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The RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY (Registered Charity No. 1042838) was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887).

President	<i>Andrew Rossabi</i>
Hon. Secretary	<i>Jean Saunders</i> <i>The Old Mill</i> <i>Mill Drive</i> <i>Foulsham</i> <i>Norfolk NR20 5RB</i>

Website	http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org
Email	richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com

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The principal aim of *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal* is to present material by Jefferies that has not been published or reprinted, or that is difficult to obtain, together with articles about Jefferies (commissioned or submitted), items of research and discovery, synopses of talks and lectures, book reviews, information relating to places where Jefferies lived, and correspondence.

Submissions, preferably in electronic format, should be sent to the Honorary Secretary at the above address and should be no more than 3,500 words unless previously discussed with the Editors. MSS and correspondence for publication will be acknowledged but cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The Editors are Peter Robins and Jean Saunders.

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Swindon Grand Steeple Chase

Richard Jefferies

This unsigned article in the *Wilts & Glos. Standard* (8 March 1873) was suggested by Phyllis Treitel as a likely candidate for Jefferies as author. There is mention of familiar names, such as C.A. Wheeler and Andrew Baden, his future father-in-law at Day House Farm, as well as a recent trip to Brussels—all pointing to Jefferies as the author of the article.

Postponed on account of the fall of snow to the depth of several inches from the 25th of February, this exciting event took place yesterday (Friday). The Swindon Derby entirely owes its existence to the fertile brain of Mr. C.A. Wheeler, the unrecognised and unrewarded author of many of the improvements which have made Swindon the metropolis of Wiltshire. We believe that a casual remark dropped in conversation led Mr. Wheeler on from one idea to the other, till considering the importance of the site of Swindon—its strategic position, to use a military expression, with regard to the railways and roads, its large and ever-increasing population, and widespread notoriety, all these combined seemed to at once suggest and confirm the idea of making it famous in the sporting world for a grand annual steeple chase. In making his calculations, Mr. Wheeler did not leave out of sight the fact of the great racing establishments in the neighbourhood. The two Olivers had long made Wroughton renowned, and Mr. H. Ellison's name was perhaps as widely known in sporting circles as any in England. Farther off there was Mr. Merry's training stables at Russley, and the new establishment at Rockley. The splendid springy turf of the Marlborough Downs is acknowledged almost unrivalled as a nursery, both of speed and wind. The idea once started ran like wildfire from mouth to mouth, and popular opinion was so strongly in its favour that means were adopted for carrying it into execution, and a committee was formed, prominent among the members of which were A.L. Goddard, Esq. and Captain Goddard, who is understood to have taken great interest in the race. Mr. Wheeler now found that he was not entirely unopposed, receiving a letter from the Rev. H.G. Baily, the respected vicar of the parish, strongly dissuading him from the project. There was an ill-founded impression that this communication was on an interfering and arbitrary nature. We have seen the private correspondence, and can vouch for its being nothing of the kind. Mr. Baily, as the clergyman of the parish, simply drew Mr. Wheeler's attention to the cruelty which racing occasioned to horses; and to the immorality which

usually accompanied it. On these grounds, he asked if it was wise or politic to proceed in the project. The letter was addressed as much to the committee as Mr. Wheeler. The committee having taken the matter into consideration, decided that popular opinion was strongly in favour of the race, and therefore to carry their plans into execution. The matter had in fact passed out of Mr. Wheeler's hands—the *vox populi* had taken it up. Shortly after, Mr. Wheeler resigned from the committee, not wishing any official position, but he still continued in communications with it, and gave the advantage of his experience. He is understood to have been instrumental in obtaining the support of the Chairman of the Great Western Railway Company to the project. What followed is well known. Just as every preparation had been completed, a heavy fall of snow compelled the committee to postpone the race. So far had anticipation gone, that no less than sixteen [black] melodists actually arrived in the town to pick up the coppers. The day was fixed for yesterday, the 7th instant, two days before the Derby steeple chase. Mr. Wheeler made a plan of the course, which was the means of inducing many to support it with subscription and influence. The course is on a part of the Marsh Farm, New Swindon. The land is the property of A.L. Goddard, Esq., and with the exception of the thirty-acre field is in the occupation of Mr. Reynolds. It is all pasture, and in the form is a large triangle, of which the road from Swindon to Cricklade is the base, the railway one side, and the road to Stratton the other. It is perfectly level—level enough for a flat race, and with so little fall that the drains will scarcely run. Up to within a day or two the course was in parts a lake. The furrows in the field where the grand stand stood had been filled up with ashes to render it level, and these ashes still more choked up and dammed back the water. On Wednesday they were opened and the water drained off. Still the ground was saturated with wet—the turf very thin, cutting through under the heel of the boot with the soft marshy earth. The sward was sullen, no spring in it, and it was confidently prophesied that none but the most powerful horses could pull through the heavy stuff. Opposite the grand stand a furze fence was erected, and further on the right towards Stratton another. This fence was near an old pond, half dry, but still a nasty place, worse than it looked at first sight. Beyond this came a large double mound, but the first part of the mound was levelled, and a large gap made, reducing it to a stiff angle hedge, with another nasty broad ill-defined ditch. The great defect of the course was the necessity for so sharp a turn at the end instead of a gradual sweep. The grand stand (from Reading) stood in a great field, with some thirty acres, occupied by Mr. Allen, and near it was the entrance to the course. This entrance was exactly opposite to the hand-post where the Stratton road branches from the Cricklade, and within less than five minutes

walk from the station. The bridge over the canal here at Mr. Dunsford's wharf, commanded the most interesting part of the course. Opposite the grand stand was the weighing apparatus, &c. Mr. Shepherd, of the Goddard Arms Hotel, supplied the grand stand with refreshments, and the two tents were supplied by Mr. J. Daniels, Fountain Inn, the catering being provided by Mr. Crosse, of the well-known Temperance Hotel, Faringdon-street. The arrangements as to admitting carriages, &c., on the ground were of the usual character. The hospitable house of Mr. Brunsdon, of Gorse Hill, being close to the course, was the rendezvous of a large circle of his friends; and we understand that Mr. Dunsford gave a dinner to upwards of 50 guests. The police arrangements were perfect, and reflected great credit on the foresight of the force. Almost all the divisions in the county contributed a sergeant, and six constables, which with the Swindon contingent made a force of 50 men, commanded by Supt. North. Detectives were present from London, Birmingham, Bristol, &c., and the railway embankment which skirts one side of the course was guarded by thirty of the Great Western Company's police. There was a police tent: the whole being under the superintendence of Captain Sterne, chief constable of Wilts. Friday is the pay-day at the Factory, which is hardly half a mile distant, and in consequence some three to four thousand workmen were flush with money—the payment being made at noon. The whole of New Swindon emptied itself upon the course. Old racing men, who remember the days when a steeple chase over hedges and ditch straight to a steeple, made disparaging remarks upon the course as not being of a sufficiently breakneck character—the ground too level, too, and the ditches and hedges not stiff enough. There was something in this—the hedges and ditches are not so stiff as courses we have seen—not so stiff for instance as that detestable and deceitful brook at Dauntsey a little while ago—that trap which report says caused the noble Duke of Beaufort to execrate the stupidity of the contriver. But the modern idea of steeple chasing is much modified, and consists of a fair course with ordinary hunting fences—not fences to break a horse's back, or brooks whose banks give way, and defy the most skilful horsemanship—but fences which bring out all the qualities of a horse without so much cruelty. And in this fact itself is the best answer to the Rev. H.G. Baily's well-meant objection. The great recommendation of the course is the ease of access, by rail from all parts of the kingdom, by good roads right to the spot from all corners of the county. At the same time the steeple chase, if it is to be a steeple chase, ought not to approach any nearer to a flat race with hurdles. We remember seeing a race at the grand course in Brussels a short time ago, which they called a steeple chase. The ground was as level as a billiard-table, and hedges there were none. These were extemporized of trenches, they could not be called ditches,

dug about eighteen inches deep and as many wide. The mound not a foot high, and above this furze about another foot high—a schoolboy could have hopped over it. Notwithstanding this we saw one jockey carried off on men's shoulders for dead. Yet all the nobility gathered together to see this 'sport.' Old stagers looked back from yesterday to the days of the Day House Steeple chases, thirty years before, over about the stiffest bit of ground that could be selected. They drew immense crowds of people. the grand stand of that day was erected on the Plain near the Reservoir, and was put up by Mr. Frampton, the well-known builder, of Wood-street, Swindon. The course was up to Chiseldon and back, passing over the feeder of the reservoir. This feeder is a river of some seventeen or twenty feet, and proved a caution. Horse and man disappeared within it—the horse and his rider was thrown into the river—never was such a pound. The ground was low at the tripping side, and some bushes were planted at the edge to make the horse rise, but this was miscalculated, they rose indeed, but too far from the edge, and consequently came down right into the centre of the stream, many of the riders going completely out of sight, and one getting a dreadful kick from a hoof under his chin. For the gratification of the few remaining luminaries of the then sporting world, we append a copy of the race of that day—copied verbatim from perhaps the only existing card. There are a few words illegible, and especially the name of the second horse.

SWINDON GRAND STEEPLE CHASES.

To take place on Friday, March 22nd. 1844 (Dore's the only accredited list published under the sanction of the committee).

STEWARDS

Right Hon. Lord Gifford
John Calley

John James Calley
Ambrose L. Goddard

C.A. Wheeler, Hon. Secretary.

HURDLE RACE—Sweepstakes of twenty sovereigns each, ten forfeit, and only five if declared on or before the 29th February, with one hundred sovereigns added.

12 0 Mr. Oliver's Cheroot

12 0 Mr. King's Vanguard, *white sleeves and green cap* OLIVER

11 0 (name, &c., illegible)

11 2 Mr. Anderson's Carlow

11 0 Mr. Elmore's Lottery, *crimson jacket and black cap* MASON

10 10 Mr. Brotherton's Marengo

10 10 Mr. Anderson's King Cole, *pink jacket and black cap* POWELL

10 10 Mr. Tilbury's Caleb Quotem

10 10 Mr. Tilbury's Culverthorpe, *crimson white body and black cap* SCOTT

10 10 Mr. Vever's Charity, *dark blue body, light blue sleeves,
dark blue striped cap*

CRICKMERE

9 8 Mr. Killard's Chance, *white body, blue sleeves and blue cap*

BENBOW

SECOND RACE—To take place over the same land and country. A sweepstake of five sovereigns each, with twenty sovereigns added, for horses of all denominations, to carry 11 stone 7 lbs. each, the Winner of any hurdle or steeple chase match excepted, to carry 14 pounds in addition, the winner to be sold for £30 if demanded in the usual way.

Mr. Bakers's Old Glory, <i>crimson jacket and blue cap</i>	BAKER
Mr. Holtham's Monarch, <i>blue body, yellow sleeves and blue cap</i>	HOLTHAM
Mr. Jones Dick Turpin, <i>dark blue body, light blue sleeves, light blue striped cap</i>	CRICKMERE
Mr. Killard's Chance, <i>white body, blue sleeves and blue cap</i>	BENBOW
Mr. Baden's Locomotive, <i>black jacket and black cap</i>	A. BADEN

All disputes to be settled by the Committee or whom they may appoint.

Dore, Printer, Swindon.

The above card may be not without some interest compared with the card of yesterday's race appended below. There are names in it which will be widely recognised. Vanguard came in first and won In the second race Old Glory won. This horse had been ridden up from Malmesbury, seventeen miles, the same morning, by his owner, who rode 18 stone, a fact that ought not to be left out of sight by Admiral Rous in the motion to inquire into the degeneracy of the present race of horses. The then celebrated Running Jack, a man who obtained his living by fleetness of foot—running after the hounds to open the gates, &c., for gentlemen came over hedge and ditch from Swindon to see the race. The reservoir lay in his way, but out of bravado instead of going round he plunged in and swam across. Being very hot at the time, he caught a chill which led to his death. The card copied above was printed by Mr. Abbott Dore. The grand stand and most of the race was over Day House farm, and for this and other acts of courtesy a piece of plate was presented to Mr. Baden, as a testimonial from his many friends. These races occurred twice. At one of them a runaway horse, without a rider, knocked down a girl of eighteen, a Miss Bramble, and so severely injured her that she died afterwards from the effects. The old racecourse was under Barbury Hill, known as Burderop racecourse, and still remains in part. Yesterday's races are therefore not without precedent in Swindon.

FIELD NOTES

Thursday morning was so beautiful that expectations rose to the highest pitch, but early in the afternoon it grew over-cast, and a strong wind blew from the south-east. This continued all night, and Friday morning broke with a driving scud, and drizzling rain. There were those who said the course would go better when actually saturated and wet, because although the hoof would sink in still it would come out easily, but that thin turf, half dry, would yield equally easy to the pressure, but would hold the hoof like a vice

when lifted again. It is a piece of ground much like Braydon country, in point of fact where the joke is that the groom can never get the clay off till the hair drops. As the morning advanced the wind veered round westward to a stiff gale, but the rain ceased except at intervals. The roads were crowded with hundreds on foot marching in from villages. At one the day cleared and became beautifully fine.

The following is a necessarily brief record of the running.

THE GREAT WESTERN STEEPLE CHASE HANDICAP PLATE of 50 sovs.; Entrance, 2 sovs.: any winner after the publication of the weights, 7lbs. extra; about two miles and a half.

Mr. Shepherd na. Mr. Ellison's Barcelona	(Ellison)	1
Mr. Rutledge's Oakley	(Sadler)	0
Mr T. Stevens's Bismark	(Daniels)	0
Mr. Harborough's Cordon Bleu	(Crouch)	0

No second or third. Slow and heavy.

THE INNKEEPERS' SELLING HANDICAP PLATE of 40 sovs.; entrance, 2 sovs.; the winner to be sold for £100; if declared at scales to be sold for £50, allowed 7lbs.; any surplus divided; about two miles.

Captain Turner's Ellen	(Captain Turner)	1
Mr. Dundas's Chance	(Johnson)	2
Mr. Stanlake's Steeple Lass	(Reynolds)	0
Mr. Holland's Lady	(Holland)	0
Mr. Ellison's Charming Nell	(Ellison)	0
Mr. Deacon's On or About	(Comber)	0
Mr. Hopkinson's Beatrice	(Lavington)	0

Winner bought in for 77 guineas.

THE SWINDON OPEN HANDICAP PLATE of 10 sovs.; 3 ft.; with 100 sovs. added; second horse to save his stake; winners after the publication of the weights, of 50 sovs., 5lbs.; of 100 sovs., 10 lbs. extra; about three miles.

Mr. Ellison's Rattlesnake	(Ellison)	1
Mr. Cookson's Lady Day	(S. Reed)	2
Mr. Ellison's Huntsman	(Crouch)	0

This was the race of the day, at least as far as horse flesh is concerned. Betting hard against Lady Day. Much admiration of Mr. Ellington's two horses. At start Rattlesnake ahead. Second fence, Lady Day second. Third fence, Lady Day still second. Huntsman laying behind. Betting, 5 to 4 against Rattlesnake. First course, Lady Day turned sharpest and kept close up—her right shoulder bleeding. All still close. Splendid jumping—Rattlesnake

clearing like a bird. Huntsman drew up by the rail, but fell back again. Lady Day closes up, Rattlesnake still leading. Immense excitement and cheering. Reed lashes Lady Day, Ellison looks behind with bare head—cap gone—smiles, and comes in first by a length.

THE V.W.H. [illegible] SELLING STAKES of 5 sovs. each; 1 ft.; with 25 sovs. added; the winner to be sold at auction for £100; if for £60. allowed 7 lbs.; if for £40, 14 lbs.; and any surplus divided; 4 years, 11st.; 5 years, 12st. lbs.; 6 years and aged, 13st., 1 lb; about 2 miles. 9 entries.

Mr Ellison's Satanstone 1

THE FARMER'S HUNT RACE of 30 sovs.; with 10 sovs. for second horse, entrance, 1 sov.; for horses that have never paid race-horse duty, and have never won a steeple chase of the value of 20 sovs., *bona fide* the property of farmers and tradesmen that have regularly hunted with either the V.W.H., Duke of Beaufort's, O.B.H., or Craven Hunts, and that have been in the possession previous to December 1st. 1872: 4 years. 10st. 7lbs.; 5 years, 11st. 12lbs.; 6 and aged, 12st. 7lbs.; to be ridden by farmers, tradesmen, or their sons, residing within the limits of the above hunts, who have never ridden for hire: about three miles. 8 entries.

Mt. T. Arkell's Medbourne.

THE UNITED HUNT STAKES of 5 sovs., each; 2 ft.; with 25 sovs. added, for horses *bona fide* the property of members of the V.W.H., Duke of Beaufort's, O.B.H., or Craven Hunts, that have been regularly hunted with one of these packs during the season 1872-3, that have been in their possession previous to Dec. 1st, 1872, and have not been charged race-horse duty during the preceding twelve calendar months; 4 years, 10st. 7lbs.; 5 years, 11st. 12lbs.; 6 years and aged, 12st. 7lbs.; Winners of any steeple chase, 7lbs. extra; of 50 sovs., 14lbs.; and of 100 sovs., 21lbs.; gentlemen riders, about three miles. 3 entries.

Captain Turner's Hussar

Mr. Marcus Verrall was handicapper, clerk of the scales, and judge; Captain Goddard officiated as starter; Messrs. Deacon and Liddiard were clerks of the course.

Extracts from Jefferies' Manuscripts

Samuel J. Looker

The following extract was published in *The Bryanston Miscellany* (Bryanston School, 1958) in an article written by Samuel J. Looker on pp.79–88. The Editor of the book was Victor Bonham-Carter. Looker opens his article with a brief biography of Richard Jefferies and then lists some of the manuscript material that 'may be of interest to enumerate the more important pieces' followed by three brief extracts. Looker points out that the 'last quotation ... is from "The Squire at Home"... largely unfinished by his death, only some ten chapters were written, out of twenty planned.' Jefferies took a few passages from this manuscript and incorporated them in the essay "An English Deer Park", first printed in the *Century Illustrated Magazine* in 1888 (Looker quotes 1887 as the date incorrectly), with some delightful pictures by Alfred Parsons and Bryan Hook (Looker names the artist incorrectly as J.W. North) and collected in *Field and Hedgerow*. Looker ends by writing: 'It is tragic to think that illness and misfortune prevented Jefferies from carrying out the many schemes he had designed and partly mapped. None the less, in spite of much that has been edited since his death, there yet remains good work writing to be transcribed. The short extracts quoted here are merely a foretaste.'

About one-third of the contents of his diaries and nature note-books; his sketch book containing many pencil drawings of great charm; a hundred pages of a first draft of *Bevis* with many differences from the printed version; one hundred and thirty pages headed 'The Squire at Home'; one hundred pages and some notes on Shooting (the only portion of a book suggested by Longman and to be illustrated by Charles Whympster); three long unfinished poems; a series of letters to his aunt, Mrs Harrild; a large collection of letters from his publishers—Smith Elder, Longman and C.P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*; a large number of other letters to and from Jefferies; an untitled fictional sketch on Beatrice and the Centaur; many pages of notes evidently intended for a revised edition of *The Story of My Heart*; an essay 'A Dream by Landseer's Lions', which has some variations from 'Lions in Trafalgar Square'; a conspectus of a proposed book 'The Heart of England'—a picture of the men and women living on the land—which is a full synopsis of *Hodge and His Masters*; a conspectus of a new magazine; *The Amateur Poacher*, an early draft with many variations; a memo book containing an 'Essay on Instinct', fifty-four pages, dated 1866; part of an early draft of *Greene Ferne Farm*; several chapters of another early novel, no title; 'A Game for Bicyclists', twenty pages (a kind of bicycle polo invented and described);

part of an earlier version of *After London*; a quantity of unclassified notes and comments and short drafts.

The surviving portion of the first draft of *Bevis* has some interesting features. In its complete state it must have run to over one thousand pages of written manuscript. Collation with the printed book shows many and wide variations. Moreover, some pages seem an early sketch for portions of *Amaryllis at the Fair*, especially where the family dinner is described at length. So the manuscript proved a quarry for both books. Jefferies' son Harold told me that so engrained had become the habit of silence at meals, that he himself had brought up his sons in the same tradition.

The extracts given below are now printed for the first time. The titles are mine.

DINNER AT THE FARM

Bevis and Mark came through the orchard: there was one red apple still on a leafless bough. Indoors the cloth was laid. Frances looked in to see it was all exact not knowing Bevis was there, with one little plump arm bare to the elbow and misted with flour which looked dingy on her delicate skin.

'Look,' said Mark, pointing under the arm-chair, 'another pair.' It was a pair of new boots far too small and shapely, neat and polished for an agriculturalist. Mark senior was always buying boots and yet never could get a pair to fit him. Mark once in a fit of temerity fetched them altogether out of dark corners and cupboards, and put them in double file where they reached from the door of the sitting room along the passage out into the courtyard and as far as the door of the old house; in all fifty-two boots, twenty-six pairs. By the mantelpiece the wall was coated with varnished oak, like wainscot except that it did not extend round the room, and just above the armchair was a spot where by the constant friction of the old man's head the varnish or polish had worn away.

At dinner no one dared speak and must not clatter the knives too loudly: if anyone dropped a fork the Master grunted in high displeasure. Rigid silence was the order of the hour: why could not someone invent noiseless plates? Plates without the glaze so as not to scrape and clatter and jar on you? A noiseless coal scuttle was even more desirable to avoid the terrible clatter of putting a shovel of coals on the fire. If anyone chanced to extend his foot and accidentally touched the Master's—that was something dreadful. While they dined, Pan (the spaniel), who happened to be shut out, stood up on his hind legs with his forepaws on the sill gazing in with reproachful eyes. The moment the dinner was over the cloth was dragged off and the things huddled out and everyone was expected to immediately leave

that room, nor dared you turn the handle to glance in at a clock. So soon as the crowd had gone the Master seated himself in his arm-chair, got his head comfortable against the wainscot and drowsed away the most of the afternoon. So he did about half-past ten or eleven every evening and often stayed there till the light of the morning shone through the chinks in the shutter, sitting so intensely still that a mouse occasionally ran up his leg and took the crumbs from his knee. This attachment for his armchair and that particular spot was the standing miracle of the house. Mark never lost his wonder at it. Such a head too to stultify in slumber, day by day, week by week, year's end to year's end. A big capacious head, rather bald, a good deal like the engravings of Shakespeare's, a style of head that must perforce have something in it, thoughts that flew high like the redwings of October, high-flying thrushes with a speck of blood under each wing.

(p.85. Extract of MS of first draft of *Bevis*)

UNTUTORED LOVE

All the reapers knew she loved him; all those in the fields saw it as plainly as they saw the high Downs. Her eyes told it, large, black like a black cherry with a stain of red in them. Black cherries—the most luscious of cherries are banished because they stain the lips. But they were very beautiful eyes, loving and untaught: loving, as a dog loves his master without restraint. And her lips were scarlet and her dress at the throat always came unfastened one or two hooks of itself, revealing the line to which the sun had burned her, brown above, white and soft beneath. The fullness of her beauty filled her dress, a common print, torn with thorns, with burrs adhering, but her own contour filled it.

How should she know any better? Her mother she had never seen: her father was a drunkard, and a thief: her grandmother was not intentionally unkind, but harsh, making no allowances for youth. She slept on her bed which, instead of feathers, was filled with oat chaff. She ran wild gathering 'Granfer Godlings', the orchis with spotted leaves in spring. She hewed wood and drew water in winter with 'daglets', icicles on her apron, or 'sobbled', soaked in rain. She scarcely saw her father except when he 'foddered' his boots before he went out, filling them with hay as he wore no stockings. The only thing he taught her was how to make a fagging hook, the curved stick used in reaping, by boiling the stick in the pot, then bending it into shape while pliant and tying it so that it hardened as required for use. These poor are as pansheres, as broken earthenware cast forth into waste places. How should she know any better?

THE WINDOW-SEAT IN THE GUN ROOM

The Squire's favourite resort when at home was the window-seat in the gun room. From this window he could see a section of the highway whose crooked course could not be over-looked in any other part of the house. Those who have lived in lonely country places know how, as the years roll slowly on, the highway gradually becomes of the first importance, being the link along which the mind travels to the outer world. This road, following the outline of the park as scrupulously as if it were a frontier, just there curved sharply inwards and then as sharply outwards forming a salient angle whose extreme point approached within half a mile of the residence. It was bounded the whole way on the park side by a dry stone wall, against which hawthorn bushes had grown at intervals, and being left untrimmed and untouched so many years their stems were almost timber. Round these again ivy had risen, and increased in thickness till at a distance they resembled green bastions flanking the curtain. The waggoners who came by noted that these bushes were much beloved by wood pigeons and thrushes for the fruit upon them; haws in autumn and ivy berries in spring.

Just where the Squire's line of sight from the gun room window struck it, the highway declined into a hollow across which ran a streamlet issuing from the park. At this declivity the road faced the house, so that the Squire reclining in the window-seat could see everyone who passed. If they came from Latten (the market town) they were obliged to draw rein and descend the slope at a walk because, though it was not steep, the bridge over the streamlet at the bottom was narrow, and a swerve would cause a collision with the railings. If they came the other way the horses walked up the hill: thus the slow pace at which they travelled gave time for observing them. The carts and vans which traverse the street before a suburban villa interest no one, the names upon them are no more than the advertisements in the papers. But in the country where people have dwelt for hundreds of years, generation after generation in one spot, there is not a waggon that can go by that has not a history. One perhaps brings down a load of wool from the Downs: it is from old Mr Hobbs' farm who for forty years has been proud of his clip. Another has a burden of wheat: it is Lambourne's team, he lost £500 in 1879 through the wet. Every man of any substance throughout the countryside is as well known and all his family affairs, as if they were written in a chronicle.

Would Richard Jefferies have made a more successful art critic than an expert on rural life?

Phyllis Treitel

Transcript of a talk presented to the Richard Jefferies Society Study Day held at Swindon Art Centre on 27 July 2002. It is No. 145 in the 'Talks and Articles' series.

Well, of course the answer is 'No' but the fact that it can be asked at all is worth examining, and I will approach it from four angles:

1. Were there any formal hindrances to Jefferies becoming an art critic? The answer will be 'No'.
2. Did he show any signs of wanting to be an art critic? The answer will be 'Yes, some.'
3. Did he in fact write any art criticism? 'Yes'.
4. Could he have made a living as an art critic? 'No'.

1. How did someone become an art critic in 19th century England?

Unlike in France or Germany, no special qualifications were required to be an art critic in England. You did not need to have an art training, or a degree in aesthetics. All kinds of people became art critics and I will mention the careers of just three by way of examples.

Oscar Wilde(1854–1900)

I start with Oscar Wilde because he is such an unlikely example and everyone will have heard of him. He was only 23 when in 1877 he went to the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery and then reviewed it for the *Dublin University Magazine*. In 1879 he reviewed the Grosvenor Gallery again, this time for *Saunders Irish Daily News*. Yet he had had no training, either as a journalist or as an art critic. He went on to become the spokesman for the Aesthetic Movement.

Henry James (1843–1916)

Henry James is best known as a novelist but, in his early years as a writer, he was a serious art critic. Many of his articles on art are published in a book titled *The Artist's Eye*. He began, aged 25, in 1868, with a review of a book about French painting; in 1873 he reviewed 'The Wallace Collection'; and in 1877 he published an article titled 'The Picture Season in London'. Most of his articles were published in America, yet they were so good that, it is claimed, John Ruskin wished Henry James to succeed him as Slade Professor at Oxford. Yet

James, though he had lived in France and Italy and spent much time in museums (he had rich parents), had had no training in art criticism.

Joseph Comyns Carr (1849-1916)

Comyns Carr is the third example of someone who was a contemporary of Jefferies, who had no art training, but who became an art critic. He differs from the previous two men in that he became a leading figure in the English art world and, important for us, he was a good friend to Jefferies. As a young man he had read for the Bar. Like many other young men waiting for briefs, he turned his hand to journalism and soon specialised in writing about art. He became the top art critic for C.P. Scott's *Manchester Guardian*, a Director of the Grosvenor Gallery, and co-founder in 1888 of The New Gallery. More important for Jefferies, in 1883 Macmillans invited him to be the editor of their new magazine—*The English Illustrated Magazine*. For this publication he commissioned Jefferies to write an article about Somerset, and sent him there to meet J.W. North, whom he had asked to do the illustrations.

Like Henry James, Carr was a conservative in art matters, but he did a great deal towards bringing art to those who had no access to London.

I have selected these three men, who were very much of an age with Jefferies, to show that they had no art qualifications: it was then (and is now) an open profession. In theory Jefferies could have done the same.

2. Did Jefferies show any signs of wanting to be an art critic?

The year 1876 was pivotal for Jefferies. He had no job. He had a wife and baby to support. He had not discovered a way of making a good living. As far as we know he spent much of 1876 in London, leaving Jessie in Swindon with the baby. We only know this from the 1876 notebook which is mainly in shorthand. We know that he published an article in *World* in 1876 which was to do with exhibitions: 'Sipping the Season' on 7 June. In it he tells us that he was attending the Royal Academy Exhibition (which was being held where it is now, in Burlington House) but taking more notice of the young women than of the paintings.

His notebook entry says (and I take this from the transcription provided by John Pearson in his thesis) (504): 'Sipping the Season? Royal Academy levee, the first thing is to get rid of the idea of time—not to have to go to the Academy at any particular hour.' A little later (505) he writes 'Dress and manners—Royal Academy in the carriage—how unnatural the pictures are. These are far more interesting. There are no pictures one would care to live with—you cannot imagine yourself walking to the Royal Academy with any of these pictured ladies accompanying you.'

In May 1878 (we do not have the notebook for 1877) Jefferies is again at the Royal Academy and comments, on 8 May, on the weakness of the hunting pictures: 'Hounds no individuality. Horses in action legs wrongly foreshortened.' And he makes a note to see *The Times* article on the Academy show on 11 May. On 12 June 1878 his article 'The Nude in London' appears in *World*. In it, he is not content to complain about the 'lanky long-drawn narrowness of form to the draped figures of recent compositions', but also assesses what might be called the poor-man's academy, namely the print shops with their depictions of half-dressed females, or with illustrations from French newspapers, and shops with carte de visite photographs of scantily dressed ballet girls. These appeal to the common man. He is, in this article, begging, in fact, for better nudes. Alas, women in northern climes seldom sit around with nothing on so it is difficult to introduce realism into such art. Jefferies would be just as ready to criticise today's editor of *The Sun*. But it is clear from the article that he spent time looking at art of all kinds, and thinking about its relevance.

It is no surprise that Jefferies took a journalistic interest in art by which we mean mainly painting as it was a hot topic for the whole of his short life. John Ruskin had established himself as the leading art critic, and we know that Jefferies read his work. The Pre-Raphaelites with their attention to detail and vivid colours had become much sought-after. The Aesthetic Movement coincided with Jefferies' writing career and must have influenced him, even if he was unaware of it. Its members took as their motifs the sunflower and the lily, and Oscar Wilde almost parodied it, but in essence it chimed with Jefferies' own concerns: 'It embraced not only High Art but also decorative arts and popular culture ... it was not about a single style of painting or design but about attitudes, individual aesthetic tastes, and lifestyles.' Walter Pater had decreed that life should be experienced to the full without too many religious or moral implications, or restraints, that beauty itself is a religion, and that 'to burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy is success in life.' This might have been written specifically for Jefferies though we have no evidence of his having ever even heard of Pater.

Again, although Jefferies never gives any hint of having heard of William Morris (of Kelmscott, not the William Morris of Swindon whom he knew well) he was probably influenced by him too. Morris's work has lasted so well that it is hard to realise that he was 14 years old when Jefferies was born, and was studying at Oxford when Jefferies was 5. When he was 21, William Morris came into his own money—£900 per year—and was able to give his whole attention to designing and making beautiful furnishings. He also wrote a great deal of poetry for which, in his lifetime, he was better known than for his designs.

At the time I am considering, i.e. 1876 and 1877, Jefferies was reading all the papers, desperately looking for topics to sell to editors. In the 1876

notebook—probably for a date in June—he writes: ‘Art.—destruction of cathedrals—visit them and describe the injury to restoration.’ And then, either on or for the First of June, he writes: ‘Academy—write account of it by end: skeleton everything local ...’ Now the item about church restoration is interesting because in March 1877 Morris wrote a fierce letter to *The Athenaeum*, protesting about the damage being done by so-called restorers, and setting up the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. One would imagine therefore that Jefferies had picked up something in the papers before Morris’s letter. And he might well have noticed a letter by Morris to the *Daily News* on 26 October 1876, protesting about the conduct of the Turks. It seems to me that in these two years when Jefferies was avid to get his foot on the journalistic ladder he was highly likely to have noticed what Morris was achieving.

3. Did Jefferies write art criticism?

Here, the answer is a definite ‘yes’, and we can examine what he achieved. His writing under this heading can be divided into articles which set out to be art criticism and those which seem to have been less deliberately so. ‘The Nude in London’ which appeared in 1878 and which was published in the Society’s *Journal* in 1894, has already been mentioned. The next example was published in two parts in 1881 and 1882 in *The Magazine of Art*. In *The Life of the Fields* the two parts are put together and titled ‘Notes on Landscape Painting’ but originally the two parts were respectively ‘The Beauty of the Fields’ and ‘New Facts in Landscape’. Neither of these titles would suggest that the articles were about art but they were published in an art magazine and so one looks for art criticism there. There is hardly any. After a long discussion of what is new in the country—much of which is pleasing to Jefferies—Jefferies devotes his last paragraph to an appeal to painters to paint what is there now, not scenes that are 50 years old. Did he have in mind the sentimental cottage scenes by Helen Allingham (1848–1926) which she admitted she deliberately altered to make them look older? Her watercolours are now highly sought after but in Jefferies’ time she was doing engravings for just the papers that Jefferies wrote for such as *Cassell’s Magazine* and *London Society*, so he may have known of her. And she married his old friend William Allingham, at one time editor of *Fraser’s Magazine*.

His next ‘art’ essay was ‘Field Sports in Art—the Mammoth Hunter’ for *Art Journal* in 1885. Again, an odd title, but this time Jefferies has been thinking deeply and seriously about the earliest origins of art: why men feel the urge to draw or paint at all. He has seen a prehistoric tusk with the image of a mammoth engraved on it, and he wonders why early man was moved to make this image. He wonders if drawing preceded speech (an interesting idea); he

suggests that primitive people are more impressed with their dreams than modern people, so accustomed to ceaseless literature, and he notes that when the stars were given names, it was the names of animals that were chosen, such as Great Bear. The essay ends rather tamely, but here in this essay, Jefferies is occupied with the very fundamentals of art.

The last 'art' essay that must be mentioned is 'Nature in the Louvre', published in the same magazine as the two essays which make up 'New Facts in Landscape'. 'Nature in the Louvre' was published in 1887, very shortly before Jefferies' death, but it had been offered to Longman in early 1884 and to C.P. Scott in 1885. Neither of them wanted it, and when he put the MS in a collection for Chatto and Windus—*The Open Air*—they suggested he leave it out, which he did. One can see why editors were shy of it: Jefferies uses the word 'bosom' once, breast nine times, thigh three times, plus blood, loins, pelvis, and bust. It is art criticism in great detail, but, in the latter part of what is a long essay, Jefferies analyses man's need for beauty—more important even than moral goodness. The discoveries set out in *The Story of My Heart* are here too: 'the green leaves repeat the beauty that gladdened man in ancient days. But for themselves they are, and not for us ... we know that for man there is nothing on earth really but man; the human species owns and possesses nothing but its species.'

This is art criticism, but it is not the sort of work that newspaper editors were buying from Henry James and Joseph Comyns Carr. I do not think Jefferies would have been content, for long, to write the kind of article editors did want.

All the same, the question 'could he have been an art critic?' has to be asked because he wrote the essays I have listed, and, to round off this cursory assessment, there are several other references in Jefferies' work which together make it clear that his mind dwelled constantly on the subject of art, even when he was ostensibly writing about something totally different. For instance there is 'Nature and Books' which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* as late as May 1887, where Jefferies begins with the dandelion and then proceeds in great detail to report the inadequacy of words to define its colour, and suggests a new colour-language to help define dandelion yellow, or different shades of green. Of course, a painter does not need such an aid, but he who uses words, does. Jefferies is not a painter but he sees, and feels as a painter.

If we look in *The Dewy Morn* we find Jefferies reacting to attempts to bring art to the people, and in chapter 47 he ridicules, with his usual generous dose of indignation, a proposed Society for the Encouragement of Art Culture in the Homes of the Poor. 'For the enjoyment of art', he states, 'it is first of all necessary to have a full belly.' And he wonders whether pictures on the wall teach a man anything about art. He is probably thinking of the Kyrle Society, begun in 1880, which aimed to distribute art more widely. He is probably right

in thinking that house-life itself can be something like true art, yet it was a widespread practice for poor-people in his day to paper their walls with pictures cut out of magazines and newspapers—they liked pictures.

