Walter's motor car; I had a good time. I have been in a motor car five times now, but the longest drive I have been in is Wanganui. I had a ride in a motor car to-day, but we did not go very far. I would rather go in a motor car than in a steamer or a train, or anything else, because it goes much faster than any other thing that we travel in. I do not know whether you heard about Mr. McKelvie and his motor car. I will tell you about it now. He was trying to get home in ten minutes; there was a horse in a paddock, and when it saw the motor car, the horse ran along in the paddock as far as it could go, then it had either to jump the fence of go into a swamp, so it jumped the fence. Mr. McKelvie's motor is a very large one, and there were seven men in it, and every one of them got hurt. They never thought the horse would jump the fence, or they would have gone slower. Two of them were sent to the hospital, but the others were not hurt so much so they did not have to go to the hospital. The motor car was smashed to pieces. I have only seen Mr. McKelvie once since he was hurt; he was not in the motor car this time; he was in a lovely little rubber-tyred trap. I go to Mrs. Wilson's classes every month, and we have to go next Thursday. I saw my letter in the "Graphic," but I forgot to cut it out, and I don't know where I put it, so if you asked me any questions I will not be able to answer them.—Cousin MARY.

[Dear Cousin Mary,—I am glad you do not make a duty of your letters to me; I only want you all to write as a pleasure, and I am sure it would not be that if you had to give up some of your play time for it. Cousin Myrtle must have been too busy to write after all, because I have had no letter from her yet, but one may come this afternoon. I expect your kitten had not been properly fed, and that was why it was so thin, and of course it would not feel much like playing when it was hungry. I am like you, and love travelling in motor cars, partly because they go so fast, and partly because I always feel snugly in trains and steamers. I don't quite see how the accident happened after all, did the horse jump in front of the car, or what? What kind of classes does Miss Wilson have? once a month is not very often to have them, but perhaps she comes down from Wanganui to teach you.—Cousin Kate.]

OLDER COUSINS' LETTERS.

Dear Cousin Kate,—Since I last wrote I have been on a holiday tour for three weeks, and as I cannot get a full account of my travels in one letter, I thought of writing a series of them. I left Auckland for New Plymouth on the afternoon of April 7th. It was fine and fairly calm when the Rarua left Onongonga, but when the vessel reached the bar several of the passengers quietly left the deck for their cabins. As I have always been a good sailor, however, I felt no anxiety, and stayed up on deck to watch the waves. It was a splendid sight to see the mountainous, angry-looking, snow-crested waves come rolling towards us, and when one expected them to overwhelm the boat she rose triumphantly upon the crests, and then went down, down, down, into a deep green valley of water, the other side. Another time the vessel would plough steadily through a wave, and then the seething, foaming water would rush by on each side, sending up a delicate shower of filmy spray. The decks were soon awash, and I and my companion had to seek dry places from time to time. The sunset was lovely that evening. The sun sank in a clear sky of pale blue, colouring the horizon with a delicate creamy, smoky tint. A few stray, fleecy little clouds caught the same colour, and the effect of this beautiful sky above the green, turbulent sea was glorious. About six o'clock it became too dark to stay up on deck any longer, and it was with much reluctance that I left it to go downstairs. When I reached my cabin (which, fortunately, I had to myself) I began to feel the motion of the boat, and imagine my surprise and dismay, Cousin Kate, when I fell a victim to mal de mer, for the first time in my life, mind you. However, it was so slight that as soon as I lay in my bunk I felt quite all right, so I stayed there until we reached the Breakwater at New Plymouth at five o'clock next morning. On stepping from the steamer to the train a magnificent sight met the eyes of the passengers. Standing out clearly in the silver-grey dawn was Mt. Egmont, its beautiful snow-capped cone reaching far heavenwards in stately magnificence. It looked so ethereal, so spirituelle, that it seemed as if one was looking down a kaleidoscope. But when the sun rose, and the snow on the top and sides of the mountain caught the exquisite pink glow of the sunrise, one could only gaze in silent admiration, marvelling at the glorious work of the Creator. The train whirled us away all too soon from this beautiful sight, and after a journey of 10 minutes, travelling along almost at the water's edge all the way, we reached New Plymouth. It was a perfect morning, and I saw the town at its best. The streets look very clean, and the roads all about are splendid for cycling. There are a large number of handsome residences, painted white, with red roofs, and they stand out picturesquely from their beautiful grounds of graceful punga and green, velvety lawns. These pungas grow most abundantly in New Plymouth, and everyone has them in the gardens. The town is situated right on the coast, and has no harbour, consequently a magnificent view of the open ocean can be obtained. There are very fine swimming baths erected on the shore, a little distance from the station, and they are greatly patronised by both sexes. I made it my first business to see the famous Recreation Grounds, or Pukekura Park, as it is now called. Everyone in New Plymouth speaks of it as the "Rec." When people first asked me if I had seen the "Rec." I thought they meant a shipwreck, until my friends explained the abbreviation. Well, these beautiful grounds more than meet with one's expectation. On entering by the main gate, the sports ground comes into view. Here Nature has bestowed a natural amphitheatre, in the form of hills rising up on three sides, and these have simply been terraced out, and seats placed along the terraces, tier above tier, from whence everyone gets an uninterrupted view of the field below. Beyond the sports ground are the lakes, spanned here and there by pretty white bridges. Punga ferns, flax, toi toi and other native foliage fringe the borders of these lakes, and are clearly reflected in the placid waters beneath. A hand rotunda and a couple of quaint-looking tea-houses are built on the shores of the larger lake. The banks that rise up from the lagoons are of a considerable height, and are luxuriantly covered with the inevitable punga and other native trees, shady, well kept footpaths wind

