

## Choice Literature.

## MISUNDERSTOOD.

BY FLORENCE MONTGOMERY.

## CHAPTER V.

Little Miles was terribly disappointed to find his confinement upstairs would extend over the day of the dinner-party, but there was no help for it.

The eventful Friday arrived, and Humphrey was on the fidget all day. He paid constant visits to the dining room and library, and even intruded into the kitchen; but he could see nothing in any of the preparations going on which at all differed from those usual.

"I suppose, for once they will eat like civilized people," he told Miles—after visit one hundred and fourth downstairs, in the vain hope of finding something new.

"Yes, just for a treat," suggested little Miles; and they amused themselves for the next few hours by imagining the astonishment of the wild men at all the different things they would see.

Sir Everard arrived late, and went straight up to Miles' room. It so happened that he did not see Humphrey, as he was under the hands of Virginia, in preparation for his appearance in company; and as several of the guests had already arrived, Sir Everard had only just time to kiss Miles, and to hurry off to his dressing room, from whence he descended to the library. So that the conversation of the preceding week, and the children's excitement over the prospect of the aborigines, had entirely escaped his memory, for want of the refreshing it would have been sure to have received had he had time for a word with either of his little boys.

He was deep in politics with an old gentleman in a broad expanse of satin waistcoat, and a general buzz of conversation was going on all over the room, when the library door was flung open with a bounce, and Humphrey appeared in the doorway.

Fresh from Virginia's improving hand, in velvetene clothes, white waistcoat and light blue tie, with his brown hair brushed back from his bright face, and his eyes sparkling with excitement, he looked like a being of another sphere, among the rusty old gentlemen congregated in the room.

Many of them turned round to look at the pretty boy, and more than one held out a hand of greeting.

But, to Sir Everard's annoyance, Humphrey, whose manners were usually perfect, took not the slightest notice of any of these overtures.

He stood at the door as if spell bound, gazing around him with an expression of intense surprise, wonder and disappointment.

"Humphrey," said Sir Everard, "why don't you come and say 'How do you do?' to these gentlemen?"

"Father," exclaimed the boy, in a clear treble voice, that was heard all over the room, "where are the wild men?"

The ghastly truth flashed across Sir Everard's mind, as the boy asked the question. The recollection of the children's conversation with their uncle came back to him, and he was at his wits' end.

"Wild men, Humphrey?" he said, with a sickly smile, "what are you dreaming about? There are no wild men here."

"You know what I mean, father," the child answered, in the same clear voice, making his way straight across the room to Sir Everard; "the wild men of the woods, that you and Uncle Charlie were talking about last Saturday, and who you said you were going to have to dinner. There were two long words, and the one I mean—means wild men. It was a very long word, the a—abo—"

"Constituents?" gasped the baronet.

Fortunately for Sir Everard's seat in parliament, the two long words, heard for the first time that Saturday, had confused themselves in the boy's mind, and he answered "I suppose it was—but I thought it began with an 'a.'"

"And you thought 'constituents' meant 'wild men'?" pursued his father, eagerly following up his advantage, while the guests laughed. "Why did you not ask me, or look it up in the dictionary? Though, to be sure," concluded the baronet, appealing to the bystanders, "I don't know that it would have been easy to make it clear to a child of seven."

"No, indeed," answered one or two.

"But why should he think it meant wild men?" asked another, laughingly.

"A child's natural love of the extraordinary, I suppose," answered Sir Everard, "the unknown is always the marvellous, and ignorance is always the most easily deceived."

He hardly knew if he was talking sense or not; he only felt he must provide an answer of some kind, and having silenced his questioner, he breathed freely again. But there was an only half-satisfied expression on Humphrey's face which alarmed his father; and dreading that he should cast his thoughts back, and by raking up something else that been said on that fatal occasion furnish to the assembled guests the clue to the conversation, he drew the boy to him, and told him he had better run back to his brother.

It still wanted five minutes to dinner; and he felt there was no peace of mind for him, as long as Humphrey remained in the room.

As if to atone for his unceremonious entry, Humphrey seemed determined that his exit should be more in accordance with the rules of society, for he advanced to the fat gentleman next his father, and holding out his hand wished him "good night," then, proceeding to the next in order, he did likewise.

"Is he going to shake hands with every single one?" thought Sir Everard, in despair, as his eyes wandered from one to another of his twenty guests, dispersed all over the library.

There could be no doubt about it. Patiently and me-

thodically Humphrey went through his task. Not one was overlooked—not one was left out.

