



# Children's Page

## COUSINS' BADGES.

Cousins requiring badges are requested to send an addressed envelope, when the badge will be forwarded by return mail.

## COUSINS' CORRESPONDENCE.

### YOUNGER COUSINS' LETTERS.

Dear Cousin Kate,—I am so sorry I could not write to you last time; I was ill for about three weeks, and I went away for a holiday to Waipawa for two weeks. When I was away I went to Napier in the motor-car one Wednesday, and I enjoyed it very much, and the way was so pretty. We have got a nice cricket bat and ball; we play cricket as soon as we get home from school. My brother and I are going away at Christmas again to Waipawa. Mother made some Christmas cakes yesterday, and we all helped her. The whole of our family have just had influenza, but are getting over it now. I wish you a happy New Year and a merry Christmas.—Your loving Cousin Kenneth.

[Dear Cousin Kenneth,—I was so sorry to hear you had been ill; what has been the matter with you; was it influenza in a bad form with you. The whole family have my deepest sympathy, because influenza is a curse. You must have enjoyed yourselves very much at Waipawa to want to go there again so soon. I am a dreadfully restless person, and always want to go to new places; it seems to me rather a waste of time to go to the same place twice, even when I have enjoyed myself thoroughly. We haven't made either our Xmas cakes or puddings yet; we have been putting it off and putting it off, so now we will have to scramble. Everybody has to help with the puddings, haven't they; the more people that stir the luckier it is, you know. I hope you all stirred yours. I wish you a lovely Xmas, too.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I went to Feilding not long ago, and enjoyed myself very much. The people I went to see have two little kittens, and they are going to give me one when it leaves its mother. Please Cousin Kate, will you tell me a nice name for it? Next Thursday I am going to a picnic at Linton; I hope it will be fine. Yes; Daisy's bed is big enough for her, and another doll as well, and the coat fits nicely, thank you. With best love from Cousin DAKYNS. P.S.—I wish you a Merry Christmas.

Dear Cousin Dakyns,—What colour is your kittens? I am trying to get a black one—quite black, you know. I had one given to me some time ago, but the mother cat killed it. I was so disappointed. As for a name for yours, there are so many to choose from—Smut, Snudge, Ginger, Scratch, or Dodo, would you like any of those? Daisy's bed must be a lovely big one to be able to hold another doll besides herself. Have you got sheets and pillows, mattress, and blankets, and all, too? We

are very busy dressing dolls for the little children in the hospital just now. I think there are ten or twelve finished, but there are a lot more to do yet. I hope you had a lovely day for your picnic to Linton, and also that you will have a lovely Xmas and a very happy New Year.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate,—I have not got my badge yet; I think it is very good of you to send me another. There is a nice house just been built next to ours, and there are two boys living there and a little girl called Nellie. The two boys are called David and Willie, and we often go over to their place to play cricket with them. We are going to break up two days before Christmas. We are already looking forward to it; I hope we will enjoy our holidays, though we are not going anywhere to spend them. I wish you a Merry Christmas, with kind regards from your loving Cousin BROOK.

P.S.—Topsy and I have had our photos taken as a surprise for mother and dad for Christmas.—B.W.

[Dear Cousin Brook,—Just the funniest thing happened! When you sent that stamped envelope for the badge, I just put it in, and never looked at the address; well, it was sent back from the dead-letter office last Friday; you had addressed it North-street, Auckland. By this time you will have received it, as I corrected it and sent it on. How glad you must be to have such nice neighbours, the boys will be companions for you, and the girl for Dakyns. I hope the photos are good ones. We had some taken a little while ago, and we look just like Mnoris, and very ugly ones at that. Thank you for your Xmas wishes—the same to you and many, many of them. I too hope you will have a lovely time in the holidays and lots of Xmas presents.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate,—I have not written to you for a long time, but I will write you a long letter this time. It was my birthday on the 18th November, and the presents that I got were six books, some handkerchiefs, a cushion, a box for pins, a purse, a brooch with my name on. Don't you think they were a lovely lot of presents? I went to the Japanese bazaar two nights last week, and I won five raffles. They were two cushions, a mantle drape, a picture, and two carved trays. Don't you think I was lucky, Cousin Kate? I went to see Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch last Monday night, and it was just lovely. Are you going to see it when it goes up to Auckland? I went to a party yesterday afternoon of one of my little friends. When we got there we played games, and had races. They had a potato race, egg and spoon race, and the sack race. I won the egg and spoon and the sack races, and I got two books for prizes. There was a bean tub, and I got a little photo frame out of it. We were all very sorry when we had to come home. What kind of weather are you having just now? We are having horrible weather down here. It is just teeming with rain to-day. Our examinations are all over, and we break up school on

Thursday, and then we will have about eight weeks' holiday, I expect. We will all be so glad, for I, for one, just hate school. One of my friends gave me some silkworms the other day, and they are growing so big. I love them, don't you. There was such a big thunderstorm here yesterday morning, and there was lightning, too. I don't mind the thunder, but I am so frightened of the lightning. Are you, Cousin Kate? Are you going away anywhere for your Christmas holidays? I think that I am going to Wellington. Please will you excuse my writing, as I have such a dreadful pen! Well, now, I think I will stop, with much love for yourself and all the cousins. From Cousin MARJORIE.