in and out everywhere, and steps lead from them in various places to the water's edge. If anyone stands on the steps the swans, who, perhaps, have been gliding about aimlessly on the lake, will immediately swim up, bending their graceful necks in expectation of something to eat. One can also get enchanting glimpses of Mt. Egmont from this domain.

A very high tribute was once paid to the Recreation Grounds, by three much travelled men, of different nations, who happened to meet in Cairo, Egypt. They were discussing the beautiful sights they had seen, and one said that the prettiest and most beautiful domain he had ever seen was in a little town called New Plymouth, in New Zealand, and the other two men who had also seen it quite agreed with him.

There is also a private recreation ground called "Aotea," and one afternoon I cycled out with two friends to see it. It is really a beautiful valley, covered with ferns and bush, with well-kept paths winding in and out. A big stream runs brawling through, giving that finishing touch that water always gives to a pretty scene. It is gratifying to see that, as in the case of the recreation grounds, very little is done to interfere with Nature. I saw some splendid specimens of *Todeas Superbus* growing at "Aotea." They are as rare as they are lovely. Right in the heart of this domain is a levelled piece of ground, where the band sometimes plays, and at one end is a dear little Maori whare, from whence afternoon tea is dispensed.

I only stayed five days in New Plymouth, but I was taken about and entertained so much that it seemed twice as long. I have most delightful friends there, and they gave me a royal time. Everybody in New Plymouth is as charming as the town itself.

We met several nice people at the hotel we stayed at, intellectual, travelled, and musical. I think I omitted to mention that my father was my companion throughout the whole tour, hence the use of the pronoun "we." I met a young Englishman, who was a pupil of the great Lemare at home, and he played for me the whole of one evening some of Beethoven's Sonatas and the works of other great composers. As I am a little musical myself, you can guess how I enjoyed this treat.

Well, dear Cousin Kate, I must bring to a close the first of my series. My next letter will continue on from this. Before concluding, however, I must mention having seen Cousins Hilda's and Diana's interesting letters, and wish to thank the former for the nice things she said about my letters. Her own letters are always delightful. Cousin Diana's description of Switzerland was very interesting, and makes one long to see it. I can quite understand her loving London best of all, simply because I have always heard that Londoners think there is no place like London, just as we Colonials think that there is no place like New Zealand.—With much love, from Cousin VIOLET.

