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PRUDY IN THE PINES.—Page 51.

LITTLE PRUDY.

BY

SOPHIE MAY.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE LITTLE PUBLIC:

A Merry Christmas, dear Children!

You who have read of Prudy Parlin, in the "Congregationalist" and "Little Pilgrim," and have learned to love her there, may love her better in a book by herself, with pictures.

To you who never saw her before, we will introduce her now. It is easy to feel acquainted with Prudy; for she is, as you will find, a very talkative little lady.

There is no end of things which might be told of Susy, Grace, and Horace; and if you wish to hear more about them, you have only to wait a little while.

God is sending us another year as fresh and clean as the purest paper. Let us thank Him for it, and try to write it over with kind thoughts and good deeds; then it will be for all of us

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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LITTLE PRUDY.

CHAPTER I.

PRUDY'S PATCHWORK.

I AM going to tell you something about a little girl who was always saying and doing funny things, and very often getting into trouble.

Her name was Prudy Parlin, and she and her sister Susy, three years older, lived in Portland, in the State of Maine, though every summer they went to Willowbrook, to visit their grandmother.

At the very first of our story, Susy was more than six years old, and Prudy was

between three and four. Susy could sew quite well for a girl of her age, and had a stint every day. Prudy always thought it very fine to do just as Susy did, so she teased her mother to let *her* have some patchwork, too, and Mrs. Parlin gave her a few calico pieces, just to keep her little fingers out of mischief.

But when the squares were basted together, she broke needles, pricked her fingers, and made a great fuss; sometimes crying, and wishing there were no such thing as patchwork.

One morning she sat in her rocking-chair, doing what she thought was a "*stint*." She kept running to her mother with every stitch, saying, "Will that do?" Her mother was very busy, and said, "My little daughter must not come to me." So Prudy sat down near the door, and began to sew with all

her might; but soon her little baby sister came along, looking so cunning, that Prudy dropped her needle, and went to hugging her.

"O, little sister," cried she, "I wouldn't have a horse come and eat you up for any thing in the world!"

After this, of course, her mother had to get her another needle, and then thread it for her. She went to sewing again till she pricked her finger, and the sight of the wee drop of blood made her cry.

"O, dear! I wish somebody would pity me!" But her mother was so busy frying doughnuts that she could not stop to talk much; and the next thing she saw of Prudy she was at the farther end of the room, while her patchwork lay on the spice box.

"Prudy, Prudy, what are you up to now?"

"Up to the table," said Prudy. "O, mother, I'm so sorry, but I've broke a crack in the pitcher!"

"What will mamma do with you? You haven't finished your stint — what made you get out of your chair?"

"O, I thought grandma might want me to get her *speckles*. I thought I would go and find Zip too. See, mamma, he's so tickled to see me he shakes all over — every bit of him!"

"Where's your patchwork?"

"I don't know. You've got a double name, haven't you, doggie? It's Zip Coon, but it isn't a *very* double name, — is it, mother?"

When Mrs. Parlin had finished her doughnuts, she said, "Pussy, you can't keep still two minutes. Now, if you want to sew this patchwork for grandma's quilt, I'll tell you

what I shall do. There's an empty hogshead in the back kitchen, and I'll lift you into that, and you can't climb out. I'll lift you out when your stint is done."

"O, what a funny little house," said Prudy, when she was inside; and as she spoke, her voice startled her — it was so loud and hollow. "I'll talk some more," thought she, "it makes such a queer noise. — 'Old Mrs. Hogshead, I thought I'd come and see you, and bring my work. I like your house, ma'am, only I should think you'd want some windows. I s'pose you know who I am, Mrs. Hogshead? My name is Prudy. My mother didn't put me in here because I was a naughty girl, for I haven't done nothing — nor nothing — nor nothing. Do you want to hear some singing?

'O, come, come away,
From labor now reposin';

Let *busy Caro, wife of Barrow,*
Come, come away!'"

"Prudy, what's the matter?" said mamma, from the next room.

"Didn't you hear somebody singing?" said Prudy; "well, 'twas me."

"O, I was afraid you were crying, my dear."

"Then I'll stop," said the child. "Now, Mrs. Hogshead, you won't hear me singing any more, — it *mortifies* my mother very much."

So Prudy made her fingers fly, and soon said, "Now, mamma, I've got it done, and I'm ready to be *took out!*"

Just then her father came into the house. "Prudy's in the hogshead," said Mrs. Parlin. "Won't you please lift her out, father? I've got baby in my arms."

Mr. Parlin peeped into the hogshead.

"How in this world did you ever get in here, child?" said he. "I think I'll have to take you out with a pair of tongs."

Prudy laughed.

"Give me your hands," said papa. "Up she comes! Now, come sit on my knee," added he, when they had gone into the parlor, "and tell me how you climbed into that hogshead."

"Mother dropped me in, and I'm going to stay there till I make a bedquilt, only I'm coming out to eat, you know."

Mr. Parlin laughed; but just then the dinner bell rang, and when they went to the table, Prudy was soon so busy with her roasted chicken and custard pie that she forgot all about the patchwork.

CHAPTER II.

PRUDY GOING UP TO HEAVEN.

PRUDY soon tired of sewing, and her mother said, laughing, "If grandma Read has to wait for somebody's little fingers before she gets a bedquilt, poor grandma will sleep very cold indeed."

The calico pieces went into the rag-bag, and that was the last of Prudy's patchwork.

One day the children wanted to go and play in the "new house," which was not quite done. Mrs. Parlin was almost afraid little Prudy might get hurt, for there were a great many loose boards and tools lying about, and the carpenters, who were at work

on the house, had all gone away to see some soldiers. But at last she said they might go if Susy would be very careful of her little sister.

I dare say Susy meant to watch Prudy with great care, but after a while she got to thinking of something else. The little one wanted to play "catch," but Susy saw a great deal more sport in building block houses.

"Now I know ever so much more than you do," said Susy. "I used to wash dishes and scour knives when I was four years old, and that was the time I learned you to walk, Prudy; so you ought to play with me, and be goody."

"Then I will; but them blocks is too big, Susy. If I had *a axe* I'd chop 'em: I'll go get *a axe*." Little Prudy trotted off, and Susy never looked up from her play, and

did not notice that she was gone a long while.

By and by Mrs. Parlin thought she would go and see what the children were doing; so she put on her bonnet and went over to the "new house." Susy was still busy with her blocks, but she looked up at the sound of her mother's footsteps.

"Where is Prudy?" said Mrs. Parlin, glancing around.

"I'm 'most up to heaven," cried a little voice overhead.

They looked, and what did they see? Prudy herself standing on the highest beam of the house! She had climbed three ladders to get there. Her mother had heard her say the day before that "she didn't want to shut up her eyes and die, and be all deaded up — she meant to have her hands and face clean, and go up to heaven on a ladder."

"O," thought the poor mother, "she is surely on the way to heaven, for she can never get down alive. My darling, my darling!"

Poor Susy's first thought was to call out to Prudy, but her mother gave her one warning glance, and that was enough: Susy neither spoke nor stirred.

Mrs. Parlin stood looking up at her — stood as white and still as if she had been frozen! Her trembling lips moved a little, but it was in prayer; she knew that only God could save the precious one.

While she was begging Him to tell her what to do, a sudden thought flashed across her mind. She dared not speak, lest the sound of her voice should startle the child; but she had a bunch of keys in her pocket, and she jingled the keys, holding them up as high as possible, that Prudy might see what they were.

When the little one heard the jingling, she looked down and smiled. "You goin' to let me have some cake and 'serves in the china closet, me and Susy?"

Mrs. Parlin smiled — such a smile! It was a great deal sadder than tears, though Prudy did not know that — she only knew that it meant "yes."

"O, then I'm coming right down, 'cause I like cake and 'serves. I won't go up to heaven till *bime-by!*"

Then she walked along the beam, and turned about to come down the ladders. Mrs. Parlin held her breath, and shut her eyes. She dared not look up, for she knew that if Prudy should take one false step, she must fall and be dashed in pieces!

But Prudy was not wise enough to fear any thing. O, no. She was only thinking very eagerly about crimson jellies and fruit

cake. She crept down the ladders without a thought of danger — no more afraid than a fly that creeps down the window-pane.

The air was so still that the sound of every step was plainly heard, as her little feet went pat, — pat, — on the ladder rounds. God was taking care of her, — yes, at length the last round was reached — she had got down — she was safe!

"Thank God!" cried Mrs. Parlin, as she held little Prudy close to her heart; while Susy jumped for joy, exclaiming, —

"We've got her! we've got her! O, ain't you so happy, mamma?"

"O, mamma, what you crying for?" said little Prudy, clinging about her neck. "Ain't I your little comfort? — there, now, you know what you *speaked* about! You said you'd get some cake and verserves for me and Susy."

CHAPTER III.

PRUDY'S KNITTING-WORK.

SUSY felt as if she had been sadly to blame, and for a long time was very watchful of her little sister.

"Your name is Susy," said the child; "and your middle name is *Sister Susy*, and you take the care o' me!"

"No, I don't," thought Susy to herself. "If I had taken any care of you at all, you wouldn't have climbed those ladders."

When Prudy was four years old, she teased to go to school, and her mother decided to let her go until she grew tired of it.

"O, dear!" sighed Susy, the first day she

took her; "she'll talk out loud, I just about know she will, she's such a little chatter-box."

Poh; no I shan't," said Prudy. "I ain't a *checker-box*, Susy Parlin; but *you* are! I shan't talk in school, nor I shan't whisper, never in my world!"

When they got home that night, Mrs. Parlin asked if Prudy had whispered in school.

"No, ma'am. I never done such a thing —I guess. Did I Susy? How much I *didn't* talk to you, don't you know?"

"O, she was *pretty* good, mother," said Susy; "but she cried once so I had to go out with her."

"Now, Susy Parlin, you *told* me to cry! She *did*, mamma. She said if I'd cry she'd give me a piece of her doughnut."

Susy blushed; and her mother looked at

her, and said, "I would like to see you alone a little while, Susy."

Then Mrs. Parlin had a talk with Susy in the parlor, and told her how wrong it was to deceive, and how she must take the care of her little sister, and set her good examples.

Susy said she would do as well as she could.

"But, mamma, if you are willing, I'd rather not sit with Prudy, now, certainly. She says such queer things. Why, to-day she said she had grandma's rheumatism in her back, and wanted me to look at her *tongue* and see if she hadn't. Why, mother, as true as I live, she shut up her eyes and put out her tongue right there in school, and of course we girls couldn't help laughing!"

"Well, perhaps she'd better sit by her-

self," replied Mrs. Parlin, smiling. "I will speak to the teacher about her carrying her knitting-work — that may keep her out of mischief."

Now it happened that grandma Read had taken a great deal of pains to teach Prudy to knit; — but such a piece of work as the child made of it!

The first time she carried the thing which she supposed was going to be a stocking, the A B C scholars looked very much surprised, for none of them knew how to knit.

Prudy said, "Poh, I know how to do it just as easy!"

But in trying to show them how smart she could be, she knit so fast that she dropped a stitch every other moment.

"There, now, you are dropping stitches like every thing," said Lottie Palmer, very much pleased. "I guess I know how to do *that!*"

"Poh, them's nothing but the *loops*," said Prudy.

But it was not long before she broke the yarn short off, and got her work into such a fix that she had to take it home and ask grandma to "fix it out."

"Why, child, where's the ball?" said her grandmother. "And here's two needles gone!"

"O, I left 'em to school, I s'pose," said Prudy. "I'm sure I never noticed 'em."

"I found the ball under the teacher's desk *once*," said Susy.

"Well, 'tain't there now," replied Prudy: "it's all *wounded* now, and I put it where it b'longs."

"Where's that?" asked grandma, laughing.

"Well, I don't know," answered Prudy, trying to think; "but I guess it's *somewhere*."

Mrs. Parlin began to think it was a foolish plan to let Prudy take her knitting-work. I was going to mention something she did the last day she carried it. She got tired of knitting, tired of twisting her pretty curls round her finger, and tired of looking at pictures.

"Let's guess riddles," she whispered to Nancy Glover, who sat on the bench beside her. "I can make up riddles just as easy! There's something in this room, in Miss Parker's watch-pocket, goes *tick* — *tick*. Now guess that: — that's a riddle."

"I wish you'd behave, Prudy Parlin," said Nancy. "Here I am trying to get my spelling lesson."

Then Nancy turned her head a little to one side, and went to studying as hard as she could, for it was almost time for her class to be called.

All at once Prudy happened to look at Nancy's ear, and thought, "What funny little holes folks have in their ears! I s'pose they go clear through. I guess I'll put my knitting-needle right through Nannie's ear while she's a-studyin'. The needle will look so funny stickin' out at the other end!"

So Prudy was very sly about it, and said not a word, but began to push in the needle with all her might.

