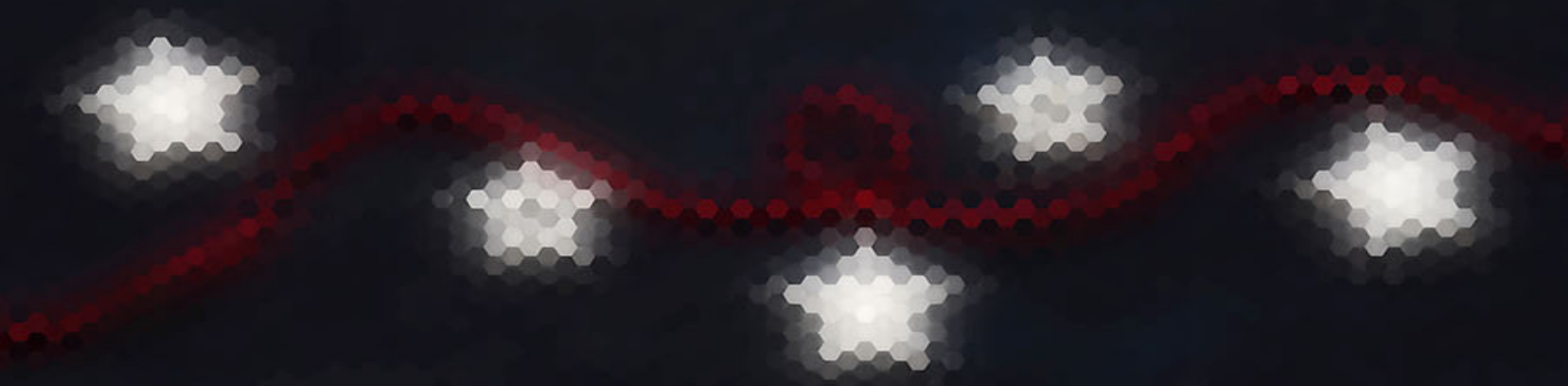


SOPHIE MAY

LITTLE PRUDY'S SISTER SUSY



MUSAICUM CHILDREN'S CLASSICS

Sophie May

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TO MY
LITTLE NIECE
Katie Clarke

THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU, KATIE,
WITH THE LOVE OF YOUR AUNTIE

Preface

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Here is a story about the oldest of the three little Parlin girls, "sister Susy;" though so many things are always happening to Prudy that it is not possible to keep her out of the book.

I hope my dear little friends will see how kind it was in God to send the "slow winter" and the long nights of pain to little Prudy.

If trouble should come to us, let us grow gentle, and patient, and lovely.

Little friends, be sure of one thing—our dear Father in heaven sends us something hard to bear only because he loves us.

Chapter I.

Keeping Secrets

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We might begin this story of Susy Parlin on a New Year's day, only it is so hard to skip over Christmas. There is such a charm about Christmas! It makes you think at once of a fir tree shining with little candles and sparkling with toys, or of a droll Santa Claus with a pack full of presents, or of a waxen angel called the Christ-child.

And it is just as well to date from the twenty-fifth of December, because, as "Christ was born on Christmas day," that is really the "Happy New Year."

For a long while the three little Parlin girls had been thinking and dreaming of presents. Susy's wise head was like a beehive, full of little plans and little fancies, which were flying about like bees, and buzzing in everybody's ears.

But it may be as well to give you a short description of the Parlin family.

Susy's eyes were of an "evening blue," the very color of the sky in a summer night; good eyes, for they were as clear as a well which has the "truth" lying at the bottom of it. She was almost as nimble as a squirrel, and could face a northern snow storm like an engineer. Her hair was dark brown, and as smooth and straight as pine-needles; while Prudy's fair hair rippled like a brook running over pebbles. Prudy's face was sunny, and her mouth not much larger than a button-hole.

