

**A Charming Story about Children
that will Interest Every Mother**



*A charming child study by T. H. Ashe, Onehunga.
"Where have you come from, Baby dear?"
"Out of the Everywhere into here."*

HIS JOURNEY TO THE GATES

BY MARION HILL

HE WAS ONLY A VERY SMALL BOY THAT WANTED LOTS OF LOVING—BUT BETWEEN MOLLY CODDLES AND MOTHER'S METHODS, HE ALWAYS SEEMED TO GET MISSED OUT SOMEHOW

REX PETTISON was not as comfortable within as might be. He dimly realised that his condition threatened to grow worse, and it disheartened him. In that house, the mere fact of being a little boy was trouble enough without being a little boy of unsettled insides.

Though, to be sure, if you took Regina's word for it, being a little girl was a bad business, too.

That they were twins only made everything worse. Twins seemed to be something that had to be looked at a great deal. Twins apparently were everybody's affair, even strangers'. Twins could not do a thing without being caught.

Then, too, one was always being flourished before the other as a warning or an example—generally a warning.

Also, it was held to be wrong in either of them to possess a characteristic which the other did not. Regina was constantly harried and hounded because she was not born a philologist, as was her brother. Rex, in his turn, was exhorted day upon day to emulate his sister's up-to-dateness of activity, whereas he loved calmly and philosophically to ruminate. Then—impossible to believe, but true—the adults occasionally varied the schedule of complaints by begging Regina for pity's sake to try to keep quiet like her brother, and by coldly advising Rex not to "parrot his elders," but to try to talk naturally, like his sister.

They were as unlike as a rhinoceros and a chipmunk, but they were made to feel that it was all due to their own wrong lack of interest in the vital matter of resembling each other. Why, if Rex grew untimely sleep-stricken, Regina, too, was sent to bed. If Regina felt wilted, Rex likewise was dosed with boiled water.

At this particular moment he wondered if it were possible that she felt as queer as he. He would find out. They

were both in the garden, supposedly weeding it.

"Sister, do you feel hollow in your body, shaky in your legs, giddy in your head, and hot while you are cold?"

Regina grinned with interest.

"How many guesses do I have?" she asked.

"It's not a conundrum," said Rex, sadly.

Regina looked and felt aggrieved.

"No, I don't. Why?"

"I do."

"Why?"

Making no attempt to explain, he put his head down on the garden bed and lay there quietly. Regina felt sorry for him, but she thriftily went on weeding. It was open-air exercise insisted upon by their mother, who at the expiration of the allotted time would appear, watch in hand, to see if they had performed their full duty, to commend them unenthusiastically if they had, to reprove them with dispassionate justice if they had not, and to lay out for them their next hour of the day. Mrs. Pettison believed in system. That is why Regina kept on weeding.

Rex was deaf to the dictates of prudence.

Now, if one could feel that one's mother was just the best thing in the world to make a sick place well, there might be some fun in illness. Rex never dreamed of so much impossibility. From his very babyhood a mysterious fetish, called Molly Coddle, had kept him from his share of petting. What Molly Coddle had not robbed him of, self-reliance had.

Mr. Pettison insisted that his son should not be Molly Coddled. Mrs. Pettison insisted that her son should be made self-reliant.

Consequently, if Rex fell down he had to pick himself up again—so as to be-

come self-reliant. If he scratched his finger, he first had to wash the microbes out of the sore and then had to forget it forever after—not to be a Molly Coddle. If he awoke in the night thirsty, he had to remember that there was a filter in the hall and that he could get water for himself without waking others: so as to be self-reliant. If he awoke frightened with dreams about ghosts, he was to remember that dreams and ghosts had no existence, and he wasn't to cry out—so as to escape being a Molly Coddle.

Molly Coddles got rocked to sleep when they felt mother-loving; Rex never. Those who undervalued self-reliance had their bumped places kissed; Rex had to ask Catherine for vinegar and anoint himself.

Regina hazily was of the opinion that only a Molly Coddle would dare to lie on the grass when it ought to be weeding. She would not for anything be in a Molly Coddle's shoes; for there was Mrs. Pettison bearing down upon them.

Rex sat up, dizzier than ever. His mother stared at him sternly. Whether or not she felt as unpleasant as she looked is another matter. But *obedience* had been the platform of the Mothers' Club for several years, and in conscientious effort to be all that she should as secretary of the association, Mrs. Pettison had become very disagreeable at home. The only break she had allowed herself in the monotony of firmness was a week or so after a lecture delivered upon "Letting Children Alone to Allow Them to Find Themselves." For fourteen frantically giddy days Rex and Regina had been let alone, but they had found such a fearful lot of other things besides themselves that the severity when resumed had been of sterner stuff than before. The look which Rex now received was awe-inspiring. Regina's portion was a smile, dignified and temperate.