O, such sharp screams as Nannie gave! The teacher was frightened; but when she found that Nannie was not so *very* badly hurt after all, she felt easier about her, and began to talk to little Prudy, asking her "why she didn't sit still, like a lady, and *mind?*"

Prudy began to cry. "I *was* a-mindin'," said she; "of course I was. I never knew 'twas a-goin' to hurt her."

Miss Parker smiled, and said, "Well, you

needn't bring that knitting-work here any more. The next thing we should have somebody's *eyes* put out."

When Miss Parker called out the next class in spelling, Nannie sat with her head down, feeling very cross. "I don't like you, Prudy," said she. "You 'most killed me! I'll pay you for this, now you see!"

Miss Parker had to call Nannie by name before she would go to her class. She was three or four years older than Prudy, and ought to have known better than to be angry with such a little child. She should have forgotten all about it: that would have been the best way. But instead of that, she kept thinking, —

"O, how that knitting-needle did hurt! Prudy ought to be ashamed! I'll pay her for it, now you see!"

You may be sure Prudy did not worry her little brains about it at all.

Her mother was brushing her hair next morning for school, and Mr. Parlin said, —

"Don't you think she's too little to go to school, mother? I don't care about her learning to read yet awhile."

Mrs. Parlin smiled in a droll way. "I should be very sorry myself to have Prudy learn to read," replied she; "but she won't keep still long enough: you needn't be a bit afraid."

"Look here, Prudy," exclaimed Mr. Parlin, "can you spell any words?"

"Poh! yes, sir, I guess I can," replied Prudy, her eyes looking very bright, "I can spell 'most all there is to spell."

"O, ho," laughed Mr. Parlin. "Let's hear you spell your own name. Can't do it, can you?"

"Poh! yes, I can! That ain't nothin'. Pre-ed, Prood, Pre-i-eddy, Prudy. There!"

"Bravo!" cried papa. "You're getting ahead, I declare! Now can you spell Susy's name?"

"Spell Susy? Why, I can do it just as easy!" replied Prudy, her eyes shining very bright indeed. "C-ez, Sooz, C-i-ezzy, Susy. There! Can't I spell?"

"Why, I should think you could," said papa, laughing. "I can't begin to spell the way you do. Now can you spell *Cat?*"

"Cat? *Cat?*" repeated Prudy, looking puzzled. "Well, I guess I've forgot how to spell cat. But I can spell *Kitty*. You just hear! Kee-et, kit, kee-i-etty, kitty! I can spell the big words the best."

"What think now?" said Mrs. Parlin. "The truth is, Prudy knew eight letters when she began to go to school, and now she knows but four."

"Glad of it," returned Mr. Parlin. "Are you ready for school, little one?" And he held out his arms, saying, —

"And now, my own dear little girl,
There is no way but this —
Put your arms about my neck,
And give me one sweet kiss."

So Prudy hugged and kissed her father "just as hard." Then she and Susy trudged along to school, and they met Nancy Glover, who was carrying something in her apron.

"Mayn't I see what you've got?" said little Prudy.

"Not till I get ready," said Nancy. "Who stuck that knitting-needle into my ear?"

"You know she didn't mean to," said Susy.

"I don't care," cried Nancy, "it *hurt!*"

Prudy felt very sorry. "I wish I hadn't

hurt you, Nanny," said she, "'cause I want to see what you've got in your apron."

"Well, I guess you'll see it soon enough. I brought it to school *to purpose* for you."

"O, did you?" cried the child. "How good you are, Nanny. I love you most as well as I do Susy."

When little Prudy spoke so sweetly, Nancy didn't know what to say; so she said nothing. They went into the school-house and took their seats, Nancy keeping the corner of her apron rolled up all the while.

By and by, when Miss Parker was hearing the third class, Nancy whispered, —

"Look here, Prudy Parlin, you wanted to know what I had in my apron: shall I show you now?"

"O, goody!"

"Well, then," continued Nanny, —

"'Open your mouth and shut your eyes,
And I'll give you something to make you wise!'"

So Prudy opened her mouth as wide as it would go, and squeezed her eyelids together very hard.

Then what should Nancy do, but take out of her apron *a wee bit of a toad*, and drop it in Prudy's mouth! I can't see how she dared do such a thing; but she did it. She had found the toad in the street, and picked it up to frighten little Prudy.

The moment the toad was dropped on the child's tongue of course it began to hop. Prudy hopped too. She seized her tongue with one hand and the toad with the other, screaming at the top of her voice.

The scholars were all frightened to hear such a scream, and to see Prudy running out to the teacher so fast.

"Do tell me what ails you?" said Miss Parker.

By that time Prudy had got rid of the toad, and could speak.

"O, dear, dear, *dear*," cried she, "I didn't know it was a toad till it hopped right up!"

"A *toad* here in the house!" cried Miss Parker.

"No, ma'am," said Prudy, trembling and sobbing. "It wasn't in the house, — it was in my mouth, — right here on my tongue."

Prudy showed Miss Parker her tongue. Miss Parker laughed, thinking her a very funny child.

"I've heard, before now, of little folks having frogs in their throats," said she. "Is that what you mean?"

"I guess so," sobbed Prudy. "And it was alive — just as alive as could be! O, O! — Nancy, she told me to shut up my eyes, you know, and I didn't see the toad till it

hopped right up in my mouth, — and *then* I didn't see it! O, O!"

"Nancy, come here," said Miss Parker, sternly. "What have you been doing to this little child?"

Nancy came out, with her fingers in her mouth, but did not speak.

"Answer me; did you drop a toad into Prudy's mouth?"

"Yes," replied Nancy, sulkily; "but she stuck a knitting-needle into my ear *fust!*"

"For shame, you wicked child," said Miss Parker. "Take up that toad, Nancy, and carry it out of doors; then come to me, for I must punish you."

"Now, Prudy," added Miss Parker, "what do you think I ought to do to Nancy for being so naughty?"

"I don't know," answered Prudy, crying

still. "I don't s'pose my mother would be willing to have folks put toads in my mouth."

"But what do you think I ought to do to her?" said Miss Parker, smiling.

"Was you goin' to whip her?" asked Prudy, looking up through her tears.

"I think I must, my child."

"Well, I hope you won't hurt her," said dear little Prudy. "Please to don't."

But Miss Parker struck Nancy with a piece of whalebone, and hurt her a good deal. It was the only way to make Nancy remember not to do such a cruel trick again.

When Prudy saw how much Nancy was hurt, it was more than her tender heart could bear. She ran up to Miss Parker, and caught hold of the skirt of her dress, hiding her head in it.

"O, Miss Parker!" said she, "I've got to cry. Nanny won't do so no more. The toad was just as alive as could be, but it never bit a bit! O, *won't you please to don't!*"

CHAPTER IV.

PRUDY'S PICNIC.

This was about the last of Prudy's going to school. In the first place she was very tired of it, in the second place it was vacation, and in the third place the whole family were going to Willowbrook on a visit.

It was very pleasant at grandpa Parlin's at any time. Such a stout swing in the big oil-nut tree! Such a beautiful garden, with a summer-house in it! Such a nice cosy seat in the trees! So many "cubby holes" all about to hide in!

But this summer I speak of was pleasanter than ever; for the Western cousins,

Grace and Horace Clifford, had come from Indiana to visit their friends in Maine. The Parlin children had not seen them for two years; but Grace and Susy became fast friends in a very short time, while little Prudy was thrown one side for Horace to take care of when he could stop.

"O dear suz," said she, one morning, "I'm so glad there happened to be a world, and God made me!"

"What, you here, Prudy?" said grandma Parlin. "What made you get up so early?"

"O, the flies waked me, I s'pose. I was dreaming about my *pignig*. I thought I had it on top o' the trees."

"Ah, it's the day for Grace's party, sure enough," said her grandmother, sighing a little, and stirring faster at her drop-cake.

"You mean *my* party," said Prudy, dancing around the table. "The party b'longs to me. You didn't know that, *did* you?"

"You'd better go and talk to your aunt Madge," said grandma, "I'm busy."

"O," said Prudy, "I guess you ain't glad I got up. I tried to keep asleep, grandma, but the flies waked me."

Prudy was going out of the room, but turned and came back.

"Grandma," said she, "if you love me, why don't you hug me?"

"O, I can't stop, dear," said grandma, laughing; "we can't hug little girls all the time."

But she did it.

After a while Grace, and Horace, and Susy came down stairs, and then there was a great time. As soon as breakfast was over, kind aunt Madge promised to make out a list of the little folks to be invited.

"First of all," said she, "are you going to have boys and girls, or only girls?"

"O, we don't want any boys," said cousin Grace, tossing her head; "they race round, and act so."

"Of course we don't want 'em," said Susy. "I'd laugh if we'd got to have a lot of noisy boys."

"Poh! we don't want boys," echoed Prudy. "They are pickin' fusses all the time."

Cousin Horace stood by aunt Madge's chair, looking quite forlorn, but too proud to say a word.

"See here, Horace," said Grace, very grandly, "we think you'd better go a-strawberrying to-day."

"I reckon I won't if I don't want to," said Horace, working the flag out of his cap. He knew the girls thought he was almost always in the way.

"I want to tell you something, Horace,"

said aunt Madge, stroking his hair. "Mr. Allen is going out to North Pond with some other gentleman, fishing, and I begged him to let you go; and he said he would, though he wouldn't take the girls for any thing."

"There, girls," cried Horace, with beaming face. "Did Mr. Allen truly say so, auntie? Of course he wouldn't have girls go. If we caught a fish, how they would scream; wouldn't they, though?"

Horace darted off to find Mr. Allen, and so he was out of the girls' way.

"Now," said aunt Madge, smiling, "tell me what girls you want to ask, Grace."

So they gave several names — Grace and Susy — which Prudy repeated after them.

"But where is Abby Grant?" said aunt Madge. "Don't you want her?"

Grace and Susy looked at each other without speaking. Prudy looked at them.

"I don't go with such poor girls when I'm home," said Grace.

"Nor I don't," said Susy.

"Nor me neither," chimed in little Prudy, glad to know what to say.

Aunt Madge shook her curly head. "I guess you musn't have a party," said she, "if you slight good little girls because they are poor. Why, I should ask her a great deal quicker, because it isn't often she has any thing nice to eat at home."

"So would I," said Grace, looking ashamed. "You may put her name down, auntie."

"Yes, put her name down, auntie," said Prudy.

Such a time as there was to get ready for that party! Aunt Madge and aunt Louise worked with all their might, cooking nice things, and the children were too happy to keep still. Susy's mother had gone back to Portland.

When the first little girl arrived, Grace and Susy hadn't the slightest idea what to do with her, and aunt Madge had to go in and set them to playing "Puss in the corner."

The next girl that came was Abby Grant.

"I s'posed ye wouldn't come," said Prudy. "We never asked you."

"Why, child," said Grace, blushing, "yes we did ask her, too."

"O, so we did," said foolish little Prudy. "We asked you, Abby, 'cause you don't get any thing nice to eat to your house!"

Grace didn't shake Prudy, only because she didn't dare to. In a few minutes all the little girls had come, and the whole party went into the front yard to play. Aunt Madge made believe she was a little girl, and played "Ring Round Rosy," "Catch," and "Button," as hard as any body. When

they had played till they were all out of breath, aunt Louise sent them to the summer-house in the garden to rest, while she and aunt Madge set the table in the front yard. O, the apple puffs, and lemon tarts, and little seed cakes, and frosted cake, and candy, looked so good to poor little Abby Grant! Then the raspberries, like red coral, and the white currants, like round pearls! Then the flowers, fresh from the garden!

The children sat on the double steps of the long piazza to eat their supper. They had plenty of room, and it was nice fun to peep round the great white pillars at their neighbors' plates, and whisper to one another, "I'm having a grand time, ain't you?" "What splendid cake!" "Don't you wish you lived here?"

And the two aunties smiled, and said to each other, —

"It is worth all our trouble to see these children so happy."

After the table was cleared away they sang several pieces, and Prudy's sweet little voice filled all the pauses with some funny little chorus of her own.

When the party broke up, the children were quite tired out, and glad to go to bed.

"Well," said Grace, as they went slowly up stairs, "didn't my picnic go off nicely?"

"*Your* pignig?" said Prudy; "why it b'longs to *me!* I had it myself."

"Hush," said Susy. "Cousin Grace came two thousand miles to see us, and grandma promised her this party, and she had it."

"There, now, Susy," said Prudy, much grieved, "I've got a cent, and I *was* goin' to buy you some shiny shoes, but now I shan't."

Grace and Susy could not help laughing, and poor tired little Prudy could not bear that.

"There," cried she, "don't you do that again! If you'll say 'twas *my* pignig, Susy Parlin, then I'll kiss you; but if you say it isn't, I won't speak to you again — never in my world!"

"Well, it wasn't your picnic — so there," said Susy.

Prudy settled her cheek to the pillow.

"Susy Parlin," said she, drowsily, "I ain't a-goin' to speak to you again — till — you — say — 'twas — my — pig ——"

But in the middle of a word Prudy made a mistake and dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER V.

PRUDY IN THE PINES.