Again, in ‘Sunny Brighton’ he lectures the reader about colour: ‘As a race we do not seem to care much for colour or art—I mean in the common things of daily life ... much more colour might be put in the windows, brighter flowers and curtains ...’ Echoes of William Morris here, I feel.

To finish, I go to ‘Walks in the Wheatfields’ published in the *English Illustrated Magazine* (edited by Comyns Carr) very late—July and August 1887. The original MS is written in Jessie’s handwriting, Jefferies himself writing only the title and signature. Parts of it are bitter, and painful to read, but not all; in this essay, looking back over his life, as he was forced to do, he writes as if he were a painter, and thus qualifies as a critic:

If I were a painter, I should like to paint all this; I should like to paint a great steam-ploughing engine and its vast wheels, with its sweep of smoke, sometimes drifting low over the fallow, sometimes rising into the air in regular shape, like the pine tree of Pliny over Pompeii’s volcano.

And, complaining that modern pictures do not show modern machines, he goes on:

Turner painted the railway train and made it at once ideal, poetical, and classical. His ‘Rain, Steam, and Speed’, which displays a modern subject, is a most wonderful picture. If a man chooses his hour rightly, the steam plough under certain atmospheric conditions would give him as good a subject as a Great Western train. He who has got the sense of beauty in his eye can find it in things as they really are, and needs no stagey time of artificial pastorals to furnish him with a sham nature. Idealise to the full, but idealise the real, else the picture is a sham.

Jefferies both saw as an artist, and as a critic of what artists did. He was dissatisfied with most of the pictures of his day, and yet he could write at length in ‘Field Sports in Art’ in 1885 about Briton Riviere’s ‘The Poacher’—a painting that would now be dismissed as sentimental. And art is discussed again in ‘Outside London’ (1885). He states: ‘The lover of nature has the highest art in his soul’ and goes on to suggest that the English love of dogs and horses makes up for any lack of salon art. I say this not to draw attention to Jefferies’ notorious inconsistencies, but just to show that throughout his life he felt obliged, and equipped, to comment on individual pictures, and the aesthetic life of the nation in general. I think his views of art and aesthetics are interesting, sometimes novel, but his real powers are elsewhere. Art criticism was only a sideline.

Richard Jefferies

Maurice-Pierre Boyé

In August 1946, the newly-established Central Office of Information published the first issue of a cultural magazine in the French language titled *Écho*. The monthly was distributed in Belgium and France until 1951 as part of a counter-offensive to combat Communist propaganda, then engaged in a global and damaging campaign to undermine post-war Western power and influence. Among the activities in which it engaged, it commissioned special articles and circulated books and journals to appropriate posts abroad.

This first number of *Écho* consisted of twenty articles from the pages of the *New Yorker*, *The Economist*, *The Listener*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Manchester Guardian* and others as well as an article on London architecture by George Orwell. Maurice-Pierre Boyé contributed an essay on Richard Jefferies (our translation below), that contained several factual errors, followed by an extract from *After London*. Later issues included articles by various authors on Eric Ravilious, Mervyn Peake, Julian Huxley and John Steinbeck.

Maurice-Pierre Boyé (1899–1968) was a French poet and author of critical studies of French painters as well as historical studies of picturesque parts of France. His book *La mêlée romantique* was published in 1946.

We do not enjoy in France, in our rustic literature or among our writers of nature, the equivalent of Richard Jefferies, whose fellow-countrymen have designated, on his gravestone, as the greatest prose poet of the English fields and woods. Certainly talented authors have celebrated the countryside and the peasant, and Marcel Arland was able, on this noble theme, to compose a whole anthology which extends from Froissart to Emile Guillaumin. I think, for my part, of pages unjustly forgotten, such as Theuriet's *Sous bois*, *Paysages* of the excellent Emile Pouillon and the admirable *Jardins sauvages* by Henri Pourrat.

But Richard Jefferies is something else. He has, in a remarkable and solid style, developed a sensitivity and a psychology that are perfectly personal and gave him a truly unique originality. One could apply to it the quality that George Sampson granted to the mystical poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, his contemporary: he has the pen of a poet, the eyes of a painter and the ears of a musician. In this way, no subtlety could escape him, and he caught the most imperceptible movements of creatures and plants.

The son of a farmer, Richard Jefferies was born in Wiltshire, at Swindon, in 1848. It seems that nothing was more pleasing to this child than freedom, wandering through meadows and forests, that he studied openly like precious

textbooks. With youth came a taste for adventure and with a companion set off for Moscow! The two travellers confined themselves to wandering in France for a year.¹ We would like to have had some details on this fanciful expedition, this zigzag trip, like Töpffer, and to know the cities where the young people stopped and enjoyed themselves more.

Richard certainly enjoyed our landscapes. But the money was diminishing, soon their pockets would be empty. It was necessary to think of making a fortune and only America offered chances for this dream. The travellers return to England and make for Liverpool where they will embark for America but found their tickets did not cover food and bedding and reluctantly they turned for home.

He came back, enriched with a lot of knowledge. He came back especially with undeniable talent as a writer, who asked only to be born and to blossom. Richard contributed to local newspapers: these were his beginnings in a difficult trade where, quickly, he progressed.

He met William Morris along the way. No one could better encourage and direct him than this astonishing man, a painter, an architect, a decorator, an aesthete, a poet, a socialist, and what else? A man of the Renaissance! With such a company, all horizons opened before young Richard. Is it Morris who opened the doors of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, where *The Gamekeeper at Home* was to appear? Without a doubt.²

Jefferies' travels in France made him alert to the misfortunes of France and when the young imperial prince comes to Hastings to take refuge, Jefferies sends him a piece of verse. Richard was twenty-two then, and made himself known by a letter to *The Times* about the workers in his county. But he thinks he is a novelist and is devoted to fiction. He did not stop, moreover, during his life, to write novels.

Richard married in 1874, the year he published his first novel: *The Scarlet Shawl*, soon followed by a second, *The Dewy Morn*.³ In 1877, the Jefferies household moved to London. The following year, Richard published *The Gamekeeper at Home* which succeeded in establishing his reputation. The inspired writer revealed himself as the singer of the earth, the great prose poet of fields and woods. He continues to compose novels to live, but as soon as he has the leisure he writes articles to the glory of the earth. These he submits to the *Graphic*, the *Standard*, the *Magazine of Art*, the *National Review*, the

¹ Ed: Besant's account is a week at most.

² Ed: Boyé wrongly identified William Morris, who was founder editor of the *Swindon Advertiser*, as the socialist designer and novelist of the same name. Inadvertently he implied the polymath influenced Jefferies' reputation.

³ Ed: *Restless Human Hearts* was Jefferies second published novel. *The Dewy Morn* was not published until 1884.

Manchester Guardian etc. Then he combines these fragments in volumes and this is how so many delightful, truly unique books appeared: his masterpieces: *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *The Open Air*, *Wood Magic*, and *The Life of the Fields*.

This lover of nature, with his genius of the earth, was compared to Shelley for the intensity of passion and eloquence of expression. He had had a predecessor, if not a master, in this way, in the person of Henri-David Thoreau, a writer of French origin, whose *Walden* had certainly influenced him. But Jefferies' art is more personal and more profound. The naturalist in him seems to observe everything with a microscope, but the poet, better still, distils and illuminates. Colour, he said, was like food to him. From his attachment to the soil, he made himself a kind of religion. For Thoreau, nature was a quiet, serious friend, always graceful; for Jefferies, being feverish, excitable and passionate, she was an exhilarating mistress. He loved whole hours, sitting under a tree to spy on what he so happily called the parade of the summer. He did not feel like wasting his time, on the contrary. 'These are the only hours that are not wasted,' he writes in *The Life of the Fields*, 'these hours absorb the soul and fill it with beauty. This is real life, and all else is illusion, or mere endurance'. Jefferies devotes his life to the outdoors, to the spectacles of the fields, the hills, the night and the sky. He will compose 'Meadow Thoughts' as later Francis Jammes the *Pensées des jardins*, but he will not have that somewhat precious tone of *Clara d'Ellébeuse*. He observes everything: 'The thin, chalky soil of Sussex is singularly favourable to poppies and charlock—the one scarlet, the other a sharp yellow; they cover acres.' Jefferies observes again, 'Green rushes, long and thick, standing up at the edge of the ditch, told the hour of the year as distinctly as the shadow on the dial indicates the hour of the day.' After a walk in the woods in January, he writes: 'The lost leaves are measuring our years; they are gone as the days are gone, and the bare branches silently speak of a new year, slowly advancing to its buds, foliage, and fruit.'

London life could not satisfy this religious nature. He returned to live in native Wiltshire.⁴ But he had to give it up soon for Sussex. After short stays in Brighton and Crowborough, he will choose a modest village near the sea and settle with his children in a large house in Goring. The wooded hills, the downs, limit the vast horizon. He will then devote a few pages 'To Brighton', 'Village Miners' and to a certain 'Clematis-Lane'.

Alas! While his talent is recognized, that his writer's talents are deployed in their richest and most expressive maturity, here is the disease that comes to assail him in 1881 and will not let go. He will undergo several cruel operations. Soon he will not be able to use his hands. His last books, among his finest, he

⁴ Ed: Jefferies did not return to his home county after leaving it in 1877.

will dictate to his wife. *Wood Magic* is from 1881. A year later, he gives the delicious *Bevis*, the novel of his childhood. There is a dialogue between the child and the wind, considered as the masterpiece of English poetic prose.



Écho, No. 1, August 1946

Introduction to Jefferies'

Wild Life in a Southern County

(Bradford-on-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1978), by Desmond Hawkins.

This edition reproduced the C.F. Tunnicliffe engravings.

Desmond Hawkins (1908–1999) gave the Richard Jefferies Society Birthday Lecture on *Wild Life in a Southern County* on Monday November 6th 1978 in the Joliffe Studio, Wyvern Theatre, Swindon. A transcript of his talk is available as No. 29 in the Society's 'Talks and Articles' series. He was one time controller of the BBC south-west region and responsible for setting up the Natural History Unit at Bristol. This launched BBC's long programme of nature features and David Attenborough's career on television. Hawkins was also a writer, dramatist and associate of T.S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas. He died shortly after his 90th birthday.

In 1948, to mark the centenary of Richard Jefferies, I produced a symposium for the BBC in which the speakers—if memory serves me correctly—were Brian Vesey Fitzgerald, Geoffrey Grigson and James Fisher. It goes without saying that his writings were familiar to those distinguished naturalists; but so they would have been to a substantial proportion of the audience, among whom the fame of Jefferies was undimmed. At about the same time Eyre & Spottiswoode published a uniform edition of the works of Richard Jefferies and—despite the official economy standards of the time—another publisher commissioned C.F. Tunnicliffe to illustrate an edition of *Wild Life in a Southern County* (reprinted here) which any bibliophile would be happy to own. That Jefferies ranked as a 'classic' nobody doubted.

Today, just 30 years later, he is completely out of print (except for *Bevis*) and second-hand copies of his books are not easy to find. To a new generation of readers he is little more than a name, although popular interest in wildlife and the countryside is probably greater than ever. Tastes change: the present-day naturalist tends to look to field-guides for the printed word and scientific data, while he finds his descriptive and atmospheric pleasures in the work of the film-cameraman and the sound recordist. But what a loss it will be if we abandon to the exclusive care of the literary historian that whole *genre* of writing about wild life and country matters that we associate with the names of Gilbert White, Richard Jefferies, W.H. Hudson and many others. They are so essential a part of the English tradition that we impoverish our comprehension of our own origins if we neglect them. Speaking of the cottage labourer of his day Jefferies wrote: 'These people have no myths ... they look back on no Heroic Age ... the past is vacant'. I hope the same may not be said of us.

What then, you might ask, is the sort of claim Jefferies makes on our attention? As a textbook of animal behaviour he has been superseded, and occasionally disproved, by later knowledge. The mystical pantheism that one associates particularly with his *Story of My Heart* is probably too diffuse and imprecise to rekindle the enthusiasm it once aroused. His abiding value can hardly be better expressed than in the words of the poet, Edward Thomas, who wrote the definitive biography of Jefferies and claimed that—

It is he who, above all other writers, has produced the largest, the most abundant and the most truthful pictures of Southern English country, both wild and cultivated.

The period represented in these ‘pictures’ is the 1870s. In that English countryside of 100 years ago technological and social revolution was well under way. Like Thomas Hardy, his senior by eight years, Jefferies was torn between a recognition that progressive changes were necessary and a nostalgia for the customs and traditions that were being cast aside. In book after book—*The Gamekeeper at Home*, *The Amateur Poacher* and *Hodge and His Masters*, to name three others besides this one—Jefferies built up a wonderfully detailed documentary of the scenes he knew so intimately in north Wiltshire, and later in Sussex. With his farmhouse origins, his contemplative temperament and his journalistic training he was excellently equipped to observe and record the myriad small incidents that made up the texture of outdoor life.

He was born in 1848 at Coate Farm on the outskirts of Swindon and close to Coate Water, which figures so prominently in his boyhood adventure-story, *Bevis*, as well as in his descriptions elsewhere of the wildlife of the unnamed ‘lake’. Above his home rose the uplands of the Marlborough Downs and Aldbourne Chase: along the chalk scarp ran the Ridgeway, linking the two ‘castles’ of Barbury and Liddington on their promontories. Near Marlborough lay the contrasting scenery of Savernake Forest. It was these landscapes that beckoned to Jefferies, rather than the vale in which Swindon itself lies.

His parents were an ill-matched couple and the fortunes of their farm seem to have deteriorated steadily. Richard himself, as he grew up, did nothing to arrest the family’s decline as he had no desire to become a farmer. A solitary, reserved and somewhat awkward youth, he must have seemed an idle layabout to his contemporaries as he wandered over field and meadow with no inclination to do anything more arduous than ferreting, rough shooting and angling. At seventeen he became a reporter on a local newspaper and so continued until he had established himself as an author. His first literary attempts were as a novelist, starting with *The Scarlet Shawl* published in 1874 by Tinsley who, the previous year, had brought out Hardy’s second novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. Two more novels followed and Tinsley may have thought he had a

second Hardy on his list, but these early efforts were swiftly engulfed in an obscurity from which not even Jefferies' most ardent admirers show any desire to rescue them. If he is considered at all today as a novelist it is in respect of a single book, *Amaryllys at the Fair*, written shortly before his final illness. And yet he might well have succeeded if he had developed some of the extensive sketches of rural characters that he put into *Hodge and His Masters*: the chapter entitled 'Going Downhill', for example, is a novel in miniature, full of incident and vivid characterisation.

What finally launched Jefferies towards public recognition was an unpredictable stroke of fortune. In November 1872 he sent some letters to *The Times* on the circumstances of labourers in Wiltshire: not only did the paper publish the letters, it also made them the subject of an editorial leader. As a consequence editors of other journals began to take an interest in the essays on country matters that Jefferies could offer them. The great storehouse of field notes that he had accumulated since his early youth now found expression in the essays that made his reputation and were collected later into the volumes that appeared in rapid succession from 1878 onwards. By then he had severed his connection with Wiltshire and was living, married and with a young family, at Surbiton. We catch a glimpse of him as the successful professional, in 1880, having dinner with Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy and Henry James at his publisher's expense, but only a year later his prospects were clouded by the ill-health that gradually-weakened and in the end destroyed him. By 1885 he was mortally sick and in 1887—not yet forty—he died, at Worthing. He lies in Broadwater Cemetery where, by a strange coincidence⁵, W.H. Hudson was destined to join him 35 years later.

Like Hudson, Jefferies had the patience and the concentration to make meticulously detailed observations in the field, taking each incident as it came to him in the ordinary chances that arise during many days spent outdoors with no distracting preoccupations and with his senses alert. The notes he made at the time were later to become his stock-in-trade. At their best they yield passages of sustained prose which can worthily stand comparison with White or Hudson. To take a single example from *Wild Life in a Southern County* I might instance the graphic account of a wasp's onslaught on a large fly:

The fly was very large, of a square build, and wrestled with its assailant vigorously. But in a few seconds, the wasp, getting the mastery, brought his tail round, and stung the fly twice, thrice, in rapid succession in the abdomen, and then held tight. Almost immediately the fly grew feeble; then the wasp snipped off its proboscis, and the legs dropped to the ground. The fell purpose of the wasp is not easily

⁵ Ed: This is no coincidence. Hudson wished to be buried next to Jefferies in a grave of similar design.

described; he stung and snipped and bit and reduced his prey to utter helplessness, without pause of a second.

So eager was he that while cutting the wings to pieces he fell off the leaf, but clung tight to the fly, and, although it was nearly as big as himself, carried it easily to another leaf. There he rolled the fly round, snipped off the head, which dropped, and devoured the internal part; but slipped again and recovered himself on a third leaf, and as it were picked the remaining small portion. What had been a great insect had almost disappeared in a few minutes.

Wild Life in a Southern County was published in 1879 anonymously, as 'by the author of *The Gamekeeper at Home*'. Its contents had first appeared as essays in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In his preface Jefferies describes the plan of the book as 'so arranged as to correspond in some degree with the contour of the country': he starts at the highest point of the downs and descends by stages to the vale and the lake. Each change of altitude brings a different habitat and a host of fresh topics. Nothing escapes his quick eye and enquiring mind. Cloud formations, the flight patterns of rooks, village craftsmen, swimming snakes, rustic superstitions—all seize his attention and form a rich miscellany of things seen and heard. His interest is all-embracing: the cultivation of the land and the countryman's way of life compete with animal and plant to attract his notice. In a remarkable degree Jefferies identifies himself with the ambience he is describing: he is essentially in it and of it.

It is hardly surprising therefore to find that he was very much a man of his time, a sportsman-naturalist who enjoyed shooting and fishing and warmly supported hunting. Noticing that some redwings, normally winter visitors only, were apparently staying to breed he tells us, 'To make quite sure, I shot one'—as unconcernedly as he shot many young kingfishers in the winter. Although he was a bookish man he made singularly little use of books to help him identify any unusual creature that he could not immediately name. The modern reader, with his field-guides ever at the ready, will find it odd that Jefferies can refer to occasional 'sea-bird' visitors no more accurately than as 'a species locally called the "sea-swallow".' And even stranger is his reference to 'one of our rarer woodpeckers', since we have only three and of these two are common enough.

But these period features are of no great consequence. What matters is, to quote Edward Thomas again, 'the irruption of an imaginative intelligence into natural history, which is so often in danger of falling into the hands of mere takers of notes'. Jefferies found his raw material in the careful records he preserved of days spent rambling and listening and watching; but what he then brought to bear was his individual genius, in which we can recognise a ceaselessly questing intellect and an inner spirit of delight in the splendour of life itself. When he contemplates 'the joy in life' of animals and birds in freedom, he comments, 'The sense of living—the consciousness of seeing and

feeling—is manifestly intense in them all, and is in itself an exquisite pleasure’. He certainly participated to the full in that pleasure, and it was perhaps heightened by his years of physical suffering.

His intellectual curiosity continually throws out hints, suggestions, speculations—possible ways of accounting for some observed item that puzzles him. His lightness or wrongness in this or that theory is less important than the open and ingenious mind that he displays. Such phrases as ‘one or all of these suggestions may perhaps account for ...’ are typical. His knowledge of his native environment is rich indeed but he offers it to us with the humility that recognises the many things still to be learnt. ‘It is instances like this’, he wrote of one seemingly strange circumstance, ‘that make one hesitate to dogmatize too much as to the why and wherefore of bird-ways. Yet it is just the speculation as to that why and wherefore which increases the pleasure of observing them’.

Nothing could be more characteristic of the man. It is what makes him still a most attractive companion with whom to explore the English countryside. He reads the little details of the landscape with a practised eye, noting ‘the miniature terraces formed along the banks by the constant running to and fro of water-rats’. He can call on a vivid imagery, as when some birds feast on cockchafer and the insects’ wing-cases are ‘scattered on the garden paths, like the shields of slain men-at-arms’. With a gentler sentiment he watches the harebells ‘meditate with bowed heads, as if full of tender recollections’. And always his restless mind plays about the scene with teasing questions and ingenious answers. At times he fuses together the various elements in his constitution as sportsman, farmer’s son, countryman and nature-lover: for instance, when he looks at a newly ploughed field:

Along the furrow, just as it is turned, there runs a shimmering light as the eye traces it up. The ploughshare, heavy and drawn with great force, smoothes the earth as it cleaves it, giving it for a time a ‘face’ as it were, the moisture on which reflects the light. If you watch the farmers driving to market, you will see that they glance up the furrows to note the workmanship and look for game; you may tell from a distance if they espy a hare by the check of the rein and the extended hand pointing.

Many other episodes clamour to be mentioned—the battle of wits between the carpenter and the mice, for example, or the onslaught of predators on the shoals of roach in the lake. These are vivid incidents of direct experience that a new generation of readers will surely be delighted to discover for themselves. My function is simply to point towards them—and offer no further distraction.

DESMOND HAWKINS

Vassar Miscellany

Matthew Vassar was born in 1792 at East Dereham, Norfolk, a son of James and Ann, farmers of Huguenot descent. In 1796 the family emigrated to America settling in the Hudson valley at Poughkeepsie, New York. Over time they established a thriving brewery business, which Matthew managed at the age of eighteen, and expanded to running their own sloops to transport the ale to market.

In 1861, Lydia Booth, a teacher and Vassars's niece, persuaded her wealthy uncle to establish a women's college in Poughkeepsie. Vassar College offered young women a liberal arts education equal to that of the best men's colleges of the day, with courses in art history, astronomy, geology, music, mathematics and chemistry.

The creative students launched a College newspaper in 1866 titled *The Miscellany News* which by 1872 became *Vassar Miscellany*, a publication mainly of essays and poems. From the archives we have discovered three essays about Richard Jefferies by Vassar students from 1893, 1912, and 1914, republished below.

After declining to merge with Yale, Vassar opened its doors to men in 1969, who now represent forty-five percent of the student body of 2,450.

RICHARD JEFFERIES

Linda D. Bishoprick

Vassar Miscellany, Volume XXII, Number 5, 1 February 1893

In an age which takes humanity for its chief study, the person who regards man as secondary, and nature as all important, is an anomaly. Still, in this analytic and introspective generation, it is a relief to find a writer, who, although in his way a realist, has excelled in descriptions of nature rather than of character. For Richard Jefferies is a realist, but the minute observation and insight which Henry James exhibits toward the inhabitants of the earth, Jefferies has turned upon the earth itself. And it has repaid his study. To him the common world around us appeared in a new and radiant light. Things were apparent to him which were hidden from the ordinary eye. Nature was the goddess he worshipped, and she graciously revealed herself in all her glory and wondrous beauty to her adorer. The love of Nature was the great passion of his life. He inherited it from his ancestors,—farmers, who had spent their lives in the open air, and who had in a silent, appreciative way observed the beauties of nature—, until he appeared to voice this love and to celebrate the place of his birth. As there are some people to whom the love of humanity is a necessity, so

to Jefferies the love of Nature was essential. He could not live away from the country; he would have been suffocated in the close quarters of London. He was not a sociable man; his most constant companion was Nature, he knew all her moods. He had been with her from sunrise, when in freshness and beauty she arose, until sunset, when weary and tired, she lay resting to gain strength for a new day. He knew from his own experience 'That Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.' That Nature was his solace in the ills and meannesses of life is proved by his saying that 'One memory of the green corn fresh beneath the sun and wind will lift up the heart from the clods.' Nature found him a worthy subject. It is Jefferies who has sung the glories of wheat as they have never been sung before. He has given it life in the world of thought. It is no longer only a physical reality; he has bestowed on it a distinct character. It is he too who has given individuality to the common grass. 'Every variety of grass—and they are many—has its own colour, and every blade of every variety has its individual variations of that colour. The rain falls and there is a darker tint at large upon the field, fresh but darker; the sun shines and at first the hue is lighter, but presently if the heat last, a brown comes. The wind blows and immediately as the waves of grass roll across the meadow a pale tint follows it. A clouded sky dulls the herbage, a cloudless heaven brightens it, so that the grass almost reflects the firmament like water. At sunset the rosy rays bring out every tint of red or purple. At noonday, watch, as alternate shadow and sunshine come one after the other as the clouds are wafted over. By moonlight perhaps the white ox-eyed daisies show the most. But never will you find the mowing grass in the same fields looking twice alike. Cold northern winds cause it to wear a dry, withered aspect; under warm showers it visibly opens itself; in a hurricane it tosses itself wildly to and fro; it laughs under the sunshine.'

He has also written about the wind. He is standing on the top of a hill, alone, with the never ending sky above—the north wind is blowing about him; can you not feel it? 'From the north comes down the wind out of the brown autumn light, from the woods below and twenty miles of stubble. The ears are filled with a continuous sense of something rushing past; the shoulders go back square; an iron-like feeling enters into the sinews. The air goes through my coat as if it were gauze and strokes the skin like a brush. The tide of the wind like the tide of the sea swells about, and its cold push at the first causes a lifting feeling in the chest—a gulp and pant—as if it were too keen and strong to be borne. Then the blood meets it and every fibre and nerve is filled with new vigour. I cannot drink enough of it. This is the north wind.' ['To Brighton', *Nature Near London*.]

Jefferies was an artist in literature. He has given us pictures as real and vivid as though painted by a brush. His word pictures convey as distinct an impression to our mental vision as real paintings to our physical sight. They

stand out in all their wonderful colours and radiant hues. And from Jefferies we have a series of paintings; the same thing revealed in its different phases, thus gaining lifelikeness. His canvases constantly change—with the sun and the sky and the winds. *The Story of My Heart* is the most remarkable of all Jefferies' works. It is a page from life. It is the autobiography of one to whom the physical life was as real as the intellectual or spiritual. He felt that unthinking joy in the world about him which the Greeks had—a joy in living just for living, a delight in the sun and in the fullness of earth. The sun and the sea were as real presences to him as to those who in olden days ascribed to them omnipotence and worshipped them as gods. This joy in the physical world approaches sensuousness, when untempered by any touch of the intellectual or the spiritual. Jefferies is saved from this, however, by the common desire of our humanity for something new, something different, better than anything of which we know. His desire for physical perfection is only equalled by his desire for spiritual perfection—his soul craves intensely for both. 'The ripe corn stood up to the beach, the waves on one side of the shingle, and the yellow wheat on the other. There, alone, I went down to the sea. I stood where the foam came to my feet, and looked out over the sunlit waters. The great earth bearing the richness of the harvest, and its hills golden with corn, was at my back; its strength and firmness under me. The great sun shone above, the wide sea was before me, the wind came sweet and strong from the waves. The life of the earth and the sea, the glow of the sun filled me; I touched the surge with my hand, I lifted my face to the sun, I opened my lips to the wind. I prayed aloud in the roar of the waves—my soul was strong as the sea and prayed with the sea's might. Give me fullness of life like the sea and the sun, to the earth and the air; give me fullness of physical life, mind equal and beyond their fullness; give me a greatness and perfection of soul higher than all things; give me my inexpressible desire which swells in me like a tide—give it to me with all the force of the sea.' He believed firmly in a 'Fourth Idea, a Soul Eternity, as yet unrecognized. Three ideas the Cave-men primeval wrested from the unknown, the night which is round us still in daylight—the existence of the soul, immortality, the deity. Since then nothing further has been found in all the twelve thousand years, as if men had been satisfied and had found these to suffice. They do not suffice me.' This is the expression of the desire of all souls, for these three have not sufficed, consequently each soul forms for itself an ideal; with Jefferies this is the Fourth Idea. Even he did not grasp and make more concrete this most elusive of human imaginings. 'The soul throbs like the sea for a larger life. No thought which I have ever had has satisfied my soul.' That sentence is sufficient to immortalize his name, expressing as it does the inadequacy of the intellectual to satisfy the spiritual, to which the world would bear witness. Jefferies' love of nature is as intense and deep as that of Wordsworth, but instead of Wordsworth's 'sweet

calm,' he has the unsatisfied cravings which are the heritage of this part of the nineteenth century. Although in his passionate Greek-like love of nature Jefferies cannot be regarded as representing this age, still in his intense restlessness and isolation, he may be considered as the product of the thought of our time. If in *The Story of My Heart* Jefferies has not satisfied a need, he has at least voiced it, and this may prove comforting, like the mournful strains of Arnold. But at any rate, he will live as one of the few men to whom Nature deigned to reveal herself, and who was able to convey a part, at least, of this revelation to the world.

RICHARD JEFFERIES, AS SEEN THROUGH HIS WRITINGS

Sylvia Tryon

Vassar Miscellany, Volume XLII, Number 1, 1 November 1912. Sylvia Tryon was Kate Tryon's daughter, the author of *Adventures in the Vale of the White Horse: Jefferies Land*, and she kindly donated nearly 35 of her mother's oil-paintings of Jefferies Land for display at the Richard Jefferies Museum in 1960.

Richard Jefferies is generally known as an 'English nature-writer,' as a lover of the wild life on the downs and along the hedgerows of Wiltshire. People are not acquainted with his desire for a deep soul-life, with his longing for perfection of physical life, which equalled that of the ancient Greeks, and with his broad interest in the human life of the city and the hamlet. It is true that he wrote a great many essays on the life of the fields. He used to spend hours, and often a whole day, walking along the lanes, climbing the hillsides or lying upon the downs, following with his eye the chaff-chaff and the tit-lark as they carried fibres to their nests, watching from an elevation the timorous wild rabbits as they fed, or gazing upon the honeysuckle trailing over the hedges, and the lakes of blue hyacinths bathed in sunlight. Nothing escaped him. He knew in which haunt the 'ruddy kingfisher' could be found at a certain time of day, the differences in the flights of birds, and even, from his own observation, the habits of fish. He feasted his eyes upon the bluebells, the cowslips, the June roses, the buttercups, and the blue-eyed veronica; he rejoiced in the 'little black moorhens', and the 'flitting stonechats'. Through the flowers and birds he drank in life. In his poem-essay, 'The Pageant of Summer', he acknowledges this: 'I cannot leave it; I seem as if I could feel all the glowing life the sunshine gives, and the south winds call into being—never could I stay long enough, whether here—or on the thyme-scented hills.' This love of Jefferies for the wild things of nature was a large part of him, but the beauty of these led him to seek for the

higher beauty of spiritual life. During his hours out of doors, he pondered in deep thought over the flowers, and in watching a lark soar into the blue, he saw far beyond it into something infinite. When he describes the actions of the wild things during a thunder-shower, he compares the cowardice of man with the courage of the so-called timid turtle doves, which preserve a 'God-like calm' during the lightning at which man trembles. In *The Story of My Heart*, Jefferies becomes more openly the philosopher. He tells of gazing up at the branches of an oak tree, of lying on the downs, rapt in meditation. So it was that he worked out his beliefs that 'Now is eternity; there is really no such thing as time', that nature cares nothing for man, that there is no directing intelligence in human affairs. In an exquisite passage he tells of reading in the spire of a little snail shell the 'bitter truth that—we must look to ourselves to help ourselves. We must think ourselves into an earthly immortality.' It was thus dreaming upon the 'thyme-scented hills' that Jefferies conceived his idea of a 'Soul Entirety' beyond mere soul-existence, beyond immortality, even beyond deity, 'an immense ocean over which the mind can sail and over which no vessel was ever launched'. Surely, if anyone has ever set sail upon this ocean of thought, it is Jefferies. A sad fact about the life of this man, seen through *The Story of My Heart*, is that of his continual ill-health. He, the human being who above all others could have enjoyed to the utmost physical strength, he who loved life so much that this feeling was a 'prayer', and whose cry was ever for fullness of life, was doomed to have his longing unfulfilled. Every night at twilight he prayed his 'Lyra prayer' for a more powerful existence, both of the soul and of the body. 'Does a crown of thorns hang over your heart?' he asks. 'A spike has gone deeply enough into mine.' In days of pain and mental suffering, caged within his house, he listened longingly to the lark's song through the window pane, and thought, 'I felt myself so much to the earliest leaf and the first meadow-orchis—but—they manage without me very well—I hear, as it were, the patter of their feet—I hear a lark through the window, singing, and each note falls into my heart like a knife.'

Although his prayer was not granted he did not spend his time in self-pity. On days when he was feeling comparatively strong, he talked with, and learned much about, 'hedgers', and 'ditchers', ploughmen, mowers and 'loggers'. The English labouring people had no greater sympathizer. He knew so much about their toil and hardships, that it almost seems as if he must have worked beside them in the fields, and slept in their squalid cottages. Their employers complained of them as being idle, drunken, thieving and immoral, and indeed, Jefferies admits that they were, yet he saw that people whose life was an endless battle with poverty, who had scarcely any food, warmth or light, who lived in cottages with damp, muddy floors, and covered with leaky thatch, could not have done otherwise than degenerate into an animal-like stupidity. He does not

denounce their employers, for this would have done small good, but he presents the facts calmly, and in such a vivid way, that one who reads *The Toilers of the Field*, or *Hodge and His Masters*, is roused in indignation against the conditions. Yet he is perfectly fair to both sides. He sympathizes with the difficulties of the farmer who has to contend with agricultural dullness. This sympathy with both sides is shown throughout his works, and never more strikingly than when he relates with feeling the difficulties of the gamekeepers in preventing poaching, in *The Gamekeeper at Home*, and then shows himself by no means hostile to the gamekeeper's enemy, in *The Amateur Poacher*. He entered so fully into the life-interests of the hamlet folk, that he knew all of their superstitions, their sayings, and their feelings. He learned how millstones were set and balanced so as to grind accurately, how 'dew-ponds' were made for the sheep, how various traps and snares were made and set. While Jefferies was learning all these details of country life, he was studying the people as well. The mind which observed the journeyings of an ant, could penetrate into the weaknesses of human beings. He detected stupidity behind an intensely knowing leer, he discerned the affectedness of young ladies who tried to appear pale and blasé, he saw the jealousy of the farm people toward a compeer who made a rapid rise, he caught the 'suspicion of a plough' about Frank D. who drove 'a high-stepper and wore top-boots.' In all his essays he proves a good delineator of character. In novels such as *Restless Human Hearts*, and *The Dewy Morn*, however, he seems to have gone out of his element. While the action of the village characters in the latter are credible, the conduct of 'Felise,' the heroine, who bathes in the lake wearing a circlet of pearls in her golden hair, shows a touch of romantic imagination. It was the love of beauty in life that made Jefferies disregard probability in his romances. It was this desire that life should be as beautiful as his ideal of it that made him long to change the condition of the labourers. He found beauty among even the poorest field-farers, as he shows in his essay, 'Golden-Brown'. 'Beautiful, beautiful human life,' he exclaims, 'Tears come into my eyes as I think of it'. When he is walking along his beloved flowery hedgerows, his love of beautiful life becomes a passion, and at the end of 'The Pageant of Summer', he says, 'The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live. To be beautiful and to be calm—is the ideal of nature! If I cannot achieve it, I can at least think it.'

