



CHILDREN'S PAGE.



COUSINS' CORRESPONDENCE.

My dear Cousin Kate,—Will you please excuse me for not writing to you for so long. I have been very busy with my lessons, and I have not had time to write. Did you go to the show on Friday or Saturday? I did not go myself, but my brother had his horse down, and he got three first prizes with him. We have got such a lot of little chickens out now. A clutch of thirteen dear little things came out on Monday. We have a dear little lamb now; it is between my little sister and me. I call it Daisy. Have you sent me my badge yet, because I have not got it by post. You will be pleased to hear that my little pony Pat got first prize for child's pony at the show on Friday. I must say good-bye now.—From Cousin Barbara.

[Dear Cousin Barbara,—I was not able to go to the show, but hear it was lovely. How lucky your brother was. I expect you are all very proud of him and his horse, are you not? And your pony, too! How pleased you must be about him. I cannot get the badges made yet, but as you will see in this week's paper hope to have them soon. Send an envelope for yours.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—This is, as you know, my first letter. My mother takes in the "Graphic" every week, and I read the cousins' letters, and I thought I would like to become a cousin. I live in Petone, and go to the public school. I was eleven last January, and I am in the fifth standard at school. We have two pets, and that is one cat and kitten. Dear Cousin Kate will you please send me a badge and a collecting card. I must end this short note.—I remain, your affectionate cousin, Nellie.

[Dear Cousin Nellie,—You are warmly welcomed as a cousin, and I hope you will take part in all our competitions, and also will write regularly. The badges will be ready next week, I hope. Will you send me an envelope for yours?—Cousin Kate.]

My Dear Cousin Kate,—Thank you very much for your nice long letter. I saw such a dear little Shetland pony some time ago. It was so small that it seemed just like a big dog. I have an aunt called Auntie Kate. Mother had two little chickens. I am going to the "Pirates" in Suva. We get into the launch, which comes up every day, and goes back again the

same day to Suva. After a time she goes through a little back river and then into the sea. We live on the bank of the river, and we see the cane launches pass by, when she passes with the empty punts which she leaves at different places. We wait till she comes back with the full punts, and we call out for cane, and they throw us some sometimes, and we eat it and enjoy it very much. We are making a tennis court. Sometimes we get on a bamboo and go in the river. I saw that notice about writing on one side of the paper. Mother says it is quite right the way I write. She says the sheets could be torn in half. Please, Cousin Kate, will you let me know if it is quite right. I would like to go in for the story competition. The gardens are all nice. With love to you and all the cousins, I remain, Cousin Lorna.

[Dear Cousin Lorna,—Your letter interested me very much. Are you fond of riding? It was always one of my greatest pleasures, but I never get out now. You are writing quite right. It does not matter the sheets being joined together as long as you only use one side of the paper. I used to get sugar cane at one time. It is very nice, is it not?—Yours affectionately, Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I have often been going to write to you to tell you the doll arrived safely, but I have kept putting it off, and as I have nothing to do I thought I would write to you. It is my sister's birthday next Wednesday, and my niece will be four years old on the day after Christmas; it is a pity it wasn't on Christmas day, isn't it. I am going to Waitetuna in about three weeks. I am so glad, because I have been there before, and I like being out there very much. It is quiet out there, but I like the country best. I will give you a description of the place. It is very hilly; there is a lot of big hills very steep, a very nice bush with plenty of nice ferns and nikau palms. The piece of ground on which the house is built has a creek running three parts of the way round it. There is a small waterfall in the creek and it makes such a noise. I must now say good-bye.—I remain, your loving cousin, Helen.

[Dear Cousin Helen,—What a very pretty place that seems to be. It must be quite like our coloured picture in the Christmas number. I should think Boxing Day would be a lovely day for a birthday, because then you get both Christmas and birthday presents.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I am going to try for a prize for the Puzzle Competition, and I hope I will get one. Did you go to see any of Pollard's Opera Company. We went to "Flordora," and are going to "The Casino Girl" on Saturday. Have you ever read "Daddy's Girl"? It is such a pretty book. I have not written to you for a little while, Dear Cousin Kate, as I have not had any time. I think the story that is in the "Graphic" must be very interesting. I have not yet had time to read it. We have such a lovely little canary, and he is getting quite tame. Now, dear Cousin Kate, I must close, as I have no more news.—Love from Cousin Gwendoline.

[Dear Cousin Gwendoline,—The holidays will soon be here now, and then you will have time to write regularly, I suppose. I have not yet read "Daddy's Girl," but must try and find time, as you say it is so very nice. I have been to Pollard's once or twice and saw you there one time.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—I am writing to tell you about our sports. On the 7th it was such a horrid wet day that we thought it would be impossible to have them, but towards the evening it cleared. On the 8th, which was Friday, it turned out to be a lovely day. At 9.30 three drags left the school with about ninety people in all. We arrived at the Hutt a little after eleven, and had our first race about a quarter to twelve. The first race was an ordinary running race. In that race I came in second, and was so tired after it. I didn't think I would get a prize, but as it was one of the longest races they gave me one. The races were much the same as last time, except that they had the long jump, and Cousin Aileen won that. She jumped eleven feet three inches. Was not it good? Cousin Aileen won two prizes, and I got one, so you see neither of us came home disappointed.