"No, my dears," said grandma, "I couldn't consent to let you go strawberrying 'up by the Pines' as you call it. It is Mr. Judkins's mowing-field."

"But, grandma," said Grace, "Johnny Gordon went there yesterday, and there wasn't any fuss about it."

"Then you may be sure Mr. Judkins did not know it," said grandma. "If he should catch any children in his field, he would be sure to give them a severe scolding."

"Besides," chimed in aunt Madge, "Prudy isn't fit to walk so far — she isn't very well."

"No, she is quite out of sorts," said grandma. "So if you must go somewhere, you may take your little baskets and go out in the meadow on the other side of the corn-field. Only take good care of Prudy; now remember."

"Grandma always says that over," said Susy, as the three children were on their way to the meadow; "and aunt Madge always says it too — 'take care of Prudy!' As if she were a little baby."

"That is all because she cries so much, I presume," said Grace, looking at poor Prudy rather sternly. "I did hope, Susy, that when Horace went down to the 'crick' fishing, you and I might go off by ourselves, and have a nice time for once. But here is 'little Pitcher' right at our heels. We never can have any peace. Little Miss Somebody thinks she must follow, of course."

"Yes, that's the way it is," said Susy. "Some folks are always round, you know."

"Now, Susy," said Prudy, forcing back her tears as well as she could, "I guess you don't love your little sister, or you wouldn't talk that way to me."

They gathered strawberries for a while in silence, Prudy picking more leaves than berries, and sometimes, in her haste to keep up with the others, pulling up grass by the roots.

"Well, I don't think much of this," said Grace; "there ain't more than ten strawberries in this meadow, and those ain't bigger than peas."

"O, I know it," said Susy, in the tone of one who has made up her mind for the worst. "I suppose we've got to stay here, though. We could go up in the Pines now if it wasn't for Prudy, and they are real thick up there."

"Yes," said Grace, "but grandma knew we couldn't without she would be sure to follow. Do you think Mr. Judkins would be likely to scold, Susy?"

"No, indeed," said Susy, eating a dry strawberry. "He keeps sheep, and goes round talking to himself. I ain't a bit afraid of him. What could we little girls do to his grass, I'd like to know? It isn't as if we were great, rude boys, is it Grace?"

"No," said Grace, thoughtfully. "Now if we could only get rid of Prudy ——"

Little Prudy pushed back her "shaker," and looked up, showing a pair of flushed cheeks damp with tears.

"I don't think you are very polite to me," said the child. "Bime-by I shall go to heaven, and I shan't never come back any more, and then I guess you'll cry."

"What shall we do?" said Grace, looking

at Susy; "we musn't take her, and we can't go without her."

"Well, I'm a-goin' right straight home, right off — that's what I'm goin' to do," said Prudy, "and when I say my prayers, I shall just tell God how naughty you be!"

Prudy turned short about, and the girls went toward the Pines, feeling far from happy, for a "still, small voice" told them they were doing wrong.

They had got about half way up the hill, when, looking back, there was Prudy, puffing and running for dear life.

"I thought you had gone home," said Susy, quite vexed.

"Well, I didn't," said Prudy, who had got her smiles all back again; "I couldn't get home — 'cause — I got my feet 'most damp and some wet. I won't be no trouble, Susy."

So the girls made the best of it, and helped little "Mother Bunch" up the long, steep hill. Prudy had one hearty cry before the long walk was over. "Her nose fell on a rock," she said; but as it was only grazed a little, she soon forgot about it.

"This is something worth while, now," said Grace, after they had at last reached the field, and were seated in the tall grass. "The strawberries are as thick as spatter."

"Yes," said Susy, "and grandma and aunt Madge will be so glad to see our baskets full they'll certainly be glad we didn't stay in the meadow. Big as your thumb, ain't they?"

You see the girls were trying to stifle that still, small voice, and they tried to believe they were having a good time.

Grace and Susy had got their baskets nearly half full, and Prudy had covered the

bottom of hers with leaves, stems, and a few berries, when a man's voice was heard muttering, not far off.

"O Grace," whispered Susy, "that's Mr. Judkins!"

He carried a whetstone, on which he was sharpening his jackknife.

"Ah," said he, talking to himself, and not appearing to notice the girls, "I never would have thought that these little children — ah, would have come into my field — ah, and trampled down my grass! I shall hate — ah, to cut off their little ears — ah, and see the blood running down!"

I suppose it was not two minutes before the children had left that field, pulling the screaming Prudy through the bars as roughly as if she had been a sack of wool instead of flesh and blood, — their hair flying in the wind, and their poor little hearts pounding

against their sides like trip-hammers. If the field had been on fire they could not have run faster, dragging helpless Prudy, who screamed all the way at the very top of her voice.

Susy and Prudy had thrown away their pretty little baskets. Grace had pushed hers up her arm, and her sleeve was soaking in the red juice of the bruised strawberries, while little streams of juice were trickling down her nice, buff-colored dress, ruining it entirely.

"You hadn't ought to have took me up there," sobbed Prudy, as soon as she could find her voice; and these were the first words spoken.

"O, hush, hush right up!" cried Susy, in terror. "He's after us, to take us to jail."

The family were really frightened when

the panting children rushed into the house in such a plight.

"It was a crazy drunk man," cried Prudy, "and he had a axe ——"

"No," said Grace, "it was that wicked Mr. Judkins, and it was his jackknife."

"And he snips off your ears and nose," broke in Prudy, "and blood comes a-runnin' down, and he kills you dead, and then he puts you in jail, and then he chased us— don't you hear him comin'?"

"What does all this mean?" cried grandma and aunt Madge in one breath. "Have you been in that mowing-field, children?"

Grace and Susy hung their heads.

"Yes, they did," said Prudy, "and I wasn't well, and they shouldn't have gone and took me up there, and 'twas 'cause they were naughty."

"What shall I do with children that

disobey me in this manner?" said grandma, much displeased.

"Worst of all," said aunt Madge, pulling off Prudy's shoes, "this child has got her feet wet, and is sure to be sick."

CHAPTER VI.

PRUDY SICK.

When aunt Madge went up-stairs that night she found little Prudy hiding her head under the pillow, and screaming with fright.

"O, there I was!" cried the child, tossing up her arms, "all tumbled out of the window! And the man got me, and I begun to be dead!"

"Why no, darling!" said aunt Madge, "here is auntie close by you, and here you are in your pretty white bed; — don't you see?"

"No, no!" screamed Prudy, "I'm up in the Pines, I ain't here."

"Perhaps you'd like to have me sing to you," said aunt Madge; and she began, in a low voice, a little ditty Prudy loved:

"There was a little darling
I used to know,
And they called her Prudy,
Long time ago."

"Stop, Nancy," said Prudy, "you put a toad in my mouth! — I must have a drink — dreffully!"

Aunt Madge brought some water, but her fingers were not steady, and the glass trembled against the child's hot lips. She watched till Prudy dozed again, and then stole softly down stairs to get a "night candle," and to tell her mother she was really afraid Prudy was going to be sick.

But Mrs. Parlin said aunt Madge mustn't be nervous; that children were very apt to be "out of their heads" in the night, and she

was pretty sure Prudy would wake up bright in the morning.

Aunt Madge tried to hope so, but she hardly slept a wink, for Prudy tossed and twisted all night. Sometimes she thought she was picking berries on the tufted coverlet. Sometimes she cried out that "the crazy man was coming with a axe."

When grandma saw her purple cheeks by daylight she did not laugh at aunt Madge. She brushed the soft curls away from the little one's hot temples, and said softly, —

"How do you feel, Prudy, darling?"

A wild light burned in the child's eyes. "It isn't Prudy!" screamed she, "I ain't her! Go 'way! You're goin' to snip off my nose! O, go right off!"

You may be sure that Grace and Susy were far from happy that day. When they noticed that their grandmother grew more

and more uneasy, and when they saw the doctor's gig at the gate, their hearts were very heavy.

"O Grace," said Susy, sobbing, "Prudy thought we didn't love her! We kept saying she was always round. How much do you suppose she is sick?"

"O dear, I don't know," said Grace, wringing her hands; "but I'll tell you one thing — we ought to have seen to her, Susy!"

"O Grace," said Susy, "you don't begin to feel so bad as I do — you can't, because you haven't got any little sister. Only think of my scolding to such a darling little thing as she is!"

"Come, you go up stairs and see what the doctor says," said Grace; "you steal in easy."

"O, I don't dare to," whispered Susy,

"I'm all of a tremble." But the moment their grandmother's step was heard in the passage they flew to her.

Mrs. Parlin set her vial down on the hall table. "I don't like to tell you," said she, shaking her head sadly; "the doctor calls her a very sick child, and says he is afraid of brain fever."

"Do they die with that?" cried Susy, seizing hold of her grandmother's dress. "O, stop a minute; is she going to die?"

"We hope not," said Mrs. Parlin, "but she is so sick that we shall send a despatch for your mother. I want you to try and keep the house still, girls, and coax Horace to stay out of doors."

"Keep the house still? I guess we will!" said Grace. "O grandma, will you forgive us for being so naughty yesterday?"

"Can you forgive us?" said Susy. "I

tell you we feel awfully about it, grandma!"

Mrs. Parlin took off her spectacles to wipe them. "My dear children," said she, gravely, "I am ready to forgive you with all my heart; but I hope that before this you have asked pardon of your dear Father in heaven. That is the first thing, you know."

Susy stole off into the nursery, and threw herself on the lounge.

"O God," sobbed she, "I should think you would hate me, I have acted so bad! O, can you forgive me, and not take Prudy? I never will do so again! I didn't mean any thing when I said she was always round. O, *don't* let her die and be put in the ground! Please don't, dear God! Seems to me I love her the best of any body. When we have any fuss, it's always me that's to blame."

Here Susy's prayer was drowned in sobs;

but her heart felt a little lighter because she had told her kind Father just how she felt, and if it was best for Prudy to get well, she was sure he would save her.

Prudy's mother came in the cars that night, looking pale and troubled. Prudy did not know her.

"Why don't you bring my own mamma?" said she.

"Look at me, darling," said her mother; "here I am, right here. Mother won't leave her little Prudy again."

"I ain't Prudy!" screamed the child; "Prudy's gone to heaven. God came and helped her up the steps."

One of the first things Mrs. Parlin did was to cut off her little daughter's beautiful curls, and lay them tenderly away in a drawer.

"Ah, sister Madge," said she, "you can't guess how it makes my heart ache to have my child take me for a stranger."

"Perhaps she may know you to-morrow," said aunt Madge; though in her heart she had very little hope of the child.

But Prudy did not know any body "to-morrow," nor the next day, nor the next. O, the long, weary time that they watched by her bed! The terrible disease seemed to be drinking up her life. Her cheeks looked as if fierce fires were hidden in them, and when she raved so wildly her eyes shone like flames.

A deep hush had fallen on the house. Grace and Susy would go and sit by the hour in their seat in the trees, and talk about dear little Prudy. Horace had the heart-ache, too, and asked every day, —

"*Do* you think she's going to die?"

Nobody could answer him, and he had to wait, like all the rest.

But God did not mean that Prudy should

die. At last, after many days, the fever died out like a fire when it has burned the wood all down to cinders. Then there was a pale little girl left, who looked as if a breath would blow her away like white ashes. I think a little baby, that tips over if you touch it, could not be weaker than Prudy was when she began to get well.

Ah, but it was so joyful to see her own sweet smile once more, though never so faint! And every low word she spoke now dropped from her lips like a note of music.

Her father and mother, and the whole family, were full of joy, and Grace and Susy went to their cosy seat in the trees to talk over the pretty things they were going to make for Prudy when she should be well enough to enjoy them.

CHAPTER VII.

PRUDY'S PRESENT.

"WELL, dear," said grandma, coming up stairs one morning, all out of breath, "what did you call me for? What do you want, little one?"

"I don't know," said Prudy, "but I guess *I shall* want somethin' by and by."

"There, there, darling," said grandma, "don't cry."

"No, I won't," said Prudy, trying to stop. "I was a-talkin' to myself, and I said, 'I won't cry no more,' and then I cried. I don't like to stay in this country, grandma, 'thout I can have somethin' to eat!"

"Of all things," said grandma, "I don't believe there's a little girl any where that has so many nice things as you do. See the jelly, and oranges, and lemons, and ——"

"Well, if I wasn't sick, grandma, and you should ask me to eat some *smashed potatoes*, and some *pie*, I'd eat 'em," said Prudy, smiling through her tears.

"Bless your little heart," cried grandma, kissing Prudy's pale cheek. "Can't you think of something besides eating? What pretty thing shall I bring you to look at?"

"O, now I know what it is I want," replied Prudy, lifting her head from the pillow, "I want to eat up the *old lady!*"

Prudy was thinking of a little image aunt Madge had formed out of candy.

"O, that's made to be looked at," said grandma. "Let's see — where do you suppose your little Zip is nowadays? I guess he misses Prudy."

"I don' know — I *ate* a little dog once," said Prudy, wiping her eyes. "He was made out of a doughnut. Once when I lived to Portland — to my mother's Portland — I used to eat things."

