



CHILDREN'S CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

Any boy or girl who likes to become a cousin can 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 100 lbs; not exceeding 4oz. 1d. for every additional 2oz 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 over-weight, they will come for a 4d stamp in Auckland, but a 1d from every other place.

COUSINS' CORRESPONDENCE.

Dear Cousin Kate,—Saturday week was the Mercer Regatta, and we all went to it. I enjoyed myself very much. It was great fun watching the canoe hurdle races, especially when the people kept falling out of the canoes when they were going over the hurdles. But I think the best of all was watching the greasy boom. There was one poor Maori that got about half way across, but then just as he was giving another jerk to get on further, his barrel slipped round and he fell into the water. The man that won the prize won it at Mercer the year before last, and also at Ngaurawahia regatta last year. I wonder whether you were at the regatta, Cousin Kate. We have got twelve miles to go to Mercer, so that is a long way to go in the trap, is it not? I have not yet received my badge that you promised me, dear Cousin Kate, but I am very anxious to get it. We have three dogs, and their names are Rover, Sailor and Don.—From Cousin Ethel.

[Dear Cousin Ethel,—I was not at the regatta, but a great friend of mine, who takes photographs for the paper, was there. He said it was grand fun. I have posted your badge to-day, and am sorry I forgot it before. I expect you saw the pictures of the regatta in last week's paper.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I have not written to you for a long time, so to-day as I have nothing to do, I thought I would write to you. Last night it rained very hard, and therefore there is a large flood on to-day. Our bridge is washed away, and now we will have to go around to the swing bridge, a quarter of a mile further away. But this afternoon it is very fair weather. We are going to break up school on Wednesday for the six weeks' holidays. I do not know whether I will be going away this year for my holidays, but I had an invitation to go to Tuakau with a friend. I would like to go very much, and I hope I can get away. I am sure you will be very glad when you hear that I have passed at our examination. I am now in the sixth standard. There was not a failure in our school. Mr Ellis, our school teacher, was very pleased, and he said that we all did very well indeed. We

have nineteen cows milking now, and twelve little calves feeding. Our youngest calf, while it was in the stable, got kicked in the eye by Grace, our horse. Its eye all swelled up, and it is a little swollen yet. This is the second calf she has kicked now.—From Cousin Bertha.

[Dear Cousin Bertha,—How pleased I am to hear you passed your examination so well. I do so much hope you will very much enjoy your holiday, whether you go to Tuakau or not. I expect, as you have so many cows milking, you are sure to have a separator, or perhaps you send your milk to a creamery. Tell me about it next time you write.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—As three of my sisters have become "Graphic" Cousins, I would like to become one also, Cousin Kate, if you will accept me as one. I am ten years old, and am in the fourth standard. Mr Ellis, our school teacher, is going to leave at Christmas, and we will have to begin the New Year with a new teacher, but I do not know who it will be. We are going to have our school picnic on the 26th of December. It is going to be held at Pokeno this year. After I have been to the picnic I will be able to tell you all about it. On the day of the picnic the flag at Pokeno school is going to be unfurled, and the people are going to try to get the Maori band, and I think it will be very nice. I have two pet cats. Their names are Tabby and Chappie. Tabby is a white and grey cat, and about four years old; Chappie is a dark grey cat, and about half a year old. If you will accept me as a Cousin, will you please send me a badge. From Cousin Maud.

[Dear Cousin Maud,—I am sorry I have not been able to welcome you as a cousin before, but Christmas has put us all out. I hope you are enjoying your holidays, and that the picnic on Boxing Day was a great success. I am going to send you a badge, and hope you will get it all right.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—Please pardon me for not writing before, but really there has been nothing stirring. Last Saturday I invited Cousin Ma to spend the afternoon with me. She arrived at 3 p.m., and after having a little chat we paid a visit to a picturesque little valley about fifty yards from the side of our house. It was just delightful, and, oh, so cool! The birds and the locusts seemed to us to be singing their best, and the different coloured berries and lovely Clematis hanging in clusters from the trees added more and more to the beauty of the place. We commenced at the foot of the valley and wandered on, gathering ferns and mosses, every now and again passing a little pool of water, where lay a lazy front dreamily gazing into space. Sometimes a gentle breeze, laden with sweet scent from the flowers, would pass us, but when we came to look for the flowers from which had come the scent they were far out of our reach. At length we came to a place where the lightning had torn up a poriri tree by the roots, causing it to fall across the creek, and upon it we decided to rest awhile. Here we sat arranging and comparing our ferns and mosses, admiring the beautiful scenery that lay around us and listening to the quiet murmur of the stream below till we could not help but think that surely we must have accidentally wandered into fairyland. Having rested we thought it time for us to return, so passing through the valley again we reached home laden with ferns, moss and Clematis. After putting our flowers into water we went off for a game of tennis, which ended

a most enjoyable afternoon. I have not yet received the collecting card and badge I asked you for some time ago.—From Cousin Irene.

[Dear Cousin Irene,—I much enjoyed your letter, with its vivid description of the gully near your home. How lovely it must be, and how lucky you are to have so charming a resort near at hand. Are you very fond of tennis? Which is the better player, Cousin Ma or yourself? Remember me to Ma when you see her, and ask her to write to me soon. Hoping to hear from you also.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I have not yet received a badge or a card. I suppose the other Cousin Gertrude got them. I am Gertrude Cahill. I have left the Newmarket school and am going to Carlyle College, in Remuera. I like it very much, and am learning French, Latin, German and literature. I was glad to hear that you received my puzzle and drawing. Cousin Gladys got her badge and she is delighted with it. Poor Mr Bruford, our late head master, was buried to-day. I will be very pleased to hear the results of the missing word competition. I hope I will be able to come to the cousins' Christmas tree. Dear Cousin Kate, I am going to send in a story, which I will compose myself.—Your loving cousin, Gertrude Cahill.