[Dear Cousin Marjory,—I think your presents were lovely, and such a number of them, too. Altogether, you seem to be a very lucky girl. Fancy winning five raffles at a bazaar. I have never won anything in a raffle in my life. I went to see Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch when they were here before, and I just loved it. I laughed till I cried. My brother laughed so much that even the people noticed him, and everybody round us stared at him hard. We were quite ashamed of him, and tried hard to look as if he didn't belong to us. I am going to see them this time, too, if I can manage it. I should think you would be sorry to go home from that party. It must have been delightful. You will want a new bookshelf if you go on getting books at your present rate, won't you? The weather up here is simply disgusting, too. The rain is bad enough, but the wind is worse. I can quite understand how you are looking forward to the holiday. I used to hate school, too. I hope you will enjoy yours immensely, and have a jolly Christmas.—Cousin Kate.]

### OLDER COUSINS' LETTERS.

Dear Cousin Kate,—This evening is quiet; the setting sun is casting long shadows through the honeysuckle and blind-covered verandah, and the air is fragrant with the delicate perfume of the wattle trees that line our front fence. It is just the time to sit down and write you a nice long letter. In a little more than a week Christmas will be here, and there is already a Christnussy feeling in the atmosphere. You meet different friends, some looking forward with happy anticipation to its advent, others wearily wishing it was over. How people vary. One lady told me in the car the other day that she hated Christmas, and it has no unhappy associations for her either. Except to those to whom Christmas recalls sad associations, it ought to be a time of joy and happiness. There is so much family reunion then and look at the pleasure that brings. But I suppose it is mostly the young that feel the joy of Christmas. The elders, who have known trouble and care, cannot of course feel the same as we do.

I have read with interest the views of Cousins Winnie and Billa on the subject of defence of our country. While not at all favouring the Continental method of conscription, I think some modified system of compulsory training should be enforced, by which our youths be compelled to learn not only how to

shoot well, but also some of the rudiments of discipline. Without some obedience to constituted authority, no matter how well our men could use a rifle, no matter how brave or how determined they may be to defend their country to the last, they would be as a rabble herd before a much smaller body of drilled men.

It may be said our volunteering system provides for that. It may be so, but our Government fails to provide for the volunteers and so the system is comparatively worthless—at least it does not fulfil its purpose. To make it a success there must be some measure of compulsion, that is to say, some regulation by which the schoolboys should be taught how to shoot and also get some instruction in drill. We certainly have a fine body of school cadets in Auckland at the present time, and I suppose other towns in the Dominion are similarly equipped, but look how many of them drop it when they leave school, and it is only the most elementary methods they learn there. It should, therefore, be made compulsory to attend, after leaving school, so many parades a year, and to spend a certain time in camp, under conditions approximating somewhat those of actual service.

One great obstacle in the past has been the objection of employers to let their men attend such duties, but as the former have such large stakes in the country and so much to lose in event of a raid or invasion, they should be compelled—if self-interest does not move them—to give their employees the necessary leave to attend to their military duties. As defence is a public matter, the country should pay the men while undergoing their military training.

To sum up, we have been told we are living in a fool's paradise, which is true enough, for it would take very little to explode the European magazine, and then we might find ourselves in the position of having to trust to ourselves for defence. Are we prepared for such an emergency? No! It is all very well to point to our British Navy as a defence, but if a combination of two powers was made against Britain, all her naval resources, as they are, would be taxed to protect the Home coasts and defend her over-sea commerce, and in such a case we might have to shift for ourselves.

The Balkan situation is such a deep subject that I do not feel competent to express much of an opinion on it, Cousin Kate. This serious question is causing much anxiety amongst all the diplomats of Europe, as the situation is so critical that it may easily be the means of involving the Continental Powers in war. I am not well acquainted with the past history (with the exception of what I have read in Fraser's "Pictures from the Balkans") of the Balkan States, nor of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, which latter appears to have been violated by Austria, in the forcible annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for these reasons I cannot speak authoritatively on the subject.

Cousin Billa has lent me several delightful books lately. First of all, I read Ruskin's "A Joy for Ever," being a series of lectures on the political economy of Art. I think Ruskin's ideas and thoughts and his expression of them are beautiful. If the reading of these lectures afford such pleasure, I can quite understand how the pleasure would be doubly increased to those who had the good fortune to hear him. The next book I read was "The Fighting Line," the latest of those clever American society novels by Robert Chambers. What charm and freshness there is about this author's works! I just love the way he depicts the pleasures of seaside life, the bathing and boating etc. And his wonderful character delineation! Take the Cutloss family, they are splendid, though I do not like Sheila quite as well, nor think her as lovable as some of his other heroines; and do you know, I like the hero of "The Fighting Chance" better than Hamill. But he is a fine character, all the same. There are so many different types in "The Fighting Line." Hamill's charming aunt, the motherly Mrs. Cardross; the smug, conceited, but amusing Portland, at least only amusing in his little conceits and weaknesses; and poor Malcourt and Virginia Sivilham. There was such a lot of good to Malcourt and much charity, and in spite of his failings, one's heart goes out to him.

I have just finished "Sally Rammer," that book of clever short stories by the Williamses. Are not their motor car stories fascinating? The adventures that befall Christopher and his Squire Rammer are delightfully romantic.

On Saturday last I went with a picnic