LIGHT EFFECTS IN THE OPEN AIR

Doris Sutton

Vassar Miscellany, Volume XLIII, Number 8, 1 June 1914

Piercing, permeating, illuminating the entire book of *The Open Air* the sunlight displays itself on Jefferies' miniature settings, while delicate shadows hovering about freshen them with contrast. The very insistence on the one theme assures us of the power of the sunlight, its life-bringing warmth, its power to heal, its beauty. Sunlight on sea and stream, on field and meadow, on rolling hill and jagged cliff, sunlight in quiet wooded nook, on woods a-hum with insects, in sunny Brighton and wet London, sunlight diffused in shadow, beams flashing out in colour, summer radiance and winter paleness,—each repetition brings a new beauty, a stronger charm. This repeated playing on one note is not monotonous, for each time a melody of a different character incorporates it; the note has a new relation to the other parts and is struck with a new shade of meaning in itself. The scape from 'Wolstanbury Hill is an island of sunshine,— all warmly lit with sunshine like the sands under the liquid sea.' The hill itself is the only reality; the surrounding hills and 'wealds' are of a different world, submerged in the molten gold of a summer's day and in the mystery of a poet's imagination. Under the arch of the bridge 'the stream arranges the sunshine in successive flashes'—what delightful cooperation in nature—'undulating as if the sun, drowsy in the heat, were idly closing and unclosing his eyelids in sleep.' The changed atmosphere is still of an unreal world, but no longer vague, mysterious; everything is comprehensible and taken for granted as readily as giants in a fairy tale. Jefferies also treats the sunlight as a useful, ordinary factor in life. 'I am a great believer in light—sunlight—and of my freewill never let it be shut out by curtains. Light is essential to life like air; life is thought; light is as fresh air to the mind.' 'Pure air, free from suspended matter lets the light pass freely, and perhaps this absence of suspended material is the reason that the heat is not so oppressive as would be supposed considering the glare.' This is so simple, so commonplace—almost prosaic—that few of us ever notice it instinctively. The effects of colour in sunlight which we ourselves notice to some extent, as portrayed by Jefferies stand out in clear relief. 'Sometimes I think sun-painted colours are brighter to me than to many,' he remarks, 'and more strongly effect the nerves of the eye.' This may easily be true, and he combines with this peculiar sensitiveness a definiteness of expression and quickness of association that startles us. 'Down the dusty road, inches deep in sand, comes a sulphur butterfly, rushing,—he fills the road, being brighter than all and for the moment is more than the trees and flowers—

dancing like a flower let loose.' 'Sulphur' is the only word of colour, but it calls up a whole picture of vivid impressions, bright, flashing, yet minute,—a mere flutter of brilliant colour. He describes a bank of clouds, 'white tent-walls of clouds—a warm white, being full to overflowing of sunshine.' This cannot mean a glaring, hot bulk, 'tent-walls' and 'warm white' are distinctly pleasing, and 'over-flowing' suggests the soft downy expanse of slow-moving, sunlit summer clouds, 'whole armfuls of sunshine.' 'Straw going by the road on a dusky winter's day seems so pleasantly golden, the sheaves lying aslant at the top, and these bundles of yellow tubes thrown up against the dark ivy on the opposite wall. Tiles red-burned, or orange-coated, the sea sometimes cleanly definite, the shadows of trees in a thin wood where there is room for a shadow to form and fall; some such shadows are sharper than light, and have a faint 'blue tint.' Sun pictures, all of them, colour against colour, mixed, blending, contrasting. There are two different kinds of sunny days that Jefferies carefully distinguishes; the days when 'the atmosphere is full of light and gives a sense of liveliness; every atom of it is in motion, and the days when the fire falls straight from the sky,' and 'the still atmosphere is laden with beat.' In the blazing quiet, 'the tender flower endures; the wide petals of the poppy, which withers between the fingers, lies afloat on the air as the lilies on water, afloat and open to the weight of the heat.' The air is as heavy and cohesive as water, we feel its oppression in the words 'endure' and 'lie afloat on the air,' we are stifled and made drowsy by the heat. There is a sleepy heavy rhythm to the words and the movement of the sentence, when he says 'the sea is blue, streaked with green, and is stilled with heat, the low undulations can scarcely rise and fall for somnolence. Light pours down'—we feel the silent rush of it. 'The flags droop, the sails of the fishing-boats hang idle, the land and the sea are conquered by the light of the sun.' We gasp for breath and are enervated. But there is a more welcome heat, when 'the sun sets all things in motion' and the woods all a-hum with insects, wasps working overhead, bees crowding and swarming on the bramble flowers, bumblebees wandering and calling at every purple heath blossom, wasp-like flies suspending themselves in the air and then shooting suddenly forward or to one side. Everything is animated and merry, all because of the magic of the sunlight. Shadow, the supplement of light, is as much beloved by Jefferies as his play-fellow, the sun; for 'without shadow, what even is the sun?' That is the spirit in which he deals with shadow; it is a contrast, a change, a decoration, but not a vital force, a by-product as beautiful as a fleeting laugh. The shadows 'lie over the summer sward, design upon design, dark lace on green and gold, they glorify the sunlight.' 'Across the vale a broad cloud-shadow descends the hillside, is lost in the hollow, and presently, without warning slips over the edge, coming swiftly along the green tips.' How smoothly, delicately it flows through the words 'cloud-shadow,' 'hollow,' 'slips,' 'green tips'—as intangible

and aloof as a beam of winter moonlight. Jefferies expresses continually his sense of a unity behind all those wonders, a mystic belief in an 'unspeakable but intelligible' plan, as Emerson says. To Jefferies, the sunlight is the most direct and active expression of this subtle omnipresent power, 'above all the sunlight the breath of heaven,'—'some intangible mysterious power which cannot be supplied in any other form but the sun's rays. It reddens the cherry, it gilds the apple, it colours the rose, it ripens the wheat, it touches a woman's face with the golden-brown of ripe life—ripe as a plum. There is no other hue so beautiful as this human sunshine tint.' Summer landscapes are filled with this 'sense of swelling, sunny fullness in the atmosphere.' 'The wheat was springing, the soft air full of the growth and moisture, blackbirds whistling, wood pigeons nestling, young oak leaves out. A place of enchantment in the mornings where was felt the power of some subtle influence working behind bough and grass and birdsong.' The sense of 'unspeakableness' is carried remarkably by the phrase 'subtle influence; working behind;' it is there to be seen if only we could throw off some of the trappings of human narrowness and gaze into the 'open secret' of the divine all about us.



Matthew Vassar

In Memoriam—Richard Jefferies

(August 14, 1887)

Wilfred L. Randell

Author and journalist Wilfred L. Randell wrote this tribute to Jefferies which appeared in the 5 August 1905 issue of *The Academy*, a weekly celebrating literature and the arts. P. Anderson Graham was the editor at the time and was an admirer of Jefferies.

In Memoriam—Richard Jefferies

(August 14, 1887)

“GO FORTH, O soul,” the Spirit said; “thy way
Shall lie ’mid flowers of thought for ever fair;
Thy work shall be to beckon others there
And tell of calm, sweet things, and bid them pray
To view, like thee, the magical display
Of Nature’s shy delights; to set a snare
For roving fairies; now and everywhere
To find a light of God in light of day.”

The soul obeyed, and wrote through weary years,
Wherein the hand of pain did strongly press,
Of new-found worlds in meadow, hill and sea;
Then, when the sad eyes craved relief in tears
And the brave heart knew all the bitterness
Of work unfinished, Death brought liberty.

WILFRED L. RANDELL

Mr. Jefferies's *Bevis*

The following review of *Bevis* was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 24 August 1882, p.5. The article is unsigned.

People who were mystified and tantalized by *Wood Magic* will doubtless find themselves still further mystified and tantalized by Mr. Jefferies's new and wayward little work, *Bevis*. Nothing fresher, breezier, or brighter has ever come from his delightful pen. It is clever to the last degree, though a great many readers will probably fail to perceive its cleverness. Of course, it is all about nothing; but then it is nothing set forth with such delicious accompaniments of beast, bird, fish, and reptile, with so much intimate knowledge of woodlore and woodcraft, with so broad a horizon of fresh air and healthy sunshine, that it deserves to be read before a great many other people's solemnest somethings, redolent all over of close libraries and unwholesome midnight oil. *Bevis* is the same impetuous, hasty, unsophisticated boy whose acquaintance we have already made in *Wood Magic*, only grown a few years older: the natural man in his first analytic, non-ethical state, frankly ignorant of earnestness or purpose, and amply satisfied with the passing pleasure of the moment for its own sake. An amiable young heathen is *Bevis* at best, evidently drawn with loving care from some actual original, but portrayed with almost too literal fidelity to the truth of boyish life, for good or for evil. We have seen nothing like it in its own way for close observation, except perhaps Victor Hugo's wonderful sketch of the Breton children in *Quatre-Vingt-Treize*. Indeed, Mr. Jefferies is if anything a trifle too directly literal. He is content to depict his figures with thorough Dutch accuracy of detail; but he is all Greek in his total and unreserved acceptance of art-for-art theory. Not only is there no moral to the story—the less moralizing the better boys will like it—but there is a sort of ostentatious absence of the ethical element, which is sometimes pushed to a rather extreme and extravagant conclusion. For example, when *Bevis* and Mark catch and beat the poor donkey, the various tortures they inflict upon it are described in a simple objective fashion, without a single word of praise or blame, which is evidently a piece of intentional restraint on Mr. Jefferies's part, in pursuance of a definite artistic ideal: but is it not rather a dangerous plan to pursue with young people? Is it not too probable that they will misinterpret the absence of blame for positive approbation, and be strengthened in their previous native belief that to torture an inoffensive donkey is rather a fine and manly sport than otherwise? We must confess that, much as we admire Mr. Jefferies's style, we read this painful and too truthful passage with more than one qualm of misgiving for its possible effects.

The book as a whole is one of those which may be read with pleasure by boys, and with equal pleasure and appreciation by older people. Here, in brief, is an outline of its course, for plot or story in the strict sense it has really none. Bevis and Mark, with the dog Pan, go through sundry adventures in strange countries, lying for the most part within a mile or so of Bevis's home. They sail in a roughly made raft up the neighbouring Mississippi, and discover a new sea. They ascend a mimic Nile into a Central African jungle of English waterweeds, and there they meet with imaginary savages and other strange creatures among the rushes to their hearts' content. Finally, they slink away from home, without leave, on a pretence of going to stop with Big Jack, and actually camp out instead on the island of New Formosa, where they sleep for several nights under a rude hut, providing themselves with food beforehand by surreptitious visits to the village shop. In all these simple adventures, the positive elements of the story are merely the river, and the island, and the familiar English beasts and birds, by far the strangest creature seen being a solitary otter: but Mr. Jefferies has managed vividly to catch the tone of fresh wonder and to picture the romantic halo with which boys surround even the most ordinary objects of everyday life: and under the skilful hands the inhabitants of the copse and the brooklet grow into mysterious and awe-inspiring beings, so that as we read we feel once more the vague charm of boyish romances, though we know all the time we are within easy walking distance of the English manor house and the village grocer's. The passing episode of pretty Frances and Big Jack just serve to keep older readers on the *qui vive*. In one case Mr. Jefferies seems to have borrowed a jarring note from the unlikeliest of all possible quarters: for surely Loo must be a Ouidesque echo, and a rather unwholesome echo too. The book ends, as *Wood Magic* ended, abruptly and nowhere in particular. This, no doubt, will much surprise many good people who have read it through with the expectation of finally coming, if not to a moral, at least a conclusion. Mr. Jefferies, however, knows his own art better. He draws his picture gracefully; and when he has finished it he never thinks of telling us what there is lying beyond the edge of his canvas.

Bevis: the Story of a Boy. By Richard Jefferies,
author of *The Gamekeeper at Home* (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1882)

Bevis: The Story of a Boy

An Introduction

George Miller

An earlier version of this Introduction was first published in *Richard Jefferies: A Bibliographical Study* by George Miller and Hugoe Matthews (Scholar Press, 1993). The account of the composition of *Bevis*, as reflected in Jefferies' notebooks, is based on S.J. Looker's published version of them (Phoenix House, 1948). Since then a fuller transcription has been made by Phyllis Treitel and Jean Saunders which contains many relevant entries omitted by Looker. These additions are included in this updated article.

Bevis is a continuation of *Wood Magic*, with Bevis himself grown up from a small child to a boy. The topography of the story is the same, a grander version of Coate Farm, and Coate Reservoir is still the Longpond until renamed The New Sea. Pan the spaniel, Polly the dairymaid, Bevis's wisely forbearing parents, and the bailiff (the only shaded in character in *Wood Magic* apart from Bevis) also reappear, and in reintroducing the bailiff Jefferies makes a clear reference back to the earlier book: 'Bevis looked, and there was the bailiff with his back against the great oak, under which he once went to sleep (i.e. at the end of chapter I in *Wood Magic*). The bailiff was older now, much older... Bevis, described as 'impatient' in the second line, is the same wilful child of nature, but now much concerned with making and doing. The transition between the two books and the two Bevises is deftly made at the beginning of chapter II: 'As he came near a butterfly rose from the raft, having stayed a moment to see what this could be among the dandelions and buttercups, but Bevis was too deeply occupied to notice it.' This anthropomorphic insect has clearly strayed from *Wood Magic*, but it and all the other busy and talkative creatures disappear with Bevis's loss of interest in them, and the only role left for the birds and animals is as quarry, to be stalked and slain by the increasingly predatory youngster. The Bevis who before tried to shield Pan from punishment now metes it out to the long-suffering beast himself.

The character of Bevis is now based more on Jefferies himself, than on his son, Harold. We only glimpse the latter again in Chapter XLIX where mama muses over her old collection of her infant son's wit and wisdom. *Bevis* is very much a portrait of the artist as a young boy, in fact he almost anticipates the book in a letter about his childhood to the editor of the *New Quarterly* of December 1876: 'There is at Coate a reservoir—it is sixty years old, and looks quite as a lake—of some eighty acres of water. I think I could write a whole

book on that great pond. I mapped it, and laid down the shallows and sand-banks, when I was a schoolboy, and I learnt how to manage a sailing boat on it.” Again the chapter describing Bevis’s observations of the stars, with its almost visionary sense of a relationship between a small terrestrial landscape and the wide heavens, has close parallels with an autobiographical fragment written later, published as ‘The Old House at Coate’. With the departure of the animal characters the human cast list is increased. Bevis is joined by Mark, who is based on Jefferies’ brother, Henry James Jefferies (Harry), though some of Henry’s bold, adventurous nature might have been transferred to Bevis. Frances, Big Jack, John Young, and the cottage girl Loo, are all rounded characters; and then there are Ted, Val, Charlie and the other lads who take part in the battle.

A critic in the *Athenaeum* of April 1880, reviewing *Greene Ferne Farm*, had said: ‘if Mr. Jefferies would only condescend to write a novel for boys, and leave novel writing for grown men and women to those who better understand their requirements, it seems certain that he might produce a sounder and stronger boys’ book than the world has seen since *Masterman Ready*.’² Jefferies would certainly have read this, and it does seem to be around this time that he began both *Wood Magic* and *Bevis*. The two works were not separate and distinct from each other at the outset, as demonstrated by entries in his notebooks³ where the development can be traced. NBs numbered VII, IX and X (NB VIII is missing from the British Library archives) contain ideas for Bevis’s adventures and the notes are referenced ‘HH’. A single ‘H’ in the notebooks refers to Harold. *Wood Magic* was published in May 1881.

The first reference in NB VII is around 7 March 1880 and is used in *Wood Magic* when a cod-fish is aware of a rusting link on an anchor chain that finally gives way in a storm; the sailors perish when the ship is dashed on the rocks (Ch.VI): ‘HH Fish—the sole and the chain cable, I saw it wound by & bye—wreck’ (folio 5). So too is the entry for 16 April: ‘HH 4 chicks in spoon’ (folio 10) recounted in *Wood Magic* as ‘they had shown him three tiny bantam chicks, such darling little things, all cuddled cosily together in the hollow of a silver table-spoon (Ch. II). On 15 May (folio 64) there are various observations that find their way into both books including: ‘HH Cats eat hen’s eggs—dogs

¹ ‘Richard Jefferies: Field-Naturalist and Littérateur,’ by Oswald Crawford, *Idler*, October 1898, vol. 13, pp.289–301 and reprinted in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* 34 (2019), p.86.

² *Athenaeum*, 21 February 1880.

³ Sixteen of Jefferies’ notebooks (abbreviated to NB) are in the archives of the British Library. The NB marked ‘VII March 1880’ runs from 4 March 1880. The last entry is dated 17 June 1880, *Add MS 58821 vol. xix*. NB IX runs from 14 October 1880; the last dated entry is 17 September 1881, *Add. MS 58819 vol. xviii*. NB X is marked ‘26th Sep. ’81’ and the last dated entry is 24 March 1882 *Add. MS 58819 vol. xvii*. The folio numbers quoted are those of Jefferies. Many of the dates quoted are approximate.

too'; 'HH Raspberry expedition (folio 65) and 'H In the hut—asleep—night moon, a friend, stars there.' Around 20 May 1880 Jefferies notes: 'H.H. cried over dead swallow: and would not kill the caterpillar; yet tied the donkey to a tree to wallop it more handily' (folio 67). The sensitivity towards the swallow and caterpillar here is consistent with the Harold portrayed in *Wood Magic*, whereas the donkey beating episode actually occurs in *Bevis* (Ch. XII). 'HH while leaning head tickled' (folio 71, May 24) is a reference to the fact that Mark tickled Bevis on the head to help the latter think more clearly (Ch. V). Bevis, the leader, comes across on 30 May 1880: 'HH I shall make you obey' (folio 76) and a year later, echoed again on 11 June 1881 with 'HH Quarrel—as just as possible, but I mean to be master' (NB IX, folio 105). Disturbingly, on 6 June 1880, 'HH first shot with gun—the yellowhammer—bull finch, bright colours—the rifle' (folios 83–84) and continued the killing spree on 12 June: 'HH The mowers waiting ... with bow & arrow to shoot at greenfinches & starlings come down to the new mown space' (folio 87).

Notebook VIII, covering 18 June 1880 to 13 October 1880, is missing from the sequence. Bevis is mentioned by name at the start of NB IX: 'Bevis walks to London' (folio 2). Interestingly there is a short street in the city of London that has been called Bevis Marks since 1720 that Jefferies might have known. Jefferies lists the name of a printing company ('Straker Bros & Co, 35 Camomile St, Bishopsgate within EC') on 26 February 1881 in his notebook (folio 52) that he probably visited. Camomile Street is a continuation of Bevis Marks. Mark isn't given a name check until soon after this date. The name Bevis might have come to mind from Jefferies' copy of *Wayland Smith* that he had owned since living in Swindon.⁴

The next entry of any relevance is not until 31 October 1880 where there is a definition of the verb to 'teel' (folio 15), as used in *Bevis*: 'But against the tree there leaned also a long slender pole, "teeled up" as "Jumps" would have said' (Ch. LL). On 18 November we have a second 'H.H.' entry, noting one of Bevis's gems of infant wisdom: 'If God had been there, they would not have let them do it. Crucifixion' (folio 20), followed on 25 December by 'HH There is one part of them that does not die. I suppose that is the thinking part?' (folio 30) as it appears verbatim in the book:

They told him there was one part of us that did not die. 'Then,' he said directly, 'I suppose that is the thinking part.' What more, O Descartes, Plato, philosophers, is there in your tomes? The crucifixion hurt his feelings very much: the cruel nails,

⁴ *Wayland Smith: a Dissertation on the Tradition of the Middle Ages* by G.B. Depping and Francisque Michel (London: William Pickering, 1847), 'Sir Bevis' is named in the Preface written by S.W. Singer. Jefferies' personal copy is part of the Looker archive owned by the Richard Jefferies Society.

the unfeeling spear: he looked at the picture a long time, and then turned over the page, saying, 'If God had been there He would not have let them do it' (Ch. XLIX).

On 8 January 1881 we have: 'Gates of Thibet—glimpse through: the path?' (folio 34), which is a reference to 'The Story of the Other Side', told by Bevis (Ch. XXXVIII). Then on 12 February we find included in a list of titles 'A Forester Good' and 'Young Robin Hood' (folio 48), which are followed on 15th by 'Knight of the Meadows' and 'King of Scamps' (folio 52). A work of some kind about a country boy's adventures, perhaps at this stage more of the conventional boys' book type, is clearly in view. There are two further notes about 'The Story of the Other Side' (with another of Bevis's childish sayings coming in between on 3 May). The first of these on 11 March is: 'Thibet Gates. The Forest, no return, for ever on and on' (folio 58). In this parable about the opposite worlds of imagination and reality, an old explorer glimpses a hidden valley in Tibet where it is possible to travel for ever, without reaching 'the other side'. The same idea is carried in the book by many references to the wanderings of Ulysses. The boys sail to the island with (in their imagination) 'No Hope of Returning', and come to regard the eventual necessity of going back as approaching the hateful 'other side' (Ch. XXXIX). Jefferies was by now preparing to write *The Story of My Heart*, and a link between that story, with its endless spiritual quest for a higher existence, and 'The Story of the Other Side' is suggested by the last note on this passage, of 9 June: 'The Story of the Thibetan Gate. The gate is into the larger life' (folio 102). Though this digression only occupies part of one chapter it is clearly central to the book's inspiration.

The rhyme that Bevis knew so well in 'an old grey book' (Ch. I) is referred to on 2 May 1881: 'HH King Estmere the old grey book' (folio 84). In July 1881 the outlines emerge more clearly with many entries all with the prefix 'HH' The first on 10 July: 'map—ship—curtain of honeysuckle. Mark⁵ watches chip sip humblebee, jay—hum—slips too, woodpecker in oak—Bevis [wake/rage]—duel put off 1 Kesselgun 2 Bounty 3 wood 4 episodes—stories & human [...] 5 no cruelty or horrors 6 thought passing of easy diction (folio 112). 'Woods. Woodpecker. Brook kingfisher. Cornfields yellow-hammer. Meadows goldfinch. Oak peculiar colour. Moon rim like corn' (folio 113). This doesn't seem to relate directly to any passage but could be an idea for Bevis's map (Ch. V), or for 'Bevis's Zodiac' (Ch. XXXV), where the moon is described as 'so brilliant that the scored relief work enchased upon the surface was obscured by the bright light reflected from it.' The next note of 16 July brings us more recognizably into the world of *Bevis*, though again the details are not exact: 'Studies magic. Falls a-dreaming in the punt while the yellow-hammer sings' (folio 113). 'HH no one had learnt to/swim since the Norman/Conquest' (folio 116). 'HH preparing for

⁵ This is the first time that Mark is named in the notebooks.

battle with/gunroom/ blood red sunset' (folio 115) and still more revealing is the note of 23 July 'HH stars orchard path summer night—no darkness, only the shadow of the earth between us & the sun, like a mountain 2nd Damas?—after reading & thinking?' (folio 115). This, then, is the book in a nutshell. The poetic ideas, Bevis's mystical story and his star gazing, clearly came first (as they are the more lasting images); then the idea of showing the boys learning formative skills, in the event these were sailing and shooting; and then the main formula for the book, to concentrate on action, with the casual introduction of 'a dream now and then.'

Many of the notes provide more detail. This from NB IX (July):

Folio 117: HH ploughboys in the bank/~The oar must be held at arm's length

Folio 118: else no support/~ takes punt & so they learn to/row & guide a boat.

HH no digression—directness/of purpose—action—a dream now/& then, but not all dream

HH battle. HH falls on/handle for ship pushed over/gorse—hears Pompey's near to land—knows battle lost/but won't be prisoner—pushes/out in/punt—drifts: Unknown/Island—boys missed at/harvest time. He determines to get

Folio 119: strong enough to beat Pomp. ...Pomp fled thinking he/has killed Caes./ Caes fled not to be/prisoner. Caes claimed the boat/casuistry

Folio 120: Who up till then was winning if goes over the cliff. Mark/locked in 'Its no use locking me in he shouted/no body else can find Bevis'/Hours after 2 in the morning/these words recur to [...] 'no body else can find Bevis'/let him out. With a nose/like a pointer Mark/quicken round with rope [...]round fir the quarry quick till he got there & then/seeing no one &/whistling hard—hid./ heard his whistle

Folio 121: for the wind took it to him/& whistled loud in return/but the wind stopped it./Mark [...] trace the cliff, misses the Punt?/Where's the Punt? Bevis is in the Punt. Takes the /ship & goes up to conquer/place—first—whistle—Bevis on board last.

HH awful rage. The First Defeat makes/him 20 times stronger/But Mark Antony/won the battle for Pomp.

Folio 122: fled, & missing his/army (in search of him. Pomp./& not to bind Caes. as Caes. supposed) fled/pursued by Mark &/the others all witnesses. So/Caes. won alone. But his rage/against Pomp. .../& his sense of wrong/cruel, brutal, were to be redeemed 'I Will'/yet HH in attacking/Pomp might take advantage of him, the

Folio 123: young farmer only used/his natural strength/—he had no idea—he had not been taught./—& he was really brave/—so in battle HH did/him a grievous wrong meaning/to do right/~ yet again for he wrote/him a note—'I mean to say that I don't/hate you & that I only/hit you because you/trapped me & I know you owe [Sims] 2 pounds

Folio 124: & I have sold my/ship (his cut of the float) &/here's the tin you pay him & if you'll shake hands/I'll give you my (gun he/was going to write—no not

his gun) my fishing rod./He did shake hands so soon/as his marks were better...

Folio 125: Flight on the Unknown Island—can' get off/—Punt no pole or oar,
lazy dog at harvest home/hid oars no one else to use/them ...—weeds can't
swim through though with/big man might, boy never/—never with those clammy
ropes clinging to legs
(swim—taught them how/to Teach themselves)

Folio 126: could do nothing but/wait when Impatient/HH came to that firm
decision he/that very moment became a MAN/~ HH sometimes a Flake
or hurdle & thinks the party/searching for Pomp (who has/fled) looking for him
gets down by means of/thistle—the Harvest Moon/now higher & he sees the
thistle—pricks his hand

Folio 127: dreadfully—sand slips—the/dark pool, under dreads it/though swim side
steep/no landing swim round & round/like the frog in tank (see/this) till drop to
bottom/not like the frog to live/—has to mind pool—rabbits/hole—fossils slide &
splash in pool... / Cue Extinction

Folio 128: Dear me how many/lives he had—just/think of it—&/chance saved
him—for as/his foot slipped slipped/slipped into sand & his hand/wounded with
the/pricks of the thistle, looking/round wildly for/anything thrust his hand/into
rabbit hole & found/something hard & upright/which resisted—

Folio 129: pulled twice it did not/give way—could/scarce believe—pulled/thrice
still firm—/trusted his weight &/held to it, it held/firm—(even in his/haste he
wondered/what it could be)—&/so got across to firm/ground. Livid & white/from
the work with the dune/—still panting—the

Folio 130: big moon—party where/is he where is He?—/They pass—he pushes
out in the Boat if he/does they shant take/him Prisoner. It/was a candlestick silver
[embedded] stolen—crack/in sand & land slip—/His returning afterwards/he goes
back to the spot &/finds it—lets keep secret

Folio 131: up inside the hollow Candlestick—a will pulls it/out—can't make out
arabic lay to it. Lawyers/writing survival if he/Ignorant who 'I Kate/Barnley see in
this/Mark' kept down to this/age. Will quote lines dry/but curious not integral
—incident/~so many incidents not

Folio 132: for plot but kessel gun/such tales

Folio 133: HH The battle—Bevis's strategy/—Thus the general found himself
alone.

The notes continue in this fashion through August, September and into the
next notebook (XI) that runs from 25 September 1881. Various titles for the book
are suggested:

9 September: 'Sir Bevis and his Tricks. Fortunes of Bevis' (NB IX, folio 147)

3 October: 'Bevis, The Story of A Boy and his Friend' (NB X, folio 5)

19 October: 'Bevis or Wild England' (NB X, folio 9)

11 November: 'Bevis in the English Backwoods' (NB X, folio 20)

until on 17 November 1881 he settles on 'Bevis: The Story of a Boy' (folio 21) and the naming of 'The New Sea' (NB X, folio 22). There is a final entry on 8 December 1881: 'HH Whether Robinson Crusoe went to heaven' (NB X, folio 27).

The boys reflect somewhat on their experiences, but in the event they hardly look back. The adults marvel at their triumphs, but their transition to 'the other side' is instant and accepting as they progress to learning to shoot properly, teaching Jack to swim, and finally the Antarctic Expedition. This is at once another progression and a subtle resumé, combining a further adventure, the voyage ever onwards, with the powerful poetic imagery of the winter landscape and the stars.

Bevis was Jefferies' longest book, filling the three volumes it first appeared in without benefit of narrow measure and deep leading—as in the case of his earlier three-deckers. The notebook entries reveal only a shadowy outline of such a large body of writing, and yet they give a fair impression of its origins and development from the summer of 1880 to the winter of 1881. As with *Wood Magic* the actual writing, in the latter part of this period, must have advanced with speed and inspirational facility.

The book was finished at some time between 18 November and 23 January 1882, when Jefferies signed an agreement for its publication. There is no documentation for this period, and several questions remain unanswered. Firstly, why did Jefferies change publishers again? Surely Cassell, who published *Wood Magic*, would be the obvious choice to bring out its sequel. Did Jefferies try Cassell, and if so why did they turn the book down? And did he also try others? Another publisher, C.J. Longman, once told Jefferies that he wrote too much, and several reviewers made the same comment. Jefferies later returned to Cassell, so perhaps at this time they were simply not ready to undertake another of his books. His creativity seemed to be setting a faster pace than any one publisher was prepared to go, or at least to be outstripping the growth of his readership. And pressure to produce more was to come increasingly from his personal circumstances. It was in December 1881 that he suffered the first serious breakdown in his health, and he underwent four operations in the next year, using up the savings from his most successful books, *The Gamekeeper* and its companions. As for Sampson Low, the head of the firm at this time, Edward Marston, was reputedly a very straightforward and good natured man, who befriended many authors and was prepared to help them when others were not.⁶ (We know nothing of Jefferies' relations with Marston, and the absence of any mention of him in Marston's memoirs⁷ suggests they were not in any way

⁶ *Publishing and Bookselling* by F.A. Mumby (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), p.330.

⁷ *After Work: Fragments from the Workshop of an Old Publisher* by Edward Marston, (London: W. Heinemann, 1904).

close. But Jefferies did fall back on Low to publish *Amaryllis at the Fair* when Bentley, after much persuasion and remonstrance, had finally declined it. They may then have been the publishers of late, if not last resort, with *Bevis*. If so we must assume the book was finished on or not long after the last notebook entry, 18 November 1881, to allow time for submissions of it elsewhere to have been made.

In the Memorandum of Agreement,⁸ a printed form with manuscript insertions, the author guarantees that the work is original and contains nothing scandalous etc., and makes Edward Marston, William Henry Low, Samuel Warren Searle and William John Rivington (trading as Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington) of 188 Fleet Street, London, publishers and sole wholesale vendors in Great Britain, Ireland, the British Dominions, the Continent of Europe and USA. The main clauses are:

The publishers are to advance the author the sum of one hundred pounds on day of publication, on account of one half profits derivable from sale of the three volume edition or from sales of early sheets, rights to translate or reprint in America, or the Continent of Europe or in the British Colonies. The author agrees further to grant to the said publisher the right to reprint the work in one volume (if considered desirable by them to do so) on condition of their paying him a royalty of 10% on the selling price of all volumes sold in the regular course of trade (but not on copies sold by auction or otherwise for clearance), it being understood that the said royalty will not be payable until the sum of one hundred pounds above referred to has been wholly refunded to the publisher.

The author further agrees to meet the cost of corrections—beyond 10/- per 16 pages of print. Payments to him are on application after receiving half yearly accounts. The document is signed by both parties and witnessed, 23 January, 1882. The immediate payment of £100 is meagre in comparison to the £150 per volume that Jefferies had received from Smith Elder, for outright sale of copyright. But in this combined profit sharing and royalty agreement probably both author and publisher were pinning their hopes on the success of the cheap one-volume reprint. In the event this did not come out until after Jefferies' death, when the book was abridged by G.A. Henty and issued in the series Low's Standard Books for Boys. In Henty's version the poetic and imaginative passages, which, as we have seen, were at the heart of the book's inspiration for Jefferies, were largely left out, making it more like a conventional all-action boys' book. In the twentieth century it came to be regarded as a classic of this genre, and was reprinted frequently both in other abridged and in full text editions.

⁸ Memorandum of Agreement held at the British Library, *Add. MS 58827 vol. xxv*. Jefferies address is given as 2 Woodside, Surbiton.

E.V. Lucas commented in his introduction to the influential Duckworth edition first printed in 1904: 'it was published in 1882 in three volumes, thus obeying a convention to which we now look back with astonishment and effectively preventing its true reader—the boy—from approaching it.'⁹ But we need to ask whether Jefferies, and his publishers, in issuing the book first as a three-decker, were merely submitting to an inappropriate publishing convention, or whether they intended it equally, or primarily, for adult readership. There are instances of *Bevis* reaching a young audience in its original form. Geoffrey Winthrop Young, the mountaineer, had known the book since a small child aged five. He wrote in the margin of his 1904 copy of the Duckworth edition, next to E.V. Lucas's comment: 'the edition our father bought for us, when it appeared'.¹⁰ Henry Williamson says that his father was given it in three volumes in 1882, and 'shared its magic'.¹¹ George D. Lawrie, coal and firewood merchant of Carlisle (one would have thought an unlikely, but apparently devoted, reader and correspondent of Jefferies), included the following in a long letter of 17 February 1887—about six months before Jefferies' death: 'I must tell you that I have read your *Wood Magic* and *Bevis* to my two little girls—one 7½ the other 6 years old. The eldest one was perfectly delighted with them and cried bitterly when they were finished and she told me she would never have any more short thin books but she must have great thick ones that would never be done. It is some months since I read *Bevis* to them first and I have begun it to them again. I have christened them *Bevis* and *Mark* and they are mad to find a new sea and to make a hut and do all that the real *Bevis* and *Mark* did. The eldest one says that Mr. Jefferies must write another *Bevis*.'¹²

Certainly there is much in the book implicitly directed at parents, about the value of a rural upbringing and of allowing children the latitude to develop resourcefulness and self-reliance. Further the contemporary adult reader, to judge by the reviews, thought the book was written for older as well as a young audience, and had no quarrel with the format. The *Athenaeum*, disappointingly in view of the comment quoted earlier, and certainly wrongly, found the book evidence that 'Mr. Jefferies peculiar vein is rapidly becoming exhausted', and saw it as a book for young people 'supposed to be interesting to grown men and women as well.' But the other major reviews, in the *Academy*, *Harpers* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, are enthusiastic about *Bevis* not only for its undiminished vividness in portraying rural life and character, but also for its zestful recreation of the glamour and romance of youth, and as a truthful study of boyhood. They

⁹ 1904 edition of *Bevis* published by Duckworth, p.xiv.

¹⁰ The Duckworth edition is part of the Richard Jefferies Society's Winthrop Young archive held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.

¹¹ 1966 edition in Dent's Everyman's Library, p.viii.

¹² Letter held at the British Library, *Add. MS 58827* vol. xv.

applaud the absence of moralistic plot or precept, and see Jefferies as an artist skilfully composing a picture that speaks for itself. They detect not only art but humour (even more rarely attributed to Jefferies)—a certain mock heroic in the spirited account of battles and voyages taking place in a domestic English setting. In other words they see *Bevis* as almost an antidote to the Henty or Kingston standard boys' book, full of sharp realism and ironic romanticism and other qualities requiring a sophisticated response. The critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (where there appeared a number of particularly perceptive and sympathetic reviews of Jefferies' works, perhaps by the same person), follows this line furthest. He allows that the book is 'one that can be read with pleasure by boys', but 'with equal pleasure and more appreciation by older people.' On its merits as a boys' book he has some reservations, similar to ones noted before about certain passages in *Wood Magic*:

An amiable young heathen is Bevis at best, evidently drawn with loving care from some original, but portrayed with almost too literal fidelity to the truth of boyish life, for good or for evil. We have seen nothing like it in its own way for close observation, except perhaps Victor Hugo's wonderful sketch of Breton children in *Quatre-Vingt-Treize*. Indeed, Mr. Jefferies is if anything too objectively literal... For example when Bevis and Mark catch and beat the poor donkey, the various tortures they inflict upon it are described in a simple objective fashion, without a single word of praise or blame, which is evidently a piece of intentional restraint on Mr. Jefferies' part, in pursuance of a definite artistic ideal: but is it not rather a dangerous plan to pursue with young people?¹³

Jefferies' realism and recognition of cruelty in children in many ways anticipates Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

The question is surely still relevant. Much of what Bevis and Mark get up to was never wholly commendable, and is not lawful and scarcely possible today. It may be that the status of *Bevis* as a boys' classic will be seen as a historical phase of its reputation, and that it will come to be regarded less as a genre work, isolated from the rest of Jefferies' output, and more a part of the entire realistically and poetically truthful picture he left us of life, especially rural life, in his times.

¹³ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 August 1882, p.5. See p.41 of this issue for the complete review.

Bevis as an Educational Tool

Many old Swindonians, born in the late 1930s to the 1940s, will recount reading *Bevis* at school. It was recommended reading for children in Swindon at one stage. But special editions of the book were also published to be used as an educational tool in both France and elsewhere. *Bevis and Mark* was published by J.M. Dent in 1937 and edited by Guy N. Pocock, whilst Hachette, in Paris, published extracts of *Bevis* in English but with an introduction and grammatical exercises and notes in French. Both were clearly aimed at children and both contained a list of questions that readers might be interested to see and marvel at!

NARRATIONS (page 191 of the Hachette publication)

- 1) Try and put into words *a)* the carter's lad's,—*b)* Polly the dairymaid's various thoughts as they watch Bevis sailing down the brook on his raft.
- 2) Read again the conversation between Mark and Bevis on the platform of sand in the quarry—*a)* in the silence and loneliness of a spot new to them; *b)* after the dog's disappearance; *c)* when they see the punt move across the lake. And say if, and why, in your opinion, they are really afraid, or delighted, or both, or perhaps delighted to be afraid?
- 3) Read again from *As they passed in Indian file ... to: That's why there are so many*, and say what you think of Mark's stealing, blowing, and dropping the wood-pigeon's egg.
- 4) Read again the passage describing the meeting of the two boys with the old lady in the cottage; and, using only the third person, state the facts of the episode as briefly as you can, but in consecutive sentences.
- 5) Read again how Bevis missed two jacks with his bow and arrows. Then imagine him telling the story to his father, asking and learning from him the reason for his failure.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS (pages 253–5 of the Dent publication)

CHAP. I. (*a*) What difficulties did Bevis have to cope with in getting his raft to the lake?

(*b*) What are the following, and how are they used: staple —gimlet—lever—lasso?

CHAP. II. (*a*) How do you caulk a vessel? And *how* did Bevis caulk his raft?

(*b*) What is a 'ha-ha' fence? Draw one.

CHAP. III. (*a*) How did Bevis and Mark propose to make gunpowder? Were they right?

(*b*) 'The bailiff shook his head and grunted: it could not be done.' Explain this.

CHAP. IV. (*a*) How did Bevis 'blaze' a trail? What other ways are there of doing it?

(b) What fish are named in this chapter. What are they doing?

(c) Describe Bevis's astrolabe. What is a degree?

