

FICTION

Carolyn Wells

Children of Our Town

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION



CHILDREN OF OUR TOWN

BY E. MARS AND M. H. SQUIRE

WITH VERSES BY
CAROLYN WELLS



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FLYING KITES

BOATS ON THE LAKE

AT CONEY ISLAND

IN CENTRAL PARK

THE FIRST OF APRIL

PLEBEIAN

PATRICIAN

QUARRELSOMENESS

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

WISTFULNESS

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

A COLD DAY

SKATES

THE EXCURSION BOAT

EVOLUTIONARY FAME

PIETY

WEALTH

THE SKIPPING-ROPE

MUSIC'S MIGHT

A BALL GAME

THE RIVAL QUEENS

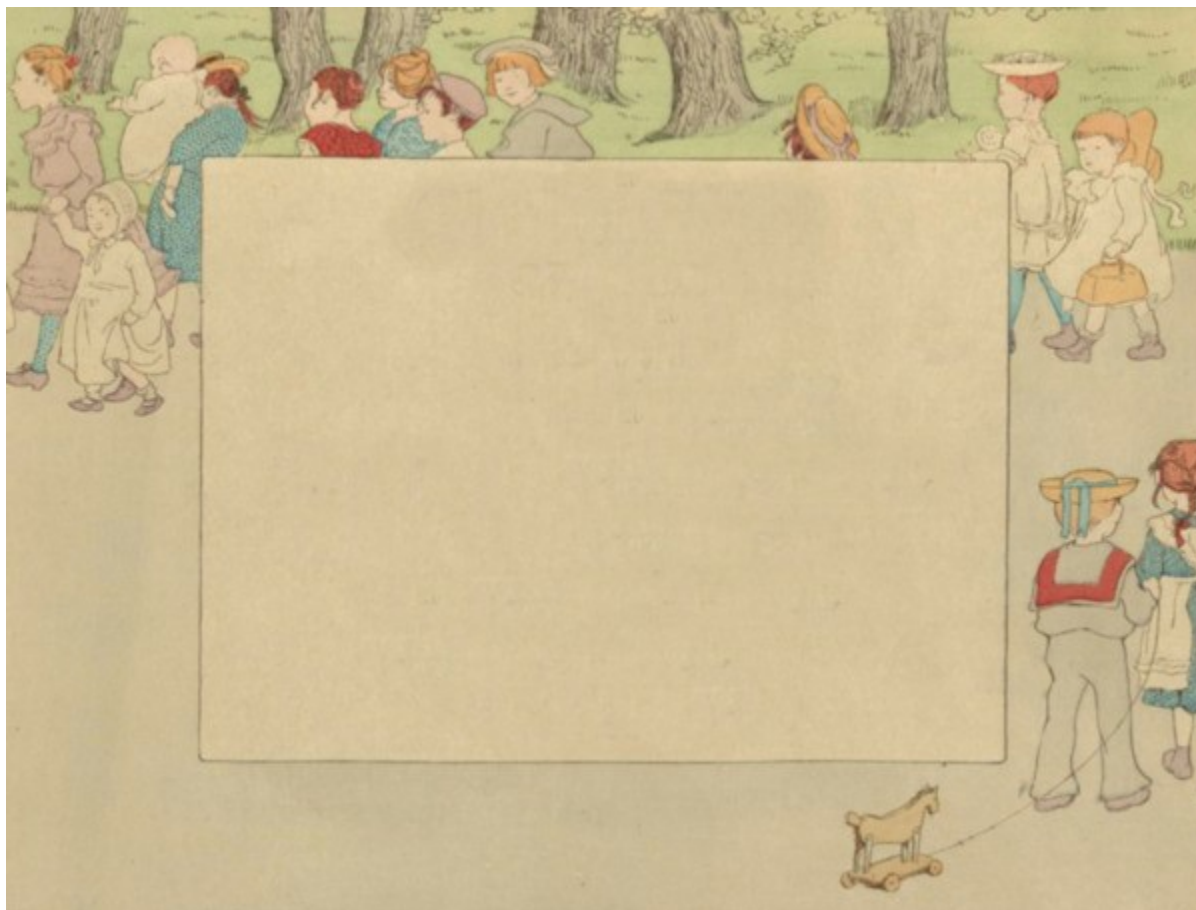
LITTLE MOTHERS

OTHER LITTLE MOTHERS

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THANKSGIVING-DAY

ICE-CREAM



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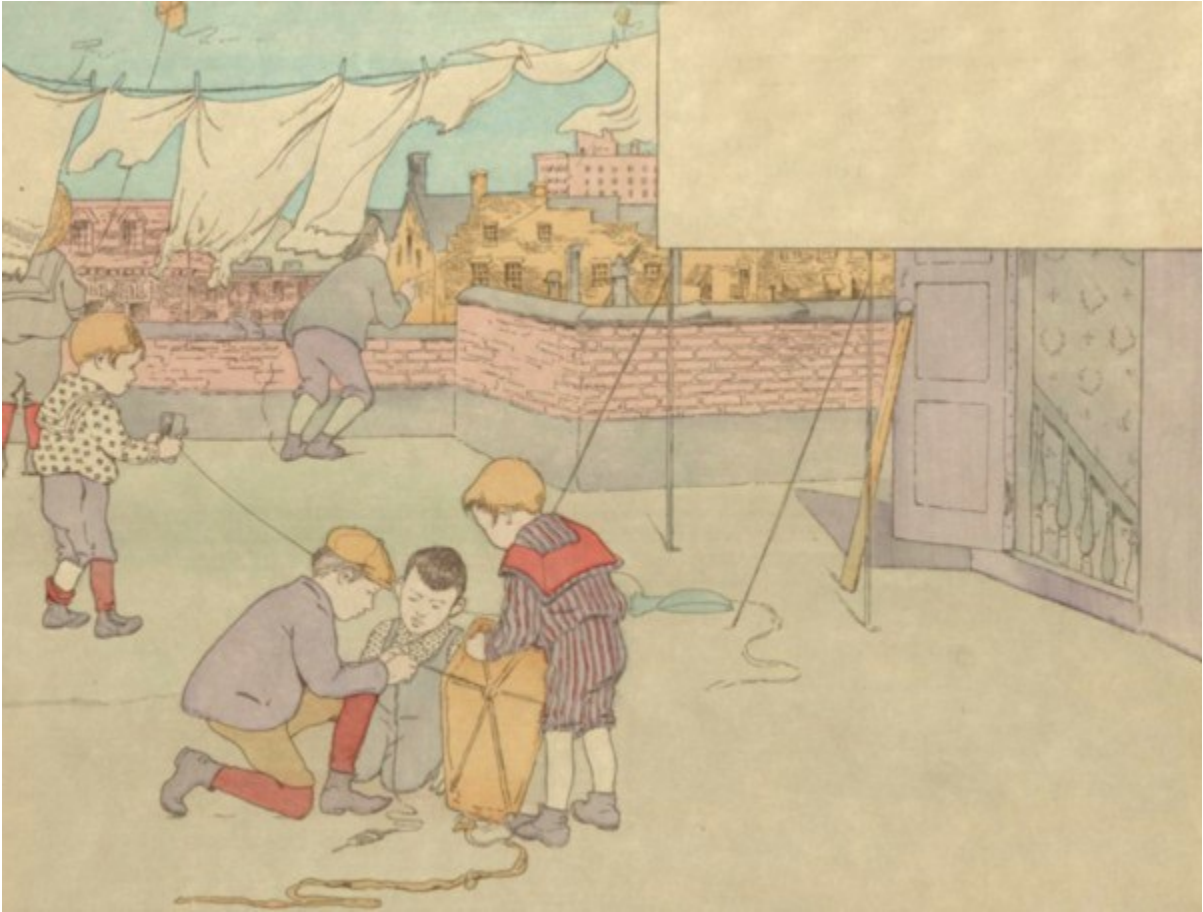
PICTURED BY
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FLYING KITES

A blustering windy day's just right
For boys who want to fly a kite;
And it affords the greatest joy
To make and use the pretty toy.

But Aged Duffers, do not try
A large-sized paper kite to fly;
You could not manage tail or string,
And ten to one you'd spoil the thing.



BOATS ON THE LAKE

A morning full of happiness any boy may find
By sailing boats upon the lake, if he is so inclined;
The wind it drives them out to sea, he pulls them back, and then
They jerk and struggle to be free--away they go again!
They wibble-wobble as they sail, and sometimes they upset,--
Of course he reaches out for them,--of course he gets quite wet.

But Aged Grandsires, if you must sail boats in Central Park,
Play properly, don't splash yourself, and run back home ere dark.



AT CONEY ISLAND

See proud Belinda smartly dressed
In all her flaunting Sunday best;
With muslin hat and ruffles big
She cannot comfortably dig.

Ask her if she would like to play,--
She will not answer either way;
She'll only shake herself, and then,
Just pout and grin and pout again.

