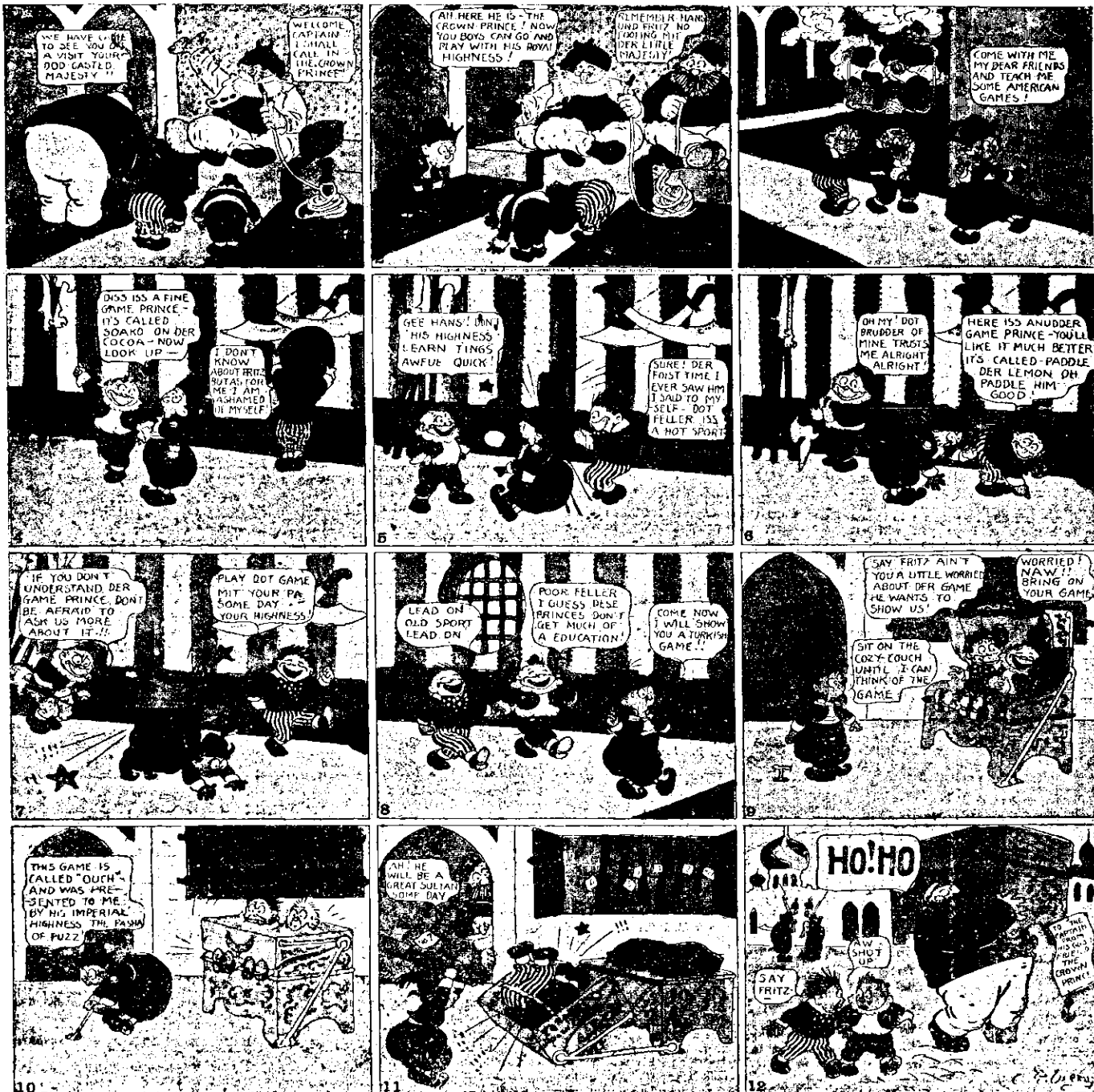


What a splendid lot of little Cousins we have. I wonder whether any of them have seen a Peter Pan picture book? If not, they will soon have the opportunity of seeing the play and making the acquaintance of Peter, Wendy, Tinker, Bell, Captain Hook... the Pirates, Mermaids, and the Redskins of the play, which, I am told, is quaintly fascinating, and full of whimsical humour. I think my recollections of Ceylon came to a sudden stop at the foot of the lighthouse of Colombo. After discovering that I was still whole, I re-entered my rickshaw, and we resumed our journey to the Galle Face. Along the Galle-road, of the beauty of which I told you in a previous letter, we met quite a number of very smart equipages, as smartly turned out as any I have ever seen in London, and at which we were greatly surprised, until we were told that the white population of Ceylon was composed almost entirely of men belonging either to the Civil or

military service, and rich planters, and wholesale merchants. The retail business is nearly all in the hands of Indian or Parsee traders, who, as far as I can remember, mostly hold their bazaars in the basements of the hotels. The Galle Face Hotel is an imposing-looking building, and is reached from the Galle-road by a broad carriage drive. At the entrance to this drive are to be seen the tall coconut palms that are to be seen everywhere in Ceylon. The coast line on the Galle side of the island is so densely fringed with them as to produce an almost indescribably beautiful effect, of which I do not think it would be possible to tire. During afternoon tea, at which we drank tea made of the leaf grown on the Lipton plantation, and which assuredly was the best tea I have ever tasted anywhere, we were pestered by the Parsee traders who, in turn, exposed for sale beautiful silks, laces, Benaresware, articles of repoussé silver, moonstones, ivory and ebony elephants, some

small enough to hang upon a bangle, and costing sixpence, and others so large that it would cost ten pounds to buy them. Beautiful fans, too, from the costly ones with carved ivory sticks, fit for an Empress, to the modest palm fan, at three for a penny. Kits, too, and baskets, made of plaited and stained straw, puzzle rings, and puzzle bangles, the secret of which, though I was presented with several, have ever remained a close secret to me, and, as I was ever averse to the keeping of a secret, I gave them away on reaching England. Jewellery which, on close inspection, proved to be Brummengem, was contemptuously waved aside. "I sold ring like this to Sir Johnson, London," said a Parsee trader to me. "You know Johnson, London?" he further interrogated. "You know Joe Chamberlain, of Birmingham?" was our friend's reply. And the Parsee, dimly comprehending, beat a precipitate retreat, to our great satisfaction, for the seller of sham stones is, of all the nuisances in Ceylon, the greatest. Tea over, we again took rickshaw and set out to witness a cricket match between the soldiers of the West Gloucester Regiment, (I think the regiment that was the first to be taken captive in the Boer War) and the Civilians of Colombo. Now, can you conceive any man but an Englishman playing anything, indeed, doing anything except taking a siesta, which can hardly be described as doing anything, with a tropical sun at its hottest. But I do assure you that nearly all Colombo turned out, and the barracking was as keen as it was at the only football match I have ever witnessed in Auckland, and in which there were so many casualties that I am firmly resolved that it shall remain the only one. But the clock tells me it is nearly midnight, and so I must close until next fortnight. With love to yourself and all the Cousins, I remain, your loving Cousin,

HILDA, Ponsonby.



THE KATZENJAMMER KIDS MEET THEIR MATCH.

"The Katsch," as they are familiarly called, are always in trouble, or else making it for someone else—usually their respected parent "The Captain." Occasionally these young desperadoes catch a tartar, which was particularly the case when the Captain took them with him on his visit to the Terrible Turk, and they met the Crown Prince, who was not so simple as he looked.