Poor grandma herself could hardly keep from crying to see Prudy so hungry.

"Here is some nice arrow-root," said she. "You may have it all if you like. You are a darling little girl not to tease for things you ought not to have.

"I believe," she went on, looking at patient little Prudy, as she drained the bowl, "I should like to give such a good child a pretty present."

"O, dear me suz!" screamed Prudy, "I'm glad I didn't go to heaven yet. — Will it be a little wee doll that can live in a thimble? — made out of sugar?"

"Well," said grandma, "I don't know.

You may be thinking all day what you would like best. Not to *eat*, dear, but to *keep*, remember. Now I must go down stairs — but here come Grace and Susy, so you won't be lonesome."

It was pleasant to see how softly the little girls entered the room, and how the glad smiles came and went on Prudy's face when they tried to amuse her.

They were dressed in a very funny rig. Susy looked a great deal wiser than an owl, out of a pair of spectacles without any eyes, and a flaring cap. Grace had stuck some false hair on her head, and a bonnet that looked as if a wagon wheel had rolled over it.

"Fine day, Mrs. Prudy," said Grace; "how have you been, ma'am?"

"I've been a-thinkin'," said Prudy, smiling, "about my present."

"You see we've come a-visiting, Mrs.

Prudy," said Grace. "Very sorry, ma'am, to see your doll looking so sick. Has she got the small pox?"

"No, ma'am," answered Prudy, delighted, "she's got the measles!"

"Deary me," said Susy, pushing back her cap, and trying to look frightened, "how was she taken, ma'am?"

"Taken?" repeated Prudy, "taken *sick!* She's got it all over her."

"Poor little creeter!" cried Grace, rolling up her eyes, "how she must suffer! I hope she's out of her head. Does she have her senses, ma'am?"

"Her *what?*" said Prudy. "O, yes'm, she's got 'em. I laid 'em up on the shelf, to keep 'em for her."

Here the two visitors turned away their heads to laugh. "What do you s'pose my present will be?" said Prudy, forgetting

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their play. "Look here, Susy, I could take that vase now, and smash it right down on the floor, and break it, and grandma wouldn't scold — 'cause I'm sick, you know."

"But you wouldn't do it," said Grace. "O, here come Mr. Allen and aunt Madge. Now, Mrs. Prudy, you're going to have a ride."

Mr. Allen laughed to see aunt Madge bundle Prudy so much, and said the child would be so heavy that he could not carry her in his arms; but I think he found her only too light after all.

Prudy almost forgot how hungry she was when she was seated in her little carriage and wheeled about the pleasant yard. She had an idea that the trees and the flowers in the garden were having good times, and the open windows of the house looked as if they were laughing. But she did not say much,

and when aunt Madge asked her what made her so quiet, she said she was "a-thinkin'." And the most of her small thoughts were about her present.

"Now," said Mr. Allen, "I'm going to hold you up so you can peep over into the pig-pen. There, do you see that little mite of a white piggy?"

"O, dear, dear, dear!" cried Prudy, clapping her hands, "what a cunning little piggy-wiggy! He looks nice enough to eat right up! I never did see such a darling! O, he winks his eyes — see him! He ain't dead, is he? Not a mite?"

"No, my little dear, he's alive enough, if that's all," said Mr. Allen.

"O, my stars!" said Prudy, sighing with delight. "Don't you wish you had such a pretty pink nose, and such little bits of shiny eyes?"

Mr. Allen laughed.

"O, so white and nice!" added Prudy. "He hasn't got a speck of red cheeks, 'cept his nose and little toes. Mayn't he have one of my oranges? I never did see any thing look so much like a sugar pig."

It did Mr. Allen and aunt Madge a world of good to see the child so pleased.

"Do you know," said she, eagerly, "who that piggy b'longs to?"

"Why, to grandpa, I suppose."

"O," said Prudy, very sadly, while the bright color died out of her cheeks at once, "I didn t know but it b'longed to grandma."

"Well, you little pet," said aunt Madge, laughing, "what do you care who it *b'longs* to? You can look at it all the same, can't you?"

"But," said Prudy, "do you s'pose ——"

"S'pose what?"

"Do you s'pose if grandpa thought I was a darlin'——" Prudy could get no farther.

"Of course he *knows* you're a darling!" said aunt Madge.

"Do you s'pose when I don't tease for things to eat, and grandma says I may think what I want for a present, he'd be willing I should have — she should give me that — *piggy?*"

"O, what a Prudy!" said aunt Madge, laughing till she cried. "Isn't there something nicer you would like for a present? You'd better think again."

"O, no, no," said Prudy, trembling with eagerness. "If grandma should give me a house full of dolls and candy all rolled up, and every single present in the world, I'd rather have that piggy."

"Well, well," said Mr. Allen, "I guess the folks that wouldn't give their pigs away

to Prudy don't live here. Let's go and see."

They went into the house to see grandpa. Of course he said Yes.

"Of all the funny presents!" said grandma; — but Prudy was happy, and that was enough.

Grandpa was very kind, but there was one thing he would not consent to — he would not let the pig come into the house. But as he said he would be sure to take good care of it, and give it sweet milk to drink, Prudy did not mind so much.

When she grew stronger she fed it herself, and the pretty creature knew her, and was glad to see her, Prudy thought. Now she had a great many presents that summer, but none that pleased her half so well as the little pet pig.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRUDY FISHING.

One morning, after Prudy was quite well, aunt Madge told her she might go into the garden and get some currants. While she was picking with all her might, and breathing very fast, she saw Horace close by, on the other side of the fence, with a pole in his hand.

"I thought you was to school!" cried Prudy.

"Well, I ain't," said Horace, pulling his hat over his eyes, and looking ashamed. "The teacher don't keep no order, and I won't go to such a school, so there!"

"They don't want *me* to go," said Prudy, "'cause I should know too much. I can say all my letters now, right down straight, 'thout looking on, either."

"O, ho!" cried Horace, trailing his long pole, "you can't say 'em skipping about, and I shouldn't care, if I was you. But you ought to know how to fish, Miss. Don't you wish you could drop in your line, and catch 'em the way I do?"

"Do they like to have you catch 'em?" said Prudy, dropping her little dipper, and going to the fence; "don't it hurt?"

"Hurt? Not as I know of. They needn't bite if they don't want to."

"No," returned Prudy, looking very wise, "I s'pose they want to get out, and that's why they bite. Of course when fishes stay in the water much it makes 'em drown."

"O, my stars!" cried Horace, laughing,

"you ought to live 'out west,' you're such a cunning little spud. Come, now, here's another fish-pole for you. I'll show you how to catch one, and I bet 'twill be a polywog — you're just big enough."

"But grandma didn't say I might go down to the river. Wait till I go ask her."

"Poh!" said Horace, "no you needn't; I have to hurry. Grandma *always* likes it when you go with me, Prudy, because you see I'm a boy, and she knows I can take care of you twice as well as Grace and Susy can."

"O," cried Prudy, clapping her little hands, "they won't any of 'em know I can fish, and how they'll laugh. But there, now, they don't let me climb the fence — I forgot."

"Well, give us your bonnet, and then

you 'scooch' down, and I'll pull you through.

"There," said the naughty boy, when they had got down to the river, "now I've been and put a bait on the end of your hook, and I plump it in the water — so. You just hold on to the pole."

"But it jiggles — it tips me!" cried Prudy; and as she spoke she fell face downwards on the bank.

"Well, that's smart!" said Horace, picking her up. "There, you sit down next time, and I'll prop up the pole with a rock — this way. There, now, you hold it a little easy, and when you feel a nibble you let me know."

"What's a nibble?" asked Prudy, shaking the line.

"A nibble? Why, it's a bite."

They sat quite still for some minutes, the

hot sun glaring on Prudy's bare head with its rings of soft golden hair.

"Now, now!" cried she suddenly, "I've got a nibble!"

Horace sprang to draw up her line.

"I feel it right here on my neck," said the child; "I s'pose it's a fly."

"Now, look here," said Horace, rather vexed, "you're a little too bad. You made me drop my line just when I was going to have a nibble. Wait till you feel the string wiggle, and then speak, but don't scream."

The children sat still for a few minutes longer, and no sound was heard but now and then a wagon going over the bridge. But they might as well have dropped their lines in the sand for all the fish they caught. Horace began to wish he had gone to school.

"O dear!" groaned Prudy, getting tired, "I never did see such fishes. I guess they don't want to be catched."

"There, now you've spoke again, and scared one away," said Horace. "If it hadn't been for you I should have got, I don't know how many, by this time."

Prudy's lip began to tremble, and two big round tears rose to her eyes.

"Poh! crying about that?" said Horace; "you're a nice little girl if you do talk too much, so don't you cry."

Horace rather enjoyed seeing Grace and Susy in tears, but could never bear to have Prudy cry.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Horace, when Prudy's eyes were clear again, "I don't think I make much playing 'hookey.'"

"I don't like playing 'hookey' neither," returned Prudy, "'cause the hooks won't catch 'em."

"O, you don't know what I mean," laughed Horace. "When we boys 'out west' stay out of school, we call *that* playing hookey."

"O, do you? But I want to go home now, if we can't catch any nibbles."

"No, I'll tell you what we'll do — we'll walk out on that log, and try it there."

The river was quite high, and this was one of the logs that had drifted down from the "Rips." Prudy was really afraid to walk on it, because it was "so round," but not liking to be laughed at, she crept on her hands and knees to the very end of the log, trembling all the way.

Horace took the two poles and followed; but the moment he stepped on the log it rolled quite over, carrying Prudy under.

I do not know what Horace thought then, but he had to think fast. If he had been older he might have plunged in after Prudy,

but he was only a little boy, seven years old, so he ran for the house. O, how he ran!

Aunt Madge was ironing in the back kitchen. She heard heavy breathing, and the quick pattering of feet, and the words gasped out, "Prudy's in the river!"

"Prudy!" screamed aunt Madge, looking wildly at the boy's face, which was as white as death.

"Run, tell grandpa!" cried she, and flew down the steps, and out across the field towards the river, as if she had wings on her slippers, though it seemed to her they were clogged with lead.

"Has she just been saved from death only to be drowned?" was one of the quick thoughts that rushed across aunt Madge's dizzy brain. "I shall be too late! too late! And her mother gone! God forgive me! It is I who should have watched her!"

Poor aunt Madge! as if any one was to blame but Horace.

There was a child crying down by the river.

"Not Prudy," thought aunt Madge. "It sounds like her voice, but it can't be. She has sunk by this time!"

"Don't be afraid, Prudy!" cried Mr. Allen, who was just behind aunt Madge, "we are running to you."

The cry came up louder: it was Prudy's voice.

Mr. Allen leaped the fence at a bound, and ran down the bank. The child was out of the water, struggling to climb the bank, but slipping back at every step. She was dripping wet, and covered with sand.

Mr. Allen lifted her in his arms, and there she lay, sobbing as if her heart would break, but not speaking a word.

When she was lying, clean and warm, in soft blankets, and had had a nap, she told them how she got out.

"The log kept jiggling," said she, "and I couldn't hold on, but I did. I thought my father would say I was a nice little girl not to get drowned, and let the fishes eat me up, and so I kept a-holdin' on."

"Only think," said grandma, shuddering, and looking at Horace, "if Prudy hadn't held on!"

Horace seemed very sad and humble, and was still quite pale.

"It makes you feel mortified, don't it, 'Race?" said Prudy, smiling; "don't you feel as if you could cry?"

At these first words little Prudy had spoken to him since she fell into the water, the boy ran out of the room, and hid in the green chamber, for he never would let any one see him cry.

"O, won't you forgive him?" said Prudy, looking up into Mrs. Clifford's face; "won't you forgive him, aunt 'Ria? he feels so bad; and he didn't catch a fish, and he didn't mean to, — and — 'twas the log that jiggled."

So Horace was forgiven for Prudy's sake.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HATCHET STORY.

ONE night the children clustered about their aunt Madge, begging for a story.

"Fairy, you know," said Susy.

"A fairy story?" repeated aunt Madge. "I don't know about that. I told a little boy a fairy story once, and he went right off and whispered to his mother that I was a very wicked lady, for the story wasn't true, not a bit; and if a baby six months old should hear it, he wouldn't believe a word of it!"

"Poh! he was a smart boy," cried Horace.

"So I am afraid to tell fairy stories since

that, for I don't like to be called a wicked lady, you know."

"There, now, auntie," said Susy, "don't you s'pose we know they're only play-stories? Just as if we hadn't a speck of sense!"

"Well, let me see," said aunt Madge, covering her eyes with her fingers. "Once upon a time when the moon was full ——"

"Full of what?" said Prudy, who was leaning on the arm of her auntie's chair, and peeping up into her face, "full of fairies?"

"When the moon was round, my child," said auntie, stroking the little one's hair." "But wait. I'll tell a story Prudy can understand — wouldn't you, my dears? When I was a little girl ——"

"That's right," cried the children. "O, tell about that."

