

THE MERMAID AND OTHER PIECES

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The Mermaid and Other Pieces by E. Patterson

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E. PATTERSON

**THE MERMAID
AND OTHER PIECES**

THE MERMAID.

SUBSCRIBERS' EDITION.

**THERE WILL BE NO SECOND EDITION OF THIS BOOK
AS IT NOW STANDS.**

THE MERMAID

AND

OTHER PIECES.

BY

E. PATTERSON;

With an Introduction

By S. C. F.

[PATTERSON & S. C. F.]

PUBLISHED

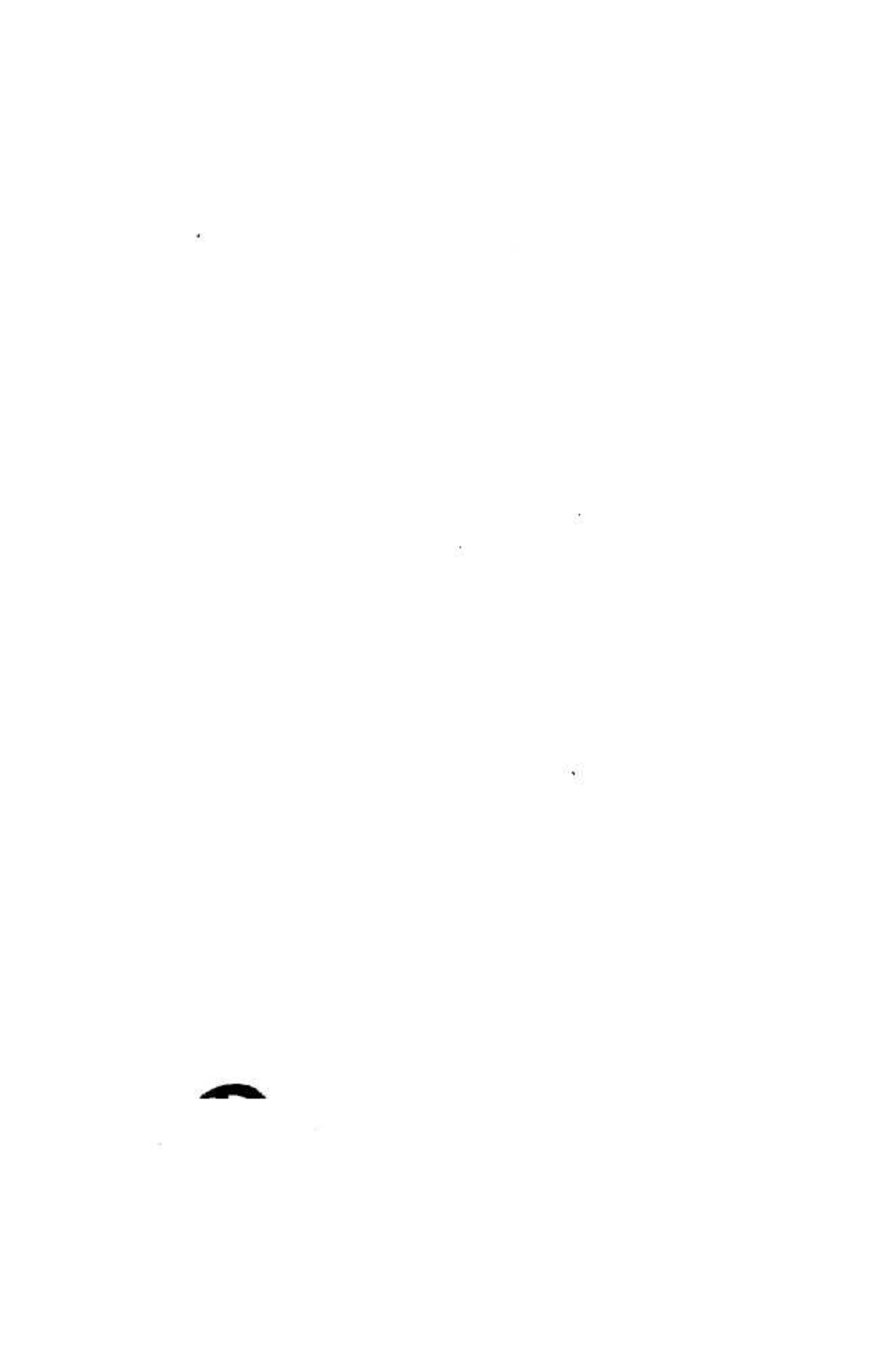
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INSCRIBED
TO
JAMES MUNN, ESQ.



INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE been asked to write a few words of introduction to this volume of verse, to stand as literary godfather to the first-born of an unknown Poet, but one who is deserving of being heard, even should the public mis-hear his singing and fail to grasp his message.

It is, I know, an unusual thing for one to pen an introduction to another's work, except the latter be dead, when "elucidations" and introductions are worked out in laudatory fashion. The best praise is reserved for poets or for other men after they have passed beyond human aid and encouragement. Living, the critics sting them as they did Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Poe. But the days of Quarterly Reviewing are past, and there are some critics, who boast of their profession, and yet can discover some good in the present-day poets. It is no unusual thing to read in the literary papers criticisms, and just, even laudatory, appreciations of minor verse of new poets. But by this I do not mean to assert that the carping critics are an extinct race, or that it is an easy matter for a Poet to gain a hearing for which he longs and works, and to which his ability justly entitles him.

It is still the fashion of the majority of well-educated people to sneer at Poetry, and especially at the Local Poet. Should some acquaintance with a faculty for stringing together rhymes, or phrases with a jingling alliteration, chance to write in an Album "a Sonnet," full of exaggerated praise of the supposed virtues of its owner, then it is possible that the contribution will be described as beautiful, exquisite, and "so very fine"—but alas! in how many cases does this sort of criticism and appreciation of poetry sum up the critic's knowledge of the subject. The owner of that Album—whom I need not state is a sup-

positious person created to represent a type—who absorbs rhyming flattery from his friend, will openly sneer at a lyrical poem and throw down a volume of verse, uttering caustic criticism of "fellows who write poetical nonsense." Anyone may sneer and criticise; it requires little ability or insight to do that even with the work of the greatest poets. To enjoy poetry and to be able to realise the imagery, catch the rhythmic cadence of the poet's language, and the sublimity of his thought, require in the reader the possession of the poetic faculty; and this poetic faculty—the ear to catch the poet's music, the eye to see the beauties of his imagery and the soul to receive his message—is in the possession of most men. The faculty lies dormant, it is true, but it is there nevertheless. Instead of poetry being popular, as it should be, it is neglected in the Schools, scorned in the drawing-rooms, and, where it is not completely disregarded, criticised and ridiculed.

Zoilus presented to Apollo a very caustic criticism upon a work of many admirable parts. The god asked what were the beauties of the book, whereupon Zoilus made answer that he only busied himself about the errors. Thereupon Apollo handed him back a big measure of unwinnowed wheat and bade him pick out all the chaff for his reward. I trust that the reader into whose hands this volume falls will not busy himself over-much with the errors, but will rather seek for the beauties of thought and the music of the language in which the author has cast his musings.

And here a word on the general subject of Poetry. I shall not stay to discuss why Poetry has so many detractors. That would require too many pages and make wearisome an introduction to a volume of pleasant verse. Yet it is strange, when we bear in mind the fact that every literature of every country begins in Poetry, that only a comparative few read poetry and find delight in the poetic. It is in the poetic form that we get the first recorded thoughts and musings of men. The thought and expression of a people find utterance in one man, and he in his efforts to record the spirit and the thought of his age frames his sentences in rhythmic measures. The earliest compositions in the English language are in metrical form, and deal with religious and