

present. Surely you don't go to school for the whole day, do you? I think little baby girls are darlings, especially when they laugh and crow. What a pretty name your baby has, Peggy, Betty and Nancy are my favourite names I think. I will send you a blue badge as soon as I can.—Cousin Kate.]

**OLDER COUSIN'S LETTERS.**

My Dear Cousins,—At Christmas time, about two years ago, some of you were kind enough to send to Violet Tate (whose address is, 1, Farry's Row, The Square, Woodford Green, Essex, England) post cards or Christmas cards, and I want to ask if you will do the same this year.

As some of you know, Violet Tate has been crippled for years, and has always to lie in bed. She is twenty-one years old, and such a bright girl, fond of reading and sewing, though she says she is not able to sit up for long at a time. You can imagine she would love getting cards from some or a good many of you, as it would be such a pleasure for her when the postman arrived with a big bundle. The year you did send her some she was simply delighted, and wrote me such a happy letter, thanking you all. I am sure you will remember Violet this year, and send her something, as you did before. So, with love to all, I remain, Cousin ALFRED, Cape Town.

Of course, you will remember the mail takes a good many weeks to England, so you must post fairly early.

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Dear Cousin Kate,—I am pleased to note that the "divided skirt" question has been taken up. Wasn't it a coincidence that an article on this subject appeared in the "Graphic" a week after my letter? I read it with interest, and think that in the illustrations the girls riding astride looked far smarter than they do in reality. I notice that most articles regarding cross-saddle riding are written in favour of it, and Cousin Hilda, too, is against me. Happening to know the circumstances that caused Cousin Hilda to advocate cross-saddle riding, I do not wonder at her adopting that attitude. My opinion, however, is still the same, and if ever I ride a great deal, which I hope to do some day, I shall choose the graceful, feminine way—the side-saddle. I suppose, Cousin Kate, you went to hear Mark Hambourg? We booked for the first night. I enjoyed the great virtuoso's performance, but not as I did Carreno's. Hambourg has magnificent technique, and temperament, though somewhat tempestuous, but he has not Carreno's artistic soul. Of course, Carreno was exceptional, an dthe impression she made on me is with me always, which makes me, I suppose, somewhat hypercritical when other pianists come along. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned, I enjoyed Mark Hambourg very much, and his rendering of some of the numbers was superb. I only claim to be a modest pianist myself, so you may guess how pleased I was when Hambourg came out and played a little Chopin waltz that I play, for an encore. I suppose the next big musical treat will be Ada Crossley.

I spent a delightful evening with Cousin Hilda and her friends discussing "Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" and Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities." These two books lend themselves well for discussion. Thackeray's clever portrayal of the inimitable Becky Sharp is splendid. Wicked as the woman is, one cannot help admiring her for her cleverness. And in the "Tale of Two Cities," doesn't Dickens draw every fibre of sympathy from one's soul for poor, pitiful, but noble Sidney Carton? The man, in spite of his weakness, is a lovable character.

My brother has just brought home "Grist Expectations," and, as it is considered one of Dickens' best, I am anxious to read it. Do you ever come across any Dickensian characters in real life nowadays? I have met one, a second Nairy Gamp. At least, I haven't met her, but know of her. She has all Nairy's amusing and cunning characteristics, down to her readiness for the teapot with something in it. A person can derive a great deal of pleasure out of life if he is a student of human nature. How delightful it is to study different people and recognise in them characters portrayed by great authors. Sometimes you hear a person say: "Isn't So-and-so like So-and-so in such-and-such a book?" The author, I imagine, would take this remark as a compliment to his powers in delineating human nature.

I have just finished reading "Young Barbarians," by Ion MacLaren. I am sure this book must appeal to all those who love schoolboys. To me, schoolboys are most fascinating human beings. Their love of mischief, their ingenuity for getting into trouble, their utter freedom from self-consciousness, their originality and daring, are qualities that seem to endear them to us more than anything else. "Young Barbarians" depicts schoolboys delightfully. The book abounds in humour, delicate Scotch humour, and also, in parts, in profound pathos. One can read over and over again "Spig's" feats of daring, of "Nestle's" humorously fabricated tales, of the splendid "Bulldog," and the smug "Dowbiggins." These characters make an impression on the mind with a freshness that can make one recall them at any time.

