



**CHILDREN'S
CORRESPONDENCE
COLUMN.**

Any boy or girl who likes to become a correspondent do so, and write letters to Cousin Kate, care of the Lady Editor, 'Graphic' Office, Auckland.

Write on one side of the paper only. All purely correspondence letters with envelope ends turned in are carried through the Post Office as follows:—Not exceeding 30x 4d; not exceeding 40x 4d; for every additional 20x or fractional part thereof, 4d. It is well for correspondence to be marked 'Press Manuscript only.'

Please note, dear cousins, that all letters addressed to Cousin Kate must now bear the words 'Press Manuscript only.' If so marked, and the flap turned in, and not overweight, they will come for a 4d stamp in Auckland, but a 1d from every other place.

COUSINS' CORRESPONDENCE.

Dear Cousin Kate,—I am writing to ask you if I may become a cousin. I have read so many stories in the 'Graphic' that I look forward to it every week. When you write will you tell me if we have to pay for badges. I go to Clyde Quay School, and I am in the Fifth Standard. My age is twelve. I must now close my letter with my name. Good-bye.—Yours faithfully, Daisy.

[Dear Cousin Daisy,—I have sent you a badge. I am delighted to have you as a cousin. There is nothing to pay. Next time you write tell me more about yourself and your doings.—Cousin Kate.]

LETTERS AND PHOTOS DELAYED.

Letters and photos from Cousin Newton, and a letter from Cousin Walter, arrived too late for this week's 'Graphic.' They will be in next week's issue.

The Fortune of Duitsia and Jacob.

A TALE FOR CHILDREN.

Late in the afternoon of a glorious summer's day, when Dordrecht lay hushing in the sunshine, a girl and a boy leaned upon the parapet of one of the numerous bridges, apparently absorbed in the scene before them.

It was a charming little bit of a water street, which for picturesqueness and colouring might well have inspired the brush of an artist.

On either hand garden beyond garden sloped down to the margin of the water, which lay placid and brown. Here and there was a little jetty where to a boat lay idly moored, and yonder was a solitary barge with a pennon drooping from the mast-head.

Farther away the canal bent round so suddenly that one might have fancied that it formed a cul de sac, where stood a large chestnut. The tree overshadowed a cottage, white-washed, and with an irregular roof of bright red tiles, whilst behind rose the broad buttressed wooden platform of a windmill. The bricks of the tower were of dark brown, and the hood was picked out with green and scarlet. The sails—yellow and old—were furled, and the usually busy arms were motionless, and through the

open mesh-work the sky was seen—sky of the loveliest blue, deepening towards the zenith.

Below the cottage half a dozen steps led down to the water, and right and left was a palisading of brown timbers.

The transparency of the atmosphere heightened the colours, and the sleeping water faithfully reproduced—as in a mirror—the azure sky, the windmill, the green tree, the vermilion of the cottage roof, the white walls, the steps, the pailings, the rushes on the banks, the idle boats.

The cottage was the girl's home, and the boy was employed in the mill, but the children were not studying the scenery.

"Duitsia," said the boy, "you are very quiet to-day; what's the matter?"

"Why, I was thinking that it only wants a week to the fair.* Now Anna's sick, there's no one to take me, and I had so looked forward to going! It's so stupid to be a girl; girls can't do anything by themselves. I wish I was a boy!"

"Don't you be too sure of that," said Jacob; "girls are a deal more fussed over than boys, and have all the best things given to them, and more time to play. They're not chivied about either, and made to do things! But I think I'd rather be a boy myself." And then he added philosophically, "I guess, after all, perhaps we're best as we are!"

"Anyway," said Duitsia, "you've been quiet enough, I'm sure, and you're not dependent on any Anna to take you to the fair!"

"Enough to make a fellow cross! I was hoping to row in the boat race, but there's an entrance fee of a quarter guilder. I had the money all right, but there was a horrid hole in my pocket, and I've lost it, worse luck!"

The boy took a small lump of mortar from the parapet and threw it into the water, and the two watched the widening circles that it made, and pondered upon their grievances.

"Jacob," said Duitsia reflectively, "I've got a whole silver guilder that I've been saving up! At the last fair Anna gave Pieter Kraaf her purse, and we three went together. If I gave you my purse you could take me, couldn't you, Jacob, and you would be able to row in the race as well?"

The boy's eyes glistened.

"Why, yes, of course I could; I didn't know you were so rich! But," he added dubiously, "will Anna let you go with me?"

"Oh, I do hope so!" said Duitsia. "At any rate, I can but ask her."