A lady gave a speech just before the prizes were given out, and she said, "What would our grandmothers say to girls running?" But she continued and said that it was far better than lying on a sofa all day. I am sure you must think the same, Cousin Kate. Most of the girls were in their gymnasium dresses and looked very nice. About three o'clock a great many visitors came out, and so it was much more jollier. There was a married ladies' walking race, and it was so funny! We arrived home about 6.30 or 7. The girls did not make such a noise this time as last, but everyone said that it was quite the nicest of days we had ever had for our sports. I am so stiff now that it hurts me to cough or laugh, but I will soon recover from that. I have got a doll to dress for the hospital, and so I will be quite busy for a week or two. We had a play last week and it went off pretty well. Some of the Preparatory School sang and danced, so it really wasn't very dry. I must now stop.—With love to you and all the cousins, I remain, yours sincerely, Cousin Zaidee.

[Dear Cousin Zaidee,—Your letter is the nicest and most interesting I have ever had from you, and I am sure the cousins will much enjoy it. The sports must have been simply splendid, and I am as pleased as you can be over your success and that of Cousin Aileen. The more exercise you take the better, and I quite agree with that speech.—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—It must be two or three weeks since I have written. I could not get another doll, so when I send the one I have in you will know I did not break it. I have been playing croquet nearly all the afternoon until now, and the time is nearly 7.30 o'clock. Fancy! Is it not lovely to think only five more weeks' school, and then the Christmas holidays? I went to the Burnell bazaar on Thursday. They had some very pretty little things from England.

Will you please excuse a short letter, as I want to do something more to the doll's clothes.—I remain, Cousin Roie

[Dear Cousin Roie,—I was really beginning to fear my most faithful cousin had given me up, and was very delighted to see your familiar handwriting. I forwarded you a doll today and hope it is the right size. If not do not bother about the broken foot. It cannot be helped.—Cousin Kate.]

Poor No. Eight.

Tuk, tuk, tuk, tchah! Tuk, tuk, tuk, tchah!"

Seven of the hens—there were eight altogether—made a rush forward as this sound greeted their ears, for each was anxious to receive the dainty morsel that their lord and master had found.

"It is no use my going," said No. 8, as she looked rather sadly after the others; "he never gives me anything but pecks, and I think I've had nearly enough of those for to-day."

Poor No. 8! Her life was not a happy one, though any passer-by would unhesitatingly have decided in his own mind that she lived in a very paradise.

Cool, green, wavy grass to stroll about in, a house fitted up with perches at all heights to sleep in, tall fruit trees overhead, laden with sweet scented blossom, fresh water every day, abundance of food, and company of her own kind.

Surely she must have been of an exceptionally bad disposition to be unhappy under these circumstances.

But she was not altogether to blame; she could not help being a little lame, for instance, or having an appearance as of moulting around her neck, any more than she could help her comb being such a very poor one.

Sometimes she would look half enviously at her sisters as they strutted about, for their combs were so abnormally large that they drooped forward over their eyes, and wobbled about in the strangest manner; but after a minute she would come to the conclusion that perhaps she was the best off, after all, for at any rate she could see where she was going, which was certainly more than they could.

"Ah," she said to herself one day, "how happy I was in that little back yard, before we were taken away from mother and put to live here! Then we were all treated alike, and nobody thought about combs."

The fact was, that the cock ruled in that little domain. No sooner did he make his appearance in their midst than the hens all did their best to win his approval—except No. 8, who apparently took no interest in him whatever. Whether it was this indifference, or whether it was that she appeared so very inferior to her sisters, I cannot say, but the fact remains that that cock took a very violent dislike to her, and never lost an opportunity of giving her a violent peck in the back, an example which, from the first, was imitated by the seven devoted hens.

From her solitary corner she could see that the cock was telling the hens something particular, for he was perched up on a piece of brick, and his fine red comb was wobbling vigorously.

A few scattered words came to her ears, for he was talking loudly.

"This evening—adventure—caged up," she heard quite plainly, and, drawing a little closer, she at last made out that he was tired of being cooped up there, and that he was going to escape in search of adventure.

All the hens loudly lamented his decision, but not one dared to suggest that he had much better not do such a foolish thing.

No. 8 put her head on one side, and thought for some minutes.

"I wonder," she said to herself, "if he knows that Rough, the terrier, is always turned loose towards evening; at least, I am sure he doesn't, or he would never suggest such a thing as going out. I must go and warn him!"

She started off across the grass to join the group, and then stopped short.