

**SELECTED STORIES
FROM OUR
VILLAGE**

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Selected stories from Our village by Mary Russell Mitford

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MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

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FROM OUR
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100
"MR. GILES MADE THE CHILD LAUGH, AND WAS HANDY WITH HER."

Selected Stories
from
Our Village

BY
MARY RUSSELL MITFORD



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INTRODUCTION.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD, the author of the following stories, was born at Alresford, Hampshire, in 1789. Her father was Dr. George Mitford, a man who has been variously described as impulsive and warm-hearted, clever and unprincipled, and a "detestable old humbug." He undoubtedly possessed some remarkably good qualities, as well as many grievous failings; in spite of these, however, he managed to retain his daughter's affection unimpaired to the end. He early perceived the premature talent of his daughter, and fostered it by every means in his power. But though he had a large fortune with his wife, his irregularities soon plunged the family into difficulties. From these he was saved for a time by Mary, who at the age of ten won £20,000 in the lottery, she herself choosing the number 2,224, because, added together, it made up her age. Out of this money Dr. Mitford built a house at Reading, and again threw himself into the extravagances that had previously reduced them to poverty. Fortunately he had the good sense to let his daughter benefit by the windfall, placing her in an excellent school kept by a French lady, a refugee, in Hans Place, Chelsea, where she remained from 1798 to 1802. She was now, at the age of fifteen, an accomplished scholar, with a great love of reading and an exceeding fondness for gardening.

Having early displayed an extraordinary gift for versification, it is not to be wondered at that Miss Mitford published her first book of poems in 1810. This was succeeded at intervals by other volumes. None of them had much success here, though they are said to have been greatly esteemed in America.

Dr. Mitford's second fortune did not last him very long, and by 1820 the family was so reduced in circumstances that his