

all, which is very exciting, but I like basket ball the best, because hockey is too rough, and I do not like it.—I remain, your loving Cousin VIDA.

[Dear Cousin Vida,—Of course you may become a Cousin, and I hope you will like the badge which I have already posted to you. Such a number of new Cousins have joined this week, and I am so pleased about it. How do you play basket ball? I don't think I have ever seen it or heard of it before, but I am quite sure I should prefer it to hockey, too. Hockey always seems to me to be a rtoe rough for girls to play. Be sure and let me know if you pass your examination.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I suppose you are thinking that I am never going to write to you again, but I do not like to write too often, as there are such a lot of cousins, and they are all such good correspondents, that I wonder at you being able to put their different letters in so often. I received the badge quite safely, and thank you very much; it is rather a pale blue, but I am pleased to have it. My brother writes to you pretty often, but I am sure I do not know what he can find to say, but there is one thing that every cousin has to put in their letters, and that is the awfully wet weather we are having; but, of course, it is only in keeping with the winter, and I hope it will be fine for fleet week, which is not very far off now. I do not know what I shall do for news, nothing seems to happen out here—at least, nothing interesting. We have a concert now and again, and a dance, but, of course, it is quite a different place in the summer; there is never a week passes without something to look forward to. I will be glad when the bathing season begins, although I can't swim, but I can just keep myself afloat, and I hope to learn this season coming (that is, if we still live in Avondale). I hope we will have left Avondale by Xmas, as I would like to go to Miss Bew's college, but it is too far for me to go back and forward every day, as we live a mile and a quarter from the railway station; but there are quite a lot of girls who have to walk four and five miles to and fro to school every day. Are you fond of music? I am very fond of it. We have such a nice gramophone, that was given to father for an Xmas-box, and we have between thirty and forty records. I am also learning the piano, and have been for the last six years. I have played at several concerts. I am fond of singing, too, and I will take lessons when I am older. Well, Cousin Kate, I must close now this interesting letter, hoping I will have something better to say next time. Love to all the other cousins, including yourself.—I remain your loving cousin CLARICE.

P.S.—Please excuse mistakes and scrawl.

[Dear Cousin Clarice,—Despite your plaint of scarcity of news, you have managed to write quite a long letter, and I don't think you need fear that you are writing too often. I like my cousins to write about once a fortnight, you know. I like summer weather ever so much better than winter, too, and when I am very cold I comfort myself by thinking that the winter is more than half over now. Couldn't you be a weekly boarder at Miss Bew's College in the winter time, and I should think you might easily get in and out in the summer, especially now that the Mt. Eden cars are running. I am very fond of both music and singing, but I am a very poor performer. I didn't practise very well when I was young, I'm sorry to say.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I am writing to you again. I hope you do not mind me writing to you so often; if so, you must tell me. Well, dear Cousin Kate, we had our annual school ball here last Friday. I think it was a great success; nearly all of the school children were there to look on, and I think everyone enjoyed themselves. The proceeds are for the school prizes, so that we shall benefit by the dance in the near future. Don't you think that they should have had an extra dance for the children?—I do. We had our examination last week, but we do not know who came top yet, so I shall be able to tell you next time I write. We are having very fine weather here now for this time of the year, but it is a little dull in the evenings. I must now close, as

I am short of news this time. With my best love to you, and all the other cousins, Cousin MARY.

[Dear Cousin Mary,—I am glad to hear that the school ball was such a success, and I certainly think the school children should have been allowed to dance until nine o'clock; there would have been plenty of time for the "grown-ups" to enjoy themselves after that. It is a grand way of raising funds for the prizes; I wonder how they manage in Auckland, because they don't have balls here, I'm sure. We are having lovely weather, too, just now; I hope it will last.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—May I be a cousin, and have a red badge. I like reading the Children's Page very much, and always read Cousina Nancie and Rosamund's letters. I am twelve years old, and I am in the fourth standard. My brother and I heard at Naparua, and attend the school there. We had a fancy dress ball on the 10th July; it was to close the dancing class. All the children enjoyed themselves, and danced till twelve o'clock. I learn music, and like it very much, and hope to get on well. We have had very bad weather for this last month. We have a launch, and we often go for picnics; there are so many lovely bays and creeks here. With love from Cousin FREDA.

[Dear Cousin Freda,—Certainly you may become a cousin, and I will send you a red badge at once. I suppose you know Nancie and Rosamund quite well. I haven't had a letter from Rosamund for a long time, but I hear she is coming to Auckland for fleet week, so I expect she will write and tell me lots of news when she gets home again. What did you go as to the fancy dress ball? I expect you were rather tired next day?—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I was very pleased to see my letter in the "Graphic" last week. All mother's spring bulbs are coming into flowers, some of them are out. Grandma and grandpa came home on Saturday morning for a week, and then they are going up to Auckland with the members of Parliament to see the American fleet. My brother Jim got a lot of prizes at the poultry show—1st for geese, 2nd for turkeys, 1st and 2nd for Guinea fowls, and second for a cockatoo we used to call Dummy, because he wouldn't talk. We passed our examination, and are in the fifth standard now. Sambo is getting on nicely; whenever I go out gardening he comes with me and plays with my hand. What a lot of letters there were in the "Graphic" last week. Last week dad made arrangements to take all the Stoke school children out to the warship Encounter, and we did have a jolly time. We went out in one of the tug boats called the Motura; the sea was lovely and smooth, and when we got there we were shown all around the man-o-war. Love to all the cousins and yourself. I remain, your Cousin MABEL.

