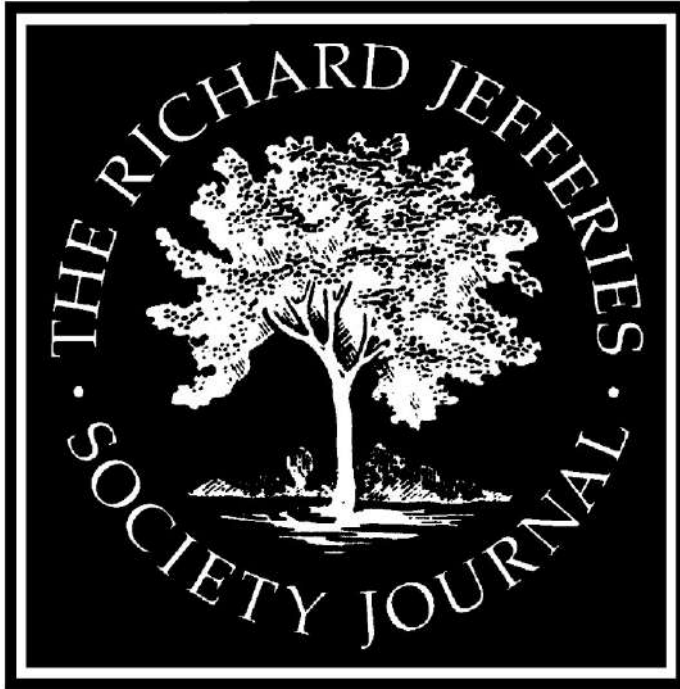




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The RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY (Registered Charity No. 1042838) was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887). Its activities include the Annual General Meeting and Birthday Lecture, winter meetings, summer outings, special events, and the publication of a summer and winter *Journal*, spring and autumn Newsletters and an Annual Report. Membership is open to all on payment of the current annual subscription: £12.00—individual; £14.00—couple (UK rate).

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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. 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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Journal No. 30, 2016

CONTENTS

Choice and Description of Guns — <i>Richard Jefferies</i>	2
--	---

The Shooting Book — <i>George Miller</i>	12
---	----

Broad Church Transcendentalism? Remarks on the Lost Essays of Richard Jefferies — <i>Simone Kotva</i>	15
---	----

Woman in the Works of Richard Jefferies — <i>Caroline A. Foley</i>	21
---	----

Afterword about Caroline A. Foley — <i>Peter Robins</i>	31
--	----

Richard Jefferies, Journalist — <i>Barry Sloan</i>	33
---	----

Index to <i>Journals</i> 26-30	44
--------------------------------	----

Choice and Descriptions of Guns

Richard Jefferies

Previously unpublished. See the next article, entitled 'The Shooting Book' by George Miller, for background information.

The size of a man's hand has some bearing upon the question of the gun that will best suit him. Small hands find some difficulty in using a gun broad across the breech—the barrels of large calibre or the metal very thick—it feels awkward. If the stock, when grasped by the right hand is thick at the same time, the weapon has yet a more awkward feel. This may wear off, but the disadvantage of using such an arm is that if you pick up anything smaller or lighter it seems a toy, and slips about in the fingers. Perhaps rather long, narrow hands are best fitted for shooting—hands that have not been widened and [stiffened]¹ by hard manual labour, but at the same time are sinewy and strong. The advantages of a long hand and finger in dexterously manipulating a gun are obvious, besides the command it gives over the triggers, without straining the wrist. Short, 'pudgy' hands find it difficult to use a gun well. Of course no one can alter their hands, but they may choose a gun or have it made to suit their physical conformation. Physique has a great deal to do with shooting—to sport with comfort a man must have a gun that fits him like one of his own limbs. The breadth or narrowness of the chest and especially the length of the neck and arms must be considered. A tall man with long neck and arms finds a short straight stock a miserable makeshift. He might nearly as well enter the fields with barrels tied to a broomstick after the fashion of the original 'hand-gonne': or fire from the hip as the Germans are said to have done with the needle-gun. If there is any difficulty—any delay—in catching sight up the barrel, if the neck has to be twisted and bent and the shoulders raised there will of necessity be a corresponding diminution of shooting powers. It is always easier and quicker to bring the barrel up to the sight, than to squeeze the head down to the barrel in an ungainly posture. Why straight stocks are recommended is difficult to understand unless there is a large stock of them in hand to be got rid of. Perhaps they are a trifle easier to make and are undoubtedly stronger, but a sportsman in an English cover does not expect to meet a wild savage in single combat, and to have to hit him with the butt. The United States sharp shooters are said to use bent stocks, and the people of the States are 'almighty' quick to catch a notion. A little bit of lead put into the butt will sometimes make a gun

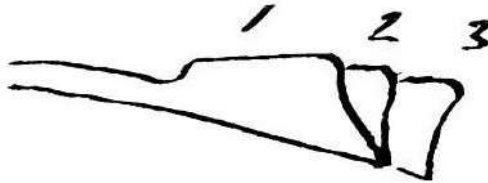
¹ Words in square brackets denote those that are unclear.

which though well poised does not 'come up' to the shooter's fancy, rise swifter to the eye. If necessary of course it should be done. Personally I dislike patching guns in this way and should prefer a new stock altogether.