CHAP. V. (a) Explain: bennet—pollen—quarry—malarious odours.

(b) Draw a map of the New Sea—copying it from the map in this book. Fill in the names as you read on.

CHAP. VI. (a) What are 'gix' and 'banyan'?

(b) 'That's the roc from Sindbad's island.' Explain this; or if you cannot do so, read about it in *The Arabian Nights*.

CHAP. VII. (a) What is a wood-pigeon's nest made of? What colour are the eggs? How do you blow an egg?

(b) 'They are little men—pigmies, you know.' Find out all you can about the real pigmies. Herodotus knew about them. So did H.M. Stanley.

(c) What is a 'coombe'?

(d) 'I've a great mind to be Charlemagne.' 'Then I shall be Roland.' Read all about Roland in a book of stories about the days of Charlemagne.

CHAP. VIII. (a) Explain, and show us, how the governor taught the boys to swim. (Do not write about it—tell us.)

(b) Why did the governor decide not to use a band round the chest in teaching the boys to swim?

(c) Draw pictures to explain the strokes.

CHAP. IX. (a) What kind of dog was Pan? Draw a picture.

(b) What were flints used for in old days?

(c) How did the boys make slings—and arrows—and darts?

CHAP. X. (a) What is a boomerang, and how does it work?

(b) Explain why Bevis's arrow missed the jack.

(c) Draw a picture of a catamaran.

CHAP. XI. (a) 'The rig was to be fore and aft.' Explain by means of a picture.

(b) Explain the alchemist, the astrologer, the enchanter. Look up the words in the dictionary.

(c) How did the boys first try to make a fire?

CHAP. XII. (a) How did they succeed in making a fire?

(b) What is a tiller, and how does it work?

(c) Look up bird's-foot lotus, veronica, and honeysuckle in a botany book. Draw pictures.

CHAP. XIII. (a) Write down the names of the boys with their Roman names opposite. This will make the Battle easier to follow.

(b) What is the meaning of 'a cohort each,' and 'two eagles each'?

CHAP. XIV. (a) What sort of poetry is 'King Estmere threwe his harpe asyde'? Do you know any other poems like this?

(b) What do you know about the *Odyssey*—which is quoted here in translation?

(c) Find out what this means: 'Off he went, having bribed Scylla, but he met Charybdis in the gateway.'

CHAP. XV. (a) What happened at the real Battle of Pharsalia?

(b) Explain 'A tail! a tail!'

(c) Show that Bevis was a 'sportsman.'

CHAP. XVI. (a) Show that Ted—for the moment at any rate—was not a 'sportsman.'

(b) How did Bevis escape? Tell the story aloud.

CHAP. XVII. (a) 'Now the way Val Crassus and his cohorts came to hunt for Bevis was like this ...' Like what?

(b) What do you think about the Battle? Could it have happened like that, or is it too good to be true?

CHAP. XVIII. (a) How did Bevis come to be shipwrecked?

(b) Explain exactly how you would light a fire in a high wind, provided your box of matches was dry?

CHAP. XIX. (a) Explain exactly how Mark managed to escape from prison.

(b) What is the real name for what are usually called bulrushes?

CHAP. XX. (a) What had Ted done after the Battle?

(b) What is a yellow-hammer like?

CHAP. XXI. (a) What is the principle of tacking? If you do not know and cannot follow from the book, you must ask for an explanation. What does 'sailing close-hauled' mean? And 'wearing ship'?

(b) 'What you really want to know is never in a book, and no one can tell you. By and by, if you keep it steadily in memory, and ever have your eyes open, you hit on it by accident.' Give an example of this from your own experience.

CHAP. XXII. (a) What was the real reason for their failure to tack? And how did Bevis find out, and put it right?

(b) Draw a picture of an anchor, and explain how it works.

CHAP. XXIII. (a) Explain 'Bevis began to see that much depended upon the moment he chose for coming about.'

(b) 'The saucy *Arethusa*.' Do you know a song about that? Look it up.

(c) Why did they call the boat *Pinta*?

CHAP. XXIV. (a) Bevis's Zodiac. Get a star-chart and look up all the stars and constellations that Bevis saw.

(b) Get into the way of looking for the planets and stars and constellations on fine nights.

Harry Jefferies

Jean Saunders



October 1865 (aet 13)



Harry Jefferies

1877 (aet 25)

Very little is known about Richard Jefferies' younger brother, Harry. He was born at Coate on 14 June 1852 and christened Henry James at Christ Church, old Swindon, on 26 September 1852. Henry is not a name that features in the Jefferies' family. However, Henry Gyde was his uncle, and James was the name of his father. Brother Richard, who was three years and seven months older, took the forenames of their grandfather John and their great grandfather Richard Jefferies. Brother Charlie (born 26 November 1858) was given the first name of their Gyde grandfather, Charles. Their eldest sister Ellen had been killed on the road by a runaway horse and gig the year before Harry was born, whilst Sarah came along a year later.¹ Given that Richard was 'fostered' by his Uncle Thomas and Aunt Ellen Harrild in Sydenham when Harry was a baby, and only came home to Coate for holidays, it was not until around 1856 that Richard and Harry became far better acquainted. By the time of the 1861 census Sarah was living with Aunt Ellen and spent many years at Shanklin Villa even

¹ Of his sisters, Ellen (23 July 1845–10 February 1851) was probably named after Aunt Ellen Harrild, née Gyde. The name Sarah appears on both the Jefferies and Gyde family trees. Sarah was born on 2 July 1853 and also called Sally and Lily.

when married. Even Charlie stayed in Sydenham with his aunt in 1879 but there are no records that show Harry staying with his aunt.

Although nearly four years younger, Harry gained Richard's respect for his strength and capacity to undertake tasks that Richard found difficult. Edward Thomas points to:

He [Richard] and his younger, but robust and more daring brother, Harry, had a reputation for their skating which points to a youth well spent upon Reservoir and Canal.²

Harry's rowing abilities were strong too. There is a report about the 'Swindon Regatta' in the *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, held at Coate Water on Saturday 28 June 1873, when the Jefferies' team won the four-oared race.³ Richard was one of the judges and the article bears his touch, albeit that it is unsigned. Richard is clearly very proud of Harry, who was the team stroke, whilst youngest brother Charlie was cox with three other lads, from farming families, made up the crew.

In a letter from Richard to Aunt Ellen, when Harry was aged sixteen, he wrote: 'Henry is the crack swimmer, crack skater, crack jumper of Coate and neighbourhood.'

Harry is cited as the side-kick of the main character in *Bevis*, *After London*, and *Amateur Poacher*. This from chapter two of *After London*, no doubt, describes Harry:

Oliver's whole delight was in exercise and sport. The boldest rider, the best swimmer, the best at leaping, at hurling the dart or the heavy hammer, ever ready for tilt or tournament, his whole life was spent with horse, sword, and lance ... all the utter recklessness and warrior's instinct.

Frances Gay, in a lecture about *The Amateur Poacher* to the Richard Jefferies Society on 1 April 1974, commented:

You are plunged straight into an account of the experiences of the writer (Jefferies) who does not give himself a name but is obviously the leader, the chief adventurer, and his brother, Orion. Richard makes this explanation of the name by which his brother Henry was known in his book ... 'Orion must have the credit of the courage. I call him Orion because he was a hunter and had a famous dog. The last I heard of him he had just ridden through a prairie fire, and says the people out there think nothing of it.'

In another of Richard's letters to Aunt Ellen (10 September 1871): 'Henry has gone to Aldershot camp with the riflemen to spend 8 days under canvas—in

² *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* by Edward Thomas (London: Hutchinson, 1909), Ch.III.

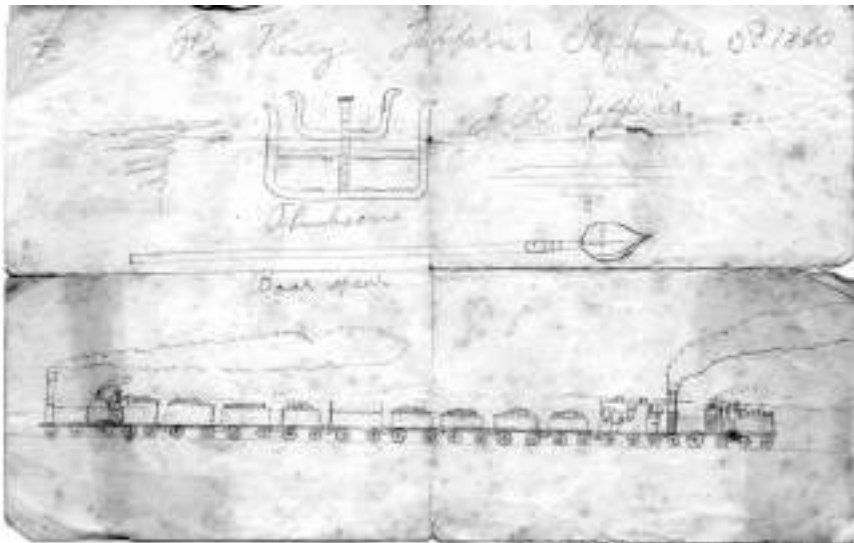
³ 'Swindon Regatta,' *Wilts & Glos. Standard*, Sat., 5 July 1873. See *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No. 36 [2021], pp.5–8.

tents... he thoroughly enjoys soldiering, puts his whole soul into it. He is considered one of the best men in the corps.'



This pencil drawing, by Uncle John Luckett Jefferies (1824–1856), of Coate Farm is believed to show Richard and Harry with their fishing rods along with the dog. It might be one of their uncle's last drawings before he died of tuberculosis, aged 31.

Richard dedicated the following two pencil drawings of a thumb-screw, trains, rifles and spears 'For Henry Jefferies September 3rd 1860' and signed it J R Jefferies.





The pencil drawing has been ‘cleaned’ electronically.

The original, on the other side of the paper, is virtually impossible to read.

The last census of 1871, when the Jefferies’ family were still living in Coate, suggests that Harry, Richard and Charlie all helped on the farm as no other occupation is given for any of them. James Luckett Jefferies’ occupation is stated as ‘Farmer 36a. employing 1 man’.

Both Harry and Sarah were the signed witnesses at Richard’s marriage to Jessie Baden on 8 July 1874 at Chiseldon Church.

Harry moved to Texas, aged 27, when Coate Farm was sold. He appears better at keeping in touch with his family than Richard. First cousin, Mary Cox, often mentions Harry in her extant diary (8 February 1887 to 16 October 1889) and his mother, Betsy, writes about him regularly in her letters to her niece, Sarah Gyde.

Harry emigrated to America in 1879⁴ and spent the rest of his life in Texas. Perhaps the tales that his father told his sons of his own adventures in America might have encouraged Harry to choose to emigrate there. Richard was inspired to write *Ben Tubbs Adventures*⁵ as a teenager, and the battles with the Red Indians on the prairies of Texas might have sparked a spirit of adventure in his brother who may have read the story.

It was evening on one of the immense prairies of Texas, the sun was sinking fast, and a slight wind waved the tall grass around a small coppice which appeared as an island of wood in the midst of a sea of vegetation. Three hunters with their rifles

⁴ In a letter from Betsy Jefferies (Harry’s mother) to her niece Sarah Gyde, dated ‘1881’ from Bathwick Street: ‘You remember Harry—he is in America—been there 2 years, get on very well.’ The 1900 census for Houston also puts his arrival in America as 1879. The exact sailing date is unknown.

⁵ *Ben Tubbs Adventures*, Richard Jefferies (Foulsham: Petton Books, 2016).

lying near sat around a sparkling fire, at which the eldest of the three was cooking a large piece of deer's-meat.⁶

Writing to Harry's cousin Sarah Gyde, in a letter dated 30 October 1883, Harry's mother Betsy informs:

You wish to know of Harry—we heard from him some time ago. He is not yet married—another put off, don't think it will ever be. He has plenty of work and in better health which is a great blessing, still in the same part of America in the carpentering building.

and she encloses a photograph of 'dear Harry'. The 1900 census for Houston, Texas records Harry's occupation as a carpenter, and resident there for 21 years. This ties in with his woodworking skills that Richard envied.⁷

The undated photographs on the next page suggest that Harry was in the American army; perhaps a frontiersman. Their functions included guarding the frontier settlements in forts from the native Red Indians, constructing roads and defending the overland trails, rivers and railways. The cap badge, a hunting horn, denotes infantry. Everything points to Fort Bend as the station, which is where he married Carrie Elise Secrest on 4 September 1884. Under 'Married' in *The Nation*, Richmond Fort Bend County, 5 September 1884, is an item recording their marriage adding that Mr. Jefferies had been resident at this city some few years and is one of our most prominent builders, much esteemed as a genial gentleman and clever businessmen. His daughter Mildred claims that her parents were introduced by an English friend in 1883.

Phyllis Treitel believes Harry's enthusiastic letters about Texas may have encouraged Richard to want to make 'a visit of two or three months,'⁸ but he never made it. Richard mentions Texas in his works. For example, in the first chapter of *Round About a Great Estate*, that was first serialised in January 1880, Richard writes about the hard times for farmers who sell-up at auction and depart to Texas. Richard notes a few towns in Texas—Cameron, Bedford and Brenham—in his notebook No. IX, around mid November 1880 and an entry dated about 18 March 1881 notes: 'Dr. S.A. Stone,⁹ Richmond, Fort Bend Co[unty], Texas' which is repeated in his next notebook around 29 October of the same year. Was Richard still thinking of planning a visit to see his brother, with the knowledge that he would be in need of a doctor?

⁶ *ibid.*, p.97.

⁷ See Ch IV of *After London* where Oliver criticises Felix's construction of his canoe.

⁸ 'The Other Side: Visions of America' by Phyllis Treitel, *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No. 2 [1993], p.26.

⁹ Samuel A. Stone was a physician, born in 1831 in Virginia. The censuses for 1870 and 1880 list the doctor with just his wife Mary at his home in Richmond, Texas.



Harry pictured in the middle



4 September 1884 (aet 33)
On his wedding day.



Carrie Secrest, born on
16 February 1854.

Betsy Jefferies mentions Harry's poor health in earlier letters to her niece Sarah Gyde but nothing specific. And later (9 January 1889) writing from 48 New King Street, Bath, she writes to Sarah:

We had a short letter from our dear old Harry. He is very ill and they have moved from the Parts [Houston?]. He thinks it is unhealthy. I do hope the change will improve health.

Betsy next mentions her son to Sarah in her letter of July 1891:

Glad to say our dear Harry and his 2 dear boys grow nicely. Harry is now very well but was poorly some time ago with abscesses on the back—very large ones which kept him from work.

In 1898 Harry had an accident at work and was paralysed until his death. At that time he had two little girls of 4 and 2 years of age along with two boys who were about 13 and 10.

The 1900 census suggests that Carrie is running a boarding house in Caroline Street with her brother David and sister Mattie.

There is just one known Jefferies' family heirloom that Harry must have taken to America. It is a silver 'pap' spoon that belonged to his grandfather, John Jefferies, who had impressed his initials 'J J' on the spoon with his own stamping iron, made by the local blacksmith. It is hall-marked sterling silver, London Assay Office, date 1852 (Victoria's head). The maker is 'EE'—Elizabeth Eaton. It is 177mm long, 40mm wide and was presented to the Richard Jefferies Museum by Mildred Besant Jefferies Weaver of Texas, Harry's daughter.



Mildred¹⁰ was Harry's third child. Walter Besant was her godfather after whom she was named.¹¹ Besant recorded a major error regarding the difference in age of Harry and Richard in chapter one of *The Eulogy for Richard Jefferies* (1888). The boys were 3 years and 7 months apart:

His [Richard] principal companion in boyhood was his next brother, younger than himself by one year only, but very different in manners, appearance, and in tastes. He describes both himself and his brother in *After London*. Felix is himself; Oliver is his brother.

¹⁰ Mildred Besant Jefferies was born on 16 July 1894 and died 23 August 1979.

¹¹ Letter to Cyril Wright from Mildred sent around 1974. Evidently Besant sent his god daughter some gold buttons. Mildred was a keen member of the Richard Jefferies Society and a regular letter-writer to Frances Gay and Cyril Wright.

Mildred married Carl Edward Weaver¹² on 26 April 1918. Along with their married daughter Martha Weaver Michael (27 Oct 1911–12 Aug 1972), who died before her mother, there is a memorial in Forest Park cemetery, Houston.



Harry and Carrie had three other children:

- Harry James (8 August 1885–1918) bore a son named Harold (born 1907) who had two sons Richard Slade (born 1956) and Robert Melvyn (born 1958). There are two photographs of Harry James in the Fort Bend Museum Collection—there for no obvious reason except that he is noted as the brother of Mrs. Carl Weaver. The information on the back of the first photograph (1902) records ‘Harry James Jefferies Born 1886, Died 1918’, a year different to our records.



Photograph of Harry James Jefferies 1902



1906

¹² Carl Edward Weaver: 18 Sep 1895–17 Sep 1966.

- Felix Secrest born 18 January 1888. Mary Cox (Harry's cousin) mentions in her diary (9 February 1888): 'I heard from Aunt S[ewell] & Mother [Fanny Cox] from Aunt Jefferies [Betsy, Harry's mother] enclosing Harry's last dated Jan 19th in which he tells of the birth of another son on the 18th of Jan.' He married (Lilian) Vivienne Liddell in Texas in 1910. He served in WWI in 1917 albeit that he tried to obtain exemption due of the fact that his wife was a dependent. He was registered on 5 June 1917 (Sacramento, California). The card records that he was slender, of medium height, blue eyes, brown hair, and no distinguishing features. The 1930 and 1940 censuses puts him in Cook county, Chicago, Illinois. Felix died 11 Jan 1969 in California.
- Martha Elise (24 December 1895-1960) married Maurice Sperling (b. 16 May 1883 in England. Emigrated in 1901)—a photographer and then retail salesman. He was issued with a WWI registration card in 1917. One daughter, Carolyn R (16 July 1922–11 June 2001, Texas) who married Mr. Littlefield. On the 1920 census Harry (now 67) is recorded at their home in Harris, Houston. Perhaps the next photograph is of their house.



Last known photograph of Harry, Christmas 1919.

Both Harry and Carrie are buried in Hollywood cemetery, Richmond, Fort Bend, but not together. Carrie died on 21 July 1905, whilst Harry died 15 years later in a local sanitarium on 7 September 1920 aged 68. The death certificate cites: 'Cardio-Reno-Vascula degeneration' of 20 years with 'dementia' as a

contributing cause for the last year. No mention is made of paralysis. His occupation is given as 'labor'. He was buried on 9 September 1920. Carrie's memorial states that it was erected by 'The Woodmen Circle', which in itself is something of a mystery unless one of her children were involved with the Woodmen Circle Home established later in the mid-1920s to serve as an orphanage and a dormitory for widowed women.



Writer's Ancestor: Hayward Boy in Society

This article was published in the *Daily Review* on Sunday 5 March 1961. The newspaper was published in Hayward, California and the headline is about Richard Slade Jefferies born in 1956. He was the son of Harry Jefferies' first child, Harold, who moved to California from Texas. Harry was Richard, the writer's, brother who moved to Texas—see article on pp.56–65. No doubt the young boy's aunt, Mildred Jefferies Weaver, was responsible for her nephews joining the RJS.



There's always a little shock of recognition which comes with seeing someone you know pictured in a newspaper.

But when the newspaper comes from half a world away and the 'someone you know' is your own 4-year-old son, the shock becomes a downright jolt.

The mother thus jolted is Mrs. Harold Jefferies, 24624 Santa Clara St., Hayward, who was leafing through a copy of the *Evening Advertiser*, published in Swindon, Wiltshire, England, spotted son Richard's picture alongside a story headlined: YOUNG RICHARD JEFFERIES IS IN THE SOCIETY.

The photo was one taken in Hayward and subsequently mailed to a relative in Texas. How it wound up in England was explained in the story:

Mrs. F.J. Gay, secretary and chairman of the Richard Jefferies Society of Swindon, has received a photograph of four-year-old Richard Jefferies, of Hayward, California, USA, who is a great-great-nephew of Richard Jefferies, the Swindon-born writer and naturalist.

Young Richard is one of the youngest members of the Richard Jefferies Society in America.

The photograph was sent to Mrs. Gay by Mrs. M[ildred] Jefferies Weaver, of Houston, Texas.

The Society referred to is one which has established, and supports, the Swindon home of the writer-naturalist (1848–1887) as a national shrine. It is the same home in which the Hayward Richard Jefferies' [grand]father was born.

Also members of the society, though they didn't get a headline and photos in the *Evening Advertiser* are Richard's brothers, Bruce 16 and Robert, 11 months.

It's too soon to know if Richard and Robert have the literary leanings of their illustrious ancestor, Mrs. Jefferies said, but Bruce, a Mt. Eden High School student, hopes to attend Oxford, and is shooting for a career in journalism.

Writer's Ancestor

Hayward Boy In Society

There's always a little streak of recognition which comes with seeing someone you know pictured in a newspaper.

But when the newspaper comes from half a world away and the "someone you know" is your own 10-year-old son, the streak becomes a downright jolt.

The mother this jolted is Mrs. Harold Jefferies, 2621 Santa Clara St., Hayward, who was looking through a copy of the *Evening Advertiser*, published in London, England, spotted son Richard's picture alongside a story headlined: **YOUNG RICHARD JEFFERIES IS IN THE SOCIETY.**

The photo was one taken in Hayward and subsequently mailed to a relative in Texas. Now it wound up in England was explained in the story.

"Mrs. F. J. Gay, secretary and chairman of the Richard Jefferies Society of London, has received a photograph of ten-year-old Richard Jefferies, of Hayward, California, USA, who is a great-grand-nephew of Richard Jefferies, the Swindon-born writer and naturalist.

"Young Richard is one of the youngest members of the Richard Jefferies Society in America.

"The photograph was sent to Mrs. Gay by Mrs. H. Jefferies Warner, of Houston, Texas."

The society referred to is one which has established, and supports, the Swindon home of the writer-naturalist (1848-1927) as a national shrine. It is the same home in which the Hayward Richard Jefferies' father was born.

Also members of the society, though they didn't get a headline and photos in the *Evening Advertiser*, are Richard's brother,

son, Bruce, 15, and Robert, 11, brothers.

It's too soon to know if Richard and Robert have the literary leanings of their illustrious

ancestor, Mrs. Jefferies said, but Bruce, a Mt. Eden High School student, hopes to attend Oxford, and is shooting for a career in journalism.



BRITISH CELEBRITY. . . Richard Jefferies, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Jefferies, 2621 Santa Clara St., Hayward, displays a copy of the Richard Jefferies Society publication. Richard was featured in a British newspaper as the youngest American member of the group. —Review Photo

Stone Readings on Burderop Down

Wendy McLeod-Gilford

These two poems by Wendy McLeod-Gilford were written just after the occasion of a joint Richard Jefferies Society, Friends of Alfred Williams and Swindon Literary Festival event held next to the Sarsen Memorial Stone on Burderop Down on 3 May 2006.

Standing on the high downs
The wind behind our backs, growing chill.
The soaring skylark sings a timeless symphony
Sullied by modern machinery's drone.

The faithful few gather on the windswept hill
Around the memorial sarsen stone
To read poetic, prophetic prose
About past lives: keen observations on man's condition.

We look out across the panoramic landscape
Towards Hodson, Coate and Liddington
And wonder, sadly, at the changes
Wrought by the industrial revolution.

Vast prairies of wheat and yellow rape,
Doused with toxic chemicals—no room for wild flowers!
The motorway, cutting through Jefferies' once wild, wooded land
Now obliterating tranquility—too late to reinstate!

The same lament then as now—too much use of the plough;
No home grown apples—cheaper from the USA.
Jefferies and Williams sent out the message then and still do now
Honour Nature—beware progress and the consequences!

13 May 2006

From Burderop Down to Hodson —Time Warp

Wendy McLeod-Gilford

From Burderop down readings I descend
Through fields of yellow rape and spring green wheat.
Then prompted by old memories of my childhood
I turn into a narrow lane to Hodson—almost unchanged.
The old thatched cottages nestling in shady dells
With primroses peeping through lush grass and bluebells—
In what remains of Hodson Wood—rudely, crudely cut in two
By the mad M4 motorway.
Jefferies' fond writings about life around Coate long ago
Gives a bitter-sweet view of long lost tranquility.
At least I also knew how it was
Fifty years ago—peaceful and slow.
My soul set free in field and hedgerow,
Woods and sky—watching sun through tracteries of leaves
And clouds of butterflies floating on warm summer air.
Then on to Liddington castle—the familiar clump of trees
Surrounded on all sides by alien crops of rape and wheat—
Oh! for the unploughed sheep downs of years gone by
With cowslip carpets and mushroom rings.
At least the clump of trees are still intact
Just as I remember seeing them from afar
From my bedroom window when I was a child.

13 May 2006

In Praise of the Country

H. D. Traill



©National Portrait Gallery

Henry Duff Traill was a Londoner of Scottish descent born in 1842. His father, James, was a magistrate at Greenwich and Woolwich police court.

Traill was educated at the Merchant Taylors' School and obtained a scholarship to St John's College, Oxford, where he gained a degree in natural science in 1865. He then read for the bar and was called to the Inner Temple in 1869 and was appointed an inspector of returns under the education office, a position which allowed him to cultivate his gift of writing.

In 1873 Traill joined the *Pall Mall Gazette* under Frederick Greenwood and followed him to the *St. James's Gazette* in 1880. It's possible, though unsubstantiated, that Traill may have some role in the publication of Jefferies' contributions to the two newspapers. He later joined the *Daily Telegraph* and was editor of *The Observer* 1889-1891. Traill also published biographies, amongst others, of Coleridge, William III, Lord Cromer and of Sir John Franklin, the Arctic explorer.

In this essay contributed to *The Contemporary Review*, October 1887, he examines from Virgil onwards various authors' interpretations of the landscape in a search for spiritual sustenance and calm. Traill's own requirements were space, solitude and quiet. Occasionally his writing style is reminiscent of the court room as he presents his reasoning.

Traill died suddenly from heart failure at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington, on 21 February 1900.

It is not many weeks since one of the most fascinating of all the writers who have ever set themselves to describe the sights, sounds, and occupations, the 'Works and Days' of the English country-side was removed from us by death. The remarkable merits of Mr. Richard Jefferies, both as an observer of Nature and as a literary artist, have received many tributes since his decease. He has been praised, in fact, like *probitas* in the well-known line from Juvenal¹, and unhappily it would seem with much the same result. Mr. Jefferies died, it will be remembered, in very straitened circumstances, and left a widow and family so

¹ Ed: *probitas laudatur et alget*: honesty is praised and is left out to freeze.

ill provided for that his friends were obliged to make an appeal to the public on their behalf. It is melancholy to think that a labourer of such rare excellence in a field so sparsely occupied should have been thus, apparently at any rate, deemed unworthy of his hire. No doubt it would be wrong to trust this sad business as exclusively a case of public neglect. The long illness that preceded Mr. Jefferies's death must have progressively diminished, and towards the end, may have entirely arrested his money-earning powers; and simple as appears to have been his manner of life, it is not surprising if, at his comparatively early age, he should have been unable to lay by anything out of an income derived mainly, it is to be supposed, from his contributions to the periodical press. Perhaps, too, the expression 'public neglect' is not applicable with justice to the lot of any writer who can find a ready and fairly remunerative market for what he writes, whatever be the particular quarter in which that market has to be sought. The world of readers may decline to buy a writer's books, or to buy them in sufficient numbers to enable him to live; but if they hear him gladly in the daily or weekly press,—as they often do—and it would be a bad look-out for many authors if they did not—his friends may perhaps be considered ungrateful or unreasonable if they complain of his being 'neglected.' What right, it may be asked of them, has a man to insist on being read in that form of publication which takes its place (as a rule) on the library shelves instead of in that form which goes (as a rule) into the waste-paper basket? If there is not enough demand for his books to make his fortune let him thank his stars that there is enough demand for his 'pot-boilers' to ensure the boiling of the pot. At the worst he will be better off than those writers whose whole time is occupied on what are called 'monumental works,' perhaps with some allusion to the posthumous character of the only fame that is to be expected from them—works which may possibly be read with admiration a hundred years hence, but the sale of which will not buy their authors bread and cheese today. Such men are no doubt living among us at this moment, though not, I fancy, in such numbers as we have been recently asked to believe, and many, perhaps most of them, even if they could spare the time for the production of ephemeral literature, have not the self-adaptive faculty necessary to enable them to produce it of the quality which its light-minded patrons desire. Mr. Jefferies, it might be said by the kind of objector I am imagining, was unfortunate in the failure of his health, and in his early death; but he cannot be said to have been 'neglected,' merely because though a well-known, fairly-well remunerated, and, in one sense, popular writer, his books did not command a large enough sale to support him during enforced cessation of work, and to provide for his family after his death.

Looking at the matter from this hard common-sense point of view, it would no doubt be difficult to deny the justice of objections like these. At the same

time it is equally difficult to restrain an emotion of that ancient and futile discontent which Coleridge rebukes in his 'Complaint and Reproof'. It is not so much, one cannot help feeling, that a writer like Mr. Jefferies does not 'obtain that which he merits,' or which we deem him to merit; but that others who seem to us to merit so much less than he did should obtain so much more. It is eminently natural, however economically unreasonable, to think that the literature which gives the most lasting pleasure to the greatest number of readers ought to bring, if not the largest, at any rate the steadiest and most lasting remuneration to its producers. If the proceeds of a single lucky hit with a 'shilling dreadful,' which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the dust-heap, may occasionally enrich its author with the capital of a modest income, is it not hard that no such reward should ever be received for those volumes which no reader who appreciates them at all would ever think of throwing away? If the thrilling story which 'you cannot put down till you have finished it' (but which when you have put it down you will assuredly never take it up again) may prove a gold mine to its author, is it fair that the man whose book, though you can indeed lay it down before you have finished it, can be taken up again with renewed delight a hundred and a thousand times, should almost want for bread.

These are old questions and as idle as they are old. They may be asked, of course, with as much point and as little profit in connection with plenty of other good literary work besides that of Mr. Jefferies. If in his case they appear to deserve a more sympathetic answer than they usually meet with from the 'practical man,' it is because his particular kind of good literary work is mocked, in this day of shams, with a semblance of popularity which it does not really possess. The English public, outside the coteries of culture, does not pretend to care for poetry except in 'selections,' or for philosophy or science except in primers, or for history in any larger doses that can be contained in manuals of two hundred pages foolscap octavo, or aesthetics in any other form than that which best exhibits the eloquence of the critic under colour of describing the qualities of a work of art. But hardly any own, however great or however slight his pretensions to culture, will admit indifference to Nature, and to her world of living things, if not perhaps as they present themselves to the scientific mind, at any rate as they appear to the lovingly observant eye. There are comparatively few people in these days who would plead guilty to that inveterate Cockneyism of which many a man, by no means assignable to the category of the club-fogey, would have boldly boasted a generation ago. The 'sweet shady side of Pall Mall' has still perhaps its votaries, who prefer it to any other spot in the world; but unless they are very old and hardened in their defence of modern tastes, they keep their devotion a secret. As for the others, it is 'the thing' to profess enthusiasm for 'the country'; and it would shock them to be out of the mode. These are they—or rather these are some of them, for women here, or

elsewhere, are more resolutely 'in the fashion' than men—who are accustomed to fill the heated air of the drawing-room, to which nothing but their own wishes brings them in mid-July with romantic aspirations for those woods and fields from which nothing but their own wishes keeps them. About as genuinely rustic as china shepherdesses, they add an exasperating touch to their imposture by their selection of the confidant of their imaginary regrets, pouring out perhaps their elegant lamentations into the ear of some unfortunate man who is chained to his labouring oar in the great city, and who, if he were master of his own movements, would be far enough away from it in a few hours. It is, I say, because so many people nowadays pretend to a passionate affection for Mr. Jefferies's subject, that one was apt at first to be more than ordinarily surprised at what now appears to have been the comparatively limited circulation of Mr. Jefferies's works. It is now clear that an immense proportion of the professed admirers of 'those sweet things, don't you know', 'The Gamekeeper at Home,' and 'Wild Life in a Southern County,' had been content to read them 'as they came out' in their evening paper, along with the 'This day's proceedings' of the latest sensational trial, and thereafter to hand them over to the Promethean housemaid. In most cases, indeed, it may be fairly assumed that even this transitory kind of interest in these unique productions was not due to that peculiar quality of them which so endears them to the true lover of the country. They have much to say, as their titles indicate, not only about the fields and woods, but about the creatures that people them; and there are a large number of worthy persons languidly interested in what used to be called 'natural history,' who imagine that to like to read about the habits of the lower animals, who have all of them their 'place in the country,' and nowhere else, is the same thing as being fond of the country for its own sake. I need hardly say that it is nothing of the kind, and that a man is no more entitled by his taste to boast himself a lover of the country, than he would be by a fondness for the Zoological Gardens.

Of the real meaning and the real charm of 'The Gamekeeper' and 'Wild Life' it appears to me that the class of readers I am speaking of never get so much as an inkling. To make anything of these books than mere collections of 'Stories about Animals' or 'Wonders of the Woods,' or, at any rate, to get their full value out of them, and to recognise them as books to be kept by us, and read again and again, as we keep and read, or are supposed to keep and read, the works of our favourite poets, it is necessary that the reader should study them in that peculiar posture of the mind and will which, as I shall endeavour to show hereafter, in the sole, the indispensable, condition of finding an enduring charm in the country. And though it is, I know, the fashion to assume that the country has more charms for us these days than it had for our fathers, I have no doubt whatever, for my own part, that, in spite of certain superficial and delusive

phenomena which seem to favour this assumption, the very contrary is the truth. Indeed, I should have been prepared to say, were it not for the aforesaid phenomena, that it is the self-evident truth. Surely the contention that the love of the country is increasing at a time when the drift of migration from the rural districts to the large towns is assuming the proportions of an economical danger, must be admitted to partake of the nature of a paradox. Nor does it seem antecedently very probable that a growing desire for the repose and monotony of country life should concur with a progressive intensification of that feverish thirst for excitement and novelty which marks our age, except, indeed, in the sense in which a growing desire for cooling mineral waters is observed to coincide with an increasing amount of intoxicating liquors. No penetrating observer, however, would adduce this last coincidence as proof of the progress of temperance; and the multiplication of 'country cottages,' 'bungalow' settlements, and 'villas standing in their own park-like grounds,' is a fact of a precisely analogous bearing on the question with which it is usual to connect it. The rush of townsmen into the country is not the sign of any genuine or settled longing for repose; rather it is a new and melancholy symptom of modern unrest. It is not quiet which is sought, but distraction; the quest is for novelty, which is itself one of the most potent sources of excitement; and the appetite, in this instance at any rate, is very quickly satisfied. Let those who are curious on that point consult any provincial or suburban house-agent in a sufficiently large way of business, and ascertain from him what is the average rate of rapidity at which these residences change hands. The statistics which he will get can hardly fail to convince him that all over the rural environs of London, out to a radius of twenty miles or so, a perpetual process of disenchantment is going on in the minds of emigrants from the metropolis; that these districts are continually receiving the influx of a stream of restless townspeople who think they long for a life of repose and quiet, and are continually sending back again an efflux of bored *suburbani*, who have found that all they really needed was a 'little change.'

The rapid progress of satiation among the class to which I refer is a phenomenon for which the wise observer would have been prepared; he would have anticipated it from the very fact that these immigrants into the country are so fastidious about the kind of neighbourhood which they select for their rural retreat—so exigent in the matter of 'picturesque surroundings.' We shall do well, as a rule, to distrust his genuine love of the country who has much to say about the 'scenery'; for in all probability the root of the matter is not in him. If such a one stakes much upon his supposed predilection for this or that particular spot, disappointment is assuredly in store for him. He has yet to master the saving truth that the true pleasure of the country—the only pleasure that survives the excitement of novelty—is not an affair of the aesthetic

sensibilities but of the contemplative faculty. It is not the glow and radiance of an emotion—for emotions are of their very nature transitory—is the equable atmosphere of a permanent mental state. The author of *Endymion* has much to answer for in having penned the most quoted of its lines. In declaring—or declaring without the necessary qualification—that ‘a thing of beauty is a joy for ever,’ he incurred a very serious responsibility. The truth which the utterance contains is not to be found in the meaning which lies upon its surface, and Keats ought to have foreseen that many persons, including some of the highest respectability, would put the superficial on it, and, upon the faith of such construction, would take villas ‘standing in their own park-like grounds,’ on three years’ agreements, perhaps even on twenty-one year leases determinable at seven or fourteen years at the option of the tenant. He should have appended a footnote to the first line of *Endymion*—it might have checked the not too even flow of the verse to have introduced it into the text—to the effect that though ‘a thing of beauty is a joy for ever,’ it is not so to the same man at all times. Its potentiality of imparting joy to mankind at large, or even, with reservations, to the same man, is doubtless perpetual in the strictest sense; but its joy in actuality is perpetual only in the sense of being perpetually recurrent not in that of being indefinitely continuous. If we fancy that it is continuous it is only because we so rarely test the question by experiment. The Grecian Urn of which Keats sang, be it real or imaginary, was a thing of beauty; his own ode to it is a thing of surpassing beauty. But if he had lived in the perpetual contemplation of this urn and of nothing else, would his joy in it have been perpetual? If the lovers of this matchless ode were to pass their lives in reading it and nothing else, would *their* joy in it be perpetual? I greatly fear that Satiety—that skeleton at every feast of the emotions, be the fare never so ambrosial—would at last assert its claims. A ‘joy for ever’ is indeed, except in the above defined sense of a ‘potentiality of joy,’ a contradiction in terms. One might as well talk of an ‘immovable wave.’ Joy is but a momentary uplifting of the waters of the soul, which flash for that moment in the sun of beauty, and then in obedience, as it were, to a mental law of gravitation, subside. Every subsidence of a pleasure is attended with a sense of loss; and a sense of loss is pain. Emotion, therefore, of any kind, as being a defiance of an ultimately irresistible force, must necessarily either be or tend to become pain; it is only on the mirrored calm of contemplation which, never rebelling against, has never to be subdued by that force, that it acts without any disturbing effect.