That very evening the eager girl broached the subject at home, and, after a little persuasion, the soft-hearted Anna gave her consent. The two children had grown up together as neighbours, Jacob was steady and trustworthy, and she could not bear Duitsia to be disappointed. The only stipulation she made was that they should keep out of mischief and not be late home.

The week soon slipped away, and the eventful day arrived, as fine and sunny as heart could wish.

In the afternoon the quay was a wonderful sight to behold. It was difficult to move about for the crowds of people, all dressed in their very best, and all chattering their loudest.

Jacob and Duitsia were there, of course. He in a short frogged jacket, with ever so many large silver buttons, thick, baggy trousers, fastened by a coloured belt, which held an ornamental dagger, and for headgear a peaked cap. She in a short serge

skirt and print jacket, with a coloured handkerchief ~~around~~ over the breast, and on her head a swathing of black stuff, covered by a gold casque, in turn surmounted by a white curtained cap. On either side the cap were little tabs, from which hung rosettes of filigree gold. Both children wore wooden sabots.

The costumes varied considerably, sometimes the casques of the women were of silver, sometimes the casques were replaced by an elaborate cap, or cap and hat, or casque, cap and hat. The arms of some of the women were perfectly bare to the shoulder, and their skirts were distended from the hips. The occasion attracted people from all parts, and hence the picturesque variety.

The water presented as curious a scene as the land. The river Maas is here very broad, and its surface swarmed with all sorts of craft, gaily painted, often in outrageous colours, and flying innumerable flags. There were steamboats, boeiers, tjalks, junk-looking vessels and punts. There were sails, brown, white and yellow, and from the committee steamer a brass band discoursed popular airs beneath the shelter of an awning.

A race between boeiers had just ended, and it was the turn of the rowing boats. This was for boys nudes fourteen years of age, and there were fully a score of competitors. The boats were strongly built, clumsy, flat-bottomed, and square-ended, and like the larger craft were painted in glaring colours—red, blue or green. The oars were hooked by a staple to a single thole pin, so that feathering was impossible, and the blades were painted in a wavy or crossed pattern the same colour as the boats.

Jacob took his seat, and the twenty being ranged in place, the signal was given to start.

The course was about half an English mile, and when the boats turned to come back seven of them seemed to be on pretty even terms, and among the seven was Jacob. But the pulling now was all against the tide, which had commenced to ebb, and as the swift current increased victory became a question of strength and endurance rather than of skill.

On nearing the goal three boats led, and each made desperate efforts to pull clear of the other, but apparently without success. The crowd of sympathetic onlookers waved and cheered, and Duitsia, too, waved and cheered

in her excitement, for was not Jacob one of the three?

Then suddenly the race was over, and when the result was made known officially the winner had won by a quarter of a length, the second boat was half a length ahead of the third, and the third was Jacob's! The three boys were almost equally cheered, for the race was wonderfully plucky and close.

Poor Jacob! It was difficult for him to bear his disappointment, although Duitsia consoled him as well as she could. He refused to be comforted, and his defeat—though most honourable—cast a gloom over the happiness of the afternoon, which not even the excitement of the horse racing could chase away. This horse racing had little resemblance to our English sport, for the animals engaged were great, clumsy, black cart horses, which it was difficult to urge beyond an ordinary trot.

The interest of the fair now centred beside the church, and the large space beneath the trees was crowded with booths and sightseers. A roundabout in full swing, with organ accompaniment, was the great attraction. It had for a motto "Lust en Rust" (Pleasure and Repose), and Duitsia and Jacob, mounted on hobby horses side by side, went round and round until they were tired.

A ride range next claimed their attention, and then a giant, reputed nine feet high—doubtless a liberal estimate. After that they saw some marionettes, and then a six-legged pig.

Having refreshed themselves at a sweetcake stall they approached a booth that bore the attractive legend, of which this is the illustration:

MYSTERY! NECROMANCY! ASTROLOGY!!! PRESTIDIGITATION!!!! THE WANDERING WIZARD!!!! SIXPENCE AN INTERVIEW.

Jacob gazed open mouthed as Duitsia laboured through the difficult words. She ended by saying: "What money have you left?" Her companion showed the purse. "Only fourpence," he said, ruefully.

The boxom looking dame who took the money noticed the children and said:

"Won't you go in, my dears?" "Please, ma'am," said Duitsia wistfully, "do you charge less for children, because we've only fourpence, and there's me and Jacob?" The woman smiled good naturedly.

* A great feature of the Kermis are "poetterjes"—a kind of cake which is extremely popular.



"IT WAS A CURIOUS ROOM, IN SEMI-DARKNESS."

*The kermis, or country fair, is a great institution in Holland.