No matter if one was standing apart, at the other end of the room, another deep in a volume of prints, and two more *à l'italienne* in a political discussion, Humphrey thought nothing of pursuing the first, rousing the second, and disturbing the others. The inevitable "good-night" rang out all down the room, and the inevitable little palm was outstretched.

Sir Everard ever afterward looked back to those slow moments of torture, as to a sort of hideous nightmare. Each minute was laden with anxiety, each new handshaking fraught with danger, each conversation that a guest opened with the child, a fresh source of fear.

Interminable moments! The hands of the clock seemed as if they would never move, the gong seemed as if it would never sound and he stood in despair, watching the little figure pursuing its triumphant progress down the room, and listening to the parting tones in which one and the other rallied the boy on his mistake.

"So you thought you were going to see a lot of wild men, young gentleman?"

"Uncle Charlie told me so," was the answer.

Sir Everard fidgeted from one leg to the other. ("Only thirteen more," he observed to himself.)

"And you're quite disappointed?" said the next one, laughing.

"Yes," said Humphrey; "there isn't much to see in a lot of gentlemen in black coats."

("Only twelve now," reflected the baronet.)

"It was a joke of uncle's, I suppose," said a paterfamilias, in a consoling tone—and Sir Everard beat the ground nervously with his foot.

"A very stupid joke," said Humphrey, with which opinion his father fervently agreed.

It ended at last. The gong sounded, the last "good night" was said, and with an indescribable sense of relief Sir Everard saw the little figure disappear. But he did not recover himself all the evening. It was remarked that he was silent and abstracted during the dinner, and the guests shook their heads, and observed that he had never got over his wife's death. He was truly thankful when the party broke up and the strain was over.

He could not pass the bedroom nursery without taking a look at Miles. He was sleeping peacefully, but various sounds, as if of sobbing, came from the other little bed.

Sir Everard laid his hand on the sheet, but it was held tight, and the curly head hidden beneath it. "Why, Humphrey, my little man, what is the matter?"

Very inarticulate sounds succeeded, but by dint of great patience, the baronet distinguished among the sobs that, "he was afraid Uncle Charlie would go to hell, for telling such a dreadful story, and he couldn't bear to think of it!"

## CHAPTER VI.

Virginia waylaid Sir Everard on his way down to breakfast next morning, to beg him to speak to Humphrey on the subject of leading Miles into mischief.

The baronet acquiesced with a sigh. It was a job he particularly disliked. In the short time he was able to be with his children, he enjoyed seeing them all life and happiness; and he hated to bring a cloud over their bright faces.

Humphrey was hanging out of the window when his father went into the dining room, and Sir Everard was half afraid of calling him away, for fear of startling him, and causing him to fall out; but at the sound of his father's footsteps, the boy drew himself in and bounded toward him.

"Why did you not come and help me to dress this morning?" said Sir Everard, as he kissed him.

Humphrey looked rather bored. "Virginia wouldn't let me," he answered; "she thought it would be a good punishment."

Here was an opening! Sir Everard felt he ought not to let it slip.

"Punishment!" said he, trying to look solemn; "I am sorry to hear you deserve punishment. Why, what have you been doing?"

Humphrey looked up to the ceiling, down to the ground, and all round the room. "I can't remember what it was, father!"

Sir Everard tried hard not to smile. "What is the use of scolding such a boy," thought he; "a child who does not even remember for what offence he is suffering?"

"Stop a minute," cried Humphrey, who was still in an attitude of reflection, "perhaps I shall remember presently."

He ran over his recent misdemeanours in his head, checking them off with his fingers, and his father, seeing it was likely to be a long job, sat down to breakfast.

"Well, Humphrey!" he questioned, after a pause, "have you remembered?"

"No, I can't," answered the boy, "but I'm sure Virginia will. Shall I run up and ask her?"

Sir Everard was amused, but a little provoked. It seemed such a hopeless task ever to make an impression upon Humphrey. But he only said, "No, you need not do that; I think I can tell you a little about it. Come and sit down here."

Sir Everard turned the tap of the urn, and put on the longest face he could think of. "I am sorry to hear from Virginia," he began, looking full at Humphrey, so as to make sure he was gaining his attention, "that you have—"

He stopped in despair, for Humphrey's eyes had wandered to the tap, and his mind was intent on the running water.

"Are you listening to me, Humphrey?"

"Take care!" was all Humphrey's answer, jumping up from his chair, and clapping his hands; "turn it off! quick! look! father!"

There was no help for it, Sir Everard had to break off his discourse and attend to the water, which was running all over the table and the boy's laughter was so infectious that he joined heartily in it.