"Was you about as big as me?" said Prudy, "and was your name *little Madge?*"

"Yes, they called me little Madge sometimes, and sometimes Maggie. When I was about as old as our Susy, I happened to go into the back-room one day, and saw uncle Edward's hatchet lying on the meat-block. I knew I had no right to touch it, but it came into my head that I would try to break open some clams. The hatchet, instead of cracking the shells, came down with full force on my foot! I had on thick boots, but it cut through my right boot deep into the bone. O, how I screamed!"

"I should have thought you would, auntie," cried Grace, fairly turning pale. "Did it bring the blood?"

"Yes, indeed! Why, when I went into the kitchen, my footsteps were tracked with little pools of blood, oozing out of my boot. Sister Maria screamed out, — 'O, look at Maggie! She's cut her foot with that hatchet!'

"No, no, I haven't," said I, for I was frightened almost to death, and afraid of being punished for disobedience. You see father had forbidden us little ones ever to touch that hatchet."

"Why, you told a right up and down —— fib," said Susy, looking shocked.

"A real whopper," said Horace, shaking his head.

"So I did, children, and before my story is done you shall see what misery my sin caused me."

"Did Mr. 'Gustus Allen know about it?" asked little Prudy.

"I guess not," replied aunt Madge, blushing. "He lived ever so far off then."

"O dear," sighed Prudy, "I wish he hadn't gone to the wars. How it made you cry!"

"Hush up, please, can't you, Prudy?" said Susy. "Aunt Madge is telling a story."

"Well, they sent for the doctor in great haste, and then tried to pull off my boot; but my foot was so badly swollen, and bleeding so fast, that it took a great while. I can't tell how long, for I fainted. When the doctor saw the wound they said he looked very sober.

"'So, so, little girl,' said he (that was after I came to myself), 'you thought you'd make me a good job while you were about it. There's no half-way work about you. You are the child that had the tip of a finger clipped off in the corn-sheller, hey?'

"I was always afraid of Dr. Foster, so I only buried my face in my apron, and cried.

"'She must have brought the hatchet down with a great deal of force,' said the doctor. 'See, Mrs. Parlin, how deep it went into the bone.'

"'I fell and hit my foot,' I sobbed out. 'I never *touched* the hatchet!'

"I knew well enough that the doctor didn't believe me.

"'So, so,' said he. 'Very well, never mind how 'twas done, but keep your foot still, little one, and we'll talk about the hatchet another time. Mrs. Parlin, if it goes to bleeding again, be sure to send for me.'

"It was ever so long before I could walk a step. Every time any body spoke of my hurt, I said, 'Why, I was just coming into the house with those clams, and my foot slipped, and I fell and hit me on something. I don't know whether it was a hatchet or a stick of wood; but I never touched the hatchet!'"

"There, I shouldn't have thought that of *you*, auntie," said Grace.

"Poh!" cried Horace, "they must have known you was a-foolin'; of course they did!"

"Well, every time the doctor came to see me, he laughed and asked me how I cut my foot.

"'Just the same as I did in the first place, you know,' said I. 'I don't know nothing about it, only I never touched the hatchet!'

"'Well,' he would answer, 'you remember the old saying, A lie well stuck to, is better than the truth wavering.'

"I didn't know what that meant, but he laughed so that I knew he was making sport of me. I knew nobody believed me. The hatchet had been found red with blood, and mother looked, O, so sad! but I had told that falsehood so many times that it did seem as if I hadn't any courage left to tell the truth. It had grown to be very easy to keep saying, 'I never *touched* the hatchet.'"

"Makes me think of that play, 'My father's lost his hatchet,'" whispered Susy to Grace.

"Every one tried to amuse me while I was sick, but there was always a thorn in my pillow."

"A thorn?" said Prudy.

"Not a real thorn, dear. I mean I had told a wrong story, and I couldn't feel happy."

Here Susy turned away her head and looked out of the window, though she saw nothing there but grandpa coming in from the garden with a watering-pot.

"Whenever father looked at me, I felt just as if he was thinking, 'Margaret doesn't tell the truth;' and when mother spoke my name quick, I was afraid she was going to say something about the hatchet.

"I got well, only I limped a little. Then

it was almost time to think of making presents for the Christmas tree. I didn't like to have Christmas come while I was feeling so. People are so good that day, I thought. That is the time when every body loves you, and spends money for you. I wanted to confess, and feel *clean;* but then I had told that lie over so many times that I thought I *couldn't* take it back.

"I talked it over with myself a great while though, and at last said I, 'I *will;* I'll do it!' First, I asked God to forgive me and help me, and when I had got as far as that, the thing was half done, children.

"I went into the parlor where your grandfather was — he wasn't deaf then. I thought I should choke; but I caught hold of one of the buttons on his coat, and spoke as fast as I could.

"'O father,' said I, 'I've told more than

a hundred thousand lies. I *did* take that hatchet! Will you forgive me?'"

"Did he?" asked Susy.

"Forgive! I guess he did! My dear child, it was just what he had been waiting to do! And, O, I can tell you he talked to me in such a way about the awful sin of lying, that I never, never forgot it, and shan't, if I live to be a hundred years old.

"My father had forgiven me: I was sure God had forgiven me too; and after that, I felt as if I could look people in the face once more, and I had a splendid time Christmas.—I believe that's about all the *story* there is to it, children."

"Well," said Grace, "I'm much obliged to you, auntie; I think it's just as nice as a fairy story—don't you, Susy?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Susy, looking confused. "See here, auntie, I've lost your gold ring!"

"My ring?" said aunt Madge. "I forgot that I let you take it."

"Don't you know I asked you for it when you stood by the table making bread? and it slipped off my finger this afternoon into the water barrel!"

"Why, Susy!"

"And I was a coward, and didn't dare tell you, auntie. I thought maybe you'd forget I had it, and some time when you asked for it, I was going to say, 'Hadn't you better take a pair of tongs and see if it isn't in the water barrel?'"

"O, Susy!" said aunt Madge.

"She isn't any worse than me, auntie," said Grace. "Ma asked me how the mud came on my handkerchief, and I said Prudy wiped my boots with it. And so she did, auntie, but I told her to; and wasn't I such a coward for laying it off on little Prudy? I am ashamed — you may believe I am."

"I am glad you have told me the whole truth now," replied aunt Madge, "though it does make me feel sad, too, for it's too much like my hatchet story. O, do remember from this time, children, and never, never *dare* be *cowards* again!"

Just then grandma Parlin came to the door with a sad face, saying, —

"Margaret, please come up stairs, and see if you can soothe poor little Harry by singing. He is so restless that neither Maria nor I can do any thing with him."

This baby, Horace's brother, was sick all the time now, and once in a while Margaret's sweet voice would charm him to sleep when every thing else failed.

CHAPTER X.

MORE STORIES.

"I MOVE we have some more stories," said Horace the next evening, as they were sitting in the twilight. "It's your turn, Gracie."

"Well, I don't know but I'd as soon tell a story as not," replied Grace, pushing back her curls; "I reckon Pincher wants to hear one, he begins to wag his tail. I can't make up any thing as I go along, but I can tell a sober, true story."

"Certain true, black and blue?" asked Prudy, who always *would* have something to say, whether she knew what she was talking about or not.

"Didn't I ever tell you about our school-dog out West, aunt Madge? You see it was so queer. I don't know where in the world he came from. He had one of his eyes put out, and was 'most blind out of the other, and only a stump of a tail, and didn't know how to get his living like other dogs.

"O dear, it was so funny he should take it into his head to come to school, now wasn't it, auntie? He knew Miss All'n just as well as could be, and used to go with the rest of the scholars to meet her every morning; and when she patted him on the head, and said 'Good old doggie,' it did seem like he'd fly out of his wits.

"Then when she rang the bell he trotted in just as proud, hanging down his head as meek as could be. He thought she rang the bell for him as much as any of the rest of the scholars. His seat was right by the

stove on the floor — it *wasn't* a seat, I mean; and he just lay there the whole living time, and slept and snored — you see he was so old, auntie! But then we all loved him, we just loved him so! O dear me, it's as much as I can do to keep from crying, and I don't know how *any body* could help it!

"What was I talking about — O, he used to walk round under the seats just as sly sometimes, and put his nose into the dinner baskets. I tell you he liked cake, that dog did, and he liked meat and mince pie. You see he could *smell*, for his nose was as good as ever it was, and the girls used to cry sometimes when he picked out the nice things.

"But then we just loved him so, you know, auntie! Why, we thought he was just as good as any body. He never bit nor growled, that dog didn't, not a mite.

There wasn't one of us but he loved, — 'specially Miss All'n.

"Now wasn't it too bad Mrs. Snell made such a fuss? She didn't love that dog one speck, — I don't know as she ever saw him, — and she didn't care whether he was dead or alive. I just know she didn't.

"I'll tell you how it was. Sometimes he got locked up all night. He'd be asleep, you know, by the stove, or else under the seats, and Miss All'n would forget, and suppose he was gone with the rest of the scholars.

"Well, he was a darling old dog, if he *did* chew up the books! I just about know he got hungry in the night, or he never would have thought of it. How did *he* know it was wrong? he didn't know one letter from another. He spoiled Jenny Snell's spelling-book, I know, and lots of

readers and things; but what if he did, auntie, now what of it?

"I ain't crying any thing about that, I wouldn't have you to think! But you see Mrs. Snell made a great fuss, and went to her husband and told him he ought to be shot."

"That Mr. Snell ought to be shot?"

"Now, Susy, I shouldn't think you'd feel like laughing or making fun. — The dog, of *course;* and they sent for the city marshal. You know Mr. Garvin, Horace?"

"Yes, the man that scowls so, with the scar on his nose, and a horse-whip in his hand."

"Miss All'n cried. She lifted up the lid of her desk, and hid her head, but we all knew she was crying. You see we had such a time about it. We thought he was going to carry the dog off to some place, and take

care of him like he was his master, or may be shut him up, or something that way; but, do you believe, he just *shot* that dog right in the yard!"

"How dreadful!"

"Yes, auntie, I reckon it was! We all cried like we should kill ourselves, and put our fingers in our ears; for we heard the man when he fired the gun, — I mean we heard the gun when the man fired it, — and *then* it was of no use; but we stopped our ears, and Miss All'n hid her face, and cried — and cried — and cried!

"O dear me, it did seem like we didn't any of us want to go to school any more, if we couldn't see our old dog coming to meet us, and rub his head against our dresses. And it was just as lonesome, — now it was *so*, auntie."

"Poor old doggie!" sighed aunt Madge.

"It wasn't you, was it, Pincher," cried Horace, seizing his dog by both ears. "I reckon if they tried to shoot you they'd catch it."

"Now, Susy, it's your turn," said Grace.

"No, Horace's; he's the oldest."

"Pshaw!" returned Horace, who had been the very first one to propose stories, "I'd like to get shut of it. Pshaw! I can't think of nothin'."

"But you must, you know, Horace; so it's no use to grumble."

"O shucks! Has it got to be true?"

"Don't say 'shucks,' Horace," said Grace, gently. "You can tell a true story, or make it up as you go along. — Come, hurry."

"I know what *I'm* goin' to tell," whispered Prudy to Horace.

"Well," said the boy, thinking a moment,

"I'll tell my story double quick, and be done with it.

"You'd ought to see my pa's horse out West, auntie; there ain't a Yankee horse can hold a candle to him; I'll leave it to Pincher. His name is Sancho, and my ma sends him to market mornings, early, with the basket, and just puts some money in, and a note to the butcher, and that horse comes back, sir, just as fast as he can trot, sir, and he has the meat there all wrapped up, and just has the basket in his teeth, this way."

"Why, Horace Clifford!" cried Grace, in surprise; "why, what a story!"

"Of course it's a story. You wanted me to tell a story, didn't you? I was just a-blowin'."

"Well, there, tell something nice, can't you, please?"

"I've told all the story I'm a-goin' to,"

said Horace, firmly. "Now it's Susy's turn."

"You talk about something else a while," replied Susy, "and let me be a-thinkin'."

"I'll tell one," cried Prudy, "let *me*, now.

"Once there was goin' to be three balls, and Cindrilla didn't have no mother, and her father didn't have no wife, so he married him one. And there was goin' to be three great big balls, and Cindrilla asked her mother if she couldn't go, and her mother said, No, indeed; she hadn't nothin' to wear. And then they started off, and her grandma came, — O, I forgot, the woman was wicked, and she made her little girls sit in the parlor, all dressed up spandy clean, and she made Cindrilla sit in the coal-hod.

"And then she told her to get a great punkin, and it turned into a gold hack, and she went off into the back shed and got the

rat-trap, and it turned into two footmens, — and the king's son — O, no ——

"And then there was some bugs round there, and they was six horses, and she got in and rode on to the ball, and her shoes come off, and then the king married her, and she had the other shoe in her pocket, and he married her right off, and they're all safe now."

"All safe?" said aunt Madge, laughing; "what do you mean by that?"

