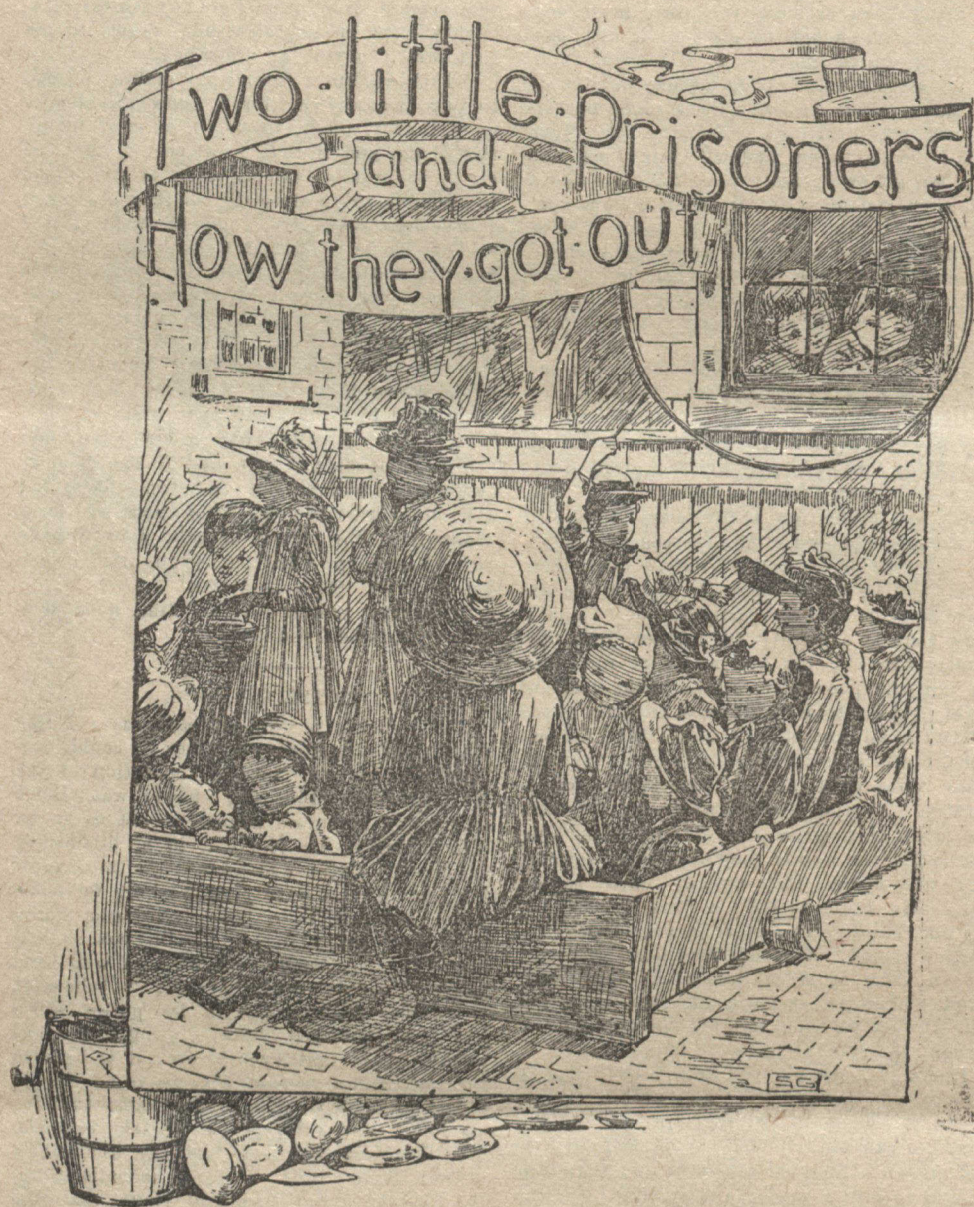


LITTLE FOLKS



A Party of Seventeen.

(Fannie H. Gallagher, in The 'Little One's Annual'.)

A hot day in July—'hotter than pepper.' Aunt Joan's two boys, John and Jimmie, were prisoners from eleven till four in two upper rooms of their boarding-house.

A saucer of cracked ice, story-books, and games helped to make the long hours pass till the clock should strike four. Then mamma always took them out for a drive or a walk.

Neighbors next door, moving out, have left a great case of shelves which lies on its back on the brick pavement below.

A short pull at the door bell, then another and another were heard. Nora tapped at the prison door, and the sound of many voices came stealing up the stairway.

'It's the party, ma'am; they were to come at four, they said, and it's just strikin' now. Where shall I put 'em, and what shall I say?'

'Oh, it's our party!' cried the two boys at once. John, jumping with delight, explained still further: 'You promised we might have a party sometime, and to-day's "some-time," isn't it? We just invited 'em, Jimmie and I, when we were out walking with Nora this morning. We asked all we saw, and told 'em to bring the rest. Now, mamma, can't we have cake and ice-cream for supper?'

Aunt Joan hurried down to meet her unexpected guests, while Nora buttoned the boys into fresh waists. 'There's ten and a' half o' ten,' counted John.

'Aren't you glad we're come?' cried Carrie Howe, the leader of the band. 'I was just tickled when I got my invitation, only I couldn't bring any of the Joneses, for they've all got the measles, nor the Smarts, for their clean clothes hadn't come home from the wash!'

Giving thanks that the Jones family, likewise the Smart family had been unable to accept, Aunt Joan led

her column to the pavement, for yard there was none. The old shelves were in the shade, and the children appropriated them in a twinkling.

Now the queer old frame became a boat, and its crew were tossed up and down on the waves. Then it was a church, and Billy Bone preached a sermon on the text 'Grin and bear it!' Then it was a circus, and John's joy was full when Carrie Howe chose him for the monkey. 'Jimmie and the twins with white caps on shall be the happy family. If I catch any of you quarrelling before the audience, you won't be happy long.'

'Now we'll vote for the flower we love best,' cried the tireless manager when the animals, suddenly grown wild, had broken out of their cages. 'All you "daisy" girls, go up on the front seat; the hollyhocks next—I'm a hollyhock! The dandelions there—I wouldn't be a dandelion! Lilies over there, Johnny-jumps behind! Sit still, all of you, while I count!'

Such a good time as they had for an hour and a half. No one even thought of supper.

No one? I forgot Aunt Joan—she thought of nothing else. The mistress of the boarding-house could not be expected to supply supper for fifteen extra people at such short notice. What should she do?

However, she found a way out of the trouble. Nora appeared with a tray on which seventeen tiny boxes of ice-cream stood up or tumbled over each other. Aunt Joan followed with a great basket of rolls and cakes. Dear, dear! how wild the children were! When Carrie Howe called out that Nora had forgotten the spoons, the 'happy family,' the 'monkey,' and Billy Bone, the preacher, rolled off on the pavement, forgetting all about their party clothes.

Seventeen children went to bed that night very tired. Seventeen children also went to bed that night very happy.

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