[Dear Cousin Violet.—I am eagerly looking forward to the next letter of your series. This one is such a decided success. I have several times had the pleasure of travelling from Auckland to New Plymouth, and I quite agree with you that New Plymouth and its people are equally charming. As to the view at sunrise from the Breakwater, I must sadly confess that I have never been in a fit state to admire its beauties. I am a terribly bad sailor, and for several days after even such a short trip as that am quite prostrate.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate.—I hasten to acknowledge your introduction, and also pay my debts to Cousin Diana, and hope to further improve her acquaintance through the medium of our "Older Cousins' page." I have never been in Switzerland, but Cousin Diana's vivid description of that country, and its climate, brought back to my memory some exceedingly pleasant hours spent in the old schoolroom of a house I stayed in when at home. My friend's governess, Mademoiselle D., was a native of Geneva, and came of a family that for generations had filled tutorial or secretarial positions. One of her brothers had been secretary to a Russian Grand Duke, and this brother was an absolute genius in the art of photography. After his death (the result of a shooting accident while in the Grand Duke's service) the Grand Duke had written a letter of appreciation

and sympathy to Mademoiselle, and had forwarded, together with his personal effects and papers, a tremendous packet of photographs that had been taken by this brother, and also one of the most beautiful malachite ornaments I have ever seen. Being a favourite with Mademoiselle, I was privileged to see these photographs, read various letters, and gaze upon various orders and decorations that had been bestowed upon this brother by the various great personages his position had brought him into contact with. But what delighted me most were the photographs of Switzerland. There were pictures of the Grand Duke and his family, pictures of the Czar and his family, pictures of them in public and in private, engaged in every conceivable occupation, in short, in situations only obtainable by anyone living in the confidence and the intimacy of the Grand Duke's family life. These pictures were, of course most interesting, the more especially as Mademoiselle was a born raconteur, and a little history attached to nearly all of them. But the Swiss pictures were the ones I liked best, because ever since I read the account of the rise of the Swiss Republic, I have had a great admiration for Switzerland, and its sturdy folk. The pictures themselves were exquisite. By their aid I saw, almost as clearly as though I had viewed them with my material instead of my mind's eye, the beauties of Lake Geneva, and its pleasure boats with their curious scissor-shaped sails, peculiar only to the boats that ply on the Geneva lake, the Castle of Chillon, and Lake Lemano. I saw it peaceful as a millpond, or lashed into the vindictive fury it can assume in time of storm, pictures of the Alps in every mood of nature; peaceful villages, where the watch, cuckoo-clock, and toy industries hold full sway—saw smiling valleys with kine coming home to be milked, and, in imagination heard the tinkle of the cow bells. And last, but not least, pictures of the Hospice of St. Bernard, its monks, and the noble breed of hounds that take their name from the Hospice. I have a small photograph somewhere among my souvenirs of the Hospice, which Mademoiselle gave me.

If, as one guesses by Cousin Diana's letter, she has only lately become a resident of New Zealand, she may be excused for envying it its climate. But I think it is generally conceded that climates have been topsy turvey the world over. Perhaps climates are being affected, as people nowadays are, with socialistic tendencies. I quite agree with what Cousin Diana says about London. I am a great believer in, and very sensitive to atmosphere. London is the only place I have ever really lived in. If I were as rich as Croesus, I would choose London to live in, eight months out of the twelve. Paris has no charm for me. I never think of it without conjuring up the hundred days and the barricades, and the Place de la Revolution. The Paris of Dickens' " Tale of Two Cities " is too deeply engraved upon my imagination for me to ever forget the shame and the underlying tragedy, that lies beneath its present mask of prosperity and gaiety, a gaiety and a prosperity that has been purchased by the loss of its soul. And I would just as lief visit the Morgue as the Petit Trianon, so decayed and so peopled with ghosts is it for me. Apropos of the French Revolution, reminds me to tell you that after all I tend to see "The Scarlet Pimpernel." I went to see a play of which the largest element is tragedy. I found a farce. I'll never go again to see a play of which I have read the book from which the play has been adapted. "The Sign of the Cross" is the only play I know of that is commensurate with the value of the book. And if I remember rightly, the play of "The Sign of the Cross" was first written by Wilson Barrett, and the book afterwards. Talking of books, I have just finished reading "The Mother," by Eden Phillpotts. It is not an easy book to criticise. But if there is, in the field, and it is safe to assume there is, no pulsing with vitality is she, a living prototype of Aviva Pomeroy, she is to be honoured second only to the mother of Jesus, for in her is invested and crystallised every ideal of the perfect mother since the creation. And in the contemplation of this perfect ideal, I am filled anew with astonishment that woman should conceive herself as playing a lesser part in the scheme of things than man. Hearing a great noise downstairs while writing this, I go to the head of the stairs, and discover that Cousin Lyn has unexpectedly returned from Rotorua and Huntly, where he had