"O, now she'll have a good father and a good mother, and won't sit in the coal-hod no more. — Now it's your turn, Susy."

"O dear suz! I was going to tell a story, a fairy story. It was going to be a real good one, about 'The Bravest of Lion's Castle,' and I couldn't think of a thing to say, and now Prudy has drove it all out of my head."

"Well, children," said aunt Madge, "suppose we give Susy a little more time, and excuse her for to-night? It's time for pleasant dreams now, and kisses all 'round."

CHAPTER XI.

PRUDY'S WHITE TEA.

"BLESSINGS on the blessed children!" said aunt Madge, one morning soon after this. "So we little folks are going out to spend the day, are we?"

"Yes'm," replied Grace, "all but Horace."

"Yes," said Prudy, dancing in high glee, "grandma wants *me* to go, and I'm goin'. I mean to do every single thing grandma wants me to."

"I wish you could go with us, aunt Madge," said Grace, almost pouting; "we don't have half so good times with aunt Louise."

"No, we don't," cried Prudy; "she wants us to 'take care' all the time. She don't love little girls when she has 'the nervous.'"

Almost while they were talking, their aunt Louise came into the room, looking prettier than ever in her new pink dress. She was a very young lady, hardly fifteen years old.

"Come, Prudy," said she, smiling, "please run up stairs and get my parasol — there's a darling."

But Prudy was picking a pebble out of her shoe, and did not start at once.

"Ah!" said aunt Louise, drawing on her gloves, "I see Prudy isn't going to mind me."

"Well, don't you see me getting up out of my chair?" said Prudy. "There, now, don't you see me got clear to the door?"

"O dear," said poor aunt Louise to her

sister, "what shall I do all this long day with three noisy children? I'm afraid some of them will get drowned, or run over, or break their necks. You see if something awful doesn't happen before we get back."

"O, I hope not," replied sister Madge, laughing. "I think there is nothing so very wicked about our little nieces."

"Here is your parasol, auntie," said Prudy, coming back. "I know who I love-best of any body in this house, and it ain't the one that's got her bonnet on — it's a-r-n-t, aunt, M-i-g, Madge."

"Well, you ought to love your aunt *Mig*, all of you," said aunt Louise, laughing, "for I do believe she thinks you children are as lovely as little white rose-buds. — Come, are you all ready? Then run along, and I'll follow after."

"O, I'm so glad I'm alive!" cried little Prudy, hopping on one foot; "I do hope I shall never die!"

"I just mean to be careful, and not get a speck of dirt on my clean apron," whispered Susy to Grace. "Aunt Madge ironed it this morning."

They had such a pleasant walk through the streets of the beautiful village, in the 'sunshine, calm and sweet!' Grace thought the trees met overhead just as if they were clasping hands, and playing a game of "King's Cruise" for every body to "march through."

When they had almost reached aunt Martha's house, aunt Louise stopped them, saying, —

"Now, tell me if you are going to be good children, so I shan't be ashamed of you?"

"Why, yes, auntie," said Grace, looking quite grieved and surprised.

"O auntie," said Susy, "did you think we were going to be naughty?"

"No, you'll mean to be good, I dare say," answered aunt Louise, speaking more kindly, —"if you don't forget it. And you'll be a nice, dear little girl, won't you, Prudy?"

"I don' know," said Prudy, coolly.

"Don't *know?* Why, do you think I should have taken you visiting if I hadn't supposed you'd try to be good?"

"Well, I didn't say I wouldn't," said Prudy, with some dignity, "I said 'I don' know,' and when I say that, I mean '*yes.*'"

"Well, I'm sure I hope you'll do the very best you can," sighed aunt Louise, "and not make any body crazy."

By this time they had gone up the nice gravel walk, and aunt Martha had come to

the door, opening her arms as if she wanted to embrace them all at once.

"Dear little souls," said she, "come right into the house, and let me take off your things. I've been looking for you these two hours. This is my little nephew, Lonnie Adams. — Shake hands with the little girls, my dear."

Lonnie was a fair-haired, sickly little boy, seven years old. The children very soon felt at ease with him.

It was so pleasant in aunt Martha's shaded parlor, and the children took such delight in looking at the books and pictures, that they were all sorry when aunt Louise "got nervous," and thought it was time they went off somewhere to play.

"Very well," said dear aunt Martha; "they may go all over the house and grounds, if they like, with Lonnie."

So all over the house and grounds they went in a very few minutes, and at last came to a stand-still in Bridget's chamber over the kitchen, tired enough to sit down a while — all but Prudy, who "didn't have any kind of *tiredness* about her."

"Look here, Prudy Parlin," said Grace, "you mustn't open that drawer."

"Who owns it?" said Prudy, putting in both hands.

"Why, Bridget does, of course."

"No she doesn't," said Prudy, "GOD owns this drawer, and he's willing I should look into it as long as I'm a mind to."

"Well, I'll tell aunt Louise, you see if I don't. That's the way little Paddy girls act that steal things."

"I ain't a stealer," cried Prudy. "Now, Gracie Clifford, I saw you once, and you was a-nippin' cream out of the cream-pot. *You're* a Paddy! — O, here's *a inkstand!*"

"Put it right back," said Susy, "and come away."

"Let me take it," cried Lonnie, seizing it out of Prudy's hand, "I'm going to put it up at auction. I'm Mr. Nelson, riding horseback," said he, jumping up on a stand. "I'm ringin' a bell. 'O yes! O yes! O yes! Auction at two o'clock! Who'll buy my fine, fresh ink?'"

"Please give it to me," cried Grace; "it isn't yours."

"'Fresh ink, red as a lobster!'"

"This minute!" cried Grace.

"'As green as a pea! Who'll bid? Going! Going!'"

"Now, do give it to me, Lonnie," said Susy, climbing into a chair, and reaching after it; "you ain't fair a bit."

"'Do you say you bid a *bit?* That's a ninepence, ma'am. It's yours'; going, gone

for a ninepence. Knocked off to Miss Parlin.'"

Somehow, in "knocking it off," out came the stopper, and over went the ink on Susy's fair white apron. Lonnie was dreadfully frightened.

"Don't tell that I did it!" cried he. "You know I didn't mean any harm. Won't you promise not to tell?"

"Yes, I will," said Susy; but she ought not to have promised any such thing.

"O dear, O dear! What is to be done?"

Little black streams were trickling down the apron on to the dress. Grace pulled Susy to the washing-stand, and Prudy thought she meant to lift her into it, and tried to help.

"I guess this honey soap will take it out," said Susy; but with all their washing and rinsing they could not make black white

any more than the poor negro who scoured his face.

"Stop a minute!" cried Grace. "Soap makes it worse — ma puts on milk."

"O dear! I wish we had some," said Susy; "how can we get it?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Grace; "we'll send Prudy down stairs to Bridget, to ask for some milk to drink."

"I like milk and water the best," said Prudy, "with sugar in."

"Well, get that," said Grace, "it's just as as good; and come right back with it, and don't tell about the ink."

Aunt Martha and Bridget were taking up the dinner when Prudy went down into the kitchen, calling out, —

"O, Bridget, may I have some white tea?"

"White *tay!*" said Bridget; "and what may that be now?"

"O, some white tea, in a cup, you know, with sugar. They let me have it every little once in a while."

"Milk and water, I suppose," said aunt Martha. "Can't you wait till dinner, my dear?"

"But the girls *can't* wait," replied Prudy; "they want it now."

"O, it's for the girls, is it?"

"Yes, but when they've washed the apron I can drink the rest — with white sugar in."

"The apron!" said aunt Martha, "*what* apron?"

"O, nothing but Susy's. I told grandma I'd be good, and I did be good; it wasn't *me* spilled the ink."

"Ink spilled?" cried aunt Martha, and she stopped beating the turnip.

"O, I ain't goin' to tell!" cried Prudy, beginning to tremble; "I didn't, did I? they won't *'low* me to tell."

Aunt Louise, passing through the kitchen, caught some of the last words, and rushed up stairs, two steps at a time.

"O, Susy Parlin, you naughty, naughty child, what *have* you been into? Who spilled that ink?"

"It got tipped over," answered Susy, in a fright, but not forgetting her promise.

"Of course it got tipped over — but not without hands, you careless girl! Do you get your shaker, and march home as quick as ever you can! I must go with you, I suppose."

Lonnie ought to have come forward now, like a little gentleman, and told the whole story; but he had run away.

"O, auntie," said Grace, "she wasn't to blame. It ——"

"Don't say a word," said aunt Louise, briskly. "If she was my little girl I'd have

her sent to bed. That dress and apron ought to be soaking this very minute."

Bridget listened at the foot of the stairs in a very angry mood, muttering, —

"It's not much like the child's mother she is. A mother can pass it by when the childers does such capers, and wait till they get more sinse."

Poor little Susy had to go home in the noonday sun, hanging down her head like a guilty child, and crying all the way. Some of the tears were for her soiled clothes, some for her auntie's sharp words, and some for the nice dinner she had left.

"O, aunt Madge," sobbed she, when they had got home, "I kept as far behind aunt Louise as I could, so nobody would think I was her little girl. She was ashamed of me, I looked so!"

"There, there! try not to cry," said aunt Madge, as she took off Susy's soiled clothes.

"But I can't stop crying, I feel so bad. If there's any body gets into a fuss it's always *me!* I'm all the time making some kind of trouble. Sometimes I wish there wasn't any such girl as me!"

Tears came into aunt Madge's kind gray eyes, and she made up her mind that the poor child should be comforted. So she quietly put away the silk dress she was so anxious to finish, and after dinner took the fresh, tidy, happy little Susy across the fields to aunt Martha's again, where the unlucky day was finished very happily after all.

"The truth is, Louise," said aunt Madge that night, after their return, "*Lonnie* spilled that ink, and Susy was not at all to blame. You scolded her without mercy for being careless, and she bore it all because she would not break her promise to that cowardly boy."

"O, how unjust I have been!" said aunt Louise, who did not mean to be unkind, in spite of her hasty way of speaking.

"You *have* been unjust," said aunt Madge. "Only think what a trifling thing it is for a little child to soil her dress! and what a great thing to have her keep her word! Susy has a tender heart, and it grieves her to be unjustly scolded; but she would bear it all rather than tell a falsehood. For my part I am proud of such a noble, truthful little niece."

CHAPTER XII.

PRUDY TRYING TO HELP.

PRUDY awoke one morning full of mischief. At the second table she split her johnny-cake, and spread it open, saying it was a singing-book, and began to sing out of it, —

"Little drops of water,
Little *grains* of sand."

Grandma heard her from the next room, and came in very much surprised.

"What shall I do with such a little girl as this?" said she, shaking her finger at Prudy.

"I think," answered the child, "you ought to call me to you and say, 'You been a-singin' to the table, Prudy.' Then I'll

say 'Yes'm;' and you'll say, 'Prudy, go right out in the kitchen, and don't let me see you till you come back pleasant.'"

Grandma put her head out of the window a moment, for she didn't want any body to see her smile.

"This is one of Prudy's days," thought she. "I'm really afraid I shall have to punish her before it's over."

Very soon after breakfast the door-bell rang, and a little boy left a note directed to Miss Grace Clifford. It said, —

"Miss Grace Clifford, the Misses Parlin, and Mr. Horace Clifford, are respectfully invited to a gypsy supper in the Pines."

The children hardly knew what it meant.

"What *is* jispies?" asked Prudy, a little frightened. "Be they up in the Pines?"

"It means a picnic, that's all," said aunt Madge, "and a very nice time you will have."

"A picnic!" screamed all the voices in chorus. It was almost too good to believe. Grace clapped her hands and laughed. Susy ran about the room like a crazy thing. Prudy hopped up and down, and Horace tried to stand on his head.

"Now scamper, every one of you," said aunt Madge, "for I must go right to cooking. — Let's see, you shall have some cunning little sandwiches, some hard-boiled eggs; and what else can you think of, Louise?"

"Stop a minute," said aunt Louise, drawing on a long face, "I hope Susy and Prudy ——"

"Tarts and plum-cake!" cried Susy and Grace.

"Oranges, dates, and figs!" said Horace.

"And them little cookies you cut out of a thimble, you know," added Prudy, anxious to put in a word.

"Hear me speak," said aunt Louise. "I hope Susy and Prudy don't think they are going to this picnic, for the truth is, they haven't been invited."

"Not invited?" gasped Susy.

"The note says, 'the Misses Parlin,'" said aunt Louise, gravely. "That might mean your grandmother, but it doesn't! I take it to mean *the young ladies*, Madge (or Mig) and Louise, your beautiful aunties, who are often called 'the Misses Parlin.' Of course it *can't* mean two little slips of girls in short dresses!"

Susy burst into tears, and tried to talk at the same time, but nobody could understand her.

"O, O!" moaned Prudy, burying her face in the roller-towel, "if I can't go I shall just lay down my head and cry!"

