Letters on the making of Our Cousins in Ohio

Contemporary reviews of Our Cousins in Ohio differed in the weight they attributed to Howitt's editorial hand. One writer from The Child's Friend and Youth's Magazine asserted that a "kind of diary" was "found" after Alderson died and that Howitt "took it, and rewrote parts of it and gave to it the title, 'Our Cousins in Ohio." Even the leading Howitt scholar Linda Peterson, with limited access to the correspondence, described Our Cousins as "a transcription of letters from the emigrant ... to her sister" (Peterson 2011, 59). What is suggested by a closer look at the letters themselves is the intentionality of the collaboration up until Alderson's death. (See also letter #46 above.)

39. To Mary Howitt, 15–21 February 1846 (Ht/7/4/10):

You will I fear think the letters of Wm Charles to his cousins silly, and yet the idea possessed me so much from hearing thee mention the Children's Year that I thought I would risk it I have found it to myself very interesting to watch the children their little adventures & ways of doing & thinking besides if you want to be acquainted with them I think it will be the most likely way of making you know their characters, I find as our out of door life increases more to interest & relate & perhaps in the end dear Mary it will be somewhat original to thee & them to know how children in America spend their days & what they think & say amidst such a new life

61. To Mary Howitt, 2 Feb 1847 (Ht/7/1/77):

Now dearest sister, I have a word to say to thee, should thou in arranging this journal find it worth publishing be so kind as not to give the real names of the grown persons at least It would do as well to alter them & might be like telling tales, I have had much pleasure in writing it & had I had more time but especially more ability it might have been much more interesting but I intend to continue it two years thrown into one will be fuller of incident. I sent thee a description of our home will this of our woods do? if it is not right nor what thou wishes tell me.

69. To Mary Howitt and Ann Botham, 24 July 1847 (Ht/7/2/39):

I shall certainly attend to thy request about additions for the children's book there have been many little incidents which I have thought of transcribing but want of time has been my constant excuse & on the whole last year was a much more eventful one than this so far has been, did thou ever get the letter with the account of old Jack, his death & burial as thou never mentioned it I feared it did not reach thee

71. Letter from Emma Alderson to Mary Howitt, Oct 1847 (Ht/7/1/79)

I am going to try, my beloved Sister to comply with thy request & give thee a few more materials to add to the children's journal of last year I shall write without reference to dates & if thou thinks them interesting then thou canst use them as thou best approves.