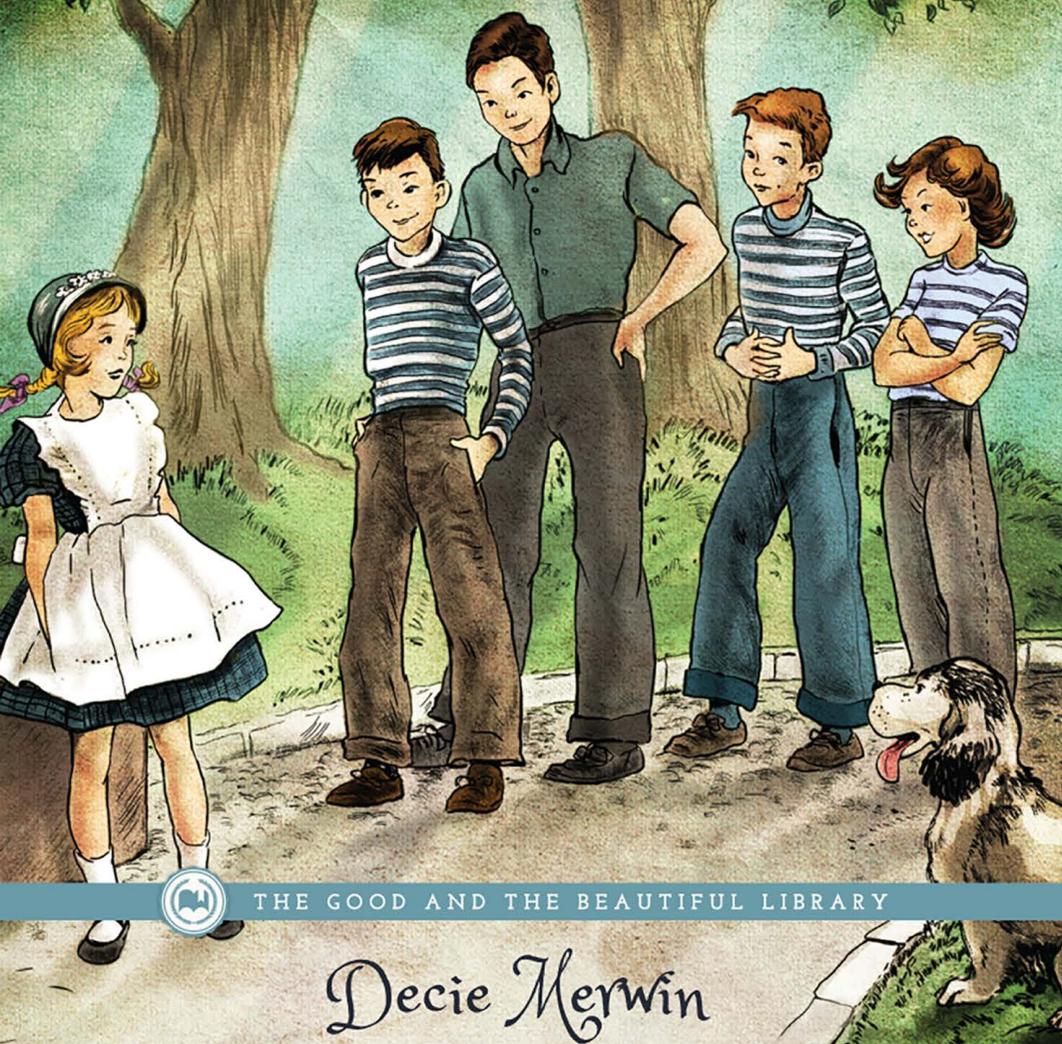


Prudy

at Meadows Farm



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

Decie Merwin





MEADOWS FARM

PRUDY TAIT'S HAIR DIDN'T CURL A BIT, BUT Prudy didn't mind. It was the color of silver-gilt, and Mother braided it in two stubby little braids that just brushed her shoulders. Prudy loved them. She called them her "pink-tails," and, sure enough, they were tied with pale pink ribbons that just matched the color of Prudy's cheeks.

Sometimes her dresses were checked, and sometimes they were plain, but always they were a blue that just matched Prudy's eyes.

And she wore pinafores.

The pinafores were span-clean in the morning and crisp with starch. By evening they were limp and badly smudged.

Mother sighed and brought a clean, crisp pinafore from the kitchen where the ironing board was still up.

“Some little girls wear denim shorts,” she said, “when they play in the park, anyway—or overalls.”

“Not overalls,” said Prudy’s father. “Not on my daughter. I like little girls to *be* little girls, not tomboys.”

So Mother tied on the fresh pinafore, and Prudy smoothed it neatly, and they all sat down to supper.

Prudy’s father tweaked a “pink-tail.”

“You look sweet enough to eat,” he said. “Like sugar and spice and everything nice—the way little girls should.”



That was before Prudy went to visit the farm.