To test the poise of a gun hold it in the left hand across the body grasping the barrel lightly just in front of the trigger-guard, when it ought to hang easy and either end should deflect with slight pressure like a sensitive balance. The pistol-handle shape, though it gives a firmer hold to the rifle with which one must shoot steadily and as it were dwell on the sight, is an inconvenience with a shotgun, and rather checks the firm handling which is the essence of success. Some stocks are also roughened at the grasp with a chequer of crossing grooves. This is quite unnecessary and though it does not do much harm should by preference be avoided. The heel-plate of old stocks used to be smooth and polished. Some of the new heel-plates are roughened—the iron scored with grooves—the object of which is that it should not slip against a coat but hold firmly when it takes the shoulders. This plan has its advantages but also its disadvantages. If the gun be thrown up correctly in the first place it is a clear gain because it prevents it shifting; but if the gun is not quite accurately brought to the present it checks its re-adjustment and causes a delay. That delay may be infinitesimal but it is surprising what a trifle of time, what a little matter, will in the moment of aiming quite destroy a gunner's confidence in himself. For instance when shooting just after jumping across a ditch or out from a hedge, it not infrequently happens that a twig or slender bough gets in the way of the barrel as you lift it up, and diverts its direction for a second. Feeble as the resistance is, it exercises an unfavourable influence and often throws the shooter off his aim. With a rifle on the other hand one would think a scored heel-plate would be an advantage because then one is not in a hurry, and anything that contributes to steadiness must tell. If wearing a coat with a shaggy nap to the cloth the grooves would 'catch it' very much, and the same would be the case with the pile of velveteen. Considerable differences sometimes exist in what may be called the slope of the heel. Holding the gun so that the barrel should be perfectly parallel to the horizon—put it on a table with the stock projecting beyond the edge—observe the angle formed by the heel-plate with the plane of the barrel.



The dotted line (a) is the continuation of the level or plane of the barrel, and dotted vertical line (b) reveals the slope of the heel which is then at an angle of about 80 degrees inwards. Now some stocks are almost or quite perpendicular: some incline inwards, and some outwards. They may be contrasted one behind the other like human faces of different facial angle in this way:-



The degree of slope is of course exaggerated here in order to bring out the contrast sharply: in many cases it may not exceed an eighth of an inch but it makes a wonderful alteration in the way the gun comes to the shoulder. No. 1 throws the barrel up and causes the aim to be high and the shot to pass over the object: it gives the sensation of a straight stock. No. 2 almost about perpendicular is best, though if the hollow is too flat it causes a sensation of stiffness. No. 3 depresses the barrel and sends its shot insensibly lower than was intended. If it were not for making the stock too short by cutting away the wood, an alteration to this part would often be tantamount to a new stock, and might serve some purpose. But the length of the stock happens also to be of much consequence, for a man with long arms feels cramped with a short stock, which brings the hammers right under his nose, and one with short arms, square shoulders and stout neck cannot handle a long stock without a sense of straining—as if he were poking a long pole at the game.

A good stock is almost half a gun: if we take it for granted that the barrels are by a reliable maker, the stock is quite half. Indeed many old sportsmen who cling to an old favourite gun with devotion and affection are really hugging the walnut. The barrels may have become scored inside, and are not so strong as they used to be, but still no gun ever comes up to their fancy like the ancient weapon. The virtue lies in the stock. Either the sportsman was from long use grown so accustomed to it that it far transcends the utility, so far as he is concerned, the very best that could be constructed on scientific principles, or else the stock really does just suit his build. When a man is fitted with a stock the gun shoots at least thirty per cent better, though many hundred guns have been condemned by their owners from some fault in the wood [end], some lack

of correspondence between the animate and the inanimate. Too much stress cannot be placed upon getting a stock which fulfils all the requirements of the sportsman to a nicety. No measurements can be laid down with any amount of confidence: they would be certain to mislead. No one can choose a suit of clothes to comfortably fit another and the sportsman must select his own stock. When once suited however, it forms a model from which in ordering a new gun to take the size and shape. This is best done by a tracing—exact size—on cartridge paper, placing the stock on it and drawing a pencil carefully round it. Then ascertain the thickness of the wood in the blade, and the circumference of the grasp. Some difference may be caused by the specific gravity of the wood which varies with age, and it is difficult to obtain the precise ‘feel’ with a new stock. However these little differences are not of so much consequence as the general outline of the work. No pains taken with the stock will be thrown away. The heel-plate is often of rather heavy metal—why it is so is not easy to understand. The plate owed its origin to the practice of placing the butt on the ground while the charge was rammed down hard by the rod and protected the wood from the damp ground. Now with the breech-loader it is to a considerable extent as ornament only and will be no thicker than to prevent the wood splitting: but it ought not to split even without the plate. It might one would think almost be made of ivory or silver now, and indeed offers an opportunity for artistic embellishment. I cannot see any reason why a gentleman’s gun should be as plain as the soldier’s rifle with which he undergoes the hardship and exposure of campaign.

