

wardah. On Monday morning in fleet week I went down town to see the procession, and in the afternoon I went up to the Domain to see the soldiers and cadets marching, and at night I went down on the Point to see the fireworks. Did you see the fireworks, and the ships lit up. I did, every night at 8 o'clock I went out on the verandah to watch the ships light up. Good-bye, Cousin Kate, with love from COUSIN ESSIE.

[Dear Cousin Essie.—Yes, I went to "Humpty Dumpty," but not to "Mother Goose," this time. I went when it was here before, but heard it was not nearly so good this time, so did not go. I liked "Humpty Dumpty," though, very much indeed. I didn't exactly have any holidays during Fleet Week, but it was really one long holiday, because I was out all day and nearly every evening, and enjoyed myself immensely. On Monday morning I went to the civic reception, and in the evening went to see the fireworks. On Tuesday I went to the Mayor's reception at the Military Hall in the afternoon and to the State hall at Government House in the evening. Then on Wednesday we were at the races all day. On Thursday I went to another ball at Government House, and on Friday we went on board the *Louisiana* in the afternoon, and afterwards went on board one of the other American ships to dinner, so you see I had plenty of amusement, hadn't I? We could see several of the ships from our own balcony, and we used to go out and admire them every evening. We could hear their bells ringing out the hours, too, and we quite missed them when they went out on Saturday.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate.—It is such beautiful weather down in Napier just now. I hope you had nice weather for the American Fleet. I have been to such a lot of plays since I wrote to you last. They were "The Prince Chap," "The Case of Rebellious Susan," "Charley's Aunt," and "The Private Secretary." I liked "The Prince Chap" and "The Private Secretary" the best. I hope that you will be able to go and see "The Private Secretary" when it goes up to Auckland, because it is so funny you have to laugh and laugh till you can't laugh any more. I am very sorry to hear that you have had a bad cold, Cousin Kate, and I hope that it will soon be better. You asked me how I remembered that it was your birthday this month. I asked you what date it was a long time ago, when I first joined the Cousins' Page, and I have always remembered it, and always shall. Do you think that I write too often to you, Cousin Kate? I hope that you will enjoy "Humpty Dumpty." I got a new book in town the other day called "Uncle Max." It's by Rosa Carey, and it is such a nice book. Have you ever read it? We all play hockey up at school, and we have such fun. Don't you wish that Cousin Essie would write again. I don't believe she has written since you have had the "Older Cousins" letters, but I do hope she will write soon. Now, dear Cousin Kate, I think I will say good-night, with lots and lots of love for yourself and all the cousins, from MARJORIE.

Dear Cousin Marjorie.—We had really perfect weather all the time the American Fleet was in Auckland, so I suppose we should not grumble because we are having cold, showery, windy weather now. You have been quite a dissipated young lady, going to so many theatres lately. I didn't see the *Roberta* Company at all. I had rather a bad cold all the time they were here, so did not go out at night. I was sorry, because I particularly wanted to see "The Prince Chap." I went to see "When Knights Were Bold" and also "Charley's Aunt." I have seen the latter several times before, but I think I laughed just as heartily this time as I did when I first saw it. Didn't you write my birthday date in your birthday book. If you didn't, I think it is really wonderful of you to remember it. I cannot remember a date and I am ashamed to say that I cannot remember even my historical dates. I read "Uncle Max" some time ago, and liked it very much indeed. I like all Rosa Carey's books, but I think I like Ethel Turner's even better. There is a letter from Cousin Essie this week, but there are two, and I think it is the other Cousin Essie you refer to, isn't it? I nearly forgot to say that you can't write too often, because I just love getting your dear little letters.—Cousin Kate.]

