

which is now the Horning Post Office, and it was here that their eldest son Mordecai Cubitt Cooke was born in 1825.

At an early age he went to a local dame's school where he remained until 1834. From there he went to Ilford to continue his education under an uncle, the Rev. James Cubitt, a Baptist minister, who, being learned in classics and mathematics, afterwards became a tutor at the famous Spurgeon's College.

In 1838 young Cooke returned to Horning taking with him from his learned uncle a useful knowledge of ancient languages, algebra, and a love for observations and study of art and science. We then find him attending a local school at Neateshead.

In 1840 he was forced through circumstances to interest himself in the trade of a wholesale draper, to whom he was apprenticed, but this occupation proved heartily distasteful to a young fellow of his natural inclinations. In 1845 he again went back to London. Young Cooke was a romantic youth in character like certain heroes portrayed by Ibsen, mayhap likeliest of all to Peer Gynt—inexpressible, loving freedom and yearning for knowledge.

At the age of twenty-one he published a volume of verse (I am told of no particular merit) entitled *The Struggle of Freedom and other Poems*.

He interested himself greatly in poetry and literature generally and we find him lecturing and writing thereon; at that time, no doubt, augmenting by these means the meagre income which he earned in his capacity of copying clerk in a solicitor's office.

The next few years the young man spent in the search for some more congenial and permanent occupation. He made himself acquainted with the system of education of Pestalozzi, and for a brief period taught this method as a pupil teacher in an infant school, kept by an uncle and aunt of his, at Stockton-on-Tees.

He then was fortunate in securing an appointment as headmaster of the National Schools at Lambeth, where he remained during the years 1851-1860. He continued with fervour his botanical studies, gained a first class certificate in botany and founded the Society of Amateur Botanists. Here he became acquainted with Worthington G. Smith, another ardent lover of nature, and a botanist of no mean achievement. It is natural that this association led him to become more specially interested in the study of micro-fungi and fungous parasites. During this time he prepared a comprehensive account entitled *A Plain and Easy Account of British Fungi*, of which the fourth edition appeared in 1860.

No doubt, his famous little books for the young, small octavo shilling manuals by "Uncle Matt," evolved during this time too. Cooke loved children to his old age, and his simple language was certainly calculated