But it is only rarely that a solicitor or stockbroker, whatever his eminence in his calling, attains to much proficiency in psychological analysis; and, as a rule, therefore, he accepts Keats’s poetic dictum in a sense which it will not bear. He firmly believes that the ‘extensive and delightful’ views which so attracted him in the advertisement of his country residence, and so charmed him on his first

visit, will never pall upon him, even as objects of perpetual contemplation. Great, therefore, is his disappointment when he discovers that only one-half of the advertiser's description remains permanently true, and has to confess to himself that the views, while continuing to be extensive, cease to be delightful. It is a new and unwelcome revelation to him to find that he is capable of being just as much bored with the 'Hog's Back' as with Bartholomew Lane or Bedford Row, and that the space of a year or so, or perhaps only of a few months, suffices to make him as indifferent to waving woods and embosoming hills, as he was to forests of chimney-pots and avenues of lamp-posts. Then is the time to inform him that it is not beauty of scenery which makes or mars the country for him who really loves it; that picturesqueness does not constitute nor plainness diminish its abiding charm; nay even, paradox as it may sound, that there are certain forms of rural beauty which, as detracting from the *mental* effects of landscape, are apt to impair its permanent value for those true lovers of whom I speak.

The two qualities which are primarily essential to the production and maintenance of this mental effect are space and solitude. Quiet, of course, is an essential also, but that follows of necessity from solitude; and solitude and quiet, without space, will not avail—as many a stockbroker and solicitor has learned to his cost—to give him that sense of freedom and repose which he associates, and very justly, with the rural life. An 'eligible villa' at the foot of an abruptly rising hill and with, say, an impenetrable wood directly in front of it, may beget so distinct a feeling of confinement as you get in Lower Thames Street. Even the desirable residence 'standing in its own park-like grounds' will produce the same effect if this attractive description is applied, as it often is, to a house stuck down in the middle of a clump of trees, which not only interrupt the view but go far towards excluding the light and air. It is an error to suppose that imprisonment within four walls of foliage is much less irksome and depressing in the long run than imprisonment within four walls of bricks and mortar. Andrew Marvell talks in 'The Garden' about the mind

Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade

That is all very well in the garden but not in the home—all very well for an afternoon but not for some sixteen or eighteen hours of the twenty-four. In that case the 'green thought' is only the Cockney's innocent belief that he will like it.

Space and solitude then, and *not* picturesqueness, are primary essentials to the production and maintenance of the true charm of the country; but it is evident that something else is required. Otherwise the appeal of the landscape and seascape would be one; for the sea is solitude personified, and it would affect us in its wilder moods, say, as the mountain and ravine affect us and in its

calmer as we are affected by the open, sunny plain. I should hope it is not necessary to point out to any true lover of the country how monstrous a heresy it would be to affirm any such proposition as this last, and how wide, how emphatically generic is the distinction which separates the 'feeling' of landscape from that of the sea. Which of the two is the superior from the contemplative point of view, which of the two makes more for abiding peace, and less for transitory joy, appears to me—though I am anxious to avoid all suspicion of dogmatism—to be a question which does not admit of a moment's doubt. I have nothing, at least that I am aware of, to gain by depreciating the sea, which indeed, if only in respect of its size and strength, it would ill become any one less presumptuous than that little prig, Charoba, in Landor's *Gebir*, to underrate. But without bring be prepared to say 'coldly, with long-lashed eyes abased, Is this the mighty ocean, is this all?' one may be prepared to contend that the ocean has no such powerfully soothing or intimately searching influence for the human heart as has, for instance, a sweep of English pasture broken in the distance by lines of purple woodland, rising tier above tier, in dimmer and dimmer colouring, till they melt into the sky. I regard it as preposterous to say that the sea has a tranquillising effect, or that it is or can be permanently satisfying to a mind which seeks tranquillity before all things, and long before the mere delight of the eyes. The sea is a stimulant, not a sedative as the phenomena of external Nature which we oftenest contemplate ought, in these days especially, to be. Who are the poets who have expressed themselves most strongly them in reality types of the restless man of action, both of them driven only by enforced exile to the contemplation of Nature, and both of them far more attracted by the life and stir of great cities. Byron died before his wandering impulse had spent itself; but we may rely upon it that if he had lived beyond the age of fifty he would he have settled down into an inveterate Londoner, with rooms in the Albany, and his own special table at the 'Travellers'. As for Victor Hugo, as soon as ever the culprit of *Les Châtiments* fell from power the exile of December returned to France, took a spacious 'sky-parlour' in Paris to receive his worshippers in, and, roughly speaking, never set foot outside the fortifications to the day of his death.

These remarks, however, run some risk of being mistaken for a digression. My point is—or was—that space and solitude alone are not the constituents of the 'feeling' of the country, inasmuch as the sea is excellently well-found in the articles of space and solitude, yet cannot claim to exercise anything like the soothing and chastening charm of landscape upon a well-regulated mind. The differentiating element, that which the landscape possesses and the sea does not, is clearly the presence of *organic* life. It is the presence of organic life which gives to those open spaces of the earth on which such life abounds their strangely tranquillising power. The spaces should not be too visibly bounded,

because the sensation of the Infinite is undoubtedly an invariable ingredient in this mental calm; but it is a mistake to suppose that the sensation of the Infinite is in itself a tranquillising force. On the contrary, as any one will find who thoroughly absorbs himself for a few minutes in the contemplation of the starlit heavens, it is essentially a disquieting, a disturbing agency, as fraught with unrest, an unrest of its own, as is a persistent gaze on that quintessential concentration of the finite—a crowded street. It is only in the synthesis of the two that the mind can repose—it is only where man beholds the finite clasped, as it were, and hushed on the bosom of the infinite, that his mind becomes conscious of the contact of finite and indefinite in its own nature, and feels the deep submerging peace which the sense of that contact must always and necessarily produce. How should the landscape fail to arouse this sense of contact, or the sea succeed? The sea is infinity, impersonality, nay, in the deeper sense, unchangeability itself. It leans illimitably upon an illimitable sky. The form of the matter upon which it forces, kindly or terrible, exert themselves is nothing; the forces themselves everything. The form of its matter—the finite element in the sea—is so incessantly shifting, that for us it is as good as non-existent; we can take no more account of it than we can of the matter of the heavenly bodies, which to use are no more than points of light. A sense of unity, a sense of common infinity with the sea is as impossible as it is with the stars.

To space then and to solitude must be added, in order to produce the distinctively tranquillising effect of landscape, the felt presence of organic life. It is the total absence of this element which made the starlit heaven appear a sad a 'sad sight' to Carlyle; it is its almost total absence that makes the desert and the glacier unfitting objects of continual contemplation. And it is its presence which causes those vague longings that ocean, firmament and desert only intensify, to be so instantaneously and mysteriously allayed by one glance at a Yorkshire moorland, or even at the misty flats, the long gaunt lines of poplar, the glimmering waterpools of a Flemish fen. The organic life of whose presence we are conscious may permissibly be human; but if human it must be rare and remote. It must be little in amount, and it must make its little go a long way off. He sight of a distant human figure in the road or on the hillside, and even the faint sound of human voices will no doubt enhance the soothing influence of landscape, but they must be far enough away to raise the particular human being who excites these sensations from the level of the individual to that of the species. He must have ceased to be a man and have become merely Man. He must, in Schopenhauerian terminology, have become a simple 'objectification of the Will of Nature', and must partake sensibly of the infinity and the impersonality of the Will from which he emanates. Bring him nearer, near enough for one to recognise dress and features, and the finite element in him is sure to bulk so largely over the infinite as at once to introduce into the scene

before us an element of discord and unrest. For all you know the man may be a Radical while you are a Conservative, or *vice versa*; but in any case his near approach can hardly fail to awaken in you a host of associations with the 'World as Will' and to intercept to that extent your calm contemplation of the 'World as Idea.'

But having combined all these necessary ingredients—space, solitude, a sufficient presence of organic life, a sufficient distance between one's self and human life—having succeeded, I say, in obtaining a combination of all these things, and having sat ourselves down to contemplate it, are we even then sure that the true charm of the country will visit us, that the genuine message of the landscape will gain the ear of our soul? Alas! no. After everything has been done that can be done on the side of the Object, there is still the Subject to be reckoned with, and this is by far the more difficult matter of the two. The receptivity of the recipient—*that* is everything; and how is that to be attained? I fear that there is no royal road to its attainment—none. How many persons are there—or how many, we may indeed ask, have there ever been—to whom Nature has spoken, once for all, her word of peace, and who thenceforth and for all time are at rest in her presence, and no more need to seek for her beauty in her face than a child needs to seek it in the countenance of its mother? There are few indeed, I think, whether in the world of real life or in that of literature. Many a magic touch in Homer convinces us that he, beyond perhaps and above all poets who ever lived, had felt the kiss of Demeter on his brow. No one can read fifty lines of Lucretius and doubt that Nature spoke to him in her deepest, most solemn, most tranquillising tones, but elsewhere among the ancient classics I am not sure that it would be easy to find out. No doubt an indignant plea will be urged for Virgil; and I could not, of course, complain if a certain passage in the Second Georgic²—perhaps the whole poem would be 'put in'—were to be flung at me with an air of triumph. Yet, even so, I think I should be hardened enough to contend that there is a touch of the townsman in 'O fortunatos nimium', &c. It is all very charming that praise of '*secura quies*', and '*latis otia fundis*' of the '*speluncae, vivique lacus*', of the '*mugitusque boum, mollesque sub arbore somni*.' But there is a note of the jaded and disappointed courier about the lines which immediately precede these. We cannot help remembering that the poet himself must have often formed one of the '*mane salutantum undam*,' flowing forth into the street from the door of the patron; nor can we avoid the suspicion, possibly unjust in Virgil's case, that it is merely ennui and disgust with the life of Rome which has set him rhapsodising on the delights of the country. Besides, why should a man who really loved the country require to be spirited up by Mecaenas, at least as tradition has it, to write a

² Ed: see Endnote.

poem about agriculture, with the object of reviving the industry? Think of the Georgics having been written 'with a purpose'! It is almost enough to spoil one's relish for them altogether. There is nothing, in fact, to show that Virgil cared much more, in any disinterested sense of the word, for the pastures and furrows of which he sang than Ben Jonson cared personally to 'hear the loud stag speak' across the silent chase in the night watches, for all the apparent earnestness of the poetic address to Sir Robert Wroth in which that fine line occurs. As to Horace, there is surely no room for doubt. He was as arrant a little Cockney as any that was ever dandled to the chimes of Bow Bells. There is scarcely a line in his praises of Tibur and of Anio which is not saturated with the 'suburban' spirit—a thing as different and as far removed from the rural spirit as it is possible to conceive.

The heretical proposition, in short, to which I am mustering courage to commit myself is, that it is the exception rather than the rule for the poets, even for those who have sung best of the country, to care—I will not say a pinch of snuff for the country, but enough about it to live out their lives in its midst. 'Falsely luxurious! will not man arise?' asks Thomson from the comfortable recesses of his four-poster; and it is on much the same terms that plenty of English poets have extolled those rural charms which never attracted them save at brief and uncertain intervals. Mr. George Meredith and Mr. Alfred Austin are shining exceptions to what I am inclined to regard as a general rule. Each of these two poets has long made his abode amid that sweet English scenery which each describes with a magic of his own. But their preferences have not been very numerously anticipated by their predecessors, as how should it be by any '*genus irritabile*'³ of mortals? A wise indifference to the world, to its struggles, defeats and victories, to the noisy voices of today, and even to the hymns of a future which will only be today a little prolonged—to attain to this is the first and great commandment which Nature imposes upon all those who come to her for spiritual sustenance and calm. And how few are they that bring it with them! How few are they who are really content with the food she gives them, who are satisfied to receive her message, and if they *must* transmit it, repeat it simply, not tricking it out that they may revel in their own wealth of words, nor philosophising too much upon it to exercise their subtlety of thought, nor lyrically subjectifying it to make it illustrate their own insignificant sorrows and unimportant joys! Is Keats never delinquent on the first count? Is not Wordsworth sometimes guilty on the second? Can Byron ever be acquitted of the third?

It is because of these shortcomings on the part of our greater poets, it is because they are so often wanting in the true surrender of the will, the due

³ *Genus irritabile vatum*: The irritable race of poets (Horace).

effacement of the striving Ego, that some few of us perhaps (I hardly know how many in these days it would be safe to reckon) may still discover in the verse of a writer long since deposed from the high place which he once occupied the purest and truest rendering of Nature's 'Peace be still!' There is no trace in Cowper of that magical might or that hand of power which all our supreme poets from Milton down to Tennyson have alike revealed in their descriptions of the visible world of things. Vigorously as he uses his favourite metrical form, it cannot compare for majesty with the blank verse of the former of the two poets whom I have just mentioned, nor in wealth of harmonies and variety of cadence with that of the latter. There is a certain courtly stiffness in the manner of his approach to the subjects of his verse and to the readers whom he is addressing. But through all the peculiarities of the tongue in which he speaks to us the voice of the poet's heart is plainly heard, and in every word he utters we are made to feel how absolute has been his self-surrender to Nature, how complete his self-effacement in her presence. Cowper's constitutional shyness and self-distrust, and his profound religious despondency, had conjointly extinguished the egoistic element in his character, and when he turned to the contemplation of the material world for relief and self-forgetfulness he did so in the spirit in which a mediaeval penitent submitted himself to the monastic vows. It was thus that in his work as a poet he found peace for himself; and it is to this that he owes that indescribable calm which breathes through his poetic utterances, and lends weight and dignity to much which were otherwise tame and commonplace.

Strange indeed it were if this truest of all true lovers of the country failed to penetrate and expound the secret of its only enduring charm. In many a line of the 'Task' he sets it forth, and one emphatic passage, after observing how many of those 'who dream they have a taste for fields and groves' would, were it not for field sports and social gaieties, soon 'find them hideous nurseries for the spleen'—he adds:

They love the country and none else, who seek
For their own sake, its silence and its shade.

The 'none else' is the point to bear in mind, and also the fact that only those will seek, and when they find them, be contented with its silence and its shade, who bring to them a mind and a heart attuned to the reception of their influences. For this, you need not indeed be like Cowper, 'a stricken deer that left the herd long since,' and purposed never to return to it. But you must possess the power, much more often talked about than possessed of self-detachment from the striving ambitions of life, and of self-surrender to that temper of contemplation which alone has power of the restlessness of the human heart. The world of woe and bliss must be for a time as though it were

not; or if this be a counsel of perfection, your state of mind must at least be that of which Mr. Meredith speaks in that weird poem of his, the 'Woods of Westermain'. Your relation to the world must be that of one who is

Sharing still its bliss and woe,
Harnessed to its hungers, no.

But if you would go on to realise the poet's promise that

On the throne Success usurps,
You shall seat the joy you feel,
Where a race of water chirps,
Twisting hues of flourished steel
Or where light is caught in loop
Up a clearing's leafy rise...

you must, I hold, be able to dethrone the lust for Success in all its shapes, and subdue the longing, not only for mere material gains, but even for intellectual and artistic achievement. You must be able to look into the face of Nature without desiring to sketch it, or to rhyme upon it, or even to talk about it, before you can expect with any reasonable confidence to receive her embrace and benediction.

~~~

Endnote: The passage from Virgil's Second Georgic that Traill refers to and quotes from is as follows:

Oh! All too happy tillers of the soil,  
Could they but know their blessedness, for whom  
Far from the clash of arms all-equal earth  
Pours from the ground herself their easy fare!  
What though no lofty palace portal-proud  
From all its chambers vomits forth a tide  
Of morning courtiers, nor agape they gaze  
On pillars with fair tortoise-shell inwrought,  
Gold-purpled robes, and bronze from Ephyre;  
Nor is the whiteness of their wool distained  
With drugs Assyrian, nor clear olive's use  
With cassia tainted; yet untroubled calm,  
A life that knows no falsehood, rich enow  
With various treasures, yet broad-acred ease,  
Grottoes and living lakes, yet Tempes cool,  
Lowing of kine, and sylvan slumbers soft,  
They lack not; lawns and wild beasts' haunts are there,  
A youth of labour patient, need-inured,  
Worship, and reverend sires: with them from earth  
Departing justice her last footprints left.

Translation from: J. B. Greenough, *Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics of Vergil* (Boston: Ginn & Co. 1900). [Virgil is sometimes spelt Vergil].

# Richard Jefferies

*Philip Alexander Bruce*

This poem dedicated to Richard Jefferies was published on p.18 of *Pocahontas and other Sonnets* by Philip Alexander Bruce (Norfolk, Virginia, 1912). Bruce (7 March 1856–16 August 1933) was an American historian who specialized in the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**M**elodious birds that haunt the English lea,  
Field, dell, and dusky woodland, flit before  
My eyes, altho' a thousand leagues of sea  
Are bluely curved between, as, Jefferies, o'er  
Thy scented, vocal page, I linger long,—  
The soaring lark spills music from the cloud;  
From flowering hedge, the mavis pours her song;  
And thronging starlings burst in chorus loud;  
The bold cuckoo cries out from hill and dale;  
Soft moans, in leafy nook, the lonely dove ;  
From moonlit thorn, the amorous nightingale  
Trills to his silent mate his note of love;  
While, from the glimmering knoll, as twilight falls,  
The partridge to his vagrant partner calls.

# Half Poacher, Half Poet

Gerald Abraham

## BBC Centenary 1922-2022

The British Broadcasting Company made its first broadcast from London (station 2LO) on 14 November 1922. From the archives of the *Radio Times* we republish below an article on Jefferies by Gerald Abraham, which appeared in the *Radio Times* 30 Oct 1936. This was an introductory article to a broadcast on 6 November, Jefferies' birthday, of 'Countryman Afield: Richard Jefferies and His Friends' given by Reginald Arkell whose biography of Jefferies had been published in 1933.

Gerald Abraham (1904-1988) was Assistant Editor at the *Radio Times* when he wrote this appreciative piece and went on to become an eminent musicologist and journalist. He was elected a Fellow of The British Academy in 1972 and his obituary published by The British Academy recorded that, 'Abraham illustrates

how conservatism may coexist with a love for the new by quoting at length from an essay by his favourite nature-mystic Richard Jefferies, showing how, even if we walk the same road every day, things are never twice the same.'

**7.30 Countryman Afield**  
**Richard Jefferies and his Friends**  
Recalled by REGINALD ARKELL  
(From Bristol)  
*An article on Richard Jefferies will be found on page 12*

Richard Jefferies's 'country' is easily defined. It is that part of Wiltshire which lies within walking distance of his birthplace: Coate Farm, near Swindon. In later years he lived first at Surbiton and then in Sussex, where he died. But no other countryside appealed to him quite as did his Wiltshire downs and valleys; he knew no other people quite as intimately as the poachers and gamekeepers and odd characters who were the few companions of his lonely youth.

This countryside and its population (human and animal) are described with photographic accuracy in Jefferies's books.

~~~~~  
On a summer's day Wolstanbury Hill¹ is an island in sunshine, you may lie on the grassy rampart, high up in the most delicate air—Grecian air, pellucid—alone, among the butterflies and humming bees at the thyme, alone and isolated; endless masses of hills on three sides, endless weald or valley on the fourth; all warmly lit with sunshine, deep under liquid sunshine like the sand under the

¹ For more on Wolstanbury Hill see article in this issue: 'An Island in Sunshine' by Florence E. Pettit, p.111-115. Jefferies refers to an earlier spelling as Wolstanbury.

liquid sea, no harshness of man-made sound to break the insulation amid nature, on an island in a far Pacific of sunshine.²

If those sentences evoke for you not merely a lovely picture but the very essence of summer on our English downs, you will (I imagine) want to know more of the man who wrote them, a man whose books are full of such evocative passages. If they do not—well, go in peace, and read ‘What the Other Listener Thinks’; Richard Jefferies will never mean anything to you. Admittedly, he is not for all tastes. Some find him unreadable; those who can read him love him inordinately. There is no middle course.

Most people, I suppose, have a vague idea that Jefferies was a ‘nature writer’. Of course, he was that first and foremost; the head of the great line of English literary naturalists that include Hudson, Edward Thomas, and Henry Williamson. But he was something more than that; a prose writer whose best work is, as Richard Garnett once wrote, ‘unparalleled, unless by Shelley, for the fusion of the utmost intensity of passion with its utmost purity’: author of one of the best boy’s books (‘Bevis’) and some of the worst novels ever written; a bold and individual, if narrow, thinker who produced in ‘The Story of My Heart’ a spiritual autobiography quite unlike any other book in the English language.

When we speak of a self-made man, we usually mean a man who has made not himself, but a pile of money. Richard Jefferies was self-made in a truer sense. Throughout his life of [almost] thirty-nine years, he was completely shut off from his intellectual equals. His mind was shaped solely by his books and by his observations. Perhaps the only men from whom he learned anything were his father, a Wiltshire yeoman farmer (whom he drew in more than one fictional guise) and the gamekeeper who figures in his first successful book ‘The Gamekeeper at Home.’ He married, but never had any intimate friends.

The story of Jefferies’ outward life may be told in a few words. Born at Coate Farm, near Swindon, on November 6, 1848, he grew up into a tall, slouching youth, sullen and dreamy. Some of the villagers thought him a ‘lazy loppet’; others considered him ‘half-cracked’; everyone pitied his parents. Even when he was famous, the village patriarch still dismissed him contemptuously as ‘nowt o’ a farmer’. But at eighteen the ‘lazy loppet’ got a job as a reporter on the *North Wilts Herald* and very soon published a handbook on ‘Reporting, Editing and Authorship’ in which he sagely observed in passing that ‘the public will read any common-place clap-trap if only a well-known name be attached to it’.

Jefferies himself was a prolific manufacturer of (unconscious) clap-trap at this period, turning out one bad novel after another and, with little worldly

² ‘Wild Flowers’ by Richard Jefferies, first published in July 1885 in *Longman’s Magazine* and collected in *The Open Air*, November 1885

wisdom, publishing them at his own expense. Unfortunately his name was not well known. The truth is that Jefferies was no novelist, though his later 'Amaryllis at the Fair' contains some fine character-studies and 'After London' (published in 1885) is a striking vision of the future, a picture of an England in which our present civilisation has collapsed and a new one is being evolved by the warriors and hunters of the Thames Valley.

Fame came to Richard Jefferies along a different path and in a curious way. A long letter in *The Times* on the condition of the Wiltshire agricultural labourer, drew attention to him as a writer of strong, clear prose who knew the English countryside intimately. He soon found the pages of the London magazines open to him and in 1878 scored his first big success with a book of reprinted essays, 'The Gamekeeper at Home'. Jefferies had found his place. But almost too late. During the remaining nine years of his life, tortured by a painful disease, he poured out a series of books, remarkable in quality and considerable in quantity.

At first, in 'The Gamekeeper at Home', 'The Amateur Poacher', and 'Wild Life in a Southern County', Jefferies was content simply to observe and describe the countryside and its human and animal population; he still remained the old-fashioned naturalist-with-a-gun. In his later books, his joy in the world of the open air raised his prose to a higher power. The gun was laid aside; the delight in killing died. Jefferies became a post-naturalist, a dreamer of dreams. He went on painting word-landscapes, but they are more than landscapes. Jefferies seems to charge his prose not so much with his own emotion as with the very scent and air and sunshine of English fields and English downs.



Gerald Abraham

Richard Jefferies on the Airwaves

BBC Centenary 1922-2022

Peter Robins

The British Broadcasting Company (later the British Broadcasting Corporation) began transmissions on 14 November 1922 from London (station 2LO). From the archives of the *Radio Times*, 1923-2019, we have listed below all the programmes broadcast about Richard Jefferies including readings of his work, discussions about the author and music inspired by him.

In the other BBC weekly, *The Listener*, of 26 Oct 1939, W.E. Williams in his 'Critic on the Hearth' column commented: 'I have never heard more unaffected and expressive reading than Lionel Marson's passages from Richard Jefferies (October 15). One of these days I want to say something in this column about the reasons why Jefferies makes such rare material for reading aloud.' Sadly, he didn't.

The archives use the 24-hr time notation, not as published in the *Radio Times*.

5WA Cardiff:
Tues 23 Sep
1924 19.30

Interval: Nature's Enchantment. A short reading by Michael Penn from 'The Open Air' by Richard Jefferies.

2ZY Manchester:
Tues 4 Nov
1924 18.30

Mr. J. Cuming Walters M.A. discusses Richard Jefferies' 'The Story of My Heart'.

National:
Tues 6 Nov
1934 23.10
[Jefferies' birthday]

'The July Grass' by Richard Jefferies, read by Felix Aylmer.

Regional:
Tues 11 Dec
1934 22.15

Western Anthology: 'Richard Jefferies' by Reginald Arkell.

National:
Fri 6 Nov
1936 19.30

'Countryman Afield: Richard Jefferies and his Friends' recalled by Reginald Arkell.

—repeated Regional Sat 7 Nov 1936 20.10

Regional:
Mon 16 Nov
1936 14.00

For the Schools: 'Bevis' by Richard Jefferies.

National:
Fri 26 Mar
1937 17.00

Poet and Peasant. A mosaic of words and music illustrating two versions of the countryside.
Readers: Rose Bruford and Hubert Gregg.
Prose and poetry by Wordsworth, George Bourne, D.H. Lawrence, Richard Jefferies William Cobbett and others.

National:
Wed 29 Sep
1937 22.45

The Plants Prevail, a reading from Richard Jefferies' 'Wild England' by Geoffrey Tandy.
—repeated Regional Wed 1 Dec 1937 10.45

Regional:
Tues 7 Dec
1937 21.40

'The Stars'. A mosaic of words and music. Readings from Edmund Spenser, Thomas Sackville, John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, W. H. Davies and Richard Jefferies.

National:
Tues 15 Mar
1938 14.05

For the Schools. Book talk: Desmond MacCarthy on 'The Gamekeeper at Home' by Richard Jefferies.

Regional:
Sun 29 May
1938 22.15

A reading from 'Wild Life in a Southern County' by Richard Jefferies.

Regional:
Sun 26 Sep
1938

A reading from Richard Jefferies' 'The Gamekeeper at Home' by Geoffrey Tandy.

National:
Fri 17 Feb
1939 22.15

Music by Frank Bridge.
Programme includes
'Storm & Poem No. 2' (after Richard Jefferies).



Regional: 'Oby and His Poaching System'.
 Tue 18 Apr A reading from 'The Amateur Poacher'
 1939 21.45 by Richard Jefferies.

On 1 Sep 1939 National and Regional Programmes
 were merged into the Home Service

Home: 'The Keeper, the Poacher and Vermin'.
 Sun 15 Oct Read from Richard Jefferies by Lionel Marson.
 1939 10.45

Home: 'Thought For Spring'. A reading from Richard
 Mon 7 Apr Jefferies' 'The Open Air' by Harold Hobson.
 1941 11.50

On 29 Jul 1945 the Light Programme was launched
 followed by the Third Programme on 29 Sep 1946

Home: 'The Story of My Heart'. Valentine Dyall reads a
 Wed 25 Sep passage from the autobiography of Richard Jefferies.
 1946 20.12

Light: Books and Authors. Introduced by Arthur Calder-
 Wed 16 Apr Marshall, includes 'Hodge and His Masters' reviewed
 1947 18.15 by Geoffrey Eley.

Home: Richard Jefferies. Talk by Clifford Dymont.
 Wed 26 May
 1948 18.30

Third: Richard Jefferies. An appreciation of his work by
 Tue 24 Jun Denys Thompson, with extracts read by Lockwood
 1947 18.00 West.

Home: For the Schools. 'The Gamekeeper at Home'

Tue 1 Jun
1948 14.15

a programme about Richard Jefferies by Ormerod Greenwood.

Third:
Mon 28 Jun
1948 21.05

Richard Jefferies. An appreciation by Clifford Dymont.

Third Programme

514.6 m. (583 kc/s) 203.5 m. (1,474 kc/s)

7.35 HANDEL Italian Cantata: <i>Act, Galatea, e Polifemo</i> Joan Alexander (soprano) Anne Wood (contralto) William Parsons (bass) Joseph Saxby (harpsichord) Chamber Orchestra Conducted by Arnold Goldsbrough	9.5 RICHARD JEFFERIES An appreciation by Clifford Dymont 1908 is Jefferies' centenary year. In celebration, a number of his works have been reprinted. This evening Clifford Dymont examines the popular conception of Jefferies and asks how far it agrees with the evidence pro- vided by his writings 9.25 Interlude
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SIBELIUS

String Quartet in D minor (Voces intimae)
Played by the Sibelius Quartet:
Erik Cronvall (violin) Hugo Huttunen (violin)
Erik Karma (viola) Arto Granroth (cello)
From Helsinki
(By courtesy of the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation)



AT 9 30

Light:
Sat 4 Sep
1948 14.00

New Books and Old Books. Includes reading from
'Wild Life in a Southern County'.

Home:
Sun 7 Nov
1948 21.30

Programme about Richard Jefferies.

Home:
Thu 16 Dec
1948 13.45

Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, Geoffrey Grigson and
Reginald Arkell discuss Richard Jefferies' achievement
as a naturalist and writer.

Home:
Wed 26 Jan

For the Schools. Includes 'Bevis: The Story of a Boy'
by Richard Jefferies. Script by Silvia Goodall.

1949 14.00

Light:

Sat 23 Apr

1949 14.00

Light:

Sat 18 Feb

1950 14.00

Home:

Mon 12 Nov

1951 14.00

Home:

Fri 15 Jun

1951 18.50

Home:

Fri 4 Feb

Fri 8 Feb

Fri 2 May

Fri 9 May

1952 14.00

Home:

Mon 13 Feb

1956 15.00

New Books and Old Books. Includes review of 'Wild Life in a Southern County' by Richard Jefferies.

Includes 'Wild Life in a Southern County'.

For the Schools. 'The Trout' from 'Nature Near London' by Richard Jefferies.

Western Men. Series of talks about great men of the West Country. No. 5: Richard Jefferies, by Guy Hunter.

For the Schools. Includes 'Bevis, the Story of a Boy' by Richard Jefferies. Adapted by Joyce Hunter.

For the Schools. Reading of 'The Trout' from 'Nature Near London' by Richard Jefferies.

10.45 THEIR COUNTRYSIDE
1—Suburban Surrey
and Richard Jefferies
by Richard Fitter

Home:

Sun 4 Mar

1956 10.45

Their Countryside. Suburban Surrey and Richard Jefferies by Richard Fitter.

Home:

Fri 24 Jan

Fri 31 Jan

Fri 7 Feb

1958 14.00

For the Schools. A reading from 'Bevis' adapted by Edward Blishen.

Home:

'Wood Magic' by Richard Jefferies. Adapted by Alan E

Fri 18 May
Fri 25 May
Fri 1 Jun
1962 14.40

Boucher.

Home:
Mon 21 Mar
1966 14.30

'A Farmer of the Olden Times' from 'Round About a Great Estate' by Richard Jefferies.

Home:
Sun 13 Nov
1966 7.50

Sunday Reading. An excerpt from 'Nature-Mysticism and Soul-Mysticism' by F.C. Happold and 'The Story of My Heart' by Richard Jefferies. Reader John Forrest.

The Third Programme and Home Service renamed
Radio 3 and Radio 4 from 30 Sep 1967

Radio 3:
Tue 27 Oct
1970 10.20

Music by Frank Bridge including 'Two Poems' (after Richard Jefferies).

Radio 4:
Sun 14 Feb
1971 7.50

Sunday Reading. John Westbrook chooses 'The Story of My Heart' by Richard Jefferies.

Radio 4:
Sun 21 Feb
1971 7.50

Sunday Reading. 'The Story of My Heart'.

Radio 3:
Thu 10 Dec
1974 21.35

The Man on the Hill. Paul Scofield as Richard Jefferies. A monologue of the writings of Richard Jefferies. Compiled by Roger Frith.

Radio 3:
Tue 4 Nov
1975 22.10

The Man on the Hill. (Repeated from 10 Dec 1974)

Radio 4:
Thu 16 Sep
21 Oct
1976 11.50

A Century of Countrymen.
—It's 100 years since Richard Jefferies wrote his classic study of the rural scene, 'Hodge and His Masters'. In six programmes Hugh Barrett compares the characters of the 1870s with the successors of today.

16 Sep
23 Sep
30 Sep
7 Oct

1. Hodge, the Labourer.
2. Hodge's Masters – the Farmers.
3. The Squire.
4. The County Newspaper and its Editor.

14 Oct
21 Oct

Radio 3:
Mon 22 Nov
1976 21.35

5. The Clergy.
6. Hodge's Daughters or 'Cottage Girls'.

'A Song of Summer' with Paul Scofield as Richard Jefferies. A monologue of the last essays of Richard Jefferies compiled by Roger Frith.



Richard Jefferies, prose poet and social philosopher, born in 1848; the photograph was taken in about 1867. Tonight Paul Scofield reads *A Song of Summer*: 9.35 pm.

9.35

A Song of Summer

with Paul Scofield

as Richard Jefferies

A monologue from the last essays of Richard Jefferies, compiled by ROGER FRITH. Long after Richard Jefferies removed from Coate Farm, his native home near Swindon, he would return there in spirit and imagination, as his numerous novels and essays bear witness.

'I planted myself everywhere, under the trees, in the fields and footpaths, by day and night, he said in his last essay *My Old Village*.

It is no wonder then, that one summer's day at Goring-by-Sea, his last home in Sussex, he should be discovered again at Coate, the cradle of his experiences and 'soul life' reflecting on nature and the future of mankind.

Incidental music composed and conducted by DAVID CAIN

Producer KEITH SLADE

Amusingly the *Radio Times* advertised the programme as: 'Richard Jefferies, prose poet and social philosopher, born in 1848; the photograph was taken about 1867. Tonight Paul Scofield reads *A Song of Summer*: 9.35 pm.' Clearly this is not a 20-year old man and definitely not of Richard Jefferies, the author! To date we have been unable to identify the sitter.

Radio 4:
Fri 21 Aug
1981 23.00

A Book at Bedtime. 'Bevis: The Story of a Boy' by Richard Jefferies, abridged in 15 episodes by Donald Bancroft. Read by Michael Williams. Long Wave only.

Radio 3:
Wed 7 Jul
1982 19.00

'A Song of Summer'. A monologue from the last essays of Richard Jefferies read by Paul Scofield, compiled by Roger Frith with incidental music by David Cain. Producer Keith Slade. (Repeated from 22 Nov 1976).

Radio 3:
Wed 14 Jul
1982 19.00

'The Man on the Hill'. A monologue from the last essays of Richard Jefferies read by Paul Scofield, compiled by Roger Frith with incidental music by

David Cain. Producer Keith Slade. (Repeated from 10 Dec 1974)

- Radio 3:
Thu 22 Jul
1982 21.15
‘The Story of My Heart’ with Paul Scofield as Richard Jefferies. Last of three monologues.
- Radio 3:
Sat 19 Mar
1983 21.00
‘The Story of My Heart’. A monologue compiled from the writings of Richard Jefferies by Roger Frith and incidental music composed and conducted by David Cain. Producer Keith Slade.
- Radio 4:
Mon 1 Jun
1987 22.15
A Book at Bedtime. ‘Bevis: The Story of a Boy’ by Richard Jefferies abridged in 15 parts by Donald Bancroft. Read by Michael Williams.
- Radio 4:
Tue 4 Aug
1987 20.30
‘The Drift of Time’ with Robert Stephens as Richard Jefferies.
- Radio 3:
Sun 9 Aug
1987 17.00
‘A Song of Summer’. To commemorate the centenary of Richard Jefferies’ death on 14 August 1887, a monologue from his last essays compiled by Roger Frith. (Repeated from 22 Nov 1976).
- Radio 4:
Mon 4 Jan
11 Jan
18 Jan
Fri 22 Jan
1988 22.15
A Book at Bedtime. ‘Bevis: The Story of a Boy’ by Richard Jefferies, abridged in 15 episodes by Donald Bancroft. Read by Michael Williams.
- Radio 4:
Mon 17 July
1995 22.45
A Book at Bedtime. ‘After London’. Paul Scofield reads the first of five episodes of Richard Jefferies’ book, abridged by Keith Slade. Music by Nick Russell-Pavier.
- Radio 3:
Sun 29 Jun
1997 13.15
Aldeburgh Festival. Included ‘Two Poems’ (after Richard Jefferies) by Frank Bridge.
- Radio 3:
Thu 18 Sep
1997 10.00
Musical Encounters. Included ‘Two Poems’ (after Richard Jefferies) by Frank Bridge.