"It's not true, children, not one word;

she's only joking," said aunt Madge, laughing and shaking the egg-beater at her sister. "I'm really ashamed of your aunt Louise for trying to tease you. What *do* you suppose any body wants of old grown-up folks at your nice little party? There, there, don't laugh *quite* so loud. Run away, and stay away, if you want me ever to do any thing."

In a few moments the children were playing out of doors in high spirits, and Prudy had told the workmen, in her pretty, lisping way, "that every one of we children were invited to a *jispy* supper; had a ticket come a-purpose, so of course we should *have* to go!"

The children were too much excited to do their morning work properly. Grandma could not tell by the looks of the piazza whether Susy had swept it or not, and had to go and ask.

"She's swept it off," said Prudy, speaking for her, "but she didn't sweep it *way off!*"

"I should judge not," said grandma; "and here is Prudy, with her bib on yet, and Grace hasn't made her bed. Do you think such children ought to go to a party?"

"O, grandma," cried Prudy, "you know we had a ticket come a-purpose!"

"I'm ashamed," said Grace, promptly. "Susy, you and I are too big to act so. Let's go and do up our work right nice, and then see if we can't help grandma."

And off went the two little girls, with beaming faces, trying to make themselves useful.

"What shall I do?" thought Prudy, for every body was at work, — even Horace, who was turning the grindstone for the men.

"I'll dust the parlors, that's what I'll do. It does take aunt Madge so long."

So, with the big feather duster, Prudy made a great stir among the books and ornaments, and at last knocked over a little pitcher and broke its nose.

"You little meddlesome thing," cried aunt Louise, as soon as she knew it, "this is one of your *days*, I should think!"

"I didn't mean to," cried the child; "I was trying to help."

"Don't say you didn't mean to; you hadn't any business to touch the duster. I shall have to snip your fingers, I do believe."

"Don't," begged the child, "*I'll* snip my hands, *you* needn't; *I'll* snip my hands and get the naughty out."

"They ought to be snipped from now till next Christmas," said aunt Louise, laughing in spite of herself to see the little one set to work with thumb and finger, trying to

do her own punishing. "There, there, go off, and be a good girl."

Prudy's bright spirits rose again at these words, and she thought she would keep on trying to make herself useful. It was aunt Madge she wanted to help — good aunt Madge, who was so busy cooking for the gypsy supper.

"I'll feed her bird," thought the child; "he sings as if he was hungry."

Now aunt Madge had fed little Daffy before sunrise, and he was as yellow and happy as a canary can be. But silly little Prudy trotted off after a piece of sponge cake, climbed into a chair, opened the cage door, and swung the cake before his eyes.

Of course Daffy flew out, and one might suppose that was the last of him; but it so happened that the windows were not up.

Prudy ran, in great fright, to tell aunt

Madge, and when she opened the door, the cat got in; and such a time as there was, you may imagine. Kitty rushed for the canary, aunt Louise rushed for the kitty, and aunt Madge for the bird. At last, Daffy was caught, and safe in his little home, with only the loss of a few tiny feathers.

"I'd give that child one sound whipping," said aunt Louise.

"Let Madge attend to her," replied grandma; "she will do right, for she knows how to keep her temper."

Louise said nothing, but she felt the rebuke; and as she left the room, there was a bright color in her cheeks.

"Prudy," said aunt Madge, gently, "you didn't mean to open the cage door, did you?"

Prudy remembered that she had been scolded before for saying, "I didn't mean to."

"Yes'm, I did," replied she, in a choked voice, "I meant to do it a-purpose."

"I'm really astonished," cried aunt Madge, raising both hands. "Then it's surely my duty to punish you."

"You may," sobbed Prudy. "You may shut me up, and not let me have no dinner, 'cause I ain't hungry. I've been eatin' cake!"

"I think," said aunt Madge, "it would be a better punishment to keep you home from that party."

"O," cried Prudy, eagerly, "wouldn't you rather snip my hands? You can snip 'em with a piece o' whalebone, you know, and switch me all over with a switch, and do *every thing* to me, if you'll only let me go to the party!"

"I'm afraid you'll forget, unless you're kept at home, Prudy."

"O, no, no; I'll promise truly I won't try to help again, never, never in my world."

"Were you trying to help when you let out the bird?"

"Yes'm, I was. He was singin' for somethin' to eat."

"O, I begin to understand," said aunt Madge, laughing heartily. "So you didn't mean to be a naughty girl after all. I am very glad of that, Prudy, for I couldn't tell what to make of you. But you must never touch the cage again. Little girls that want to *help*, must ask somebody to tell them what to do. There, now, kiss me, dear, and I'll forgive you, and we won't say any more about your being naughty, if you'll only remember next time."

Prudy laughed, and twinkled off the tears. She was what aunt Madge called a "bird-child," and was never unhappy but a little while at a time.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GYPSY SUPPER.

After a great, great while, it was afternoon, and the children went up to the Pines, carrying a small market basket half full of nice things.

I don't know which felt most at home in those woods, the birds or the children. It wasn't at all like having a party in a parlor, where there are chairs and rugs in the way, and where you can't run and jump without being afraid of hurting something. No, there wasn't any danger of scratching the varnish off the trees, nor any danger of soiling the soft carpet of the earth.

And if there hadn't been a party, it was enough to make any body happy only to breathe the sweet air, and look away down at the white village, and away off at the blue hills.

Dr. Gray's daughter Ruth, a girl of fourteen, was to have the care of Prudy; and at first she followed the child about like her shadow.

"You dear little pet," said she, "don't walk so fast. There, now, my sweet dovey, let me take your hand."

Prudy looked down at her copper-toed shoes with something like a pout, and slowly gave her hand to the young girl.

"Now, you're a little pink of a dear," said Ruth. "Let's see," added she, feeling anxious to say something, for she thought Prudy would want to be amused, "do you love your aunt Madge any? *I* think she's very good and nice."

"Yes'm," said Prudy, "I've kissed her so much that I love her a good deal."

"Well, I declare," laughed Ruth, "that's a new way of learning to love any body! I guess people call you a funny little monkey, don't they?"

"No'm, they don't," replied Prudy, drawing away a little, "they think I'm as cunning as I can be."

"O, my! I know a little girl that thinks pretty well of herself. Ah, here comes Dedy Roberts; does my little love know Dedy?"

"Yes'm, I went to see her once; she lives in a dreadful *ragged* house!"

"Well, you two little lammies can sit right down here and pick flowers, and if you find a strawberry I'll give you a cent."

"As if we was babies," thought the little girls, for they were wise enough to know that strawberries were gone long ago.

"I don't like her," said Prudy to Dedy, when Ruth had turned away; "she calls me names all the whole time. I guess she don't know my name is Prudy."

"I wouldn't let her," said Dedy. "What did she call you?"

"O, monkeys, and lammies, and pinkies, and things. Don't you s'pose she's 'most an *April fool?*"

After watching Prudy to the child's vexation for about two hours, Ruth forgot all about her, and it so happened that the little thing strayed off with Horace and his friend Gilbert, whom he called "Grasshopper," to a little clearing in the wood.

It is a sad fact that "Grasshopper" had a bunch of matches in his pocket, and the boys meant to build a fire. Horace gathered the dry sticks and crossed them, so all Grasshopper had to do was to strike a match, and the fire was soon crackling briskly.

"How it pops!" said Prudy, "just like corn."

"I reckon this is *popple* wood," said Horace, "and they call it so because it pops in the fire."

Prudy did not doubt it. She never doubted any thing Horace said. She stood looking on, with dumb surprise, as he took out of the inside pocket of his raglan three small fishes.

"Now," said he, "if we can cook these for our supper, won't we go a-flyin'?"

"Be they minnies?" asked Prudy. "O, I know; it's mack fishes!"

"She means *mackerel*, you see," said Horace, with a wise look at Grasshopper. "No, Prudy, these are chubs, nice chubs, too; I caught 'em myself."

How to cook a fish, Horace had no idea, but he was not a boy to give up at trifles.

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"If I put 'em into the fire they'll burn up," said he; "but if I hold 'em over the fire they'll cook; — now won't they?"

"Your hand will cook, too, I guess," said lazy Grasshopper, sitting down and looking on.

Horace said no more, but went quietly to work and whittled some long splinters, on which he stuck the fish and set them to roasting. True, they got badly scorched and dreadfully smoked, but that was not all that happened. A spark flying out caught Prudy's gingham dress, and set it in flames in a second.

Whether the boys would have known what to do, I can't say; but just then Sam Walker, a good-natured colored man, came up and put out the flames before Prudy fairly knew there were any. Then he brought water from a spring and drowned the bon-

fire, and gave the boys "a piece of his mind."

All this while poor Prudy was running off into the thickest part of the wood, crying bitterly. Sam ran after her, and caught her up, as if she had been a stray lamb; and though she struggled hard, he carried her to the picnic ground, where the large girls were just spreading the table for supper.

"You'd better look out for these here young ones," said Sam. "This one would have been roasted sure, if I hadn't a-happened along in the nick o' time."

Ruth Gray dropped the paper of candy she was untying, and turned very pale. She had been too busy playing games to remember that she had the care of any body.

"O, you little ducky darling," cried she, seizing Prudy in her arms, "don't you cry, and you shall have a pocket full of candy. You didn't get burnt a mite, did you, honey?"

"No'm, I ain't cryin'," sobbed Prudy. "I ain't crying any thing about that;" and every word seemed to be shaken out, as if there was a little earthquake at her heart — "*there — is — black folks!* O, he is just as — *black!*"

"Is that all," said Grace, stroking Prudy's hair. "Didn't she ever see any negroes — any nice black negro men before, Susy?"

"I thought she had; why, we have 'em in the streets at Portland, lots and lots of 'em."

After much soothing, and a good deal of candy, Prudy was comforted, and the supper went off famously. The children were all polite and well-behaved, "even the boys," as Ruth said; and though they all had keen appetites, nobody was greedy.

By and by, when it would not do to stay any longer, they all started for home, happy and tired.

Ruth held Prudy's little hand in a firm grasp, and wished she had held it so all the afternoon; "for," as she said, to herself, "she's a very *slippery* child."

This had been a trying day for Prudy, and when aunt Madge put her to bed, her sweet blue eyes wouldn't stay shut.

"Where do they grow, auntie?" said she, "them black folks. Be *they* the jispies?"

"O, they grow any where," replied aunt Madge, laughing; "just like any body. They are not gypsies, but negroes."

"I should think they'd wash their faces."

"O, they do, but our Heavenly Father made them black."

"Did he?" cried Prudy, raising her head from the pillow. "And did he know how they was goin' to look when he made 'em? That man that catched me up, why, how he must feel!"

"He was very kind," said aunt Madge, trembling as she thought of the child's danger. "O Prudy, did you thank him?"

"No, I didn't," replied Prudy. "I didn't know as he could hear any thing. O, mayn't I go up to the jispy Pines to-morrow and thank him?"

"We'll see; but now it's time you went to sleep."

"Well, I will," said Prudy, "I'll go in a minute; but, auntie, he's good, ain't he? He ain't black *all* through?"

"He's quite a good man," answered aunt Madge, trying not to smile, "and has had a great deal of trouble. I can't stop to tell you, and you wouldn't understand; but I dare say he has cried ever so much, Prudy, and felt worse than you can think, all because he is black; and some people don't like black men."

"I should think they'd be ashamed," cried the child. "Why, *I* love him, 'cause he can't wash it off! Mayn't I put him in my prayer?"

Then Prudy had to get out of bed and kneel down and say her prayer over again. It followed the Lord's Prayer, and was in her own words: —

"O God, please bless every body. Bless all the big children, and the little children, and the little mites o' babies. And bless all the men and ladies that live in the whole o' the houses."

And now she added, —

"And won't you please to bless that black man that catched me up, and bless all the black folks, forever, amen."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ANGEL-BABY.

THE beautiful summer was passing away very fast. Only a few days more till autumn. A little longer, and the cousins must separate; so, for the time that was left, they clung all the more closely together.

I have called it a beautiful summer; so it was, but there is one sorrowful thing I have not said much about. There was one trouble which always made the children feel sad when they stopped to think of it.

While they were playing in the hay-field, or taking supper "up in the trees," now and

then they would hear the tired cry of the darling sick baby.

Then Grace would clasp her hands together in her quick way, and say, —

"O dear, dear, I wish the doctor would get Harry well."

"Poh!" said Horace, "the doctors they have East ain't no 'count, are they though, Gracie?"

"Of course they don't know so much as Dr. De Bruler," replied Grace, very decidedly.

"I'll tell you how they make doctors," spoke up little Prudy; "they take a man and put him in a bear's buffalo coat, and that makes a doctor."

"And a gig," said Horace, "and some sharp things, and lots of little bottles."

"What children!" said Grace, looking down upon them with a lofty smile. "Why, Prudy, what *have* you got in your pocket?"

"O, I don' know," said Prudy, throwing her hands behind her. "*Goodness* won't hurt me, will it, Susy?"

"I guess *you* ain't good enough to hurt."

"Well, grandma says not to eat green apples," said the child, "but she'd be willing I could chew 'em and get the *good* all out — don't you s'pose she would?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Susy; "you must ask."