The youngest sister was named Alice, but the family usually called her Dotty, or Dotty Dimple, for she was about as round as a period, and had a cunning little dimple in each cheek. She had bright eyes, long curls, and a very short tongue; that is, she did not talk much. She was two years and a half old before she could be prevailed upon to say anything at all. Her father declared that Dotty thought there were people enough in the world to do the talking, and she would keep still; or perhaps she was tired of hearing Prudy say so much.

However, she had a way of nodding her curly head, and shaking her plump little forefinger; so everybody knew very well what she meant. She had learned the use of signs from a little deaf and dumb boy of whom we shall hear more by and by; but all at once, when she was ready she began to talk with all her might, and soon made up for lost time.

The other members of the family were only grown people: Mr. and Mrs. Parlin, the children's excellent parents; Mrs. Read, their kind Quaker grandmother; and the Irish servant girl, Norah.

Just now Mrs. Margaret Parlin, their "aunt Madge," was visiting them, and the little girls felt quite easy about Christmas, for they gave it all up to her; and when they wanted to know how to spend their small stock of money, or how much this or that pretty toy would cost, Prudy always settled it by saying, "Let's go ask auntie: *she'll* know, for she's been through the Rithmetic."

Prudy spoke these words with awe. She thought "going through the Rithmetic" was next thing to going round the world.

"O Auntie, I'm so glad you came," said Susy, "for I didn't see how I was ever going to finish my Christmas presents: I go to school, you know, and it takes me all the rest of the time to slide!"

The children were busy making wonderful things "all secret;" or they would have been secret if Prudy hadn't told.

For one thing, she wondered very much what Susy could be doing with four pins stuck in a spool. She watched the nimble fingers as they passed the worsted thread over the pin-heads, making stitches as fast as Susy could wink.

"It looks like a tiny snake all sticked through the hole in the spool," said Prudy, eager with curiosity. "If you ain't a-goin' to speak, I don't know what I *shall* do, Susy Parlin!"

When poor Susy could not pretend any longer not to hear, she answered Prudy, half vexed, half laughing, "O, dear, I s'pose you'll tease and tease till you find out. Won't you never say a word to anybody, *never*?"

"Never in my world," replied the little one, with a solemn shake of her head.

"Well, it's a lamp-mat for auntie. It's going to be blue, and red, and all colors; and when it's done, mother'll sew it into a round, and put fringe on: won't it be splendid? But remember, you promised not to tell!"

Now, the very next time Prudy sat in her auntie's lap she whispered in her ear,—

"You don't know what *we're* making for you, *all secret*, out of worsted, and / shan't tell!"

"Mittens?" said aunt Madge, kissing Prudy's lips, which were pressed together over her sweet little secret like a pair of sugar-tongs clinching a lump of sugar.

"Mittens? No, indeed! Better'n that! There'll be fringe all over it; it's in a round; it's to put something on,—to put the *lamp* on!"

"Not a lamp-mat, of course?"

"Why, yes it is! O, there, now you've been and guessed all in a minute! Susy's gone an' told! I didn't s'pose she'd tell. I wouldn't for nothin' in my world!"

Was it strange that Susy felt vexed when she found that her nice little surprise was all spoiled?

"Try to be patient," said Mrs. Parlin, gently. "Remember how young and thoughtless your sister is. She never means any harm."

"O, but, mamma," replied Susy, "she *keeps* me being patient all the whole time, and it's hard work."

So Susy, in her vexation, said to Prudy, rather sternly, "You little naughty thing, to go and tell when you promised not to! You're almost as bad as Dotty. "What makes you act so?"

"Why, Susy," said the child, looking up through her tears, "have I *acted*? I didn't know I'd acted! If you loved me, you wouldn't look that way to me. You wrinkle up your face just like Nanny when she says she'll shake the naughty out of me, Miss Prudy."

Then what could Susy do but forgive the sweet sister, who kissed her so coaxingly, and looked as innocent as a poor little kitty that has been stealing cream without knowing it is a sin?

It was plain that it would not do to trust Prudy with secrets. Her brain could not hold them, any more than a sieve can hold water. So Mrs. Parlin took pity upon Susy, and