Dear Grandams, meekly learn from this,
How very ill-advised it is
To don a costume fine and grand
When you go playing in the sand.

Instead of your bespangled net,
Or moire velvet edged with jet,
Just wear a gingham, simply made,
So you can tuck it up and wade.



IN CENTRAL PARK

In Central Park, along the Mall,
We see the gay goat-carriage crawl;
With little boys and girls inside,
Enjoying their exciting ride.

Right willingly each nimble steed
Exerts his very utmost speed;
And o'er the smooth hard road they race
At something like a turtle's pace.

But stout old men and portly dames,
Pray, do not urge your rightful claims;
And even though you have the price,
Listen, I beg, to my advice.

Do not insist on getting in
The little carriage for a spin;
You'd not look picturesque at all
Careering up and down the Mall.



THE FIRST OF APRIL

'Tis taught by philosophic schools
The human race is mostly fools.
And once a year you see this truth
Aby set forth by jocund youth,
Who broach the tenets of the creed
Plainly that he who runs may read.

But Aged Idiots, 'tis not meet
For you to run along the street,
And with a manner bold and sly
Pin tags on ladies passing by,
Or sit upon the curb and look
For fools to snatch your pocket-book.



PLEBEIAN

Lucinda's tastes are so depraved;
 She likes to play and romp
With children poor and ill-behaved,
 Who boast no style or pomp.

 Their costumes are not quite correct,
 They have no pretty tricks;
Lucinda! pray be more select,
 In higher circles mix.



PATRICIAN

Ah, sweet Lucinda, best of girls,
How quick to take advice.
Behold her with unpapered curls,
And frock so rich and nice!

Her haughty stare! Who would suppose
That dress would change her so
Oh, blessed influence of fine clothes,
How much to thee we owe!



QUARRELSOMENESS

Dear lady-readers of whatever age,
Look backward and with me enjoy this page.
What happy moments have we often spent
Thus to our frenzied anger giving vent.
Ah, me, the long-lost joys of being young!
To make up faces, and stick out one's tongue;
How those occasions of Xantippish strife
Gave zip and zest to our dull childish life.



THE ETERNAL FEMININE

Ah, truly, as the tree is bent the tiny twig's inclined,
And in the very littlest girls we see
The contradictory tendencies of woman's wayward mind
Developed to a marvellous degree.
For each small daughter of her mother
Will say one thing and do the other.

For instance, when some little girls just hate to go to school
And beg that they may stay at home and play;
And then, permission given, these same children, as a rule,
Delight in *playing school* the livelong day!
Ah, no wonder poets feature
Woman as a captious creature.



WISTFULNESS

Baby and Sis and me
Stand by the fence and see
 Picnickers munch
 Lots o' good lunch,
Jes' givin' nothin' to we.

Baby and Sis and me,
Hungry as we can be,
 Haven't no right
 To be 'spectin' a bite,--
But we're glad lookin' is free.



KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

The Bison, though he seems so grim,
Is very sensitive;
And when the children stare at him,
He wants to cease to live.

He hears them wonder why he's there,
And why he can't break through;
And why he has such funny hair,
And why he doesn't moo.

At this, the suffering Buffalo
Can scarce restrain to weep;
Their caustic comments hurt him so,--
They haunt him in his sleep.

But, Grown-Up people, let me pray
You'll not behave like this;
The Bison pet,--and, when you may,
Give him a friendly kiss.



A COLD DAY

In winter time when ice and sleet
Make slidy places on the street,
The children early leave their beds
And rush out with their skates and sleds.

All merrily the little dears
Throw snowballs in each other's ears;
And thus with pretty playful ways
Beguile the white and wintry days.

Oh, Venerable Veterans,
I hate to disarrange your plans;
But truly, if you try this game
You will go home all stiff and lame.



SKATES

A blithesome boy this picture shows;
He has a true Mercurian pose,
Like winged heels his roller-skates
Send him fast-flying past his mates.
When one is young, 'tis very nice
To skate on rollers or on ice.

But Ancient Gaffers, do not try
With active boys like this to vie.
For if you get a skate on, you
Acquire a rolling gait, 'tis true.
But soon this proverb you'll endorse,--
A rolling gait gathers remorse.