Radio 3
Sun 28 Mar
2010 22.45

'Words and Music: The South Country'
Tamsin Greig and Neil Pearson read prose by
Gilbert White, William Cobbett and
Richard Jefferies.

Radio 3
Fri 12 Jul
2103 19.30

BBC Proms.
Julian Anderson's new commission sets some
lines concerning nature and time by
Richard Jefferies.

Radio 3
Sun 3 Nov
2013 17.30

'Words and Music: Village Minstrel'
Karl Johnson and David Annan read extracts
from John Clare, Gilbert White, John Steinbeck
and Richard Jefferies.

Radio
Wiltshire
Thu 6 Dec
2018 19.00

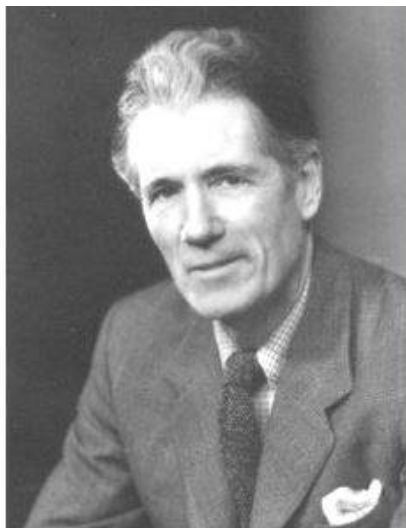
Mike Pringle on his life as director of
the Richard Jefferies Museum.

Radio 3
Wed 18 Sep
2019 19.00

'In Tune Mixtape'
Selection of music including Frank Bridge's
poems inspired by *The Story of My Heart*.

Books and People: Richard Jefferies

Adrian Bell



Herein follows the complete text for a BBC overseas broadcast that went out in November 1946 to the Pacific, African, North American Service and General Overseas Service having been recorded by Bell on 1 November and produced by Mary Treadgold. The broadcast lasted 13 minutes, 10 seconds and the script has many crossings out. It is not known if this was due to time-constraints, an editorial decision or Bell's own preference. The content has been reproduced to include all deletions (indicated by square brackets) whilst the ellipses inserted in the quotations have been added to indicate that words were left out. Reproduced by kind permission of the Literary Estate of Adrian Bell and with thanks to the BBC Written Archives Centre for providing a digital copy

of the typescript 'Books and People: Richard Jefferies TX November 1946.'

I was at a horse sale the other day, and I thought: here is the last fragment of a bucolic culture—the bucolic culture of old England. And yet the scene was so in contrast to the life today of the country town in which it was held; it brought a sort of foreign-ness. The place was invaded by [a] swarthy race of men with nobbly (*sic*) sticks, some with rings in their ears, wearing queer-shaped hats and coloured neckerchiefs. And then the scene in the sale-ground, the be-ribboned horses with their tails plaited with straw, one having slipped its halter was tearing at the leaves of a lime tree. Flaxen-maned colts were hurtling about the ring. Others were stamping and kicking in the horse-boxes into which they were being loaded; and said all this the impassive faces of the people, faces so in contrast to the usual faces you see about the town. Not moulded by any sort of amenity, no touch of book education, of the parlour, about them, but their features seemed to have been hewn out by the struggle with animal strength, and wind and weather. Not really attractive in the conventional sense of the word at all, but with a sort of fierce reality belonging to a ruder age altogether. A burly farmer, mounted on a great plough horse he had bought, was lumbering

out into the street like a man off to the crusades, to the music of the tinkling bells of trotting ponies and the shouting of drivers.

What a scene it was, the passing of old England. I thought of Jefferies, who saw such things as these—and loved them and wrote of them and yet had no regrets. [It is rather difficult to speak of Richard Jefferies as a man. The man is dissolved, as it were, into his writing. So often in the like and work of the country I find myself thinking of him, or not so much thinking as brought face to face with him as it were, in some moment, because his writing does not so much describe, as in some amazing way actually embody; it almost is the thing he is writing about.]

It's very difficult in a short talk to give a fair idea of Jefferies, because of the extraordinary variousness of the man. Sometimes he is like Cobbett, sometimes he is like Gilbert White. There is even a touch of Keats in him. He describes in many of his essays the old ways of the country. He describes with loving detail the old wooden plough of the South Downs drawn by oxen. In his book *Round About a Great Estate* he describes the old type of farmer and house. He loves the linnets and the goldfinches that flutter round the eaves. He describes with equal zest the knack of Cicely the dairy-maid in turning over a huge cheese; but he says, 'I would not have it therefore thought that I wish the former state of things to continue or return. My sympathies and hopes are with the life of the future.' [He even pleaded for a country bus service.]

He saw the country scene whole; he is the complete countryman; utterly without prejudice; and how few of us can be that, how few can see these things and not regret 'the good old days.' You see, he was not only a naturalist. His love of nature was also his love of human nature. He was a man of intense social conscience. It made him a prophet. A blade of grass growing in the spring enthralled him and he can describe it minutely and lovingly, but what enthralled him about it was that it was so alive and so perfectly alive, living to the utmost of its nature, seeking the sun. It was not just the blade of grass, but the life in the blade of grass that he loved. So he loved life in all its forms, and when he turned to humanity he saw that the human form was not perfectly and beautifully expressing itself, like the grass blade but was marred and stunted in its effort for freedom and self-fulfilment.

If I stress this social, human aspect of Jefferies it is to counteract the purely naturalist aspect of him, or the vaguely soulful, mystical aspect of him, which has been until now his current reputation. It is significant that he regretted that Gilbert White had not made a study of the people of Selborne as well as its wild life.

I will confess that my own appreciation of Jefferies grew slowly. It is a tribute to him, really, that one only appreciates him fully as one grows up and grows older. There is no fine writing in Jefferies to catch the eye. 'The orient and

immortal wheat', wrote Traherne. Jefferies describes wheat, none better, but he doesn't describe it like that. 'The wheat is beautiful', he says, 'but human life is labour'. You see, he sees both sides of the picture; or rather, every side of the picture.

[I remember as a boy being given his *Bevis* by a well-meaning aunt, and although it is the story of the adventures of a boy let loose in the country, such as I was, I must confess that although I felt it was the sort of book an intelligent boy was supposed to read and enjoy, secretly I found my coloured comic papers much more interesting.

Later, as I grew up, and I became busy with farming, I only came across Jefferies in fragments, in anthologies, and it was mostly either nature observations or some rhapsody out of *The Story of My Heart*, altogether too soulful and vague for me, in the busy farm life I had to lead. Until lately, Jefferies has been badly represented in anthologies. You really need to have his stuff entire to get a just estimate of him. I may as well say now that I do not care very much for *The Story of My Heart*. I think it is unfortunate that his popular reputation should have been based mainly on that. He tried very hard with that book, he tried to express what I think is inexpressible, or rather something that is not expressible in that way. It is rather like a painter trying to paint just light; whereas it is the light shining upon the ordinary things of every day that conveys its true beauty. And he could and did show the light shining upon the things of every day—transfiguring them. In doing that, he became a novelist.] He was not a very good novelist, if you want a well-made story; but a man with such an overpowering sense of reality just could not be bothered to make up a story, any more than Shakespeare could be bothered. Yet there are in his novels some wonderfully vivid characters. And the greatest of his novels is really great. It is one of the great books of the language. I refer to *Amaryllis at the Fair*; he was not good at titles. Nothing happens in *Amaryllis*, nothing need happen. It is really a picture—a picture of his own home life. Old Iden, the small farmer, is his father, an unusual man in many ways. The girl Amaryllis occurs under other names in other novels; she is his ideal of young, passionate womanhood, the human blade of green springing grass, shall we say; but not sentimentalised in any way, not at all. Why, he is at pains to describe Amaryllis's ankles as being—if not thick—thicker than was considered conventionally beautiful. But the way old Iden takes his mid-day meal, the fastidiousness of his appreciation of plain good food, his potatoes and his greens and his mutton; and how he goes to sleep in his chair afterwards, with his head resting against the wainscot, and a mouse creeps up to his knee to steal a crumb. All this is wonderfully vivid and true.

Consider Jefferies origins. The son of a small farmer, brought up with all the conservative prejudice of his class. Chiefly the popular impression of him

among the neighbours was of an idle young man loitering about with a gun under his arm. Never was a more diligent indolence, to use a phrase of Keats. He dabbled in provincial journalism; not a very promising start; and yet by the age of 38, when he died, he had emancipated himself from all the conventions of the Victorian age, and was as modern as 1946.

[I must stress this extraordinary modernity of outlook which he achieved. By some miracle of inner integrity—perhaps it was the old yeoman independence in his blood—he kept clear of all the literary convention of his day. In fact, nothing is known of him as a literary man. He only went to London to see his publishers. He had no literary friends, and lived quietly, uneventfully, with his wife and family, walking in the country, thinking, writing. He freed himself also from the religious conventions of the Victorian era. He became what was considered so dangerous in those days, a free-thinker. And so if we want to know about Jefferies, we must study his work. The man is wholly there, and is nowhere else. The least literary of men was Jefferies; he only wrote because he had to, he hated pen and paper. More than once he remarked on how the sun puts out the printed page, and how the chattering of birds outside makes writing a burden, unreal. And yet his writing, his choice of words, is very good, very much to the point. Speaking of a little town, ‘The road is jammed between cottages.’ Can’t you see it? So narrow.]

Reading much of his work it is impossible to believe that it was written so long ago as the 70’s and 80’s of the last century. If you want to savour the whole variety of the man, his two essays called ‘Walks in the Wheatfields’ give perhaps a just picture, though even then it is a partial one. He describes the beauty of the wheat ripening to harvest, and the birds and the rabbits and all the wild creatures that find a temporary home there. Then the reapers come, and this is how he describes them. ‘I used to wonder how these men and women could stand it,...the edge of the reap-hook... driven by force through the stout stalks, ... blow after blow, minute after minute, hour after hour. ...Their necks grew black, ... their open chests were always bare, and flat, and stark, ... their arms, tough as ash, seemed cased in leather ... Never was such work. The wages were low in those days, ... and it is not long ago, ... [but] the reaping was piecework at so much per acre, like solid gold to men ...who had lived on dry bones, as it were, through the winter ... So hard, you see, is the pressure of human life ... Does it not seem bitter that it should be so? Here was the wheat, the beauty of which I strive in vain to tell you, in the midst of the flowery summer, scourging them with the knot of necessity.’

Then a page or two later he tells by contrast of how the singing linnets come in parties, the happy greenfinches, the yellow-hammers—out they come from the hazel coppices. And every one of them finds something to his liking in the wheat stubbles.

Then he speaks of the horses and then of something new, the black funnel of a steam engine, which yet had not driven the beautiful cart horses out of the fields. And it hasn't even yet, nor has the tractor—our local horse sale is still an annual occasion. Does he deplore those first signs of a coming mechanisation? On the contrary, he welcomes them, to lighten all that labour. He says, 'If I were a painter I should like to paint ... a great steam-ploughing engine and its vast wheels, with its sweep of smoke ... sweet white violets in a corner by the hedge still there in all their beauty... I think that the immense realism of the iron wheels makes the violet yet more lovely. ... Sunlight falls on the modern implements just the same as on the old wooden plough. ... [To be true, pictures of our fields should have them both, instead of which all the present things are usually omitted, and we are presented with landscapes that might date from the first George. ... He who has got the sense of beauty in his eye can find it in things as they really are, and needs no stagey time of artificial pastorals to furnish him with a sham nature. Idealise to the full, but idealise the real.' That is what he says.

Is not that a message as necessary to some of our rural sentimentalists to-day as it was 70 years ago?]

Again he says, 'Could we, then, see the tithe barn filled again with golden wheat but this time for this purpose of help to humanity ... to give the little children a midday meal at the school.' 'In the course of time,' he adds, 'it is more than probable that something of this kind will really come about.' Well, it has come about; and other things for which he hoped are beginning to come about. He desired above all things a physical beauty for men and women, and spiritual freedom. 'So happy the birds,' he cries, 'Yet there are few to listen to them.' He describes the flail of men's incessant labour. 'The flail is made of two stout staves of wood joined with leather.' But, he adds, 'They had flails of harder make than that ... hunger, necessity, fate, to beat them on the back and thrash them on the floor of the earth. And yet, as young wheat is pounded by the hooves of the huntsmen's horses, 'dashing down fibre and blade ... it will rise again all the fresher ... for there is something human in wheat.' He goes on; 'Despots grind half the human race, and despots stronger than men—plague pestilence and famine—grind the whole; and yet ... the green wheat of the human heart is not to be trampled out.' The green wheat of the human heart. That was his dearest wish, that it should grow to fulfilment.

Hodge: Wheatfield or Battlefield?

Peter Robins

When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 it was ill-prepared for a major conflict. As a traditional maritime nation defence spending had been focused on the navy and in the decade before the war began the building of battleships was the dominant requirement to compete with Germany's expansion of its navy.



From office to battlefield for
London volunteers: 1915.

At the outbreak of war the British army consisted of 80,000 regular trained troops supported by Reservists and Territorials. The Asquith government moved quickly to increase its military force by appointing Lord Kitchener as Secretary of State for War on 5 August. Kitchener had a well-earned reputation as an imperial administrator and for colonial victories in the Sudan and South Africa. He was one of a few to foresee a long war of at least three years and, sceptical of the readiness of the Reservists and Territorials, immediately organised the raising of volunteers to serve in several New Armies.¹

About 100,000 soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force were sent to support and cooperate with the French army to protect Belgium. But an early defeat in August at Mons led to a retreat by the French and British armies and this was

portrayed as an epic battle to the British public.² These reports greatly increased volunteer numbers and between 4 August and 12 September 478,893 men had joined the army, mostly recruited from the industrial areas of the north of England, the Midlands, South Wales, Scotland and London.³

¹ Two of Richard Jefferies' biographers joined up: Henry Williamson enlisted August 1914 in the London Rifle Brigade and Edward Thomas in the Artists' Rifles, July 1915.

² R. Grant, *World War I: From Sarajevo to Versailles* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2014) p.46.

³ Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-16* (Manchester University

There were fewer volunteers from rural areas and in November the author Stanley J. Weyman, writing from North Wales, pointed out to *Times* readers that there had been no volunteers in his locality for a foreign war but that should there be any threat of invasion his neighbours 'will do their duty'.

The Times, 26 Nov 1914

RECRUITING IN THE COUNTRY

Sir,— I write to you because I live year round in the country, and can gauge what my neighbours are thinking and what they know. They know that there is a war in France and Belgium or some distant part. They know that we are mixed up in it, as we have been mixed up in wars before. They don't doubt that we shall come out of it as we have come out of wars before. They know that the gentry are keen on it, but the gentry are apt to be keen on wars—they suspect vaguely that the gentry get something out of wars. And that is pretty well the sum of their knowledge—a war, dim, distant, somewhere in foreign parts, in which we are engaged. The upshot is that from the three eastward parishes, covering a large spread of hill country, barely one man is serving in England or the front; and of other parishes, up and down, the same may be said. The small town to the west has done its part, has not done unworthily. But the farmers and the farmers' sons and the farmers' men shrug their shoulders and think, "Wars are for the wastrels; it's no business of ours."

But if the government were to let my neighbours know that in certain contingencies the Germans may land on our shores, that here in England corn stacks and hay stacks may go up in smoke, farms may be stripped, farmhouses burned, small town shelled—much more if the government were to make this possibility known in the most practical way, by the issue of directions for the conduct of all persons in that event—then my neighbours' knowledge and their conduct would be wholly different.

I am told that the Government does not do this lest we be panic-stricken. But it is surprise that begets panic, not preparation. To be forewarned. Especially in an emergency of which we have had no experience, is to be forearmed. Panic-stricken? No, Sir: line us upon the deck, give each of us his orders, set each of us his task, though it be to stand still, and there will be no panic. Even we, the worst placed of all, the untrained men of 60, will quietly shoulder the ambulance-stretchers, or what not; and our women-folk will as calmly and quietly pad the shoulder-straps that they may not gall us.

And my neighbours and my neighbours' sons and my neighbours' men will do their duty.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

November 24.

STANLEY J. WEYMAN⁴

Press, 1988) p.75.

⁴ Stanley J. Weyman (1855–1928) was a popular author of historical novels and lived at Ruthin,



Poster calling on the men of Essex to volunteer for Kitchener's Army: 1915.

The threat of invasion was still being taken seriously for two or three months after the outbreak of war and home defence was a consideration for Kitchener at a time when he was raising infantry divisions for service abroad. 'I am only prepared,' said Kitchener, 'to rule out the feasibility of an invasion if I can learn that the Germans regard it as an impossible operation.'⁵

Anxiety about invasion by a foreign power was widespread in Britain after the swift defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War in March 1871. In the summer of that year the *Swindon Advertiser* published a series of three articles by Richard Jefferies under the title 'A Natural System of National Defence'.⁶ In these articles Jefferies suggested various methods of organising defensive forces including trained volunteers, cadet forces at schools, rifle butts and gun

batteries. He argued that any system of national defence must be tailored to suit the English character. In the Introduction to the Petton Books edition of the articles, Andrew Rossabi commented:

He lauded the brave, hardy, adventurous spirit of the English with their love of outdoor pursuits such as mountaineering, sailing, hiking and hunting, and descanted on the muscular torsos to be seen on our beaches, the burly forms of farm-labourer, navy and sailor. The strength of average Englishman banished the fear he had felt on reading of the immense armies on the Continent. We were a race of doughty warriors, whose sterling qualities had been proven by the heroic charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War. Other qualities marked in the English were their spirit of independence and mechanical genius.⁷

Denbighshire, for the last thirty year of his life. His address was omitted though it was customary for *TheTimes* to publish an address for letters to the Editor.

⁵ Simkins, *op. cit.*, p.42.

⁶ Richard Jefferies, *A Natural System of National Defence* (Faringdon: Petton Books for the Richard Jefferies Society, 2014).

⁷ *ibid.*, p.ii.

By December 1914 after the battles of Mons, the Marne and the failed attempt by the Germans to take Ypres, the opposing armies settled into trench warfare. Perhaps prompted by this strategy, and having read Weyman's letter to *The Times*, a Gay Bury wrote to *The Observer* quoting a passage by Jefferies from *Hodge and His Masters*⁸ in which he acclaims the hardy farm labourer as the ideal of a soldier, 'the man for the trenches' who 'will not fail England'. Although the mention of trenches appears prescient, trench-warfare fighting was tactically used by the French in the Franco-Prussian war.

The Observer, 13 Dec 1914:

THE PEASANT AND THE WAR

Sir,—The following paragraph from one of Richard Jefferies' most observant and interesting books, "Hodge and His Masters," might with advantage be studied just now, when the percentage of agricultural labourers joining the army appears to be small, and when, to quote from a recent letter by Mr. Stanley Weyman to the "Times":—"Farmers and farmers' sons and farmers' men shrug their shoulders and think 'wars are for wastrels, it's no business of ours,'" In Jefferies' opinion:

"The man that from his boyhood has stood ankle-deep in the chill water of the ditch, patiently labouring with axe and bill; who has trudged across the furrow, hand on plough, facing sleet and mist; who has swung the sickle under the summer sun—this is the man for the trenches. This is the man whom neither the snows of the north nor the sun of the south can vanquish; who will dig and delve and carry traverse and covered way forward in the face of the fortress, who will lie on the bare ground in the night. For they who go up to battle must fight the hard earth and the tempest as well as face the bayonet and ball. As of yore with the brown bill, so now with the rifle—the muscles that have been trained about the hedges and fields will not fail England in the hour of danger."

Let us hope Jefferies will prove right and that in this, England's hour of need, the men of the plough will not be found wanting.

Yours, etc.,

GAY BURY.

Mayfield House, Farnham, Surrey,
Dec. 8, 1914

As a consequence of the agricultural depression during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Britain at the outbreak of war was sixty percent reliant on imports for food supplies. The dilemma for the government was the ambition of increasing domestic food production set against recruitment for the New

⁸ The passage appears in 'Hodge's Fields', Ch. V of Vol. II of the 1880 first edition and as Ch.XX in the 1890 single volume edition. The essays in *Hodge and His Masters* were originally published in *The Standard* between 24 September 1878 and 12 January 1880.

Armies. Farmers were reluctant to surrender their sons and farm workers to the recruiting officers without assurances that replacement labour could be found. But many came forward, encouraged by press and poster propaganda, particularly of Kitchener's accusing finger, but as a farm worker's son from Yorkshire confessed, 'My patriotism wasn't very deep, and Belgian atrocities didn't cut much ice, but I was fearfully sick of a humdrum life that led nowhere and promised nothing.'⁹ Escape from poverty also encouraged enlistment. William Gooderham from Mellis, Suffolk, son of a farm labourer, joined the navy aged 16, having lied about his age. His daughter, Joyce Youngman, recalled, 'My grandfather had 12 shillings a week to feed himself, his wife, and eight children. So when my father, William, joined up it was one less mouth to feed.' In a letter home William remarked that he had never seen so much food.¹⁰

The historian Bonnie White has observed in an essay about First World War Devon:

The men from agriculture who enlisted early in the war were most often casual labourers or those who were not bound by contractual or familial obligations. Although some farm labourers enlisted to escape poor pay and working conditions, agricultural labourers experienced a considerable range of pay and conditions, which helped to explain why many were unwilling or unable to leave the land.¹¹

A reader of *The Daily Telegraph*, signing as 'Hodge', wrote to the newspaper about the patchy response from farms.

The Daily Telegraph 8 Jan 1915:
[Abridged]

AGRICULTURAL RESPONSE

Sir,— I am in close touch with two agricultural districts in Surrey and Sussex. In the one, ten percent of one parish have joined the colours. In the other, much nearer London, the sowing of wheat and harvesting of important root crops has been greatly hindered owing to the lack of labour caused by enlistment. [...]

I know for a fact that farmers are being prevented by lack of labour from increasing their winter wheat acreage. The labourers know this as well as the farmer and I know of several willing to go but unwilling to strand their employers

Yours faithfully,
HODGE¹²

⁹ Simkins, *op. cit.*, p.173.

¹⁰ 'The Bible and World War One'. The Bible Society: www.biblesociety.org.uk

¹¹ Bonnie White, 'Feeding the War Effort: Agricultural Experience in First World War Devon', *Agricultural History Review*, 58, no.1, 2010.

¹² *The Telegraph Book of Readers' Letters from the Great War*. Ed. Gavin Fuller. (London: Aurum Press, 2014). pp.94–5.

Those who enlisted from the agricultural sector between August 1914–February 1916 are recorded as 259,000, some 28.2 percent of the pre-war labour force compared with 41.2 percent of those from professions, men in commercial and clerical jobs and those working in hotels, restaurants, theatres. Overall, 3,081,000 of all occupations enlisted during this period.¹³

The low numbers from farms meant that,

Battalions raised from agricultural counties had to be filled up with recruits from the bigger population centres. The 9th Devonshire Regiment contained a mere eighty native Devonians, the remainder coming from London and Birmingham. The 6th Wiltshire Regiment also had a preponderance of London and Birmingham men.¹⁴

In January 1915, *The Observer* published a letter from a reader in Georgia, USA, challenging Gay Bury's assertion, supported by his Jefferies' quote, that the 'peasant' would make an efficient trencher and soldier. In his letter, John C. Stiles makes a case, based on evidence from the American Civil War, that the town or city man made the best all-round soldier.

The Observer, 17 Jan 1915

THE CITY MAN AS FIGHTER

Sir,— In your paper of December 13 you have an article on the "Peasant and the War," by "Gay Bury," quoting from Richard Jefferies' book "Hodge and His Masters."

These gentlemen seem to think that the peasant is a better man for trench work than one brought up in a town or city. Of course, when it comes to any kind of work, the man who has had experience is the better one for the job. But it was found out in our American Civil War that the city man made the best all-round soldier, for various reasons—namely, being used to keep all kinds of hours for sleeping and eating, having to think quickly and depend practically upon himself; while the farmer lad goes to bed, gets his meals regular as clockwork, and does what he is told, no more and no less. Of course, in time the latter gets used to irregular hours, but the former, already prepared for that, will at first be a better trencher than the latter a soldier, and so gives better service all around.

I have been keeping a close touch with the war and really cannot see how the British soldier can readily be improved upon, and, as the enemy will soon be driven out of their trenches, the work in the digging line will be minimised by using the trenches of their opponents, and the quick thinking, quick acting, alert, wide-awake man is the one of the hour.

Yours truly,

Brunswick, Ga., U.S.A., Dec. 30. 1914.

JOHN C. STILES¹⁵

¹³ Simkins, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.70.

¹⁵ John Couper Stiles (1865–1956) served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Spanish-American war. A

As the majority of volunteers for the New Armies came from industrialised cities and towns, an initiative was launched by the government to form 'Pals' battalions. These were composed of men who lived in a particular city or district or who shared a common or social or occupational background. As Peter Simkins concluded:

No British Army in history has contained such a high proportion of units directly linked to individual communities. The idea of serving with one's friends in a battalion which was closely identified with one's own town, district or workplace appealed strongly to many thousands of men and often proved the decisive factor in persuading them to enlist.¹⁶

The hidden tragedy in gathering men in this manner was demonstrated many times, particularly in the case of the Accrington Pals, a battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment, which took part in the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916. Out of 720 in the battalion, 584 were killed, wounded or missing. In the same battle the Grimsby Chums, a battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment, suffered casualties of 502 officers and men of a total of 600.¹⁷ Such losses devastated whole towns and communities and after the Somme the Pals battalions were largely disbanded or amalgamated.

In 1915 volunteering was curtailed by the news of heavy losses on the battlefields and the government, after much debate which came close to breaking up of Asquith's Coalition, came to the conclusion that conscription would have to be introduced to maintain sufficient forces in the field. The Military Service Act of January 1916 specified that single men aged 18 to 41 years old were liable to be called up for military service.

In an essay by Jefferies, 'The Future of Country Society', which was published in the *The New Quarterly*, April 1877,¹⁸ he enthused again on his repeated theme about the labourer's suitability for the military and mused on why their ardour had not been marshalled:

Splendid men they are, the pride of the recruiting sergeant. Tall and sturdy, with chests far exceeding the regulation girth; accustomed, too, all their days, from childhood upward, to exposure and hard fare, the very man to form the backbone of an army. It is strange that no attempt has been made to organise this natural enthusiasm. If England should ever have to maintain forces in some degree equal to the huge armies of the Continent, the men for the purpose will have to be sought in the rural districts.

frequent writer of letters to newspapers expressing opinions on military matters, mostly concerning the American Civil War and the First World War. (Georgia Historical Society).

¹⁶ Simkins, *op. cit.*, p.186.

¹⁷ R. Grant, *op. cit.*, p.181.

¹⁸ Collected in John Pearson, *Richard Jefferies: Landscape and Labour*, (Bradford-on-Avon, Moonraker Press, 1979) p.90.

Conscription did offer the organisation Jefferies sought but he had written in his 1871 *Swindon Advertiser* series that he was firmly against 'the dreaded compulsion of military service' and sending a volunteer army abroad,¹⁹ relying instead on part-time training and drilling for all men to form a defence force.

The new Military Service Act meant that a continual removal of men from the farms would seriously reduce domestic food production. In May 1916, *Country Life*²⁰ magazine reported that in the House of Commons George Lambert, Liberal MP for South Molton, raised the matter of the pressing labour shortage on farms:

Mr. George Lambert somewhat violently attacked Lord Selborne and the Board of Agriculture for not having put up a better fight against the military authorities, who, in his view, have snatched away far too many men from the farms. The Minister himself was emphatic that agriculture could certainly spare no more. Out of a million men—including the farmers themselves—employed on the land before the war, more than a quarter had joined the colours. That had brought agriculture to what he called the "danger point of decreased production," and the only way, he said, they could pull through without serious loss was for the farmers to avail themselves of all the supplies that were available to make up the shortage. The main source is women's labour.

Women's War Agricultural Committees were set up in each county as a form of labour exchange, matching women wishing to work in rural areas with farmers who had labour shortages. The Women's National Land Service Corps, later the Women's Land Army, was created in order to bring urban women, usually educated and middle class, into the countryside in the 'lighter' rural roles. In addition, the War Office supplied farms with prisoners of war and some British soldiers released from the front line, particularly experienced ploughmen as this was a vital and skilled job. These measures proved inadequate and the following year a voluntary code of rationing was introduced but by 1918 rationing was imposed for meat, butter, cheese and sugar.²¹

The conscription order, which Kitchener had opposed, further separated him from the government following his poor oversight of the production of shells and his support for Churchill's ill-fated Gallipoli Campaign. He was sent on a diplomatic mission to Russia and on 5 June 1916, on his way to negotiations with Tsar Nicholas II, his ship, HMS *Hampshire*, struck a German mine off the Orkneys and sunk with a loss of 737 lives, Kitchener among them. His premature death meant he never saw his volunteer armies slaughtered on the

¹⁹ Jefferies, *op. cit.*, p.26

²⁰ *Country Life*, 27 May 1916: 'Agriculture and the War: A Memorable Parliamentary Discussion.' p.641.

²¹ Laura Stearman, *World War One: The Few Who Fed The Many* (Stoneleigh: National Farmers Union, 2014) pp.9–10.

Somme where on the first disastrous day, the worst in the history of the army, the British suffered 20,000 killed and gained very little ground.²²

At the end of the war in 1918 overall numbers of those killed were estimated at British, 750,000; France, 1.4m; Germany, 2m; Australia, 62,000; Canada; 65,000; India, 74,000 and Belgium, 58,000.²³ Gentlemanly debate as to the merits of whether men from the town or country made the better soldiers became inconsequential when armies were confronted by the effectiveness of machine-guns and high-explosive shells.

As British nurse Vera Brittain commented on Armistice Day, 1918, 'Already this was a different world...the war was over; a new age was beginning; but the dead were dead and would never return.'²⁴



Poster recruiting women for farm work: 1917.

²² R. Grant *op. cit.*, p.148.

²³ *ibid.*, p.332.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.148.

‘An Island in Sunshine’

Florence E. Pettit

This charming account of Wolstonbury Hill was published in *The Lady* on 18 September 1969, pp.410–421. It was accompanied with photographs of the area that cannot be reproduced clearly. Florence Pettit lived in the foothills of the hill at 8, Grand Avenue, Hassocks, Sussex and the 1939 register puts her birth as 30 April 1911. She lived with her husband, Thomas, who worked for the Inland Revenue and their baby daughter Audrey, born 8 July 1939. Florence died in 1987. The quotes are from Jefferies ‘Wild Flowers’, where the hill is called ‘Wolstanbury’, first published in *Longman’s Magazine*, July 1885 and collected in *The Open Air*.

The author Richard Jefferies (1848 to 1887) glowingly described the hill on the Sussex Downs where he once walked—and where I walk often. I can see Wolstonbury from my home, and I can tell what the day’s weather will be like by the appearance of the hill on the skyline.

Should it ‘advance’ towards me, then I know that rain is imminent. Occasionally it is itself blotted out by low cloud or mist. Usually it is softly distant, yet always abidingly near, inviting me to walk upon it now and then.



I climb upon its summit, as Jefferies did, with the wind from the sea blowing about me, for Wolstonbury is 677 feet high. Seven miles to the south the Channel sparkles beyond Brighton. If I turn slightly, the trees around the Devil’s Dyke can be seen, thronged about by cars judging from the flashes of sunlight that catch windscreens.

Farther over, to the west, on clear days, the clump of beeches known as Chanctonbury Ring, north of Worthing, stands blue in the distance. Much nearer, and eastwards, Jack and Jill catch my eye; they are a pair of black and white well-preserved windmills, home of a well-known golfer. From the valley road they appear to be near the sky. From the superior height of Wolstonbury they are curiously low, below the line of green hills. If I were to decide to walk past the windmills, I would eventually arrive in Lewes.

It is the immediate area below Wolstonbury Hill that is most inviting. I usually begin a walk near the windmills, preferably early in the morning, or at the closing of the day.

In August, the chalk tracks are fringed with outsize wild scabious—almost as big as the garden ones. There are gorgeous red and purple thistles too, and white and yellow bedstraws that would grace any rockery. But—and this must be understood from the start—the flowers are not for plucking. The cushions of thyme that adorn the molehills are fading. So are the wild orchids that grew lately on the downs, although a few ‘bees’ are going to seed and some late red pyramids.

Blackberries are colouring up and all about spread the old-gold harvest fields. These slope away downwards. I know that when I actually arrive on the top, I will look down on to a patchwork quilt of colour, incredibly vividly beautiful—and *still*; it will be still, save where a field of barley has not been cut; that will be wafting softly, catching the light, looking now like a pale gold sea, now like a ‘huddle of windsheep’ as my son once expressed it.

Real sheep are all around, their lambs fat and feeding independently. A glance to the right, and downwards, brings sight of a badger track. Generations of badgers have lived there in the rather poor soil where foxes also used to abound. There may be a red form scuttling across a barren chalk patch, even today.

In one of his essays Richard Jefferies wrote:

On a summer’s day, Wolstanbury Hill is an island in sunshine; you may lie on the grassy rampart, high up in the most delicate air—Grecian air, pellucid—alone, among the butterflies and humming bees at the thyme, alone and isolated; endless masses of hills on three sides, endless weald or valley on the fourth; all warmly lit with sunshine, deep under liquid sunshine like the sands under the liquid sea, no harshness of man-made sound to break the insulation amid nature, on an island in a far Pacific of sunshine.

Ten minutes’ walk is enough to make one realise the meaning of the phrase ‘an island in sunshine.’ One can see little bits of road below, where cars are obviously hurrying, but the sound doesn’t carry upwards at all. There is no sound save that of the skylarks soaring happily above. There are skylarks on Wolstonbury, all the year round (unlike Jefferies, we spell it now with two o’s).

So, with dancing harebells about one's feet, and with the happy larks above, it is with a spring in the step that one approaches the green summit. The distance is not far. The grass is cropped short—it was shorter in the days of many rabbits! The ground will be dry, for rain and dew trickles quickly away through the thin turf and the chalky soil.

There are hollows formed many years previously, by ancient Britons and Romans. There was an Iron-Age hill fort or camp here, with an earthwork running like a wide guttering all around the top of the hill. I always think, rather oddly, of the tonsured head of some monk!

From the top one can understand Jefferies' writing:

Some people would hesitate to walk down the staircase cut in the turf to the beech trees beneath. The woods look so small beneath, so far down and steep, and no handrail. Many go to the Dyke, but none to Wolstonbury Hill.

How glad I am that this still is true, a century after the essays were written. One can only explore Wolstonbury on foot or on horseback, but the ponies do not usually get up on to the summit.

From the grassy knoll above the 'steep staircase' gashed crudely out of the chalk on the northern slope one can look down towards Danny with its lake hidden like a jewel beneath massed trees; Danny and 'the Hurst of the Pierreponts' as Jefferies termed it, but called Hurstpierpoint today. This contains not only the famous College, but an Elizabethan manor belonging to the Campion family. It has now been tastefully divided into elegant flats, but its great hall is open to view—for a fee—once a week.

Descending by the easier velvety slope to the east one would reach the charming village of Clayton.

Time was when interesting flints could be picked up on the downs around here, especially in the small quarry on the right where, in spring, very long-stalked cowslips grow. (Flint implements recovered from Wolstonbury are now on display in the museums of Lewes, the County town.) Up until recently one could find that strange plant, the lesser dodder, with its thin, red, prostrate stems intertwined among the wild strawberries.

It was here that, a few years ago, I encountered a moss-gatherer. His flashing knives and trussed up sacks gave me a momentary fright, but he explained that he sold his sacks full of moist green moss to the Brighton florists. Rising bus fares, however, were making it difficult for him to continue 'in business'!

Before my time the hill shepherds would augment their meagre wage packets by snaring wheatears that habitually bred in downland rabbit burrows. The wheatears would be baked into pies by hoteliers. Wheatears still breed on Wolstonbury in the summertime, but in decreasing numbers.

A lovely passage from a Jefferies' essay reminds me of the wild white violets that still grow about the feet of the hill in springtime. They are hard to find because they grow in the chalk close beside the little black/white banded snails. When the sun is in one's eyes the white lane dazzles and many pass the violets by although perhaps aware of their sweet scent.

Before I had any conscious thought it was a delight to me to find wild flowers, just to see them. It was a pleasure to gather them and to take them home; a pleasure to show them to others—to keep them as long as they would live, to decorate the room with them, to arrange them carelessly with grasses, green sprays ... Without conscious thought of seasons and the advancing hours, to light on the white wild violet, the meadow orchis, the blue veronica, the blue meadow cranesbill, feeling the warmth and delight of the increasing sunrays, but not recognising whence or why it was joy.