She was to stay without Mother and Daddy for the first time while they went off on a little holiday of their own.

It was Granny’s farm.

But a lot of people seemed to live there besides Granny.

They all came out to meet her when Daddy and Mother and Prudy drove up in the car.

There were greetings, much laughter, and talk.

“You see, darling, you can’t possibly be lonesome,” Mother said brightly. “All your cousins to play with—such fun! And Auntie May will help with dressing or anything if Granny is busy.”

“And we’ll be back in two short weeks,” Daddy said. “Why, you’ll hardly know that we’re gone!”

“You’re really a big girl now—when you’re big enough to visit by yourself.”

They kissed her.

They waved.

They drove away.





Prudy didn't feel like a big girl.

She felt very small.

She looked at her cousins. They were all much bigger than she was.

She looked at the house. It was the biggest house she had ever seen. It stood among the tallest trees.

Her own suitcase, on the path beside her, looked very large.

One of her cousins, a big boy with red hair and freckles, picked it up.

“Gee,” he said. “What’s in this thing? Rocks?”

“My—my clothes,” said Prudy.

Her voice quavered a little.

Granny laughed.

“It is a big suitcase for such a small girl, but I guess you’re strong enough to carry it upstairs, Spotty. Or Tucker can help you.”

She turned to Prudy.

“You come with me, child,” she said. “We’ll go up to your room. It’s a tiny one next to mine. Your mother used to sleep there when she was your size. I think you’ll love it.”

And Prudy did.

Not only was the room tiny, but the ceiling sloped down into the wall on each side of the window. The bed and the little dressing table were painted white, and there were snowy, ruffled curtains with pink rosebuds on them. There was

wallpaper with pink roses, too—just the color of the ribbons that tied Prudy’s “pink-tails.”

Outside the window were the green branches of a big tree, and outside the door was Granny’s big bedroom. This made the little room seem even smaller, just the right size for a little girl.

Prudy didn’t say anything, but she went around the room touching the pink roses and smiling, and she felt sure Granny knew how much she liked it.

They went downstairs where Prudy had a glass of milk that tasted better than the milk in town—and sugar cookies to go with it.

Her cousins were very nice to her.

They showed her the old spring house, cool and damp.

And the corn crib.

And the big, red, dusty barn.

There were animals in the barn: a few hens, a cow with a little brown-eyed calf, two great *big* horses, and a gray pony.

Prudy asked questions.

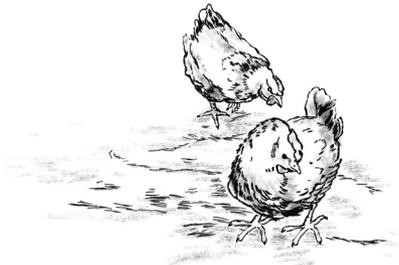


Tommy and Tucker said, “Didn’t you know that?” and “Didn’t you know *that?*”

And Midge looked surprised.

But Spotty told her everything.

He showed her how to feed carrots to the big farm horses—flat on her palm so they couldn’t make a mistake and nibble a finger instead of a carrot. He let her take a warm brown egg from a hen’s nest that was hidden away in the hay.



And he gave her a ride on the gray pony!

The pony's back was round and slippery, but she grabbed his thick mane with both hands, and Spotty led him carefully. First, they walked. Then they trotted. Prudy's cheeks got pinker and pinker. She lost a ribbon, and one of her "pink-tails" came undone. Her little blue skirt flopped up and down,



and the strings of her pinafore untied and trailed behind her like the tail of a kite.

“Hang on, now,” Spotty told her. He started to run, and they came back to the barn at a canter.

Prudy squealed with delight. She had never had such fun.

Spotty lifted her down.

Midge got on the pony and galloped around the lawn without anybody leading. Midge was wearing blue jeans, and she didn't seem to find the pony's back slippery at all.

Prudy watched her. She thought Midge was wonderful.

All her cousins were wonderful.

And she liked Spotty the best.





They played hide-and-seek in the barn.
Prudy's dress got torn. So did her pinafore.
A bell rang, and they ran pell-mell for the
house. Prudy couldn't run as fast as the others, but
Spotty waited for her.

Spotty was her favorite cousin.

"Goodness, child!" Granny said when she saw
Prudy. "Goodness! Well, it'll do you good. Your

cheeks look pinker already. Only, I'm afraid that frock and pinny are beyond mending."

The children had supper on the porch. They played tag among the trees on the grassy lawn.

They caught fireflies and let them go again.

Then it was time for bed.



Prudy

at Meadows Farm

When Prudy stays at Granny's farm without her parents for the first time, she feels nervous and out of place. Before long, however, Prudy trades her pretty dresses for a pair of blue jeans and learns to climb, ride a pony, and walk the old log across the creek.

Together with her cousins, Prudy experiences adventures previously unknown to her while learning lessons about herself and the world around her.



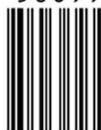

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