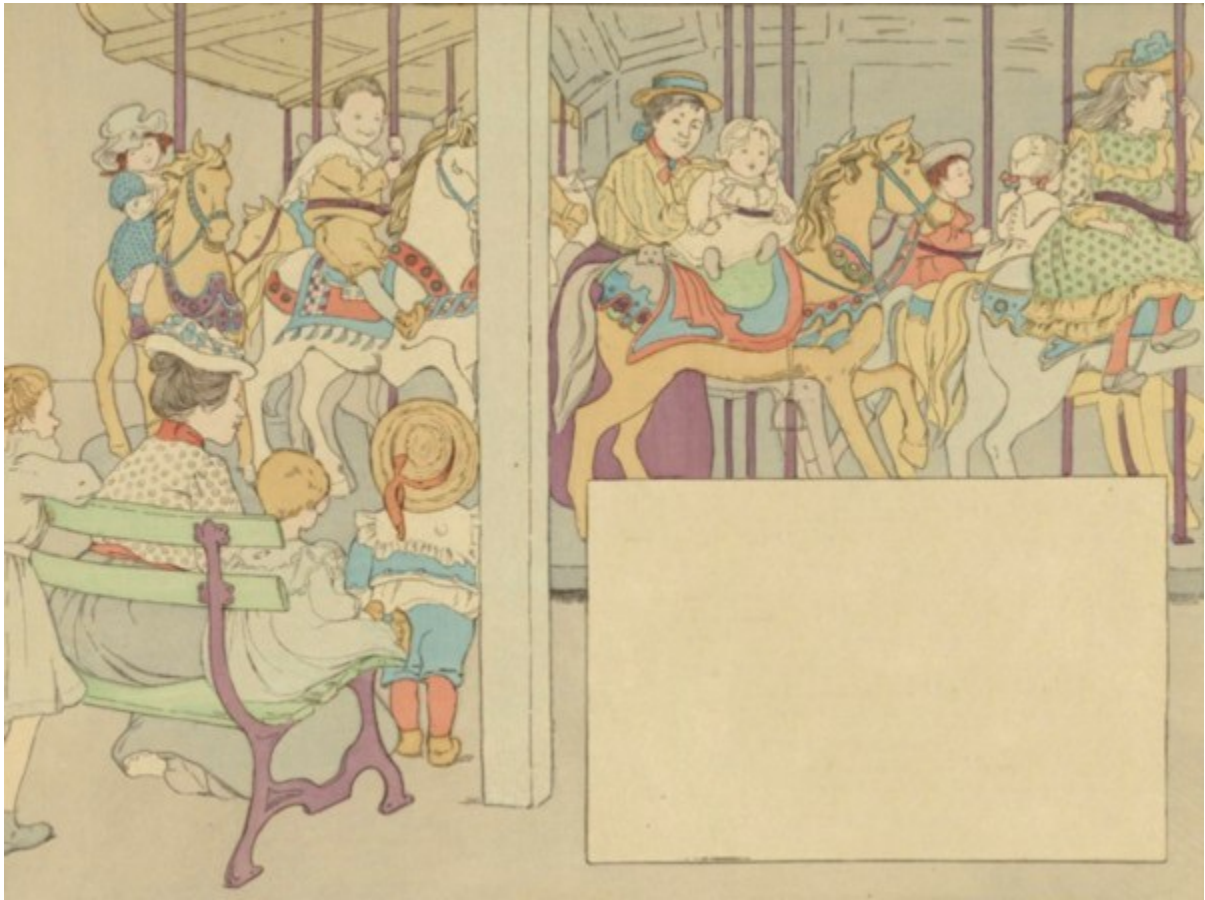
THE EXCURSION BOAT

Into the boat the breeze blows fair,
It blows across the deck;
It blows the little children's hair,--
They get it in the neck.

And in this picture you may see
The happy girls and boys,
So true to life,--but thankful be
You cannot hear the noise.

The great steam-whistle's fearful squeaks.
The band, ill-tuned and loud;
The babies with their screams and shrieks,
The bustle of the crowd.

Grown People, you'd prefer, afloat,
A private yacht, I'm sure;
Then shun the gay excursion boat
Unless you're very poor.



EVOLUTIONARY FAME

These merry children, I'll be bound
In careless pleasure ride around;
Unthinking as they onward go,
What pedigree their horses show.

But, Graybeard, you leamed when a boy
About the Wooden Horse of Troy;
And you assume these steeds to be
The Trojan Sire's posterity.

Well, there you're wrong! you have forgot.
They're Flying Horses, are they not?
And, scions of a noble name,
From Pegasus descent they claim.

But, Graybeards, curb your mad desires
To mount upon these whizzing flyers.
For there's the very strongest chance
You'd go home in an ambulance.



PIETY

With new, ill-fitting gloves,
 With frocks as white as snow,
By two and two these little loves
 To First Communion go.