So it is still, about the Wolstonbury he loved, for me at any rate. 'Beech and beautiful scenery,' he also wrote, 'go together.'

Even in August, there is a glow of russet about the tops of the great sweep of beeches that cover the lower slopes of the hill. These trees, in autumn, are like a huge fox's brush—gently curving, softly graceful, protected from the wind by the hump of Wolstonbury. They invite one to walk beneath their welcome, outspread branches.

Thus one continues to descend, walking beneath the trees, past all these viburnums, hawthorns and wayfaring trees. The viburnums had black and green and red and yellow berries upon them in large clusters in July—they berry up at the same time as the mountain ashes do, surprisingly early.

What a noise the rooks and jackdaws make as they rise like clouds of outsize midges above the treetops. Someone with a dog, perhaps, has disturbed them—or is it that the 'children' are about to leave home? There is a tree-pipit descending to a gorse bush—he sings coming down—unlike the skylark who sings as he ascends! From these slopes I watch for the first willow-warblers in spring, the first chiff-chaffs and the first whitethroats. They usually come more or less together. In the early autumn they pass the other way—bound for the Channel and the faraway African shores.

The beech glades here have, alas, been fenced in since Jefferies' day. The deep cart tracks—now tractor ruts—are hard upon the feet. After rain they are well nigh impassable.

Here, in the glades, in May-time, the wild white garlic flings an oniony perfume about as one passes. Nearer to the Danny 'staircase' there are clumps of white helleborines—in May and June.

In late summer and early autumn it is not white flowers to be seen but coloured toadstools and fungoid growths upon an overturned tree trunk close by the 'Arthur Rackham' oak with its grotesquely twisted old branches. This is a

creepy bit of the woods, but a fascinating corner for those who like to sketch such distortions. Mostly, there is not enough light for painting—except in spring when the foliage is less dense and when the bluebells cause one to gasp in annual wonder and delight.

I often pause beneath a beech, spreading its canopy of deep green about us. Here it was that my children used to climb—and challenge me to do likewise. Here sweet-hearting still goes on, to judge by the carved hearts and crude initials borne long-sufferingly by the once all-smooth grey bole. Here, too, we used to find the earliest of all wild orchids, the strange green twayblade that likes to appear in February—before all others. Its two, large, fat leaves are an open invitation to the gnomes of the woods to shelter beneath them.

‘Twayblade!’ my son used to call and, ‘Twayblade!’ echoed my daughter, who had stumbled upon another. Now the little grandsons seek—and still find—them, but we never pick them, for orchids take an unconscionable time to grow. Fortunately, few passers-by appear to observe their camouflaged flowers. I would like to think that Jefferies knew about the twayblades growing there down secret pathways.

Even when it is wet in the woods, there is charm. Our essayist, who died so young—before he was forty—wrote:

The raindrops as they slide from leaf to leaf, the balmy shower that re-perfumes each wild flower and green thing, drops lit with the sun, and falling to the chorus of the refreshed birds; is not this beautiful to see?

There used to be hanging, ropey vines in the hollows at the foot of Wolstonbury. There my son used to swing and pretend that he was Tarzan. A rubbish tip was started there a few years back and everyone round about was sad because of it.

However, already the hollow has been almost filled in—it was a very creepy place in two senses of the word—and Nature is clothing it anew.

There is change on Wolstonbury, as elsewhere, and yet there is still that timeless quality that makes me feel that it will be much the same generations hence—when my grandsons perhaps have grandsons of their own. I hope that these thoughts prove true, that other nature-mystics like Jefferies (and myself) will walk upon its slopes quietly, preferably alone, in the years to come, and sense the lovely spirit that pervades this gentle Sussex hill which Jefferies called ‘an island in sunshine.’

Over The Old Road

Andrew Soutar

This article appeared in the New Zealand publication: *Dunstan Times*, issue 3372, 21 May 1928. It is reprinted under a Creative Commons New Zealand BY-NC-SA licence. Perhaps the article first appeared in a UK publication.

Andrew Soutar (1879–1941) was a prolific British novelist and journalist. He was born in Swindon in 1879 and baptised on 18 March 1880 as Edward Andrew Stagg. His father, Frederick, a Swindonian, married Anna Davidson from Newcastle where Andrew's elder siblings were born. Around 1878 the family moved to 9, Sydney Terrace, Rodbourne, Swindon. By the 1901 census the family had moved to 28 Regent Circus and Andrew is noted as a newspaper reporter. He worked for the *Swindon Advertiser*. Soutar married Elspeth Soutar Swinton (born in Scotland) in 1907 and adopted the name Soutar. His novels and adventure stories were popular with filmmakers, particularly during the silent era. He died in Cornwall on 24 November 1941.

To regain one's youth, said Wilde, one has only to repeat one's follies. I know of a safer and more pleasurable way. Go back to some town that was familiar to you 30 odd years ago and mark the change the years have wrought.

You shall be made conscious of many conflicting emotions. There shall be the restrained joy that one associates with the happening on a long-lost book—the turning over of time-soiled pages, the glimpsing of a chapter here and there, and the priding of oneself on a retentive memory as incidents are recalled without seeming effort.

And there shall be sadness, too, as you tour the streets and lanes and look for landmarks that have been effaced by that arch-vandal, Progress.

I realised all this during a week-end I passed in Swindon, Wiltshire.

They will tell you that Swindon is no more than a depressing town where thousand[s] of men toil daily in the making of railway engines—engines and trains that rush more fortunate people away into sunshine and convivial environment. There is no place in all England so rich in legend.

I motored past the estate of the Bolingbrokes at Lydiard Tregoze. There you shall mark a prodigality of oaks—even the hedges are of oak. The first Bolingbroke, so the legend goes, rendered some signal service to the State and a whimsical Sovereign granted him the estate on condition that he reaped only three crops. Bolingbroke planted acorns! And the first crop has not yet been reaped.

Half there have laced the streets with tramway lines. When first I entered the town as a boy the carrier's cart rumbled through the quiet thoroughfares. I remember timidly inquiring at the Mason's Arms for Cripps, who should take

me to the village of Chiseldon. His presence awed me, for he possessed one immobile eye and one that took in every detail of my modest clothing.

His horse was old and wheezy, but his cart was older and wheezier still. He had patched it with boards taken from soap boxes; it was not commodious, but his heart made it expand; he never refused to take up 'just one more passenger.' Before we reached the end of the journey he must have had fifteen or twenty persons packed in among the luggage.

He sang as we moved slowly along the road towards the Downs. He pointed out the house at Coate in which Richard Jefferies, the poet naturalist, was born. It stands on the side of the highroad, and immediately behind it is the Coate reservoir whereon he sailed his boat and caught the spirit of the open air.

A little further, on the left of the road, still stands the old inn, the Red Cow¹. To the proprietress of this inn Jefferies used to take his boat sails to be repaired, and while she sat and stitched he talked to her of the magic of the woods.

In those days Chiseldon was an old-world village of exquisite charm—thatched cottages and sequestered lanes with the sweetness of the down winds permeating the atmosphere. Today it is pock-marked with relics of the war—ugly, misshapen army huts with broken windows.



Mary Smith outside the Spotted Cow with her daughter

¹ There was an inn called the Red Cow in Swindon on Princes Street. The old inn referred to by Soutar was the Spotted Cow at Coate. Mary Smith née Rawlings was the landlady there from at least 1881 to 1901, firstly with her husband, and former farmer at Snodshill, John Woolford (with whom Richard Jefferies stayed in October 1870) and, on John's death, Daniel Smith. Mary, was a little older than Richard, perhaps by four years (her birth date is uncertain). Edward Thomas interviewed her whilst researching for *Richard Jefferies: his Life & Work* (London: Hutchinson, 1909). Jessie Jefferies was reluctant to speak to Thomas about her husband when she learnt that Thomas had already interviewed Mary. Was this because Mary had worked as a servant in the Baden household when Jessie was living there or could there have been some jealousy? Mary was the model for Bevis's 'Polly the milkmaid'. In Chapter XII of *Bevis Frances* (Mark's sister) is called upon to hem the sail, but this might well be based on a real incident that involved Mary Rawlings. Mary's grandfather had also been a gamekeeper at Hodson and helped raise Mary in their cottage at Coate.

We passed through the village, then down the winding path in Hodson Woods. It was here that Jefferies found his soul. The gamekeeper's cottage about which he wrote so tenderly, peeped at us over a bank—a thatched cottage with windows that resembled the quizzical eyes of an old man suspicious of modernity. Then through the villages of Wroughton, prominent as a racing centre in those days of 30 years ago. Didn't George Frederick win the Derby? And didn't they roast an ox in the main street in celebration?

It is changed today. The bungalow dwellers have been eating up the land where the wild flowers grew. I looked in vain for the lane through the fields from Swindon.

There are still racing stables, but I couldn't regain the romance of the old ones. I did recall one early morning when I walked along the road towards Swindon in the distance, meeting on the way a stable boy astride a small compact-built horse. He had brought it from the station; it was going into training in the village.

'Any good' I asked.

'It will win the Chester Cup,' said he. And it did. The horse was Count Schomberg.

Back in the town of Swindon, I walked some of the streets in a vain effort to recapture the sense of quaintness of three decades ago. The cumbersome trams that bellow their way down the hill mocked the visions of carrier's carts and tubby farmers astride their cobs.

Stay! I was given the glimpse of one institution that hasn't changed with the passing years. It was market day, and in the Corn Exchange (where I saw my first cinematograph entertainment) farmers were sniffing handfuls of grain, passing from one sample to another as though nothing on earth could help them to make up their mind.

Yes, everything, yet nothing, changes. The farmers are still insisting that farming is dead; the hotel-keepers lament the demise of the hardened old toppers.

They were still talking football with the enthusiasm of those days when Dick Jones was a stalwart, and Menham, the old Everton goalkeeper, and Charlie Williams and Sutherland and ... Ah! the memory totters a little, but they are still talking of winning the English Cup and gaining promotion—just as they talked 30 years ago.

It is good to the soul to go back over the old, broken road, picking up and reviving memories that have lain dormant for 30 years.

Ships in the Night: Richard Jefferies and W.H. Hudson

Conor Mark Jameson

On 8 May 2021 author Conor Mark Jameson gave the Richard Jefferies Society Spring Lecture about the briefly overlapping but closely dove-tailed lives of Richard Jefferies and W.H. Hudson. In this paper he develops some of those ideas.

Appropriately, 2022 is the centenary year of Hudson's death.



Oil painting of W.H. Hudson at the RSPB's Sandy Lodge
photographed by Conor Jameson

I encountered the work of Richard Jefferies long before I discovered W.H. Hudson, which would be typical for my generation. I didn't have all that many books as a child, but I was the proud owner of the Jefferies novel *Bevis*, a present from my mum. I asked her recently if she remembers this, and her recollection is pleasingly detailed. She was a teacher of French and English, and one day came across an excerpt from *Bevis* in a school textbook. Recognising something of me in the boy's immersion in everyday, backyard nature, she purchased the Puffin 1974 edition from a Glasgow bookshop.

I kept it close to me for years. I recall in certain phases that I wanted to *be Bevis*, to have a life like his, in a rural idyll where the weather was often nice (compared to post-industrial west-central Scotland) pottering by his brook, making his rafts. I wish I could say that W.H. Hudson had been a similar influence on me in early life, but Hudson has not enjoyed the enduring renown of Jefferies. I'm curious as to why this might be.

Excerpts of Jefferies' prose also 'spoke' to me in later youth—as he strove with words to capture something of the divine inspiration we can take from nature at its most arresting. Despite my Hudson-esque terror of public speaking at that time I agreed to give a reading at my brother's wedding, and suggested a rapturous passage by Jefferies, although Kevin opted for something equally epic, but somehow more grounded-yet-vaster-in-scale, from John Muir.

I found Hudson when I started work at the RSPB's Lodge, Sandy, headquarters back in 1995. His almost life-size image in oils hangs above the stone fireplace in the main meeting room, befitting the period of the house, and even the heathy woodland beyond the window. Hudson has on his best wool suit, with wing collar and a cap, and a pair of field glasses. He has an earnest, slightly searching, even suspicious expression, with shadowed, inscrutable eyes.

Although his setting might pass for the greensand ridge on which The Lodge was built, in fact it was painted, after his death, from a photograph taken in the heart of the New Forest, Hampshire. The painting originally hung in the RSPB's London office, surviving the blitz there, and followed the organisation to Sandy in 1961.

Finding his books in the library, my imagination was captured by a story Hudson tells in his *Birds and Man* (1915) about a night he spent in a big house such as this, but on the wild coast of Cornwall, as a winter storm raged outside. He was sitting by the fireplace, and on the mantel were glass cases, containing stuffed animals: a green woodpecker and a red squirrel.

The wind outside was making a hundred strange noises... somehow the woodpecker was catching these small sounds in his beak and turning them into words... "Hullo!" he said. "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

Hudson lapsed into a nightmare, that when men die they are condemned to a similar stuffed and mounted state, in a glass case, in the 'walls of the palace of hell,' to remain for eternity in that state.

"Do you know," says the squirrel. "I think he is going mad."

I couldn't help noting the symmetry with his current situation, here by the fireplace, life-size but lifeless, and voiceless. I was reminded of Professor Yaffle, the woodpecker character in the children's animation *Bagpuss*, in which the toys in a shop come to life, after hours... It became a mission for me to re-animate Mr. Hudson...

Paradoxically, Jefferies belongs to an earlier literary era than Hudson, despite the fact that Hudson was the older man—by seven years. Their tenures on Earth overlapped. So too did their spaces. Hudson lived at various addresses in south-west London, and for a time, in the late 1870s, Jefferies was just ten miles away, in Surbiton. Jefferies was at this time already a prolific author, while the recently arrived immigrant Hudson was spending long hours in the British Museum library, reading doggedly, exploring London's parks and green fringes, and making occasional forays beyond the city when time, money and his wife Emily's schedule would allow. She managed boarding houses, and taught music, having retired as a professional singer.

The earliest reference to Jefferies I have found in Hudson's writing comes in an 1884 letter to the prominent humanist and animal rights activist Henry Salt. It gives a hint of Hudson's distaste for and resentment of the majority of writers on natural history, as practised in that period.

The last place one would look for the feeling for nature, which gives flavour to the writings of Thoreau, Jefferies, Melville etc, would be in the works of the naturalists—so-called. Robert Mudie, the ornithologist, is an exception... [Shrubsall 2007, Vol 1, p.56]

By the time Jefferies' life was tragically curtailed in 1887 at age 38 he had published more than 20 books. Hudson, meanwhile, published almost nothing of note until 1885, when he was 44. This belated breakthrough was a novel, or romance, called *The Purple Land that England Lost*. It is the tale of an adventurer in the Banda Orientale: Uruguay, as we call it today.

Jefferies' bleak vision of the future, *After London*, appeared in the same year. Two years later came Hudson's futuristic novel, *A Crystal Age*, which he published anonymously. It seems inevitable that he was familiar with Jefferies' book, though his treatment of the future is less apocalyptic, more philosophical.

Another area of overlap seems to have been the Selborne Society, which has claimed both men as members, or patrons, around this time [Clarke]. It has not been possible to trace any more specific evidence of this, or how this shared allegiance might have brought Hudson to Jefferies' attention. In any case I think we can be fairly sure they never corresponded, and there are three main reasons: I can find no reference by Hudson to doing so; Jefferies was in poor health by the time he might have known of Hudson; and Hudson was never 'forward' in these things, even when he'd made his name. [One incident in support of this I would cite is the time Hudson took up Thomas Hardy's invitation to visit him in Dorset. Hudson got as far as the garden gate then couldn't summon the will to knock on Hardy's door.]

In the summer of 1887, Hudson received a scrapbook of cuttings from his publisher Fisher Unwin. It contained around 35 reviews of *A Crystal Age*, most

of them, in Hudson's view, 'more or less favourable'. The most complimentary, to his mind, was an 'extremely generous' one snipped from The *Glasgow Herald*. The writer of that review, William Canton, also contacted him directly.

'One thing in your notice specially pleased my wife,' Hudson told Canton, in reply. 'I mean your mention of Richard Jefferies at the end, for she has always maintained that I resembled him when writing about nature, and in Natural History articles, and your words proved to her at once that she "was right"; which was a great satisfaction, as up to then she had not found anyone to agree with her. Poor Jefferies!'

By the time Hudson's grateful and typically self-deprecating reply reached Canton, Jefferies had died at his home in Goring, Sussex, in mid-August 1887—'slain before his time by hateful destiny,' as Hudson put it.

It is tempting to conceive of the chronology between the two writers as a seamless passing of a pen-shaped baton, with the briefest of overlaps. One thing that didn't pass was the gun, and the end of Jefferies and start of Hudson perhaps marks some kind of threshold between two eras, between armed and unarmed naturalists here. Hudson may have done more than anyone to challenge the cultural norm that nature should be approached with a fire-arm, collected and taken home.

I've seen nothing to suggest Hudson ever carried or fired a gun in the near half-century of his life in England. This is especially interesting considering that he may have been seldom without one when living in South America, where he had latterly been a collector of bird specimens, and lived the life of a gaucho, and served in the Argentine army, when frontiers were fiercely contested and summary justice routinely dispensed. Although he never said as much, perhaps he had seen more than enough killing by the time he emigrated, and felt it a relief to walk unarmed. We didn't have names for trauma back then, but I often wonder what effect the brutalities he witnessed in early life must have had on a mind so acutely attuned to the beauties of nature.

Details of Hudson's early years in England are patchy. For reasons hard to fathom he encouraged his friends to believe he arrived here in 1869, five years earlier than he actually did. He had met and married Emily Wingrave within two years, and their first decade or so after that were difficult years for the couple, about which he didn't care to be reminded. He spent long hours in the British Museum library, and must have read Jefferies as he 'crammed' to amass knowledge of British natural history, and literature. There was little time or money for excursions, but he seems to have begun going to Sussex not long after Jefferies' death. He liked to hang out at Shoreham with writers George Gissing and Morley Roberts, and artist Alfred Hartley.

More than a decade later Hudson was more outwardly mobile and back on the south coast, writing *Nature in Downland*. 'Jefferies was much in my mind

just now,' Hudson writes at the start of that book, published in 1899, 'because by chance I happen to be writing this introductory chapter in the last house he inhabited, and where he died.'

While they never met, a very curious thing happened when Hudson decided one day to visit and stay for a few days at Sea View, that house in Goring where Jefferies had lived in later life, and where he died. Hudson wrote from there to his close friend and fellow naturalist Emma Hubbard, describing his lodging as:

A large, well-built comfortable cottage in its own grounds, ivied and pleasant to look at, with fig and apple trees in the grounds; the sea close by... My bedroom is the one Jefferies occupied, but he died downstairs in one of the sitting-rooms. In the garden there is a now ruinous summer house where he often sat to do his writing.

'A mysterious adventure befell me,' Hudson wrote in *Downland* of a walk he had taken near the church, approaching the house:

My mind was full of sadness, when, hearing the crunch of gravel beneath other feet than my own, I suddenly looked up, and behold, there before me stood the man himself, back on earth in the guise of a tramp.

'Can you spare a penny?' the stranger asked him.

Hudson obliged, and not surprisingly was troubled by this apparent visitation by Jefferies. 'I knew,' he reflected, 'that those miserable eyes would continue to haunt me...' But it seems the spectre didn't follow him back to the house. The following morning Hudson resumed his letter writing:

A rainy morning! But I slept soundly, and poor R.J.'s ghost did not disturb me—they seldom come back. I wish they did.

Hudson had visited a number of times before, but it was in 1908 that his attentions turned fully to Wiltshire, Jefferies' home turf. 'I must stick to that county now,' Hudson declared. In fact he had been spending time there for some years, getting to know the local shepherds and their families sufficiently well to earn their trust. He promised to keep their identities secret, and even gave the village an alias: Winterbourne Bishop. He had written to Hubbard on 29 May 1903 from Marlborough:

Today I saw a *Daily Telegraph* here with a notice of *Hampshire Days* [his book published that year] in it—the usual sort of newspaper review, indiscriminate praise and Richard Jefferies mantle stuff.' [Shrubsall 2007, p296]

Hudson visited the statue of Jefferies in Salisbury Cathedral in April 1905—he had obviously been before, hadn't thought much of it then. He wrote to publisher's reader Edward Garnett: 'I just now had a look at that Richard Jefferies bust in the cathedral and dislike it worse than ever. The expressionless face of it!'

Hudson could be unsparingly candid in his views. In the same letter to Garnett he wrote: 'There is a deadly want of humour in Jefferies. Yesterday I

laboured at *Bevis* until I dropped to sleep over it.' It seems he preferred Mark Twain's American counterpart: '... one chapter of *Huckleberry Finn* was worth more than all that long book.' [It is worth noting here that some critics—I think inaccurately—have accused Hudson of lacking a sense of humour.]

There was a compliment too, though qualified:

I have been told that I have some affinities with Gilbert White. Jefferies too was a great observer and—unlike White—a poet and an artist, but his work is also a little mannered. He is at times perhaps too consciously an artist, too consciously an observer and student of nature.

Hudson was also honest about his dear friend Edward Thomas, whom he is said to have met in 1906 when Thomas was engaged in writing Jefferies' biography, and acquainting himself with Jefferies' Wiltshire. Hudson was among those who persuaded Thomas that his forte was poetry.

Thomas's biography of Jefferies appeared in 1909, and was dedicated to Hudson. 'He and Edward constantly wrote to each other and met often in London,' Helen Thomas would recall, after her husband's death. 'Edward responded to this somewhat austere, solitary man, and honoured him above all writers of the time.' [Tomalin, p.120]

Hudson's *Shepherd's Life* appeared in 1910, and is among the most enduring of his works, being still in print. A friend of mine found and photographed one on the shelves of Waterstone's, next to Jefferies, with a book of my own sandwiched between. I found this both humbling and embarrassing, but alphabetical order counts for something, I assured myself.

War came, and Thomas enlisted, an unlikely soldier, along with most of Hudson's younger friends. Edward Garnett was serving as a medic, in Italy. 'He has written to me,' Hudson reported, 'and enclosed a letter from a local who says he loves my writing, and that of Richard Jefferies.'

As World War I raged, Hudson had a spell of serious illness, and visions brought on by fever, or medication, or both, which prompted him to write his vivid memoir of childhood, *Far Away and Long Ago*. The death of Edward Thomas on the Western Front dealt him a terrible blow.

'I am like Richard Jefferies,' Hudson wrote in 1919, 'when he spent his last months looking out of his window and wondering what Nature would do without him—how the flowers would ever come out and the birds make their nests—and so on.' [Shrubsall 2007, p.643]

Hudson's output in what most of us nowadays consider retirement years was prodigious. And it seems that the longer he lived, the more feverishly he worked. By the end he was engaged in a scramble to buy back the rights to his earlier books, and as much money from American publishers as he could squeeze out of them, to leave to his beloved Bird Society.

With Hudson's 80th year approaching, his long-time friend and later biographer Morley Roberts made a point of interviewing him, to attempt to capture something of the man. Roberts extracted perhaps the most revealing articulation of Hudson's self-identity:

I myself would be anything you like except the professional showman of the beauties of what people are pleased to call the countryside... My style of writing was bare and free from ornament. I was profoundly interested in the little things, in trifles. No, it was not strange none cared much for my books. They have made handsome amends since then.

That Hudson and Jefferies share top billing at Broadwater Cemetery in Worthing is of course well known to readers of either, or both. But it is curious that Hudson was so keen to be buried—in a shared grave with his wife Emily—not only in the same cemetery as Jefferies, but to have a plot alongside him, in the prominent, central location that Jefferies 'enjoys'. Alas for Hudson this proved impossible:

I had hoped to acquire a plot for us beside Richard Jefferies, in the old and most rustic part of the cemetery, with its noble old trees, but the heads of this place insisted that this part was full. I—or should I say we—must be content to rest, as they call it, in another part.



Emily Hudson was older than her husband, perhaps as much as 15 years older. She would never divulge her birth year and, if he knew it, he never let on. She had been in care at Worthing for around a decade, and died in early spring 1921. His doctor insisted that Hudson was too ill to travel and attend, and only able to leave his winter quarters in Cornwall three months later, at which time he visited her. 'There is a good pine tree by the grave,' he reported, 'and the

turtle doves were crooning all the time I stayed there. The whole place seemed swarming with birds.'

I think it fitting that Jefferies is centre stage, and Hudson and Emily almost off-stage, in the wings, and shadows. It seems somehow symbolic of their respective places in literature today, and certainly reflective of Hudson's character, if not Jefferies'.

'It is good to hear that someone is trying to keep Hudson's name alive,' Honorary Secretary Jean Saunders said to me before my talk to the Richard Jefferies Society. 'It is a pity that there isn't a W.H. Hudson Society.'

Indeed. A century after his death, I would be content if we could muster a W.H. Hudson Conference, but even without the challenges posed by covid, I wonder if the will exists in enough minds. The dwindling of Hudson's renown would seem natural if it weren't for the enduring place of Jefferies in the literary canon. Deliberating on this might make an interesting theme in itself for a conference. Is it political? Possibly. While both men were ambiguous politically, Hudson made himself unpopular with some important and influential people, and couldn't care less whom he upset in defence of the birds, and the special places, with his candid views and 'native lack of delicacy'. While Jefferies was from and of the rural people, Hudson was a sympathiser with humble folk, but an outsider. He was by all accounts a good man to know, but you had to work at it to get there.

It is interesting to note the view of Q.D. Leavis from 1938, who blamed the cult of Hudson that she perceived at that time for the decline of interest in Jefferies in the 1920s.

The impression that left was that Hudson did everything Jefferies did, only much better because he was an artist, a great stylist, and the other a clumsy amateur who wrote journalism.

If her analysis is correct, it is especially interesting that Jefferies 'came back', boosted of course by the founding of the Richard Jefferies Society in 1950. Meanwhile, Hudson faded, to the point that in 1964 an anthology of Hudson's prose (issued by the RSPB) acknowledged that by this time he had but 'a small circle of rather fervid admirers,' making it possible that 'some of the present neglect has resulted from over eager praise'.

When reading about the modern vogue for nature writing you might be forgiven for concluding that the genre was invented by J.A. Baker in 1967, with his Jefferies-esque epic *The Peregrine*. But Hudson bore witness to the genre's earlier incarnations, and fluctuating tastes:

When I began to write, nature writing was rather out of fashion or was only just coming in. Jefferies' good work of the [18]70s and 80s had been practically forgotten. [Shrubsall 2007]

It is typical of Hudson to defer to his predecessor, and concern himself more with reviving the collective memory of Jefferies than in ensuring his own.

Timeline of milestones

Year	W.H. Hudson	Richard Jefferies
1841	Born	
1848		Born
1850/60s	Fevers that left him with a weakened heart	Tuberculosis
1866	First known letter, to the Smithsonian Institute, Washington	Newspaper reporter
1874	Emigrated to Britain	First novel. Married
1876	Married	
1877	Lived south-west London	Lived Surbiton—10+ miles away
	Co-writing <i>Argentine Ornithology</i> —took 15 years	Publishes circa 20 books in circa 10 years
1883	Sparrow poem and South American lullabies essay	<i>Nature Near London</i> published
Mid 1880s	Selborne Society patron?	Selborne Society patron?
1885	First book <i>A Purple Land</i>	<i>After London</i> published
1887	Second book <i>A Crystal Age</i>	Died August 14 th aged 38
1888	<i>Argentine Ornithology</i>	
	Circa 25 books after age 50	
1922	Died August 18 th aged 81	

Notes:

Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* was published in 1876, Jefferies' *Bevis* in 1882, and Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* in 1884.

Selborne Society and SPB links: I have read through the Selborne Society newsletters of 1890/91 online, and where I could see lists of Vice-Presidents etc, I couldn't see the names of Henry Salt, Hudson, Eliza Phillips (RSPB founder), etc—though William Morris is listed. I made enquiries to the Selborne Society, which were helpfully received, but at the time of writing it has not been possible to confirm what records they have of Hudson and Jefferies' involvement.

If both Jefferies and Hudson were named members/patrons of the Selborne Society around the years 1885 to 1887, this might at least have made Jefferies aware of Hudson. I haven't seen Henry Salt mentioned in connection with the Selborne Society, but he was an acquaintance of both men.

More from Q.D. Leavis from a review in the 'Comments and Reviews' section of *Scrutiny* (pp.435-446) March 1938:

The other factor that pushed Jefferies out of sight for the post-war [WW1] generation was the Bloomsbury cult of W.H. Hudson. The impression that left was that Hudson did everything Jefferies did, only much better because he was an artist, a great stylist, and the other a clumsy amateur who wrote journalism. It is hard now to understand how anyone could have had patience with the precious style Hudson affected or have been interested in his Victorian Utopias. We did not venture to disagree openly with Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Herbert Read and Mr. Murry and the *Athenaeum*, but we privately found Hudson a bore and, in his sentimentalisation of human life, embarrassing. No one had the strength of mind of the child in *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and by the time Hudson had ceased to be read Jefferies had dropped back out of sight. It took the red blood of Mr. A.G. Street and the happy ingenuousness of Mr. Adrian Bell to get country life back into the circulating library.

It is generally difficult to persuade people to persevere with *A Shepherd's Life*, the best of Hudson's country books, so discouraging are the first two chapters, yet it is well worth reading: but how strained, how literary, how unconvincing compared with the mounting life that informs *Round About a Great Estate*, to take only one out of a pile of Jefferies' good things. And how W.H. Hudson dates! while his predecessor is still a modern.'

Further reading:

- *Pioneers of Conservation The Selborne Society and the Royal SPB*, Richard Clarke, 2004.
- Hudson's *Afoot in England* has notes on Jefferies, April 1905.
- 'Hudson often mentioned his fellow naturalist Richard Jefferies, both in his conversations and in his books.' p.26 Worthing Cavalcade.
- Hudson mentions that Jefferies 'found himself' as a writer, to Emma Hubbard 1899. Shrubsall Letters, 2007 p.131.
- Hudson was back at Goring again in January 1900, Shrubsall 2007, p.147.

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With thanks to Andrew Rossabi for his helpful comments on this paper and answering some questions. Also to Jean Saunders and to Blake Lee-Harwood for sharing thoughts.

Frederick Philip Grove, Richard Jefferies, and John Burroughs: Connections, Loose Threads, and Dead Ends¹

Gideon Perret

The letter came as a complete surprise. He had found it in the letter box in front of his small house at the edge of the town of Rapid City, Manitoba, where he was principal of the local High School. With his wife, Tena, and his little daughter, May, Grove had just moved here from Eden, another small midwestern town in Canada that, to his mind, did not live up to its name. Eden was not paradise, and neither did life move rapidly where he now had decided to locate his small family in order to teach the children of poor farmers struggling to make ends meet. Having slouched home through the knee deep freshly fallen snow after a day's work he now sat at the kitchen table reading the words that would soon change his life: "I believe Over Prairie Trails is great prose: I put it on my shelf beside Jeffries (sic) and Burroughs (...) just a little higher up towards the quality corner of the shelf—You give us the observation of the scientist made with the eye of a poet."² His hands started to tremble. He put the letter down into his lap and watched the clouds outside make way for a little sunlight that was now streaming through the small window at the back of the house.

I have invented this scene, of course, as we do not know what Frederick Philip Grove was doing or thinking when he held the letter that Arthur Leonard Phelps, head of the English Department at Winnipeg's Wesley College, now the University of Winnipeg, had written to him on 3 December 1922. What we do know is that Grove was familiar with John Burroughs' works. If he knew, or had ever heard of Richard Jefferies, however, seems uncertain. And why, for that

¹ When Jean Saunders asked me if I would be willing to write an article about Grove, Jefferies, and Burroughs, I gladly accepted the offer. Little did I know that this enterprise would almost turn into a wild goose chase, as it were. There were too many open questions I couldn't answer. I'd like to thank some people therefore for kindly offering their support and help. Tamara Pianos for searching her attic looking for her transcription of a letter from Burroughs to Grove—which she couldn't find. Whatever she did find, I hope enlightened her day and gave her a good walk down memory lane. Konrad Groß for finally pointing me to said letter in Margaret Stobie's book about Grove. And finally Birgit Gerl in Austria for supplying me with an obviously unread set of Burroughs' Riverby Edition, in which I found what I had been looking for.

² The letter can be found in Klaus Martens (Ed.): *Over Canadian Trails: F.P. Grove in New Letters and Documents* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), p.165.

matter, would Phelps put Grove's *Over Prairie Trails* on his shelf next to Jefferies and Burroughs? But let's start at the beginning: Who was Frederick Philip Grove?

Frederick Philip Grove, FPG as he is known for short, was actually born Felix Paul Greve in the West Prussian town of Radomno in 1879.³ The family soon moved to Hamburg where he was a prize pupil, took his A-levels and became a student of Old Languages and Archaeology in Bonn and Munich. His literary ambitions got him into contact with the influential George-circle in Munich, he became a novelist and a poet, and he actually managed to become the German translator of Oscar Wilde, H.G. Wells, and perhaps most notably André Gide, among other early moderns. Mounting debts, however, and the accusation of fraud led to a prison sentence in 1903–1904, after which he was shunned by his friends and literary colleagues, never seeming to find solid ground again. When he appeared in the Canadian province of Manitoba in 1912 as Frederick Philip Grove, settling down and working as a teacher in small prairie towns south of Winnipeg, a life of adventure, but also of hiding lay behind him. In 1909 FPG had staged his suicide in Berlin and had fled to Montreal via Liverpool. Relatively little is known about the three years between 1909 and 1912. He may have been a potato farmer in the Ohio region and traces of his life seem to appear in Cincinnati and in Kentucky. What is certain, however, is that his wife Else followed him to the New World, they united in Pittsburgh, but parted ways in 1912 without being divorced. Else then turned up in New York to become the Dada artist Else Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven. FPG never lost his literary ambition. Apart from teaching school, mostly to farmer's children of German and Russian Mennonite stock, he kept writing furiously and became, in no small part thanks to A.L. Phelps' letter of 3 December 1922 one of the founders of Canadian realism and of what might be called the farm novel.⁴

Given that FPG was steeped in European Modernism, the reference to Jefferies and to Burroughs in Phelps' letter seems intriguing. At first sight, Burroughs might be easily explained, but this is mere speculation or creative invention: as is well known, Burroughs' books had long become compulsory reading matter for schoolchildren in the US.⁵ They simply may have crossed the border into southern Manitoba, so that this was the reason why FPG was familiar with this iconic and beloved author. Obtaining books in small town Canada was certainly no small feat in the first half of the twentieth century, as

³ For biographical information on FPG I have relied mainly on Klaus Martens's biography *F. P. Grove in Europe and Canada: Translated Lives* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2001).

⁴ Comp. Florian Freitag: *The Farm Novel in North America: Genre and Nation in the United States, English Canada, and French Canada, 1845–1945* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013).

⁵ Comp. the section 'Burroughs and Education' in Charlotte Zoe Walker: *Sharp Eyes: John Burroughs and American Nature Writing* (Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp.211–247.

we know from some of FPG's letters and from his prologue to *In Search of Myself*, in which he remembers a day in the early 1940s when a librarian, presumably from Toronto, had come all the way to his house near Simcoe, Ontario, just to bring him books: '(...) for years he had dropped in on me once or twice a twelve-month, bringing me some six or ten volumes of the best that had come to hand within the time elapsed since his last visit, and taking away such as he had left behind on the last occasion.'⁶ This time he has brought him a biography of his old friend André Gide, apparently on the assumption that Grove would be interested. And as we learn, Grove is more than interested. Here is a man that in his late life still follows the fate of the key players of European high modernism, which he himself would have loved to be part of. So again, this begs the question why Phelps would put Grove's *Over Prairie Trails* beside Jefferies and Burroughs.

Over Prairie Trails is a fascinating hybrid of a book. Part travelogue, part memoir, partly written for his young daughter to read, it consists of seven long drives (actually seventy-two condensed into seven) in a horse-drawn wagon through the prairie landscape of Manitoba. The narrator, who can be equated with the author himself, makes these arduous and dangerous journeys of between 34 and 45 miles in order to spend the weekend with his young daughter and his wife, who are both waiting for him. It is exactly this structural device, the hero on his way home, his wife faithfully waiting, that has led some commentators to see through FPG's mask of the rural school teacher and find the highly educated man of letters behind. Of course, this is Ulysses on his journey home to Penelope.⁷ However, there is another side to *Over Prairie Trails*. Martens, quite rightly, sees in it 'a Thoreauvian book' which 'reports the sounds of the silence in the wilderness'.⁸ This obvious link to Thoreau, FPG's sketches, or essays, brimming with observations of nature, is also the link to Burroughs, whom he had sent the manuscript of his other book of nature writing, *The Turn of the Year*. Burroughs' letter to Grove, however, 'would not have raised his spirits', as Margaret Stobie says.⁹ The letter seems condescending, Burroughs 'find[s] there is no natural history in this mass of matter', and he does 'not think it has any special value (...). Bare, unrelieved description of storms or of any other phase of nature is tiresome. His advice to Grove is 'to be a philosopher as well as a naturalist'.¹⁰ And all this before giving

⁶ Frederick Philip Grove: *In Search of Myself* (1946) (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 3.