[Dear Cousin Gertrude,—I have just posted another card and badge. I expect, as you say, the others went to the wrong cousin, as I have several of the same name on my books. I was sorry to have to keep your letter back so long, but the holidays have rather upset our usual arrangements. I wonder if you were at the Christmas tree; there were several cousins there who never came up and spoke to me. I was so sorry.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I saw my photo. in the "Graphic," and thank you so much for having it put in. I have begun my Christmas holidays from to-day and am greatly looking forward to them. As soon as the weather is settled I am going to continue my swimming lessons at the salt water baths. Did you hear the Waihi Band playing in Albert Park on Sunday? It played beautifully. I am very fond of music and learn both violin and piano, which I like very much indeed. My brother's dog has a sweet little puppy about six weeks old, but my brother is now at Home in England at school, and his dog misses him very much. I must now say good night. Wishing you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year, with love I remain, Cousin Roie.

[Dear Cousin Roie,—I was sorry you could not come up to the tree at the hospital. The children enjoyed it so much, and the stockings you sent were simply lovely. I believe the children liked them better than anything. You are very fortunate in learning two instruments. I hope you will get on well with the violin. Perhaps next Christmas you will play us a piece at the hospital, if we have another Christmas tree. A little bird told me you were learning photography. As soon as you get a nice, very clear one, please send it to me for our cousins' page. The gentleman who is showing you the way would know what would be best.—Cousin Kate.]

My Dear Cousin Kate,—I am sure I don't know what you must be thinking of me for not writing to you for so long, but until this last week or so I have had toothache a great deal, and so have felt rather cross and in no mood for letter-writing. I have a scrap-book to send you. I really do not know if it will be too late or not, for when I read the notice I did not take much heed of the date of closing, fully expecting to see it again; and then the "Graphic" was sent away, so I just had to trust to my memory. I do not at all expect to gain a prize (because my book is not nearly good enough), but I shall be glad to think that the bright pictures might amuse

some poor child. I am also returning my card, which I have kept for so long. I am sorry I could not collect more, but I hope you will not mind. This will make a total of fifteen shillings altogether. How is the poor child in the cot progressing, dear cousin? We have not heard much about it lately. I hope you have quite recovered from your illness long ere this. I have had a very severe cold all this week, making me feel very miserable. I think our cousins are very kind to send in their photographs. I have been reading several books lately, but those I liked best were "St. Elmo," "Robinson Crusoe," "Strawberry Hill," "From Log Cabin to White House," "Elsie's Children," and "Elsie's Widowhood." These last two were birthday presents, making seven of the "Elsie" series that I have now. Have you read all of the others? I think they are delightful. I must now conclude this babyish scribble, with fond love and with best wishes for a happy Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.—Ethel Ada.

[Dear Cousin Ethel Ada,—I wonder if you came to the tree after all. I gave your little brother some tickets, but as you did not come and speak to me I do not know if you were there or not. There was quite a crowd of grown-up patients, and so many people, that I really scarcely saw which of the cousins were present. I know none of you by sight, you see, so was not to blame, and I did not recognise you. The scrap-book was lovely, and I am sure gave great pleasure to some poor little thing. Please don't forget me in the New Year, but write regularly.—Cousin Kate.]

The Christmas Tree at the Children's Hospital, Auckland.

No doubt there were many happy folks on Christmas Eve, but between the hours of three and five none, I am sure, were happier than the children and convalescent patients at the Auckland Hospital. The Christmas tree and entertainment arranged by the "Graphic," and to which several cousins contributed by sending dolls, etc., was a most splendid success. The tree was a grand one, very kindly supplied by Mr Goldie, of the Domain. It was so high we had to have a huge ladder to reach the top in decorating and in taking off the presents. Each child had two presents, also a fancy stocking of toys and lollies and a cracker. The girls all had dolls, and a great number of the smaller boys too. They simply loved them, because they dressed and undressed so nicely, and all the clothes were so pretty and so beautifully made. One little girl had just had an operation that morning, and was very pale, poor little mite, but was operation, poor little mite, but was allowed to be wheeled in her bed. A number of the children had to come in their beds, while others had crutches and chairs to support their poor injured legs. Three little fellows were in the fever ward, and could not come, but be sure we sent them some lovely presents. It was a merry time indeed, when we began to strip the tree. A large number of grown-up patients who were well enough came down from the other wards, and every inch of room was occupied. Every child seemed convinced he or she had got the very nicest present in the world, and there was much laughter as the crackers were pulled, and the caps and masks they contained were fitted on to the little heads. It was sad, too, in a way, to see such pale faces in some cots, but even these were brightened with the joy of the treat. Then began the Punch and Judy show. It was a really splendid one by Professor Beckford, and how we all did laugh at Mr Punch and his dreadful actions. Then came Mr James Bain, the very clever English variety artist and comic singer, who has been all over the colony. Mr Bain is at the head of his profession, and his kindness in coming up and singing for no fee except the gratitude of the children was much appreciated. He sang three songs, and we were all quite weak with laughing when he finished. The faces he made were simply excruciating. Then Miss Brightie Berry and Miss Freda Hunter gave us a coon song and dance, and as an encore an Irish jig by Miss Brightie Berry. I never imagined