"My little girl's diligence pleases mother. *I am happy.*" This admission, according to the best authorities, was the noblest reward a child could receive.

Regina looked frightened to death. What on earth was her proper reply? In that house one had to say something immediately when a pause came; if one waited too long, one got badgered into making some statement of so horrible a nature that one got punished for it.

"Yes, mamma," said Regina desperately. It passed.

"But you, Rex, have disappointed me, grieved me, astounded me."

In the impelling, majestic pause Rex merely blinked with an unconcern which appealed to his sister as nothing short of suicidal.

"You have been moping for several days, but I have not reproved you, trusting you would come to your senses of your own accord."

Come to his senses! He was several thousand miles away from them right now, in Regina's moderate estimation, for he maintained his fateful serenity. Even his mother felt thrilled with a species of fright. She resorted to a remark calculated to electrify.

"I shall be obliged to punish you. Do you understand?"

Rex clawed some sand—peaceably, nonchalantly.

"Do you hear me, *sir?*"

The intensity of that "sir" was successful—in a measure. Rex lifted his troubled eyes and spoke.

"I can't put 'peripatetic' back in the bag," he said.

Appearances to the contrary, he had been very busy while he lay on the ground. His memory was a store-house of long words—words caught surreptitiously from grown-up conversations, or plucked laboriously from printed pages. He had been rolling those treasured words of his around like so many marbles. His glittering favourite was "peripatetic." There was, therefore, a certain coherence in his speech. He said it again, more faintly:

"Peripatetic. It won't go back in the bag."

His mother dropped on her knees and folded him in her arms. He felt himself being carried into the house. Was he to be punished? What form would it take? Evidently none, just at present, for there was fear, not anger, in his mother's voice as she called to Catherine and gave the order:

"Telephone to Doctor Wismer."

Doctor Wismer! Hearing this, Rex felt more than ever uneasy, lacking confidence in the man who, the last time he was called in, had inconsiderately and carelessly left behind him a strange baby which they had to look after ever since.

True, Mrs. Pettison said that the doctor had been but an agent of heaven—that God had sent the baby. But Rex, being a Christian and wishing to remain one, preferred to consider Doctor Wismer the sole offender.

He came. He made himself obnoxious from the start, and had Rex put to bed.

"What is the matter with me?" the invalid asked of Regina. She had been listening to the Wismerian directions imparted to her mother. She knit her brows and scowled in honest endeavour to remember.

"Bites," she said at length.

"Bites?"

"Microbites." She looked doubtful and miserable. She hated to fail her brother in time of need. Microbes had something to do with it anyhow. She heard the doctor say so.

"Is it catching?"

"I think so."

"Is there a sign on our house?"

With one long, glorified, hopeful, rapturous look at the kindly brother who had made such a lovely thing possible, Regina slid out to make an examination. She came back on wings. She at once began to spell, so as not to forget:

"S-C-A-R-L-E-T F-E-V-E-R W-I-T-H-I-N."

She was hustled out of the room, and it was weeks before she got in again.

Photo. by Home Studio, Takapuna.

"AFTER THE RUN" John, the son of Mrs. Gould, of Takapuna, in the costume in which he won first prize at the Government House Children's Ball, Auckland.

Rex really did not miss her, so many odd things happened. About the oddest was the disappearance of whole pieces of the day. Any hour of the twenty-four was liable to drop right out of sight—like a board from the bottom of a washtub—and leave a gap.

After one of these gaps he came back from somewhere and found that he was in the best spare bedroom. Spare? It was spare enough now, goodness knows, because the white curtains were gone, the pictures were removed, the rugs were up, and the portieres were down. "Spare" was the word.

There came some more gaps. Then Rex discovered that the spare room belonged to someone else beside himself. She was a quiet lady who wore a cap and an apron, even at night. People called them trained nurses—why, he did not know. She was very quiet. He used to forget she was there. Then, first thing he knew, a spoon would glide through the air and stop under his nose. She would be on the other end of it. Whenever she had not anything else to do she would make him take a dry smoke—on a glass cigarette.

He did everything she mentioned. Her voice made him. She, the doctor, and his mother, all spoke in the same tone—as if he, Rex, had pig-headedly chosen to be ill, in spite of their best advice to the contrary. He grew discouraged.

One day, while he stayed in bed—for he could see the ceiling all the time—he and the bed and the ceiling went to an awful place, full of bad sounds and wild beasts. The nurse was very much of a brick that time. She put her arms around him and kept the things away.

Then came the day that he was dying. He talked all the time. He could hear it himself. The doctor seemed to be there every moment. Catherine came in, too, and begged that Father Jennings be sent for, because Father Jennings had the way with him. Regina was brought in and was lifted up to kiss him. His father and mother were both there—holding on to each other.

Right in the middle of the dying business the ceiling fell—on top of everybody, the nurse, the doctor, Catherine, Regina, and his father and mother. Then the usual calm followed and he went to sleep.

The hall clock woke him. It struck "one"—midnight. The room was dark, except in one corner, where there was a shaded lamp. All the world was asleep. The world was solemn—and cold, too. Only he, of all the world, was awake. No, there was his mother.

She was close beside the bed, in a rocking-chair, but she did not rock. She had on a blue wrapper. It looked very nice around the neck, because it had no collar. He thought no collar must feel much nicer than the stiff, high white one that she always wore. She looked very tired. Her hair was plaited like Regina's. She was like someone else's mother. He remembered that he had not spoken to her, oh, for years and years. He spoke, and his voice boomed like the clock, yet it was a tiny voice, too.

"Mamma."

"Yes, my baby."

Her baby! Then Wismer had been at his old trick.

No—wonderful—he, Rex, was her baby, for she was leaning over him, her hand on his.

The world was still asleep, still quiet and dark, but it did not seem cold or lonely any more. To have a hand to hold—that makes the difference.

"Does my boy want something?"

Truly, nothing, but to wonder at the queerness and niceness of having conversation in the middle of the night.

"Does my little one want a drink?"

"Yes," said Rex, experimentally, curious of what might follow.

What *did* was the total smashing of self-reliance. She brought the drink, she held the glass, she raised his head, she put it back on the pillow, she replaced the glass. He had only to swallow.

Oh, the bliss of lying there in bed and being cared for without being scolded! She seemed shining with happiness to think that there was something she could do for him. She did not appear to worry at all that self-reliance was on its last legs.