

MORDECAI CUBITT COOKE
(1825-1914)

H. T. GESSOW

WITH PORTRAIT, PLATE I

There is carved upon a certain tombstone in St. Mary's Islington Cemetery at East Finchley, England, the representation of a lowly and obscure plant. The image excites the curiosity of the visitor for it embodies a toadstool. Why, among all the beautiful and ornate members of the Vegetable Kingdom, should the choice fall on such an unattractive member?

Yet this little toadstool, linked with the name of the man resting beneath the tombstone, has a history, and with reverence the interested visitor will remember this. To us the toadstool is a *Coprinus*, or to be quite scientific, *Coprinus micaceus* of Fries and its clump will remind us of the little woodent which adorns the cover of the "Handbook of British Fungi" of which he, who lies beneath the tomb, was the author. Mordecai Cubitt Cooke, the veteran mycologist and pioneer of British Mycology.

Mordecai Cubitt Cooke's life affords several generations of botanists as well as the present, ample food for thought. His unique training, his phenomenal interest in the natural sciences, his zeal in imparting such interest to the young, his untiring pen and his retiring nature stand out prominently among the characteristics of this remarkable man.

He was born at Horning, Norfolk, England, on the 12th of July, 1825. His father Mordecai Cooke was a member of an old respected Norfolk family which in past times spelled their name Coke. Mordecai an old semitic name - was a traditional one, which had been in the family for many generations. Mordecai Cooke, senior, was in early manhood connected with the manufacture of bombazine, once a thriving local industry. He married Mary, daughter of William Cubitt, a schoolmaster of the neighboring village of Neateshead. On his marriage he opened a village store,