

**THE VILLAGE OF
MORTIMER,
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The village of Mortimer, and other poems by J. Mosdell

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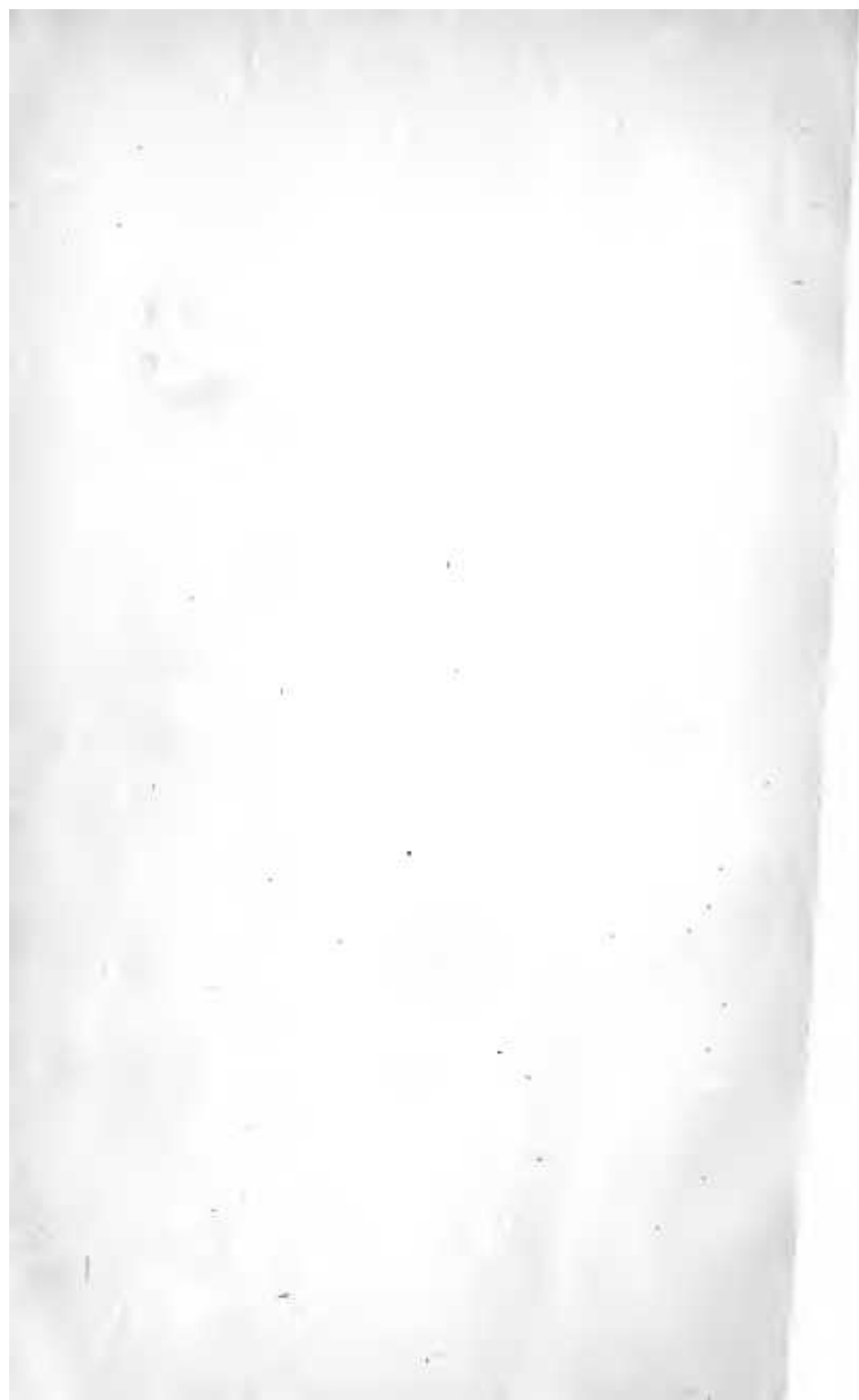
BY
J. MOSDELL.



Reading :

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THE FOLLOWING COLLECTION OF POEMS IS

Respectfully dedicated

(BY KIND PERMISSION)

TO

THE REV. C. L. CAMERON,

VICAR OF MORTIMER,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E .

In giving publicity to this little collection of Poems, it is perhaps necessary that some explanatory statement should be made respecting them and their appearance in type.