A friend of mine (by the way, I hope the printer will paragraph this, as I have done, for I jump from subject to subject so rapidly) is going to America shortly. San Francisco is her destination, and as she intends writing to me—she is humorous, good at description, and decidedly literary—I may be able to give interesting extracts in some of my letters to the page. I envy her the opportunity of studying what I consider the most wonderful of all nations. There is a similarity between the Americans and colonialists I think, which makes the tie of friendship doubly close. American and colonial girls are somewhat alike. We haven't their aplomb perhaps, but we have the same characteristics of capability and independence, and withal, the charm of femininity natural to our sex.

I once mentioned casually in a previous letter, the Chinese problem. One reads so much of the menace of the East, the black shadow that hangs over us, that it would make, I think, an interesting discussion amongst the cousins. For myself, I think the gradual immigration of Chinese into our Dominion (horrid word, but I suppose if I put colony, it would be corrected as a technical error) is to be greatly deplored. It is a very good thing that a stricter, and, let us hope, more prohibitive law, the English test, is coming into force shortly, though I believe a good many Asiatics are pelting over here as fast as they can before the Act is enforced. What I object to is the wholesale monopoly of the fruit trade here by this race. They are by nature the reverse of clean, and it is really not right that they should have anything to do with things we eat. Of course, their shops are always well got up, and, to all appearances, clean and healthy, and the Chinaman behind the counters always look clean, I admit (the law, of course, compels these things), but somehow there is something in the personality of these people that makes one shudder, and wash the fruit and vegetables through half-a-dozen waters before using when one gets home. I do not consider them sufficiently honest, either, when they put big, rosy apples in the front of the window, and when you go inside to buy some give you smaller and less rosy ones from the back. I admit, however, they seem honest enough in other ways, and are hard-working and law-abiding. In his own country I have no objection to the Chinaman, so long as he stays there. But the gradual increase of Asiatics in the Australasian colonies is a matter for serious consideration, and it makes one tremble to think what might happen if the four hundred millions awoke to civilisation. That they will awake some day is inevitable with a nation like Japan, so strategic, so clever, and so terribly imitative, behind them. There is now, in fact, a progressive party in China, of the younger Chinese, slowly but surely awakening the dormant minds of their countrymen to their future possibilities. And then, some day it will be the great battle of Armageddon. East against West, the forces of Christianity against the forces of Paganism.—Cousin VIOLET.

[Dear Cousin Violet,—Illustrations, like distance, certainly lend enchantment, but the same applies to the old habit; as for graceful, does the habit make the woman? I think not; of course, every one must judge for themselves and their figures—for feminine, if she is only feminine in her clothes "heaven help her"; that should be part of her character. Surely character and clothes are as far apart as the poles. You don't judge people by their clothes, do you? A really womanly woman can be and wear whatever is at hand and retain her womanhood. We went to hear Mark Hambourg on Monday night, and enjoyed

it immensely. I like him better this time than last. When he played Chopin it was pure joy to me; I love Chopin so. You ask me if I have ever met anyone like the characters in Dickens, my dear. Yes, some years ago, a friend and I were staying in the country, and riding in the township we found it was one of Dickens' villages come to life. You can imagine what fun we had exploring and discovering one character after another. Discuss the Chinese question, by all

means, though I would much prefer the Balkan Situation. We have heard so much of the Chinese, but you must remember that those that come here are only the very lowest classes. In what other nation will you find such well-behaved, quiet, orderly people of that class? As for their honesty and cleanliness, I think you are too sweeping. As servants they are nearly perfect—clean, faithful, sober, and hard-working. What more could one have!—Cousin Kate.]

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