## OLDER COUSINS' LETTERS.

Dear Cousin Kate,—I have nothing to write about, but am keeping my promise to send a letter fairly regularly, even though as dull a one as this will be. I suppose my mother and sister left yesterday, and I do hope they, or any way, Madge, saw Saturday's football match when the representative New Zealand team won. I am anxious to hear their account of it, and if they didn't go I shouldn't consider they are proper New Zealanders, but only South Africans after all. My other sister has been in Capetown for about three weeks, but tomorrow she and her husband leave for East London, where they stay a while before going on to Port Elizabeth and Durban. They will be at the latter place when mother's boat arrives, and that is simply grand, I think. Elsie wants me to go up for a fortnight's trip when the boat is due, and travel back with mother, but I hardly like to ask for another holiday so soon after the last, though I should revel in the trip. My brother and I have had some grand cycle rides this winter, which has been a particularly good one—no rain, only lovely, sunny, clear days. We go to a farm at Durbanville, and have a long rest before coming home, leaving about five in the evening. It is so nice to have a place to spend the afternoon, as one grows tired of lying in the grass. We explore the kopjes, gather flowers, talk, and have plenty of tea and home-made cakes before returning. As a rule we bring home fresh butter, which is quite a treat. The owners of the farm are dear old Dutch people, most kind and hospitable, and don't mind a bit that we go out there so often. Their daughter is very nice, quite young, and has been educated in an English school, the chief result being to make her hate the slow country life. Her home is lovely, with a big creek at the foot of the farm, where we boat in a canoe or ordinary pulling-boat. I just wish I lived there, for the air is glorious and the scenery beautiful, the village being bounded by a range of blue mountains, and oh, the sunset! Still, I suppose one can't live on sunsets and scenery, without other interests. I almost think I could. I have read "The Broken Road," and liked it more than any book I have lately had. It is uncommon, and really interesting; it somehow seemed natural, which is quite a change from the books I have read recently. I am still adding to my collection, and have just bought "An Island Voyage" and "Virginibus Puerisque," by R.L.S. He is my favourite, and I shall be both happy and unhappy when I have his entire essays. My bookcase is full, and I hope to get another soon. "The Real Siberia" I found most interesting, and written in such an easy style. I like that sort of book more than novels now. I hope Cousin Hilda will perhaps mention a few books she thinks I will like, as just now I have none on my list of "wants-to-read." We were all so sorry to hear the news of our dear old Archbishop's death at Home. He was such a splendid old man, and Capetown was quite sad for a time after the news came through. The Cathedral bell was tolling at five one afternoon, and no one knew why until the next morning. I hate the sound. I am looking forward to hearing all about Cousin (of the past) Dora, with whom my sister is staying, or, rather, I should say, was staying. She is our first girl friend, and I just wish I could have been there with Madge. My mother has thoroughly enjoyed her trip to New Zealand, and seems so happy among all her friends. In this case the anticipation was nothing as compared with the realisation, thanks to the Auckland people who have made mother's and Madge's stay so particularly pleasant and jolly. They will both look blooming on their arrival here, I know. Good-bye once more, with best wishes to the cousins, and love to you.—I remain, your ancient cousin, ALISON.

[Dear Cousin Alison.—As you have no doubt noticed, I have not been answering the "Older Cousins" letters lately, but I feel I must acknowledge yours, my furthest-away cousin. I'm afraid you will say that I am not a good New Zealand, for I haven't seen one football