[Dear Cousin Mabel,—The spring flowers seem to be coming out very early this year; we have primroses and daffodils out already, and the anemones, narcissi, and snowflakes have been in flower some weeks. I must congratulate Jim on getting so many prizes; what a long time it must take him to feed all his pets every day. Are your grandfather and grandmother coming over-land to Auckland? It is a very interesting trip to take, but it will be a dreadfully cold one at this time of the year. I expect you did have a jolly time on the Encounter. Did the sailors show you all their pets?—Cousin Kate.]

OLDER COUSINS' LETTERS.

Dear Cousin Kate,—As Cousin Hilda suggested, we should give our opinions on Woman's Suffrage, I am just writing a few lines thereon. I quite agree with both Cousina Hilda and Diana that women are unfit for public life. A woman's first consideration should be her home, and, if she is married, her husband and children. The behaviour of the women in the suffragette agitation at present going on in England is disgraceful, and makes one blush for our sex. I imagine the politics of a country in the hands of shrieking, hysterical creatures like these. A woman often lets her personal feelings overcome her political principles; I know of a case, out here, where a

... got for a certain member because he was good-looking and... considered, not his policy. Now, what is the good of Women's Franchise when they vote like that. Of course lots of the women out here vote as their fathers and husbands tell them. This is the best way, I think, for in a great many instances they know very little about politics, and it is best for them to follow the judgment of the men who do. There are lots of intellectual women who are extremely clever and capable, and you will notice that these women are quite content to shine in their own homes. They take an interest in politics perhaps, and if they are the wives of politicians, often advise them. Many eminent politicians acknowledge that the advice and assistance given by their wives have been the means of helping them in their careers. Mr. Chamberlain, for instance, is one who has often spoken of his wife's assistance to him in this way. A woman loses all the charm and true womanliness that is synonymous with the sex when she leaves her proper sphere, viz., home life, and rushes, or attempts to rush, into politics, which is entirely man's sphere alone. I wonder if any of the cousins have read "In Subjection," by Ellen Thornycroft Fowler. I suppose they have. Isabel is such a charming character, I think, clever, intellectual, and a devoted wife to Paul. She takes a keen interest in his politics, but in no case is her judgment better than her husband's; she recognises this and is content to remain in subjection.—Cousin VIOLET.

Nellie and the Dark.

BY ANNIE HAMILTON DONNELLA.

Nellie could hardly believe it,—she wouldn't believe it, she wouldn't! she wouldn't! Not locked in? Why, people starved to pieces and—froz and froze got locked into places! Plenty of 'em did,—Nellie read of them, and heard of them.

It was mild, sweet May, but Nellie did not think of that. In May people do not freeze, anyway, but there is always the danger of starving. She sat down hard on Joey Hoy's seat and wondered if two whole days—a Saturday and a Sunday—besides a supper and a breakfast, could starve a person to a skeleton. Skeletons died, of course—people found 'em, and held up their hands in horror, and cried, "Can this be little Nellie Page, starved into a heap o' bones?"

She shuddered. Already she was hungry. She stretched out one of her plump arms and pried it because it would be a poor bone so soon. Then in a sudden tempest of revolt she ran to the door and shook it again—to all the windows and shook them. They were just as locked as they had been before—there was no difference. There never would be any difference until next Monday morning, and that would be too late. You didn't care to be let out when you were a skeleton. You'd just as lieves starve then.

Nellie had crept back into the dusky little schoolroom while Miss Eddy was patiently correcting papers at her desk. It had been later than usual, not because there were so many papers, but because there were so many mistakes. X—X—X—the patient pencil made them over and over again opposite the cramped, unsteady words. The weary little teacher's brain had seemed to be ticking out X's in a monotonous procession.

Nellie was the worst scholar in the Four Corners School, and, if the truth must be told, the patient little teacher's prickliest thorn. Nellie almost always pricked. She had crept back into the schoolroom to—prick. It would be such fun to hide behind a desk and jump out.—Boo! Teacher was the scariest person! You could scare her with a mouse or a nice slippery frog from the swamp, or a snake, or anything. So if you said "Boo!" of course she'd jump like anything. It would be such fun.

"I'll pay her up for sayin'," Nellie Page, stop whisperin'!—Nellie Page, stop eatin'!—Nellie Page, stop pinchin'! She's always Nellie Fagin'. I'll pay her up."

But down behind the desk Nellie had found something glistening in a wide crack in the floor, and while she was industriously faking for it with a pin Miss Eddy had jocked up quietly and gone home. In her preoccupation Nellie had heard no warning sound; she had been intent on finding out what that glistening

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