"Well, I never teased for any. Horace gave 'em to me, and I shan't swallow 'em."

"O, what a little snipe," cried Grace, laughing, "your pocket is stuffed so full its going to burst open, and you'll be sick again, now you see!"

"Sick?" repeated Prudy, looking frightened, for she did not forget her severe illness; "then I'll throw 'em away. I don't love such sour things anyhow. I was only *hung-buggin'*."

And Prudy went down the wooden stairs which led from the trees, and walked slowly towards the house, dropping the green apples one by one into the grass.

At the kitchen door she met her aunt Madge, who was in tears.

"O auntie," said she, "I'm going to wash my hands spandy clean, and then are you willing there is any thing I can have to eat?"

"Cookies, if you like, my dear."

"O auntie," cried Prudy, eager with a new thought, "won't you tell me where them raisins is—the ones you didn't put in the pudding? Tell me, O, do, do! If you will, I won't touch 'em, true as the world."

"Then why do you want to know where they are?" said aunt Madge, a faint smile flitting across her face and then dying out again.

"O, 'cause," said Prudy, "then I can tell Susy, and *she* can get 'em!"

"You can each of you have a handful," said aunt Madge, reaching down the box. "You may have some, for I know you wouldn't take them without leave, and Susy wouldn't either, you funny child!

"Now," said she, putting the raisins in Prudy's apron, "I want you to go out of doors and keep very still."

"Why do you cry so, my dearest auntie in the world?" said Prudy, climbing into a chair, and throwing her arms around her auntie's neck, while the raisins dropped to the floor; "is Mr. 'Gustus Allen dead?"

"No," said aunt Madge, hugging little Prudy as if she was good for the heart-ache, "the baby is a *great deal worse*, darling! Tell the children I will send them some dinner up in the trees, and don't let Horace come into the house. You know he means to keep still, but his boots make so much noise."

Prudy gathered up the raisins, and went out quietly, her happy little face looking very sober. But the "bird-child" could not be sad long at a time, and she had hardly climbed the steps into the trees, and given away the clusters of raisins, before the sick baby was almost forgotten.

"There," said Horace, suddenly, "I must go right into the house and see Harry. I haven't seen him to-day."

"O, no, no!" cried Prudy, holding him back, and speaking very fast, "he's a great deal *wusser*, and auntie said your boots was so big she'd send the dinner out here; and then she cried like every thing."

"O," said Grace, "I'm so afraid the baby won't get well! Aunt Madge didn't say any thing about *dying* — about Harry's *dying*, did she, Prudy?"

"No," replied Prudy, stopping a moment

to think; "she said he was wusser — a great deal wusser, darling. And then she talked about Horace's boots, and that's all."

"The darling little baby! He used to love me before he got so sick; and all the way coming East I held him ever so much, you know, Horace."

"Well, he liked me, too," said Horace, looking very sober, "and I've played with him the most, and let him spoil lots of my things."

"So you have," said Grace. "I heard ma say the other day you'd always been good to little brother. O Susy, you ought to have seen how Harry used to jump when he'd hear Horace open the door; he always expected a frolic!"

"Didn't we have *times!*" cried Horace, dropping his eyes, which were full of tears.

"O Susy," said Grace, "do you suppose

any one that's sick all summer ever gets well?"

"I don't know," sighed Susy; "mother says if God is willing they'll get well, and if he isn't they'll die. God knows what is best."

"Yes," chimed in little Prudy, "God knows a great deal more'n I do!"

And so the children chatted and played quietly all day long, sometimes breaking off in the midst of a game to talk about the baby. It seemed like a very strange day. The sky looked so calm and peaceful that you could almost fancy it was keeping still to listen to something a great way off. The quiet trees might have been dreaming of heaven, Susy thought. Horace begged her now to tell that fairy story about "The Bravest of Lion's Castle;" but Susy said it made her feel wicked to think of fairy stories *that* day, though she couldn't tell why.

When the children went into the house at supper-time it was very still. Nobody was to be seen but aunt Madge, who gave them some bowls of bread and milk, and said the family had taken tea.

A kind of awe crept over Grace as she looked at the tearful face of her auntie, and she dared not ask about the baby.

After they had finished their supper, aunt Madge said, "You may all follow me into the nursery; I have something to tell you. — Our dear little pale baby, who has been sick day and night all this long summer, will never feel sick or cry any more. God has taken him to heaven to be a little angel."

All but Prudy knew that she spoke of death. Grace flung herself on the floor and wept aloud. Horace rushed up-stairs into the back chamber, without saying a word to any body; and Susy buried her face in the

sofa-pillows, whispering, "O God, don't let it be so; it isn't true, is it?"

But Prudy only opened her blue eyes in wonder. When she saw the pure little form of the baby lying on the bed, in a soft crimson dress, she smiled and said, —

"O, he looks as if he was asleep, and he is asleep!"

"But see, he doesn't breathe," whispered Susy.

"No," said Prudy, "he don't breathe because he don't want to. He was sick, and it made him too tired to *breathe* so much."

Why every body should weep was more than Prudy could tell; but she thought it must be right to do as the rest did, and by bedtime she was sobbing as if her heart would break. She afterwards said to Susy, —

"I tried as hard as I could to cry, and

when I got to crying I cried as tight as I could spring!"

But when aunt Madge wanted to put Prudy to bed she was unwilling to go. "O, no," said she, "I want to wait and see the baby go up!"

"See what?" said aunt Madge.

"See God take the baby up to heaven," sobbed the child.

"But he is in heaven *now*," replied aunt Madge.

"O, no, he hasn't gone a single step. I saw him on the bed. They haven't put his wings on yet!"

Aunt Madge was puzzled, and hardly knew what to say, for it is not easy to make such very little children know the difference between the body, which goes back to dust, and the spirit, which goes to God who gave it.

She talked a long while, but I doubt if Prudy understood one word, for when the casket which held the form of little Harry was buried in the garden, she cried because the earth was heaped over it.

"What makes 'em do it?" she asked, "he can't get to heaven through all that dirt!"

But by and by, when days passed, and there was no longer a baby in the house, Prudy began to think of him as one of the angels. And one morning she told a beautiful dream which she thought she had had, though she sometimes called her *thoughts* dreams.

"O," said she, "I dreamed about my angel! He had stars all round his head, and he *flowed* in the air like a bird. There was ever so many little angels with him, and some of 'em sang. They didn't sing *sorry;* they was singing, 'The Little Boy that

died.' And, aunt 'Ria, I guess you wouldn't cry if you could see how happy they were!"

"No, no," sobbed poor aunt 'Ria, holding Prudy close in her arms, which she said felt "*so* empty" now, "it can't be right to cry, can it, Prudy, when I *know* my baby is so happy in heaven?"

CHAPTER XV.

GOING HOME.

It was now autumn. The trees couldn't keep green any longer, for their time had come; so they just made the best of it, like sad faces laughing through tears, and glowed and flushed in a perfect blaze of glory, making believe they were having splendid times all by themselves, and didn't care for what was coming.

The Parlin children had staid a great deal longer than their parents at first meant they should stay, and now they must really go back to Portland.

The little cousins were sorry to part, for

you know they had learned to love one another dearly. Grace and Susy clung together till the last moment.

"O Susy," sobbed Grace, "don't you forget these good times! Remember to write, no matter how it looks. I wish I hadn't got to go 'way off out West. I never did have such times in any place as we've had here at grandma's."

"Nor I either," said Susy, looking sorrowfully at the barn, the seat in the trees, and the clover patch. "Remember, you're coming back in just two years. Won't it be splendid? — O dear, but two years is 'most forever!" added Susy, suddenly breaking down.

"Good by, Prudy," said Horace, climbing into the stage-coach, quite out of breath. He had run all the way to the post office just for the sake of seeing her again.

"Good by, Prudy. You're the cunningest little spud! If you lived out West I'd just go a-flyin'."

Nobody knew whether Horace cried or not, for nobody saw him till dinner time, but then he looked very sober indeed. He and Grasshopper had been building a fort, he said; and after he had told so much, he seemed not to care about talking. He felt captain of a little company, and such a brave soldier that he would not even say he felt sorry Prudy was gone.

Grace talked a great deal about Susy, and asked her mamma if she might not invite her to go out West some time.

Mrs. Clifford said she should be very glad, indeed, to have a visit from both the children, and who knew but it might happen so? for Mr. Parlin, Susy's father, often took journeys out West on business.

This idea struck Grace very pleasantly, and she had a strong hope of the visit in a minute. In two minutes she had a firm belief in it; and the last we see of Grace and Horace in this book, they are sitting on the piazza, eagerly talking about the next winter, when they shall both go to the cars to meet uncle Edward and the children.

"They'll be there my birthday — what'll you bet?" said Horace.

"I shall wear my tippet when we go to the depot, and have a new hood," said Grace. "I don't know what my dress will be, though."

"I'll make a bow-arrow, and a gun, and a steamboat for Prudy."

"And I'll give Susy my large doll, and make a blue dress for it, with flowing

sleeves. She shall put all her things into my cabinet."

"What'll we have to eat? Pecans, and 'simmons, and raisins, and figs."

"O, we shall have plenty to eat, Horace, we always do. We'll give 'em canned peaches with cream. Susy likes cream as well as a cat."

"I'd like to see Prudy eat a 'simmon — a green one, I mean," cried Horace, laughing aloud. "Seems like I can see her mouth puckering up now."

Susy and Prudy, all this while, were riding home in the cars, under the care of the conductor.

"O," sighed Susy, "I wish we were going backwards, just the other way. Grandma is going to let Grace boil some candy to-night, and put oilnuts in it."

"I guess they'll want *me* to help 'em pull it," said Prudy.

"There, now, we've got to Brunswick," murmured Susy. "I don't like to get so far away from the folks at grandma's. Don't it seem real lonesome?"

"No, indeed," replied Prudy. "I'm glad we're goin' home to see mother and the rest of 'em. What do you s'pose the baby'll say?"

But their speech was cut short by some large pieces of sponge cake, which the smiling conductor brought to them wrapped in a newspaper.

Susy and Prudy reached home safely, and there is nothing more to be said about them at present.

I think I will copy the letter which Prudy wrote to her dear friend, Mr. Allen, or which she got aunt Madge to write the next time she went to Portland.

CHRISTMAS DAY.'

DEAR MR. 'GUSTUS ALLEN:

WHEN you went off to the wars aunt Madge cried some, for I saw her wiping her eyes. You asked me if I loved you for the candy, but I didn't; I loved you for the nuts and oranges.

I think you was real good to write me a letter. I had just as lief kiss you as not if you *wasn't* my father; and aunt Madge says she'll answer it, 'cause you couldn't read my writing; *but* I hain't got any pig! He was a pinky winky little thing, but grandpa kept a keepin' him eatin', and he got so big once when I was gone that they had to kill him.

But he didn't go to heaven, and I'm glad, for I don't ever want to see *him* again. That was last summer, when I was a *little* girl. I don't like pigs *now*.

Of course I'm going on five, for if I

wasn't most five my grandpa Read wouldn't be dead most two years.

I've got my presents, but they ain't took off the tree yet. Mother gave me a tea-set. O, I wish you could see it, 'cause you wouldn't break a single thing. And I had a doll, and lots of candy and books, and a new dress, and a scarf, and some shiny shoes.

I'm glad you wrote me that darling letter. I can't think of any thing to think of. The skeeters bit me when I was to grandma's. I hate *live* skeeters. They might be flies, and I wouldn't care then. They used to get into my skin just as easy, and sting me all up.

Won't you write me another letter? Please to.

Susy fastened her tooth to the door-latch once. It got so loose it shook in her mouth,

and it hurt her so I had to cry. But *my* teeth are drove in real hard. I mean it hurt her when 'twas pulled, that's what I mean.

I saw a cow the other day in the road, that wasn't hitched. Susy said, 'Go long goff, sir,' but he didn't, and then a man shoo-brauded him, and he went.

We had a dear little toady in the garden, and when I talked to him he winked. He had a nest in the flower-bed last summer.

I like to stay at grandma's, so I can jump off of something. Mother won't let us hunt for any eggs to Portland — 'cause we haven't any hens.

Horace was a captain to his men. He made me a sled. I had a new dress on the Christmas-tree, and a sugar basket.

I've got a bad cold, but Susy hasn't. My head is all snuffed up.

When are you goin' to come home?

I haven't seen Grace and Horace for so long! They went home after the baby died. God has got the baby up in heaven, but the *tired part* of him is in the garden.

My father is most crazy to see me. He is, truly; and when I say *truly*, I *can't* lie. He *said* he wanted to see me so he was most crazy, and he's comin' to-night.

I s'pose he'll bring me something, for I've been good. When I act cross, it's 'cause I don't feel well.

Aunt Madge says to me I've wrote enough, and I'm tired. She's wrote the letter, but I made it up.

I wish you a Merry Christmas! She asked me if I forgot to wish it, but I didn't.

Good by.

From

PRUDY PARLIN.

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