match this year. I have wanted to very much indeed, but something has always happened at the last moment to prevent it. I suppose you have got over the excitement of having your mother and sister home again by this time. They were looking awfully well, I thought, didn't you? I can just imagine what a lot you will all have to say for the first week or two. I hope you managed the trip to Durban after all.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate,—I am afraid that Fleet Week has completely demoralised all we "Older Cousins," as I do not believe any of us have written for at least a fortnight, and my letter, I am afraid, will have to be a short one, because I have not very much time this week. But I felt that, long or short, it was my bounden duty, as well as my pleasure, to write this week. Fleet Week to me was one long round of disappointments. I had a fearfully sore throat, and it shut me out of nearly everything. On Monday I managed to crawl down to town, and was delighted with the feast of colours the streets presented. Looking up Queen-street from Customs-street, it reminded me of a huge kaleidoscope, so brilliant and so shifting was the mass of colour. We arrived at Wellesley-street in time to see the people return from the Civic Reception. It was quite easy to pick them out, so festive and so full of importance did they look—quite civic, in short—and I thought I could smell Tortoise Hair and "Sucking Pig" and Baba au Rhum. But, there! Even writing of these civic dainties makes me wish myself at least a Councillor, which is a privilege denied my sex. Turning into the Piccadilly for some lunch, we found it so crowded that we had to share a table with three others, and "awfully slow in town this morning" was the utterance of the lady to my right. "Yes, frightfully," said by *vis-a-vis*. Slow, with all that moving animated crowd, thought I, what next? Then the decorations came in for adverse criticism, and just as I was wishing that I were Mr. Cattermole, and could inquire solicitously, "How's your liver?" (you will perceive by this, that I have seen "The Private Secretary") the first mentioned lady said, "I'm stone broke, and have mortgaged my allowance for the next two months in order to come to town to see the Fleet." And then I understood, and forgave. For I, too, was nearly stone broke. But that, as Kipling would say, is quite another story, which I mean to tell you more about another time. Of the decorations, I thought the Harbour Board, Milne and Choyce's, and the South British the most effective, and the Union Bank of Australasia (a harmony of chocolate, yellow and green) the most artistic. I went to the Mayoral Reception, and though the crush was great, enjoyed it immensely. I do not think I ever saw or talked to a more ingenuous lot of young men than the American officers. "Not a scrap spoiled," was everyone's verdict. And, with a few exceptions, they speak as good English as we do. I love a uniform of any kind, and simply revelled in the number of handsome ones worn that afternoon by the diplomatic, naval, military, and civic officials. Although the Drill Shed (I beg the Mayoral pardon, I mean the Military Hall) was metamorphosed for the nonce into a veritable Garden of Eden, the effect was not nearly as imposing as it would have been had we had a stately building spacious enough for the carrying out of such an important civic function. And nothing, I should think, could have

brought home so forcibly to the citizens of Auckland the crying necessity of losing so much time in the building of our new Town Hall. I felt all the more dissatisfied because a few weeks ago a friend who has been travelling through the States of America since the St. Louis Exhibition, had sent me a huge pile of exquisite photographs of all the principal public buildings in the largest States—and I have fallen in love with the Washington buildings. And I couldn't help thinking that from a spectacular, as well as from an economic point of view, how much more impressive it would have been had we had a decently imposing building in which to hold such an important function. We say the fireworks from our own house, which is splendidly situated for seeing anything that goes on in the harbour. Didn't the ships look weirdly beautiful at night? For the life of me I couldn't let that line from "The Ancient Mariner" out of my head: "A painted ship upon a painted sea." I was invited to dine on one of the boats, but could not go on account of my throat, and also on account of another member of our family having a sore throat too. So the Mayoral Reception practically ended Fleet Week for me. I have been reading Ruskin's "Joy for Ever." It is specially interesting to me, because it consists of lectures that were delivered by Ruskin at Manchester, nearly half-a-century ago, and near Manchester my people have lived since before Charles the first's time. Our fortunes have always been bound up in Manchester, and I am very interested in the art of Manchester, which possesses its own school of art. Cousin Violet, I am sure, would be delighted with "A Joy for Ever," and I mean to pass it on to her when I have read it a second time. Cousin Ethel is a great lover of Ruskin's, she sent me a little picture of Ruskin's grave, which I value very much. I am reading "The Diva's Rubies," by Marion Crawford. What a delightful way he has of continuing the fortunes of his characters, which causes one to take an interest in them which is almost personal. Easily as I often guess the denouement of a story, I confess I am a little puzzled as to how this story is going to end. But I am afraid that the man who has the finest rubies will be the man who will win Cordova. And Cordova will think that she has married Van Torp because, like herself, had a passion for Wagner. But if Marion Crawford (after reforming Lagotheti) lets Van Torp marry Margaret Dorme, I'll never forgive him. Will you? We are going to have a literary evening in a fortnight, and are going to compare Dickens with Thackeray. I am on the side of Dickens, though I know that Thackeray was the greater intellect. I went to Miss Ansley's matinee this afternoon. How she has changed. The concert was an altogether delightful one. But I do think Liddle's "Abide with Me" needs a voice of greater volume than Miss Ansley has at present. But she is very charming, and is a singer we shall all be very proud of some day, and indeed are now. With love to yourself and all the cousins, I remain, your loving Cousin HILDA.

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