I watch them as they pass,—
 Somehow, I shrewdly guess
Each child thinks little of her mass
 And much about her dress.

But you, dear Aged Saint,
 Whose eyeballs upward roll,
I trust you have no worldly taint
 Upon your gentle soul.



WEALTH

Joe Munn who has a penny
Has friends and friends a-many;
They hang around him eagerly and offer him advice.

Tim Lanigan states clearly
That he loves taffy dearly
And butterscotch is awful good and chocolates is nice.

Jane said, but no one heard her,
"An orange would go funder,"
While Billy Barlow's heart beat high inside his chubby shape.
It needs no divination
To see the application,--
Until your purse is empty from your friends you can't escape.



THE SKIPPING-ROPE

This picture (as you can see, I hope)
Shows a fat little maiden skipping rope.
She can jump "highwater" and "pepper" too,
But, fat old ladies, let me tell you,
If you jump "highwater" you'll lose your breath,
And to jump "pepper" might cause your death.



MUSIC'S MIGHT

On the East Side any day,
When the street pianos play
 You can see the children dancing with
 a rhythmic whirl and sway.

All untaught their native grace,
Joy in every grinning face,
 To the music they are gaily keeping
 perfect time and pace.

But, infirm and aged crones,
Do not risk your ancient bones;
 Your old nerves would suffer sadly
 jarred and jolted by the stones.



A BALL GAME

There never was a place so bad
But one redeeming trait it had.

Now Harlem is no good at all
Save as a place for playing ball.

But there the boys will run and play
Their favorite game 'most every day.

But, Reverend sir, 'twould foolish be
To play, with your rheumatic knee.

And, Deacon, do not try, I beg,
To play the game with your game leg.



THE RIVAL QUEENS

Now wasn't this ridiculous?
Essie and Mamie had a fuss,
And each declared she wouldn't play
Unless she could be Queen of May.

"You think you're smart!" Miss Essie said,
And Mamie sneered and tossed her head.
And each one angrily declared
There'd be no queen for all she cared!

Mamie was mad as she could be,
And Essie pouted sulkily;
With angry looks they onward stalked,
While no one 'neath the May-bower walked.

Oh! social Queens, this lesson learn
If for supremacy you yearn,
And of your fitness there is doubt,
See that your rival too's kept out.



LITTLE MOTHERS

The Little Mothers of the poor
They lead a jolly life, I'm sure;
For without being gray and old,
They've all a mother's right to scold.
As eagerly each day they meet
To pass the gossip of the street,
Her baby-cart, each states with pride,
Is finest on the whole East side.
And each, her small charge will declare
The handsomest baby anywhere.
Oh, Grown-up Mothers, learn to praise
Your children and their pretty ways.



OTHER LITTLE MOTHERS

The Little Mothers of the rich
Are really works of art,
They are dressed up to such a pitch
In frocks so fine and smart.

They do not have to take the charge
Of baby boys or girls;
No, they have dolls exceeding large
With silky, flaxen curls.

Ah, Mothers in Society,
Accept this reasoning sound;
Dolls far less troublesome would be
Than children bothering round.



FOURTH OF JULY

These boisterous boys, with bang and fizz,
They make such noisy noise;
But, then, perhaps the reason is,
They are such boisy boys.

The girls as well,--from early morn
They shoot and shoot and shoot;
And on a trumpet or a horn
They toot and toot and toot.

But you, whose locks are bleached by Time,
(Or by the Chemist's aid),
Heed my admonitory rhyme,
Nor join the gay parade.



THANKSGIVING-DAY

When Autumn brings around the day
 Devoted to thanksgiving,
The children scream with laughter gay
 For very joy of living.

And every sort of escapade
 Receives their commendation;
But all agree a masquerade
 Is best for celebration.

The boys and girls all swarm around
 The crowd is hourly growing;
Straw hatted and grotesquely gowned,--
 With tin horns loudly blowing.

But dear old dames with snowy puffs,
 Tulle caps and Mechlin laces,
Don't scramble out and join the toughs
 In boys' clothes and false faces.



ICE-CREAM

To Bob and Sue, who have ice-cream,
Life is a glowing, halcyon dream,
 While Tom stands empty by;
And says, "Gee! fellers, ain't it prime?
Say, I had ice-cream too, one time,
 And it was great! Oh, my!"

Ah, beaux and belles at rout or ball,
Does ice-cream on your palate pall?
 Is it to you no treat?
You never ate it from the can,
Come, patronize the Ice-Cream Man,
 Come down to Mulberry Street!

