

**MY OWN STORY; OR,
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A CHILD**

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My Own Story; Or, the Autobiography of a Child by Mary Howitt

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MARY HOWITT

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MY OWN STORY;

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BY MARY HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "STRIFE AND THRIVE," "SOWING AND REAPING,"
"WORK AND WAGES," ETC., ETC.

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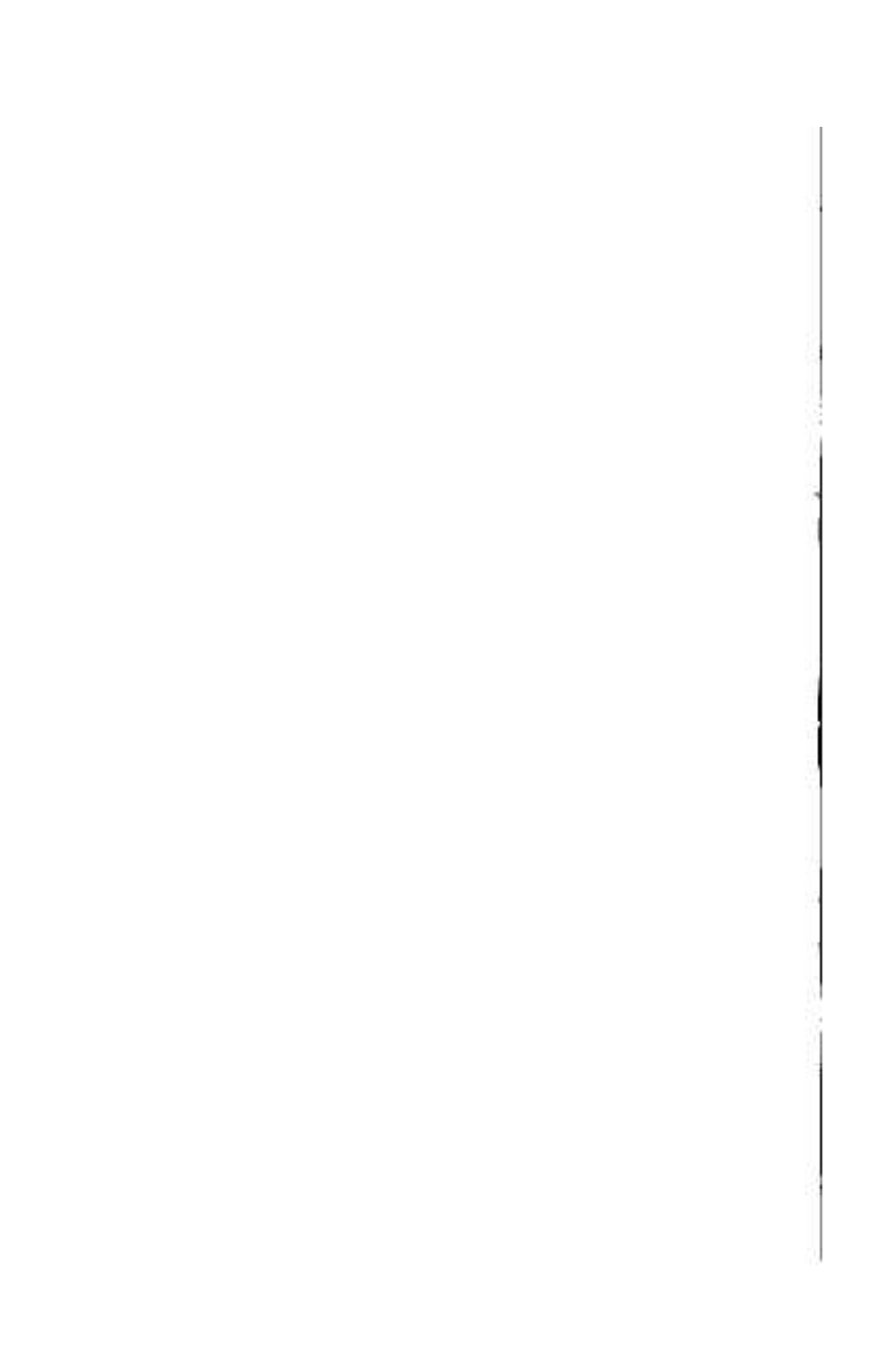
ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS volume completes this series of Tales for the People and their Children. It is a work which has grown in interest as it has proceeded, and I now see my task completed almost with regret. The scope which it embraces is a wide one, and the farther I have gone, the more it has opened before me; the lessons of human life and experience are inexhaustible, and hence it is my intention to continue this class of stories at some future time.

