

THE LITTLE FOLK.

Marmalade.

BY MRS. MOLESWORTH.

Huffy's real name was Humphrey. He was six years old. He was short and stout and slow. Some people called him stupid, but that was a mistake.

Huffy had brothers and sisters older than himself and one or two younger. But though he was very good friends with them all and loved them all he had no special crony among them. For a time, as long as the baby was a baby, he loved it the best, I think. He counted it his great friend, and it loved him and used to stare up at him solemnly with blue eyes very like his own. But all too soon Baby grew into a big little girl and being very quick and merry for her age, she took to playing with her lively little sisters and found them more amusing than quiet Huffy.

So Huffy seemed alone again and grew quieter and slower than ever.

If he did not speak much he thought a great deal, and in his own way he was quite a happy little boy. It never came into his head that any one was not kind to him or that he was to be pitied.

Two of his older brothers, like many boys, were exceedingly fond of playing tricks, and Huffy's serious way of taking things made them doubly enjoy tricking him, or what they called "getting a rise out of him," even though his great good nature when he found out that he had been taken in, somewhat lessened their pleasure, I fear.

But at the time I am speaking of, these two—Norman and Terence were their names—had been away at school for some months, so poor old Huffy had led a peaceful life. Holidays came however, and with them Nor and Terry, bubbling over with high spirits and mischief, really bursting to start their home "larks" again.

For a day or two no special chance of tricking Huffy turned up. And Nor and Terry were not bad hearted fellows. They felt touched by Huffy's pleasure at seeing them again and by the little kind things he tried to do to please them.

It was the middle of the summer—July—and July was a very "birthday month" in this family. Two or three came at the end, the tenth was Huffy's own birthday and the eleventh was his mother's. These two days coming together in this delightful way were the happiest of all the year to Huffy.

They began by his coming downstairs to breakfast, which was a great treat, though he never could manage to eat very much; he felt so excited about his presents!

"Come now, Huffy, old man," said his father on the morning of this particular birthday—his seventh one—"you must eat something more. What will you have? Here's some nice honey—you are fond of honey, I know."

Huffy held out his plate.

"Zank you," he said gravely. Then "won't mamma have some?" he went on. "Sall I hand your plate for some, mamma?"

Mamma was getting up from her chair.

"No thank you dear," she said. "I have quite finished. And I don't care for honey. I like marmalade ever so much better—and our marmalade is all done."

The boys were left alone at the table. Nor and Terry were fond of honey if their mother was not.

"What are you staring at so, Huffy?" said Norman. "Do you think we're eating too much honey!" for the little boy's eyes were fixed on the jar.

Huffy looked round slowly.

"No," he said, "I weren't thinking of the honey, 'cept—"

"What?" said his brother, "out with it."

"To-morrow's mother's birthday and she likes marmalade, and there isn't any. I'd like to get her some. Where does it come from, Nor? I've seen the bees making honey—"

Norman kicked Terence under the table to make him understand that he was not to interfere.

"You don't know where marmalade comes from?" he said, raising her eyebrows with a look of great astonishment. "Why I had no idea you were so stupid. You know that bees make honey—well then—can't you guess? No?" as poor Huffy looked up with a puzzled face.

"Really—just think a moment. Of course if bees make honey, you might guess that wasps make marmalade."

There was a smothered giggle from Terry, but Huffy was too absorbed to notice it.

"Do they really?" he said. "No, I never know it before. I thought wasps didn't do nothing but sting. And how do they get the marmalade from them? Is it like getting the honey?"

"Oh, much easier than that," said Norman. "You're only

got to go to where you know there's a wasp's nest and whistle, and they all come flying out and you've nothing to do but scrape out the marmalade with a big spoon from the inside of the nest."

"How nice," said Huffy, but before he had time to say more, both his brothers, choking with laughter, hurried out of the room.

He went on thinking about it to himself while he collected his birthday presents to carry them away to his own quarters.

"If only I'd knowed about it," he reflected, "I might have got some marmalade for mamma's breakfast to-day." Then a bright thought struck him. To-morrow, not to day was mamma's birthday; it was not too late. If he could find out where there was a wasp's nest, he might get some this afternoon when he and the other little ones were out playing in the garden—if only—oh he did hope Norman and Terry would not think of it! He would not tell any one about it—he would ask the gardener without saying why he wanted to know.

Late that afternoon when Humphrey's mother was walking quietly homewards through the grounds having been as far as the lodge gates with a friend who had come to see her, woful sounds met her ears. At first, being at some little distance, she did not pay much attention to them, thinking it was perhaps the stable boys' playing or some village children in the road. But as she walked on the sounds became more distinct and evidently came from some part of the garden. She stopped and listened, and words mingled with the cries grew clear.

"Oh mamma, mamma, oh nurse, do come."

She hurried on and soon a little figure came rushing toward her. It was poor Huffy, and his mother knew that it took a great deal to make him rush. She felt really frightened.

"What is the matter, Huffy? Tell me quick, dear."

The little fellow raised his face—it was not only tear-stained—in two places it was sadly swollen and red.

"Have you been stung, my boy?" his mother exclaimed.

"Oh yes, mamma, and my hand too," and then his mother saw that he was carrying a large spoon and a little china jug. What had he been doing? Soon the whole story came out, though any one less quick than mamma would have found it difficult to understand.

"I whistled and whistled," said Huffy, "but they didn't come out. So I just touched the nest very gently with the spoon—Simpson told me not to disturb the wasps. And I don't think he knowed about the marmalade. And then one came out and then another and another and they flew at me, and I runned, but it was like burning fire. Oh, mamma, mamma, it is so sore!"

Some "blue bag" on the stings and much potting comforted the poor little man. Mamma kept him beside her the rest of the day, so that after all, Huffy's birthday ended happily—for him, that is to say. For Norman and Terence looked very grave and sober and ashamed of themselves, after a long talk with their father in his study that evening. I think their jokes were harmless ones for the rest of their holidays any way.

And next day—his mother's birthday—his father himself took Huffy to the neighbouring town and bought a beautiful glass jar of the finest marmalade for a present to his dear mamma. It was a beaming little boy that ran in to give it to her, though his poor face was still disfigured by the painful red lumps. But Huffy bore no malice, and now that he is a "grown-up" boy he often laughs at himself for having been so easily taken in as to believe that wasps make marmalade.