⁷ Comp. for example Tamara Pianos: *Geografiktionen in der anglo-kanadischen Literatur: Perzeptionen und Kreationen nördlicher Landschaften* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), pp.66 ff.

⁸ Martens, *Over Canadian Trails*, op. cit., pp.167 and 168.

⁹ Margaret Stobie: *Frederick Philip Grove* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), p.53.

¹⁰ The full letter can be found in Stobie, pp.53-54.

Grove the final blow of letting him know that he has only partly read the manuscript, and would Grove please send him the necessary stamps in order for him to return it. Though demanding a return envelope may be standard procedure, it still must have been a huge disappointment to FPG, who not only was an avid reader of Burroughs, but who also at one point gives a hint as to who was on his mind when he was writing *Over Prairie Trails*. There is only one footnote in *Over Prairie Trails*, which refers to Burroughs' *Riverby*, the title of one of Burroughs' books.¹¹ Grove must have either forgiven Burroughs, or simply tried to ride the wave of his success, the latter of which seems more likely.

Burroughs' conduct towards Grove and his disparaging demeanour do not seem unusual. In an excellent and well-researched talk about John Burroughs, reprinted in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* in 2018, Phyllis Treitel says 'that neither Jefferies nor any other nature writer quite reached the standard that Burroughs held up.'¹² Indeed, as Treitel shows in her article, Burroughs was highly critical, to say the least, of almost anyone who had left his mark in the field of nature writing. While Treitel gives examples of what Burroughs has to say about H.D. Thoreau and W.H. Hudson, Brian Morris in his *Richard Jefferies and the Ecological Vision* extends the list to include Charles G.D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton.¹³ It is only late in his life that Burroughs, perhaps mellowed by old age, perhaps out of a sense of decency, praises Jefferies in a letter to his son Harold Jefferies: 'Of course I know your father's work, and greatly value it', he says, before stating that '[t]he volume of his that moved me most is *The Story of My Heart*.'¹⁴

In the same letter Burroughs also mentions the second trip to England he undertook: 'When I went to England in 1882 I took one of your father's books with me (*Wild Life in a Southern Country [sic]*) I think, and promised myself the pleasure of seeing him, but for various reasons—none of which seem satisfactory at this distance—I failed to make the effort. I shall never cease to regret that I did not try to see him.'¹⁵ As we know from a letter to a friend, Burroughs had indeed thought about seeing Jefferies, but had then left London for the north.¹⁶ What is also intriguing is that Burroughs' granddaughter mentions that her grandfather had explored Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Kent.¹⁷

¹¹ Frederick Philip Grove: *Over Prairie Trails*. (1922) (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), p.51. The footnote reads: 'See Burroughs' wonderful description of this phenomenon [pool mist] in *Riverby*.'

¹² Phyllis Treitel: 'Introducing John Burroughs, 1837–1921', in: *RJS Journal* (33) 2018, p.24.

¹³ Trafford Publishing, 2006, p.373.

¹⁴ The letter can be found in *RJS Journal* (33) 2018, pp.7–8.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.7. Burroughs' first trip in 1871 had been for government business and had resulted in numerous essays collected in *Fresh Fields* (1884).

¹⁶ Comp. Treitel, p.24.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley: 'John Burroughs in Great Britain', in: Charlotte Zoe Walker: *Sharp*

Burroughs must have known about Jefferies' roots in Wiltshire. Did he visit Wiltshire in order to explore Jefferies? Why Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Kent? Hampshire seems easy to explain: Gilbert White's Selborne would have definitively been on Burroughs' list of places to visit. So perhaps this was a literary pilgrimage to the West Country. Which leaves Kent as a mystery, of course.

More difficult to ascertain is whether Jefferies knew of and had read Burroughs' work. As Treitel says, Jefferies never mentions him, and there is no more than 'some circumstantial evidence for thinking that Jefferies had read *Fresh Fields*'.¹⁸ Given that *Fresh Fields* was published in 1884, however, this must have been late in life. Perhaps a look at Jefferies' reading might help. According to his son Harold, Jefferies had indeed read 'old John Burroughs'¹⁹, 'old' used as a term of endearment in order to signify that *of course* his father had read him. Keith also says, '[w]e might naturally expect that he knew Thoreau, but there is no mention of him', and '[t]he case of Whitman is even more complex'.²⁰ Jefferies' reading therefore seems to be another dead end when looking for some kind of influence on his writing. His personal interest and fascination, however, seemed to have leaned towards the New World. There is the well-known episode of Jefferies and his cousin Jimmy Cox running away from home in order to walk to Moscow, but then changing their mind and trying to ship to America via the port of Liverpool. As Andrew Rossabi says, 'America stood for an ideal land out of sight over the horizon.'²¹ As with so many boys (myself included) Jefferies' idea of an ideal America had been formed by reading James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*.²² Though this may be merely worth a footnote mentioned in passing, it seems intriguing that Cooper's *The Deerslayer* (1841) is set near the Hudson Valley, not too far from where Burroughs lived. It shows the reader an edenic America, untouched by civilization with Natty Bumppo as its unblemished hero. Burroughs might have held the same position in Jefferies' mind, and maybe Jefferies had wished to have lived the boy's dream in his later life. Perhaps, and this is pure conjecture and will seem far-fetched, *The Story of My Heart* gives testament to Jefferies' youthful longing.

Eyes: John Burroughs and American Nature Writing (Syracuse University Press, 2000), p.103.

¹⁸ Treitel, *op. cit.*, p.20.

¹⁹ Cited in W.J. Keith: 'Jefferies' Reading', *RJS Journal* (2) 1993, p.19.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.20.

²¹ Andrew Rossabi: *A Peculiarly English Genius, or, A Wiltshire Taoist: A Biography of Richard Jefferies, Volume I, The Early Years, 1848–1867* (Foulsham, Norfolk: Petton Books, 2017), p.176. The same point is made by Phyllis Treitel in 'The Other Side: Visions of America', *RJS Journal* (2) 1993, p.33: (America came nearest to being Jefferies' ideal land; it remained ideal so long as he did not go.)

²² *ibid.*, p.175.

Which still leaves the biggest conundrum of all: had Grove ever heard of Jefferies? As I have said above, FPG was more than familiar with the work of H.G. Wells and Oscar Wilde, and these Victorian authors certainly represent the scope of his literary pursuits on the British Isles. Nature writing quite simply has no tradition whatsoever in Germany, which is why we can be fairly certain that he wouldn't have heard the name Jefferies until he left for the US in 1909. We do not know much about FPG's reading between 1909 and 1922. Martens says that FPG was 'ignorant' of contemporary American literature, 'though unwilling to concede its superiority over works he knew'²³, which is to say that in his thirteen years in the US and in Canada he had not been able to familiarize himself with, say, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, and Jack London. Burroughs seems to have been the exception to the rule, and as I speculated above, the fact that Burroughs' books were used in schools might have been the reason for this. If FPG had not heard the name Jefferies during his European years, and if he had not really read any American literature in his time between 1909 and 1922, how and why should he have been able and willing to read a more or less obscure English author who fell way beside his literary sphere? The Grove/Phelps correspondence rather quickly abandons *Over Prairie Trails* and Grove turns Phelps' attention towards a manuscript he calls 'Pioneers', that would soon be published in a much shorter version as *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), which he dedicates to A.L. Phelps. Phelps and Burroughs were only springboards for Grove to launch his own career as a novelist in Canada. Burroughs had given him the idea for *Over Prairie Trails*, a work of someone who sees the country of his choice with fresh eyes, as Thoreau and Burroughs had done before him. *Settlers of the Marsh*, however, is a work of European naturalism transposed to the Canadian prairie. FPG simply wrote what he knew.

What to make then of Phelps' decision to put Grove next to Jefferies and Burroughs? In the course of writing this essay I have found numerous lists of authors, all different somehow, the most surprising of which appeared in Brian Morris's *Richard Jefferies and the Ecological Vision* in which he mentions Seton, Fabre, Hudson, Muir, and Jefferies in one sentence.²⁴ The surprise here, apart from pairing Hudson and Muir, is the French author Jean-Henri Fabre (1823-1915), whose work, as far as I am aware, is usually not mentioned in English publications. We all make our own lists, which, of course, are only fictions. The Grove, Jefferies, Burroughs list, however, finally does have one last justification. We can be fairly certain that Grove was not familiar with Jefferies' oeuvre. But he had read the name before.

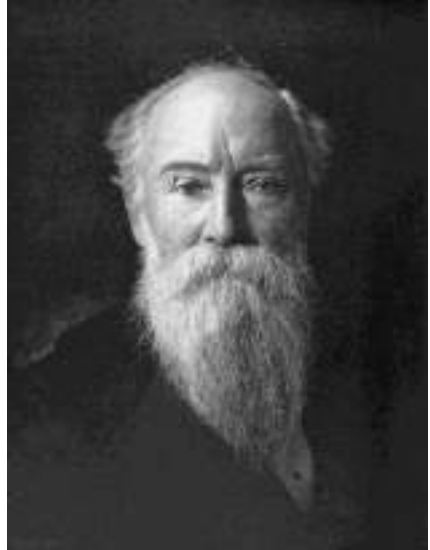
²³ Martens, *Over Canadian Trails*, p.173.

²⁴ Morris, *op. cit.*, p.385.

*So old Burroughs was wrong after all. There was someone who thought his little book was worth putting next to the master himself. But who was Jefferies? The name rang a distant bell. He walked towards his own little shelf that contained only a handful of books, took down Burroughs' Riverby, browsed through it for a while, finally stopped, and started reading: 'Richard Jefferies was probably as genuine a lover of Nature as was Wordsworth, but he had not the same power to make us share his enjoyment.'*²⁵ *Old Burroughs, critical of each and every one he thought might be a rival. It didn't matter. His own book was now on the same shelf with Burroughs and Jefferies, whoever he was. Life as a man of letters in Canada had finally begun.*



Frederick Philip Grove



John Burroughs

²⁵ *The Writings of John Burroughs, Volume IX, Riverby* (1894) (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), p.223. The complete quote and more can be found in Phyllis Treitel's article about John Burroughs, p.21.

Ghosts on Horseback and a Hero's Return

George Miller

On 10 April 2021 Batemans of Stamford, Lincolnshire, were auctioning 'A collection of books and ephemera relating to Richard Jefferies and naturalism, including a page from Richard Jefferies' scrapbook, with letter and Pamphlet from Samuel J. Looker. . .'. The page, in Jefferies' hand, was penned in purple and black ink on a sheet of paper measuring 8" x 5", larger than his notebooks, which were in pencil, so clearly not a detached leaf from them, and bearing no evidence to suggest it was ever part of a scrapbook.

The note was formerly part of Samuel J. Looker's collection, but given by him to H.K. Springett¹ as a mark of appreciation. Looker's covering letter to Springett, dated 23 March 1945, reads: 'I want to give you something that you will really like and cherish, and I can think of nothing that would please you better than an actual page of notes written by Richard Jefferies himself nearly seventy years ago. Here it is with my very best wishes. . . I feel certain you will love to have a scrap of the Master's own writing. It is scarce and valuable but I have such a comprehensive collection that I am glad for you to have this.' The lot included two of Looker's pamphlets, both sent to Springett: *To the Immortal Memory of Richard Jefferies*,² inscription dated 25 October 1944, and *The True Richard Jefferies*,³ inscription dated 12 February 1949, and on the back of the document he signed an authentication stating that Jefferies 'sometimes used this violet ink and especially whilst making notes for his *Wild Life in a Southern County*, first published in 1879.' The purple ink is characteristic of Jefferies' MSS and notes circa 1877; for example 'Machiavelli: A Study', 'The Dragon at Ashdown', 'A Game for Bicyclists' and 'Three Centuries at Home'. So the most likely date of the ms is 1877, from 2 September, during his Tolworth years.

¹ Herbert Kentish Springett (1885-1952) wrote the chapter titled 'Richard Jefferies at Surbiton and his *Nature Near London*' (pp.113-128) and supplied relevant photographs for the Worthing Cavalcade. 1946 publication: *Richard Jefferies: A Tribute by Various Writers*, edited by Samuel J. Looker. Worthing, Sussex, published under the Worthing Art Development Scheme by Aldridge Bros, 1946. Springett was living in Ewell (1939 records: 35 London Road) with his wife Phyllis.

² *To the Immortal Memory of Richard Jefferies*, by Samuel J. Looker. Issued upon the occasion of the unveiling of a tablet of indication and remembrance upon the house in which he died, Goring by Sea, Sussex. Issued under the Worthing Art Development Scheme and published at the Sign of the Dolphin, Aylesbury. 1939.

³ *The True Richard Jefferies: An Examination of the Misunderstandings of Malcolm Elwin in 'The Essential Richard Jefferies'*, by Samuel J. Looker. Cheadle, North Staffs., G.A. Holmes, printer.

From
Sep 2nd all

Fire Hearth: laws/huge fireplace—iron supporters/farm/: dog Iron : arriere dos. & furniture——// curing bacon up the chimney//—— old ghost story of a man on horseback riding up hall & disappearing in large fire place

Return Q[ueen] Eliz. nutcrackers.

Ulysses
ashes on
head——
hospitality
March

Farm chairs & tables: Dagobah: Chaloupe:
Shakespeare:

Knives leave for?

Inkstands from Egypt also: with her: send on
Wolsey's scroll:
see note

copper pan [Ch..]

Hampton Court

March

620 col

—glass:

Chimneys see

1240 pg.

Roman

Meyrick again for

620

&

fine furniture

[150]

see Meyrick

—4

600

16 folios

exactly

to 20 outside.

& Kensington Museum
also for cupboards &
Locks & watches
& clocks.

Warming pans

Dairy Utensils

Teniers: or

Rubens in

N. Gallery

scissors

Ancient Roman

& handles See

Album

bone ivory &

Thorn

chests

Canister

In Homer's feast

flowing round

pavement

lines re & c

The notes are hastily scrawled and very difficult to read. Opposite is an attempt at a transcription, but alternative identification of some words is possible. The most difficult words to read are the two beginning with ‘D’ and ‘C’—possibly obscure terms, e.g. ‘Dagobah’, a domed structure for a saint’s relics (simile for an empty fireplace?); ‘Chaloupe’, some kind of boat.

The interpretation of the document brings together the thoughts of Jean Saunders, Andrew Rossabi, Peter Robins and myself. The notes appear to relate to a visit to Hampton Court and the great kitchen with its “huge fireplace”, pictured right.



2 September 1877 was a Sunday.¹ Jefferies mentions Hampton Court in ‘The Story of Furniture’² and ‘Magpie Fields’ (*Nature Near London*), but neither context relates to his observations here. ‘Wolsey’s scroll’ is noted and this is depicted in a painting of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, for whom the palace was first built in 1514. Hampton Court is within walking distance of Jefferies’ Tolworth home. The palace was opened to the public after some renovations in 1838. Perhaps he is remembering the large fireplace at the Elizabethan mansion at Upper Upham with its dog irons and supporters, or Burderop Park perhaps? In *The Amateur Poacher* (1879) he mentions that Dickon was a great favourite at the house. He was in love with one of the maids, who showed Jefferies ‘the famous mantelpiece, a vast carved work, under which you could stand upright’. Even cottagers cured ‘bacon up the chimney’ so this was a common practice.³ However the ‘old ghost story of a man on horseback riding up the hall & disappearing in large fireplace’ cannot be identified at Hampton Court but Jefferies writes of the legend in *The Amateur Poacher*:

once a year on a certain night a sable horse and cloaked horseman rode across that great apartment, flames snorting from the horse’s nostrils, and into the fireplace, disappearing with a clap of thunder.

¹ The website for Hampton Court of Historic Royal Palaces says Hampton Court was one of the few attractions open on a Sunday, the only day working people could visit; perhaps the only day of the week it was open to the public.

² ‘The Story of Furniture’, *Cassell’s Family Magazine*, June 1877. Vol. III, no. 31, pp. 406-408.

³ See ‘The Farmer at Home’ in *Fraser’s* in 1874 (collected in *The Toilers in the Field*, where Jefferies writes that the interiors of the third class of farmsteads (that is, the poorer ones) had a Dutch homeliness with a vast fireplace for curing bacon.

The quote comes from Chapter VI titled 'Lurcher Land: "The Park".' Whilst Burderop Park appears to be the prime setting in Jefferies' mind for this, it might be Upper Upham mansion or a mixture of the two. Memories of Upper Upham are recorded in *Jefferies' Land* where (p.90) Jefferies writes about the banqueting hall and Queen Elizabeth (in his note also) and the fireplace:

It is at least thirty feet in length, and of corresponding breadth and height. Here is another carved mantelpiece, considered to be of Jacobean times. It is in excellent preservation. The supporters on either hand are carved figures. What indescribable scenes of revelry this chamber in all probability witnessed in the days of long ago! Whilst the rude retainers quaffed, and roared forth their drinking songs in the spacious hall beneath, those of more noble birth feasted here. Every window—and there were three to this banqueting room, though now but one—glared forth upon the night with the light of the flames in the fireplace, or the flaring torches. Two cart-loads of wood, says tradition, was the allowance of yonder yawning chimney-place from sunset to sunrise. Here the strangely-dressed courtiers of Queen Elizabeth's time feasted and drank, and discussed court scandal. There is a tradition that Queen Elizabeth herself once spent a night or two in this old mansion during one of her progresses.

He also mentions that a horseman might have been able to ride into the Hall:

Perhaps in ancient days the door was of a similar height to allow of a horseman riding into the hall of the mansion—an occurrence by no means uncommon if tradition and ballads are worthy of credence.

'Kensington Museum' is mentioned too. There was a Meyrick Gallery of Ancient Armour in the South Kensington Museum around Jefferies' time. Samuel Rush Meyrick also wrote *Specimens of Ancient Furniture* (London: William Pickering, 1836) which might explain the reference to 'fine furniture'.

There is a ceiling devoted to Ulysses in the King's Gallery, Kensington Palace, though there was no public access in 1877. The note about Ulysses, ashes, hospitality, and hearth could be a reference to the episode in Book VII of the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus (Roman name Ulysses), his raft wrecked in a storm sent by Poseidon on his voyage home to Ithaka, is washed up on the shores of Scherie. He supplicates Arete, the Phaeacian Queen, to help him get home safely as he has 'been suffering woes far from my friends. So saying he sat down on the hearth in the ashes by the fire, and they were all hushed in silence.'⁴ 'Homer's feast' might equally apply: 'Come, make the stranger to arise, and set him upon a silver-studded chair, and bid the heralds mix wine, that we may pour libations also to Zeus, who hurls the thunderbolt; for he ever attends upon

⁴ *The Odyssey*, Book VII, by Homer, translated by A.T. Murray, in two volumes (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1919), p.243.

reverend suppliants. And let the housewife give supper to the stranger of the store that is in the house.⁵

With its lists of domestic objects, kitchen utensils, furniture, clocks etc., the document has every appearance of detailed memoranda following a visit of interest, the notes in black added later, with a view to a possible article. Very much Jefferies the journalist, but with memories and associations hinting at Jefferies the writer. In 'Coate and Richard Jefferies' John Chandler observes:⁶

And yet there is something of a paradox. Although so exact and minute observer RJ does not record the landscape as a map records it. His woods and fields, meadows, brooks, roads and houses are rarely faithful to a single place... We are seldom completely sure whether Coate Farmhouse or Day House Farm, RJ's father or father-in-law, Badbury Wick or Coate, Jessie his wife or RJ himself, are behind a particular description ... In contrast to the immediacy of RJ's description of places in Surrey, Sussex and around London, in which he is specific about places and times, RJ's Wiltshire is disguised by imaginary place names—Okebourne Wick, Luckett's Place and Overborough for instance—which are used to recount incidents from his past.

In 1877 Jefferies had gained respect as a practical and informed commentator on agriculture and the land, (one of his articles was even translated into Spanish), and at the same time obloquy and derision as a writer of sensational fiction. Before *The Gamekeeper* (1878) his main themes and fame as a literary interpreter of nature and rural life had not been established. He was writing on a variety of topics and looking for outlets in a variety of journals and newspapers. The notes were clearly written with an article in mind. He provides his calculation as to how many folios will be needed: 16–20 pages. The fact that he retained them could have meant that he might still have intended to write the piece he had in mind. On the other hand there remains the possibility that it was written, and published as other articles and his first successful books were (reviews of the early novels still too close for comfort) anonymously. And it may have been the untypical subject matter that has served to conceal it from the scrutiny of Jefferies' unrelenting bibliographers.

⁵ *ibid*, p.245.

⁶ *Coate and Richard Jefferies*, by John Chandler. [Salisbury, John Chandler 2004], published by the Jefferies Land Conservation Trust, 2005.

Coming to Coate

Ronald Richard Cretchley

Ronald Cretchley was a member of the Richard Jefferies Society who lived in High Wycombe and died in 2006. He paid a visit to Coate on 11 December 1985 and this poem was first published in the Society's Annual Report 1985-6.

IT WAS LIKE a homecoming.
As we entered the walled garden
The open door bid us welcome
As it had done so many times,
For him.

There is a spirit that indwells
No matter what.
Though dust track is gone,
An asphalt strip, gaudily lit and screaming
Rails at it,
Yet the old house sleeps
And gently dreams.

It is just as the books have told;
But for Bevis:
Kitchen, parlour, gun-room, two flights of stairs,
Attic where the apples stored.
With floor-touched windows,
And four-poster bed.
But no Bevis.
No clatter and bang of doors;
Only silence,
And the books he left.

Why do we come as pilgrims?
For the shell of a kernel, consumed,
A body exhumed,
A 'portrait' assumed,
A 'world' subsumed?

Or is it that we come as Magi in humility
Seeking only the sense of mystery
Wherein all mortals tread?
To feel the gossamer thread of his thought
Gently touch our hearts and minds
Is cause enough to come to Coate.

‘Mr. Jefferies’ wonderful talent’

Unsigned obituary

Shortly after Jefferies’ death, this unsigned obituary was published on 20 August 1887 in the weekly *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette*, credited to the *Scottish News*. George Miller has commented that, ‘it is a remarkable recognition of Jefferies as an artist and the future classic status of *Amaryllis at the Fair*, considering the limiting, qualified approval of most early critical assessments, “reporter of genius”, “dwindle to a few descriptive sketches”, “cataloguer”, or even the somewhat patronising sentimentality of Besant’s *Eulogy*.

Mr. Richard Jefferies, who has just died, was first of all writers in his school. America has Mr. Burroughs; but as is inevitable in an untamed country, his essays on sport and scenery are of almost barbaric tone. Scotland has “Nether Lochaber”¹; but the district of which he is the natural historian is not large, and its literature tends to become local. Mr. Jefferies, on the other hand, wrote of matters that interest all men in a manner that commands universal sympathy of admiration. “The Gamekeeper at Home” is as descriptive of Ross-shire as of Wiltshire; “Hodge and His Masters” is as readable in Devonshire as in Norfolk. Mr. Jefferies’ wonderful talent for utilising catholic affinities of sentiment was probably the result of his early training. He was a journalist, and therefore comprehensive of his purview of human likings. Keenly observant of everything immediately around him, he had wit enough to realise that the public had more variegated impressions to be made vocal, and he had imagination enough to induct the special thing with which he was acquainted only from the general type. His training, however, hampered him in the task of his later years. His novels are not first-class after the common estimate of excellence in fiction. They are expanded leading articles of magazine essays, treatises on country life and love straight-forwardly written in masculine English; and they did not take greatly. Still, “*Amaryllis at the Fair*” and other romances will live. They will some day be classic in a literature of which, we might almost assert, the latter half of the current century was the birth-time. They meet a want that society has only begun to vividly feel. The eternal hills have always been with us, and the moors, and the streams, and lochs; but they are with us now in a new realism. Men have always hunted and fished; but sport

¹ Ed: Rev. Alexander Stewart (1829-1901) author of *Nether Lochaber: The Natural History, Legends and Folk-Lore of the West Highlands* (Edinburgh: W. Paterson, 1883), a collection of articles published by Stewart under the pen-name ‘Nether Lochaber’ over forty years in the *Inverness Courier*.

now has an unwanted zest. The growth of industrialism, which has drawn the masses of the people into great cities, and the development of public life, which has shaken the landed classes out of humdrum consistency to their native heaths, have given men the elements of a contrast in which the tonic repose of Nature is realised, and in which the chase, once mechanical and melancholy, has acquired a novel joyousness. Civilisation has awakened in men the capacity of sensuous delight.

Mr. Jefferies was the first definite artist in that new mode of social feeling. His books and essays fed the fresh appetite as none other had. Many earlier writers told us about sport; but even in the pages of Scott and Wilson the presentment was portraiture not art. It was minute, exact, and full; but it was comparatively lifeless. The old authors had not that keen sense of the blessing of contact with the wilds of Nature that throbs like a pulse in every line by Mr. Jefferies. They could not have it; for the instinct of the chase, barbaric and dull in its origin, was not in their day vivified as it is in ours. The industrial intensity of our social life created a new opening for the literary artist; and, entering, Mr. Jefferies found his especial field. Other men have culled in the same fair realm. Tennyson has; and the song in "Maud," which sometimes by a single touch, as when "The woodbine spices are wafted abroad and the musk of the rose is blown," tap our feelings for Nature in a magical instant, is perhaps the most thrilling of all efforts in the new art. Ruskin has; and, with the pardonable inconsistency of divine genius, he lives in infinite sadness over the very factor of our communal life that has given rise to the highest poesy, that knowledge of the evils of industrialism which has begotten knowledge of the good of Nature. Tyndall has; and he reveals it, incongruously, when he is slaying the repute of Mr. Gladstone under the Alpine auspices "whose glorious privilege is to soothe." Mr. Jefferies, however, was the especial seer of the modern art, which has displaced Pantheism by a rational communion between Nature and Man on equal terms. The writers we have named, and others, made occasional incursions into the delightful sphere; but Mr. Jefferies' 'life and work' lay in it always. He never rose to the sublime brilliance of Tennyson and of Ruskin; but he systematically wrought among the materials from which they struck enduring gleams, and the world has reason to be grateful for his labours.

Those that were dependent on him for their daily bread have little reason to be grateful to this world. Apart from the chance of charity, they are destitute. Mr. Jefferies' work is of incalculable virtue; but it had a poor reward. Complaint against the world would be of little use for, after all, the *Fortnightly* essayist uttered a profound truism in his remark about "the common rank of divine genius." Literature is a profession; and, by dire necessity, it lives on wages. Mr. Grant Allen, who a few weeks ago made a pathetic confession of poverty, seems to think that there should be some other system and certainly the difference of

worldly reward between the profits on trade and those of letters is depressing; but the anomaly cannot at present be destroyed. As regards men of letters generally, the mills of Economy, with one little difference, resemble the mills of God: they grind exceedingly small. A few writers are rewarded according to their merits, which are also ideally the deserts of many others left to struggle with despair; but, until a new order is established, pen folk generally must be content to have their work valued by the yard, and must think themselves fortunate indeed when a yard of genius is better paid than a yard of Turkey carpet. During the last six years in anxious illness, Mr. Jefferies did his life's work heroically at the current market rates of pay; and, saving a certain contemptuous disgust, no charge against be made against society on that account. In the world of letters, as in the world of pigs and paraffin, the law of supply and demand is supreme. Mr. Jefferies' supply, although he had a monopoly, was not unlimited; but the supply was arbitrary. With a Press so cheap that the next step must be payment of the public for "taking it in," owners of literary periodicals can rarely afford to pay genius as it should be paid; and Mr. Jefferies died a victim to preposterous fate. That is all. By and by, perhaps, things will be different. The dawn of reflection as a popular habit has so regenerated society that mere wealth is generally thought vulgar. It may be that in the noonday of the new Renaissance a juster sense of relative proportions will prevail; and then Mr. Grant Allen, or his successor, will not have run his head against the wall of relentless Economy.

Richard Jefferies

Pamela Tennant

This poem first appeared in *Windlestraw: A Book of Verse with Legends in Rhyme of the Plant and Animals* by Pamela Tennant (London: Chiswick Press, 1905).

RICHARD JEFFERIES

He, to declare the courage of his heart
Wrote in its blood, it seems that all might know
One soul had flinch'd not from the searing smart
Of Man's captivity to joy and woe.
Life's loneliness, and brilliances of hope
Far peaks of pleasure, and deep gulfs of pain
Yet wrought he, furthering his soul's wide scope
So even his agony became his gain.

Thus did he manifest the God in man
When most his spirit cried "There is no God."
Thus did his soul's eye gloriously scan
Heights more uplifted than his footstep trod.
He led his brethren to a fertile land
Seeking for beauty on an ampler wing
And shall not such an heart, like Moses' wand
Make of the barren rocks a quenchless spring?

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Pamela Wyndham was born in 1871 at Clouds, East Knoyle, Wiltshire, the daughter of Percy Wyndham and Madeline Campbell. Percy Wyndham was Conservative MP for Cumberland West 1860-1885. When the Richard Jefferies Fund was announced just after Jefferies' premature death, Wyndham offered to be a Trustee, suggesting Jefferies was read and appreciated at Clouds.<sup>1</sup>

Life there was full, especially of literature and art with visitors such as Watts and Burne-Jones. In 1895 Pamela Wyndham married Edward Tennant, son of a wealthy Scottish industrialist, who became a Liberal MP for

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<sup>1</sup> Letter dated August 30 1887 held in Richard Jefferies Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Library. The three Trustees of the Richard Jefferies Fund were Walter Besant, Alfred Buckley and Charles Longman. The monies raised and invested for Jessie were raised by appeals in *The Manchester Guardian*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*.

Salisbury and was created Lord Glenconner in 1911. In 1906 Tennant built a mansion, Wilsford Manor, in the Avon Valley, Wiltshire, thereby sustaining Pamela's connection with the county.

Pamela, together with her elder sisters Mary and Madeline were depicted in a well-known painting of 1899 by John Singer Sargent titled *The Wyndham Sisters*, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Sargent was paid £2000 for the commission.

In Tennant's book of verse, *Windlestraw*, among the animals, birds and plants in rhyme are 'The Butterfly's Wing,' 'The Caged Skylark' and 'The Legend of the Saintfoin.' Wiltshire played a lasting and essential part in her life and in addition to the poem on Jefferies she included 'Three Country Poems in the Wiltshire Dialect—'The Fire O' Logs,' 'Jack O' Lantern' and 'The Bee and the Butterfly,' a dialogue between two cottage maidens, Carry and Fanny.

The title *Windlestraw* is unusual and Tennant may have been inspired by a geographical feature, Windlestraw Law at Walkerburn in the Scottish Borders, a few miles from the Tennant family estate at The Glen in Peebles.

Pamela Tennant wrote a number of other books, some for children, as well as verse and edited prose and poetry anthologies. One of her sons, Edward Wyndham Tennant, was killed in the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and in her sincere faith that she had received messages from her dead son she published a book about his life—*Edward Wyndham Tennant: A Memoir* by Pamela Glenconner, (London: John Lane, 1919). Influenced by the spiritualist movement of the time Pamela attained a life-long conviction of immortality and a happy reunion with those she had lost.

Lord Glenconner died in 1920 and two years later Pamela married Edward Grey, 1st Viscount Grey of Fallodon, a Liberal politician who had been Foreign Secretary 1905–1916 and was Leader of the Liberal Party in the Lords in 1923. His recreations were fishing and bird watching, prompting, several books of which *The Charm of Birds* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927) is his best known.

The marriage brought great happiness but was short-lived with the sudden death of Pamela on 18 November 1928, aged fifty-seven. Lady Grey was interred in St. Michael's churchyard, Wilsford.

In a fulsome obituary in *The Times* (20 Nov) it was said of her character that—

She befriended all sorts and conditions of people. Her kindly benefactions were innumerable, and she extended her charity to the troubled and socially ostracised...She was devoted to all creatures, animals and birds. Cruelty of any kind was abhorrent. Loved and welcomed wherever she went, she lived graciously, an example of aristocracy at its best and noblest.

# Richard Jefferies

*Erwin F. Smith*

Erwin Frink Smith was an American plant pathologist who played a major role in discovering that bacteria caused plant disease. He had married in 1893 but his wife, Charlotte, became unwell and died prematurely in 1906. Smith celebrated his wife's memory in a book of poetry and biography, *For Her Friends and Mine: A Book of Aspirations, Dream and Memories* (Washington D.C., Privately Printed, 1915). Among the many pieces in the four-hundred-page book is a poem to Jefferies.

## RICHARD JEFFERIES (On reading *The Story of My Heart*)

PEACE, peace, O loving soul! Now art thou blent  
With all the light and beauty of that world  
Of suns and stars, and dreams on dreams unfurled,  
That was to thee thy soul's pure element.  
Beyond the sensuous sway of colour, scent,  
Of line and form, thou sawest pure spirit climb  
The infinite degrees of space and time:  
Therefore, could death alone bring sweet content.

Peace, peace! As mist of dawn, there shalt thou find  
Thy deepest sorrow gone; thy soul, aglow,  
The pitiful and tender God shalt know,  
Whose handiwork in mountain, sea and plain,  
Upon the dear, dim earth thou sought'st in vain:  
There grow the lofty, longed-for, larger mind.

*Hotel des Capucines  
Paris, Sept 26, 1913*

# Review of *Greene Ferne Farm*

*The Manchester Guardian* reviewed *The Amateur Poacher*, *Hodge and His Masters* and *Greene Ferne Farm* in one article on 19 August 1880 on p.6. The following extract focuses on the last of the three books.

We have taken these three last works of Mr. Jefferies—as *the Amateur Poacher* may now without indiscretion be called—together, because, despite wide differences of plan and intention, they are in reality only so many more instalments of his studies on the rural life of the south of England. *Greene Ferne Farm* is a novel in form; and *Hodge and His Masters* a series of sociological essays; but both are really as much continuations of *The Amateur Poacher* as the latter is of *The Gamekeeper at Home* and of *Wild Life in a Southern County*. *Greene Ferne Farm*, indeed, gives more definite indications of locality than any of its predecessors by the mention of Ilsey and an ancient monument which is called the ‘Grey Weathers,’ but which is much more like Wayland Smith’s forge. The scene of Mr. Jefferies’ studies may, therefore, be taken with some confidence to be the western portion of the valley between the South and North Downs, embracing portions of Berkshire, Wiltshire, and, perhaps, even Somerset and North Dorset. It is needless to say that the internal evidence of all the books has pointed in this same direction to those who know the country well enough; but here it seems to be allowed without much attempt at concealment. ...

*Greene Ferne Farm* is, as we have said, a novel in form, and what is more, it has some of the characteristics of a very good novel. It is difficult sometimes to avoid reminiscences of *Yeast*,<sup>1</sup> though perhaps these are only due to the fact that the scene of the two novels is nearly as possible identical. Two at least of the incidents, the wandering of Margaret (the heroine) and her lover on the downs by night, and the shot-gun duel of the two rivals for the young lady’s affection, are admirably done. But the real object of the book is clearly neither plot nor incident. It is the drawing of various typical figures in the rural life of Wessex, and, still more, the portraying of the landscape itself. In the latter respect even Mr. Jefferies has rarely been more successful. The church and churchyard, the huge downs with their bewildering absence of distinguishing landmarks, the old mill, the thunderstorms that are never more impressive than in such places, the fields and woods and covers all stand out from the pages like so many etchings, save that the literary artist can give a profusion of detail without spoiling his work, a profusion which would ruin that of him who works

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. *Yeast: A Problem* by Charles Kingsley (London: John W. Parker, 1851).

with the other scratching implement. The *Yeast*, again, at the close of the book, is a satisfactory contrast to that in which Charles Kingsley drew all too faithfully the worst features of village life five-and-thirty years ago. Nor are the single figures in the foreground less attractive. The heroines, Margaret and May, are indeed little more than graceful lay figures, and their two or three swains are likewise merely outlined. But the two farmers of the old school, Ruck and Hedges, the wicked old miller, a miller of better descent but much worse character than Mr. Tennyson's, the loafing bailiff, Augustus Bassett, and still more, the various shepherds and hinds could hardly be better. They are less quaint than Mr. Hardy's studies, in a district not a thousand miles distant, but they have the advantage of being even more lifelike. Yet here, as everywhere with Mr. Jefferies, it is the landscape and not its inhabitants, at least its two-footed and featherless inhabitants, that is the chief point of interest. He is a shrewd observer, and as such his observations on men as well as on things and beasts deserve attention. But the observations of things and beasts are given with an affection, a sureness of touch, and an obvious familiarity which is, as a rule, wanting in the observations on men. When Mr. Jefferies talks of birds and beasts, of trees and flowers, we know perfectly well that he is absolutely to be relied upon, and that his pictures are true as they are beautiful. It is hoped that many of the aspects of nature which he describes will long remain accessible at first hand in England. But they are yearly becoming less frequent and abundant, and a larger population is yearly growing up out of familiarity with them. Mr. Jefferies' works supply these latter unfortunates with a whole gallery of true, and beautiful illustrations of the paradise from which at least as a matter of fact constant entrance they are debarred.

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