It is but justice to say, that of the thirteen stories of which this series is composed, two were written by my husband at a time when I was otherwise unavoidably occupied; nor must I take my leave of the work without expressing my deep gratitude to the excellent projector and publisher of it for his handsome and friendly behaviour throughout this, our literary connection, and still more for his kindness and thoughtful consideration at a time of severe domestic affliction.

To the public, both at home and in America, who have received these books with distinguished favour, I now, as far as regards this series, bid adieu.

Clapton, Aug. 30th, 1844.



AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

CHAPTER I.

OUR HOME.

IT has often been a subject of regret that so little is known of the workings of a child's mind during its earlier years. Little of this, however, can be known, excepting in cases of great precocity in children; and then the case is not an ordinary one, for children do not reason at all, they only receive impressions. They feel things keenly, kindness or unkindness, joy or sorrow—but they neither reason nor reflect—the reason and the reflection come later, and then we draw inferences, and understand the connection of one thing with another. We stand then, as it were, at the proper distance to take in a general view; we stand like the traveller on the hill-top, and look over the landscape which we have left behind us. We see there, in a clear perspective, the house in which we were born; the trees around it, or the neighbours' houses; we see here sunshine, there shade; there the hill of difficult ascent, which was

painful to our feet, and there the green and sunny valleys where we wandered with the companions of our joy, and gathered the gay flowers of every season.

I stand now on this hill-top, and look back over a scene which extends through the present century. The scene widens on every hand, and has broader lights and shades, and more important action as it nears the present time, but with it in its breadth and extent we have nothing to do. We look into ten years only, and that time lies in a pleasant valley, which will tire the foot of no youthful wanderer; nothing lies there but what is amusing and pleasant, children and childish sports—and thither let us betake ourselves, you, my young readers, and myself, and see what we can find there.

I must, in the first place, introduce you to the home where we lived. I say *we*, not in any editorial capacity, or because it sounds better, but because, when I write of myself as a child, I must write of my sister also. My sister was a year older than myself, but we were so constantly together, and were so guided by a constant amity of will, that we were something like one soul in two bodies. People imagined that we were twins, perhaps, because we were nearly the same height, or, perhaps, because we were always together, and always dressed alike. My sister was Anna, I myself, Mary.

Anna was somewhat slenderer than myself, with an oval countenance, soft blue eyes, soft brown hair, a remarkably rosy complexion, and an expression of great sweetness in her whole countenance. She was, in fact, the most amiable, the most feminine and

affectionate creature I ever saw. I, for I remember well what was said of me, if I do not remember my own person, was broader set than my sister, with a round face, large grey eyes, and a deal of healthful colour on my cheeks, with a roguish, merry expression of countenance, which made people think that I was very fond of mischief. I was not particularly so, but that was the general opinion, and I heard it so often said, that I set it down in my own mind for fact.

Our home was one of great comfort, though it was old-fashioned, with low rooms and small windows. A court separated it from the street, and its principal sitting-rooms opened into a pleasant and rather large garden, which sloped down behind it to a green, pleasant meadow, where ran a quick and clear brook. Beyond this meadow, fields, which had formerly belonged to our grandfather, stretched upwards for half a mile into a pleasant region of pastoral farms and cornfields, which, if pursued for a few miles, led to the classical world of Bagot's Park and Needwood Forest, and thus the landmarks of the horizon were, here and there, a conspicuous group of trees, a large barn, or farm-house. It was by no means a grand view, but it was one of great quietness and rural beauty. Our father was extremely fond of it, and pointed out its peculiar features with great pride to his visitors. I remember once his chagrin and almost anger, when, on having particularised the beauties of this familiar scene to a rich and worldly and not over-polite visitor, she remarked arrogantly, "You think it pleasant, no doubt—but, from my drawing-room windows, I look over an extent of fifty miles, right to the sea."