"I give it up," he said to himself; "it's no use in trying to make an impression on anything so volatile."

"It served you quite right, father," said Humphrey, "for not letting me turn on the tap. You know quite well Miles and I always take turns to do it. Oh! I wish it would happen again!" And at the recollection, the merry laugh broke out once more.

But the mention of the little prisoner upstairs recalled Sir Everard to a sense of his duty, for Miles was suffering for his brother's thoughtlessness. So he gave Humphrey a long lecture on leading his brother astray and threatened him with the continual espionage of Virginia in the garden if he had any more complaints of the kind.

Humphrey sat looking very mournful while the discourse lasted, and was vehement in his promises that it should never happen again.

"Till next time, I suppose," said the baronet, laughing, and then he gave him some bread and honey and took up the newspaper.

He felt rather proud of the effect he had produced, for Humphrey ate his bread and honey in silence, and seemed very thoughtful.

"Boys will not attend to the maids," he reflected; "there is nothing like the authority of a parent after all."

In about five minutes, Humphrey's meditations came to a close.

"Father!"

"What, my boy," said Sir Everard, putting down his paper, in anticipation of some penitent speech, and mentally saying, "I did not mean him to take it so much to heart, poor child!"

"If you had lived in the times of the Wars of the Roses, which side would you have taken?"

Sir Everard was rather taken aback. In the first place, because it was rather a shock to his feelings to find, after all, how little impression he had made; and in the second, he was by no means so familiar with that part of history as to be able to give his opinion in a hurry. He would not, however, lower himself in the boy's estimation by allowing his ignorance.

"Wars of the Roses," he repeated, to gain a little time for reflection; "have you been learning a great deal about them lately?"

"Yes," said Humphrey, with a sigh; "Virginia seems very fond of them. Is it true that unless I remember all the battles of the Wars of the Roses, I shall never be able to go into parliament?"

"Does Virginia say so?" inquired Sir Everard.

"Yes," said Humphrey. "She says, of course all the members of parliament know the names at the tips of their fingers and could say them in order; and which were won by Yorkists and which by Lancastrians."

Sir Everard felt very thankful that he held his seat on less frail a tenure, and sincerely hoped his son was not going to put him to the test. Vain hope!

"I suppose, of course, father, you could say them right off?"

"It's almost a pity to stay indoors such a fine day," said the baronet, hastily; "suppose you get your hat and run out in the garden."

Yorkists and Lancastrians at once vanished from Humphrey's head, and he was off. But when he was gone, Sir Everard took down a volume of English History, and studied it for the rest of the morning.

After luncheon, Sir Everard proposed to take Humphrey out riding.

Little Miles looked very disconsolate when the horses came to the door, and he found himself condemned to a solitary afternoon, but seemed somewhat cheered by a long-whispered confabulation that his brother had with him before starting.

At three o'clock Sir Everard and Humphrey mounted, and as they went along the road, the following conversation took place:

"Will you pass through the town, father; because I've got some shopping to do?"

"Shopping! why what do you want to buy?"

"It's such a very great secret, that I don't think I can tell you. But perhaps you can keep a secret?"

"Yes, I think I may promise to keep it."

"Well, then, I'll tell you. It's a birthday present for you. And what would you like? But you must promise not to tell any one."

"No one shall know; but I think I would rather you choose for me; what you like, I shall like."

"Well, now, I don't think you would. You see, I should like a pop-gun, or some nine-pins. Now you would not care for either of those, would you?"

Sir Everard admitted that he was getting a little old for these amusements.

"I thought so!" pursued Humphrey, delighted with his own discrimination, "and that's what makes it so difficult. You've got a watch and a thermometer, and all the other things grown-up men have, so it is very puzzling."

"But, my dear child, all the things you mention are very expensive, far beyond your little means, I should think. Why, how much money have you got?"

"Well! that's just the awkward part; I have not got any! But I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind giving me some, as it is for your own birthday present."

Sir Everard laughed.

"Rather an expensive way of having birthday presents."

"I don't think it will be very expensive," said the practical Humphrey; "but of course it depends on what I buy. Here is the shop, father; please stop."

They pulled up before one of those little nondescript shops to be found in every small country town.

(To be continued.)

Dr. GORD, of Edinburgh, preached on Sabbath at the opening of the new Newark Church, Port Glasgow, which has been erected at the corner of Brown and Jean Streets at a cost of \$20,000.

The Archbishop of Canterbury receives \$250 a day, the Archbishop of York \$165; and yet Bishop Kyle declares that the order to which he belongs finds it very hard to make both ends meet!