With regard to the Poems themselves, it may be observed that they are the results of the musings of one whose education was of the most elementary character possible ; indeed, so far as *scholastic* training is concerned, it may be pronounced to have been absolutely *nil*. He began work at the early age of eight years, and beyond the alphabet and acquiring a knowledge of the fact that two and two make four, has no distinct recollection of having learned anything during the few years it was his privilege to attend school. The fact is, owing partly to the harsh system in vogue in the schools at that time, and partly from his having been from his earliest infancy an ardent lover of nature and wild freedom, and strongly objecting to anything like restraint, he ever, particularly when the weather was fine, preferred roaming through the lanes and among the woods, watching the beautiful birds and listening to and ever charmed with their ravishing melodies ; or rolling in the lovely green meadows among the cowslips and buttercups, and inhaling the delightful fragrance that ever comes (especially when newly rolled or rolled upon) from the beautiful herbage growing amid the young and tender grass ; or paddling in the limpid, cooling stream on a hot summer's day, chasing the tadpoles or catching the minnows in the brook, or hauling up the "crawdabs" (crayfish), and—looking at the sun to see if it was time to return home. It would not have done to go too soon, as that would have suggested a difficulty on his arriving there, should he be interrogated respecting his untimely appearance ; of course, if he happened to be late it did not so much matter, as he had invariably "been kept in."

This playing "truant," however, often got him into sore trouble at home, as somehow or other the matter would occasionally leak out. Some humorous lines, bearing upon this matter, taken from a piece entitled "Recollections of my Boyhood," and written merely for amusement, may not be out of place in this connection. Hoping his readers will not be unduly shocked at their extreme levity the author begs to be allowed to transcribe a few stanzas:—

'Twas while living there in that crowsy old town,
That first I was pack'd off to school,
To learn A, B, C, and the next letter D,
While striding the form or the stool.

But all unsuccessful I never learned much,
The alphabet was I think all,
My letters I learned but I all the rest spurned,
However the teacher might hawl.

Which he sometimes would do, and not only so,
But also would chastise me sore,
Which made me but hate both himself and the slate
And all the book's confounding lore.

In Wokingham 'twas that I first degrees took,
'Twas there that I first went to school,
To learn wrong from right and my lessons to slight
And sometimes get stood on the stool.

'Twas thus that I soon won distinction and fame,
And left my companions behind,
By this means I rose o'er my friends and my foes,
The triumph of matter o'er mind.

And thus too I soon became known thro' the school,
Exalted my fellows above,
Who all of them gazed to see me thus raised,
But gazed more in mischief than love.

Their gaze I returned, I could all of them see,
Not one from my look was exempt,
Perch'd high on a stool (as if born but to rule),
I view'd the whole lot with contempt.

The teacher, of course, was attentive to me,
 He could not neglect such a lad,
 But took a delight in thus wreaking his spite,
 He seemed to regard me as bad.

One cold frosty morning, I well recollect,
 Arriving at school rather late,
 My fingers so cold that I scarcely could hold
 With comfort the book or the slate ;

But this notwithstanding of course I must rise,
 At once in my place I must stand,
 And though a mere child somewhat wayward and wild,
 Was order'd to hold out my hand.

The "pointer" he then would let fall with a whack,
 My fingers did tingle with pain,
 Then back to my place with a woe-be-gone face,
 At once I was order'd again.

This harsh treatment it was which made me dislike
 The schooling of those early days,
 The infliction of pain with pointer or cane
 My strongest resentment would raise.

And hence it would happen that often I roamed
 And strayed far away from the school,
 'Neath skies bright and blue where the tall cowslips grew,
 'Twas there that I went as a rule.

Though this I enjoyed and preferr'd it to that,
 My pleasures would end but in pain,
 When homewards I went back to school I was sent,
 And stood on the stool once again.

Again to be stared at by all the rude boys,
 Sly young ignoramuses they,
 Who turned up their eyes with delightful surprise,
 Respectful attentions to pay.

Like Saul, head and shoulders above them I stood,
 Like him but a king in disguise,
 Advanced to a throne, crown and sceptre alone
 Were needed to give me the rise.

Foolscap on my head would have served for a crown,
 The pointer a sceptre had been,
 Had I then but these the long robe and the keys,
 A monarch they all might have seen.

There calmly I stood contemplating the boys
 And eyeing the crafty old man,
 Who thought *he* was king and myself a mere thing
 Which he at his pleasure might "tan."

A bright looking object the old member was,
 With spectacles straddling his "beak,"
 Through which he would look at the slate or the book,
 But *over* them when he would speak.

His pate was as bald as the globe on the stand,
 Resembling a bladder of lard,
 Round, chubby and fat, though of course for "a' that"
 The top of his "cranny" was hard.

"A bright shining place where no parting was known,"
 Devoid of all semblance of hair,
 Nor wool, fleck, nor down, could be seen on his crown,
 Long since it had ceased to grow there.

But of this enough, or the writer's readers will weary at the threshold. His father's profession or calling in life was that of a cordwainer, as will be seen from the poem entitled "Reminiscences of Home," and having a large family, mostly boys, and being, of course, but a poor man, it was perhaps a matter of necessity with him that his sons should have been early put to the "seat." As, however, the writer grew older, he became more thoughtful and strove to cultivate his mind in many ways, and he thinks he is entitled to say, without any fear of its being attributed to vanity or egotism on his part, that his verses are evidence that he has not altogether failed in his attempts at self-culture. Having thus cleared the ground with regard to himself his more cultivated readers will, of course, be prepared to make all due allowance, and not be too captious or over critical, or unduly harsh in their strictures upon one who, as the foregoing statement clearly shows, can lay no claim whatever to