It is next to impossible for anyone not a practical workman and actually engaged in the trade to pronounce a just opinion upon the barrels of a gun. When a gun has been in use some time of course the owner comes to understand the peculiarities of the barrels, and knows how far they can be relied upon in a general way. But to pick up a gun in a shop, or at a friend’s, and expect to discover anything about it from the most minute examination—even to the use of a gauge—is perfectly futile. The damascene may present a pleasing appearance, the breech may look thick and strong, the muzzle not too much worn, the interior smooth enough, and yet the shooting may prove utterly disappointing and the metal unsafe. It is surprising how bad a gun may be furbished up, so as to even out-shine a first-class article. After being re-bored the interior of the barrel feels smooth to the finger, and has a pleasant sheeny surface if you look through the cylinder. The pattern on the exterior may be renewed—the brown twist can be produced with the greatest ease and is not the slightest guarantee that the barrel is really a twist. A little oil gives it a polish and that newness of feel which goes so far with customers. Now there are no nipples, nor screw-breeches the deception is even easier. If the muzzle [looks thin] the remark is ready that the gun was built for lightness—heavy guns are

unfashionable—and the metal used was extra tough on purpose. As for stock and locks they may of course be quite new and decent enough and yet the barrel be worthless.

Guns that have been re-bored—especially if more than once—are often dangerous being so thin, while their shooting may be as wild as that of a catapult. The re-boring of a barrel is a most critical and delicate operation, and is not to be done by everybody. How then is a good barrel to be distinguished? The answer is that there really is no test at all except actual use, and the only way to secure a thoroughly reliable barrel is to purchase from a leading maker. Here indeed they have the ‘pull’ upon the sportsman who so far as first-class barrels are concerned is quite in the hands of a few firms, who are thus able to secure very long prices. It is true that their barrels are beyond compare, and in that sense are worth the money. To select names is rather an invidious task but the Westley-Richards firm may be mentioned without hesitation.

The length of the barrel is a matter in which individual taste generally rules. All the old guns were made with long barrels to secure the full ignition of the powder, flint locks being slow shooters. With the development of the copper cap, and the improvement of ammunition the barrels all at once became short, the powder burnt so quickly that long barrels were considered as being only so much more metal to carry without yielding better results. At least short barrels were the fashion, though in popular estimation, outside the connoisseur circles a long gun was always believed in. The growth of cover-shooting told in favour of short barrels which were considered more quick and handy. On the other side the modern system of farming—cutting the grain crops close to the ground—which destroys what may be called open field cover rather went in favour of long guns, for long shots. So too, did the enormous popularity of grouse shooting when a long range is a great advantage. Upon the whole there has therefore been a return to longer barrels. Guns are constantly seen in the shops now whose barrels would project considerably above those of say twenty, or even fifteen years since, were they placed side by side. They do not approach the elongated tubes which weighed the shoulders of our forefathers: they may be called medium-long. Barrels at present range from 28 inches to 32: probably the 30 inch barrel sells best.

When it is considered that the powder of the day burns very quickly, that very powerful powder can be purchased, that chilled shots even without the choke adds to the killing power, it seems almost as if the length of the barrel should be looked at apart from mechanical reasons, and should be judged from a personal point of view. A man standing six feet or upwards wants a gun corresponding to his height or he feels as if he were handling a toy. On the contrary the sportsman of short stature is burdened by a long gun, so that other things being equal, one may reasonably select a barrel that runs parallel as it

were with the physique of the purchaser. For a short man, a 28 inch barrel or even 26 may be best: for a man of moderate stature 30 inch: for a tall sportsman 32 inches. And perhaps for good shooting it is safe to say that of the two a gun should be a little too long, rather than a little too short. A very short barrel often leads to a jerky style of firing—the gun comes up quick, the eye travels up the rib instantaneously and, imagining that you have your aim, you pull the trigger immediately. But the gun has not settled to the shoulders and the motion of which you are uncertain causes a miss. It is indeed difficult with a short barrel to know when you are off or on a bird on account of the minuteness of the parallax. The eye judges of the entire line from the breech to the bird by the barrel: now the error of the line at 24 inches say is barely perceptible though when carried 40 yards it may amount to six or eight inches, the angle increasing with the distance. The long barrel corrects itself by making the error visible. In the same way in drawing with a pencil a short line may be out of the perpendicular and yet pass muster unless tested by a ruler: if it be lengthened say, from an inch to three, the inclination is at once seen by an unpractised eye so that a comparatively long barrel balances the aim, and will not allow the shooter to feel satisfied with it until it is put straight. A sportsman will therefore generally shoot steadier and better with barrels that are long enough to show an error instantaneously, and yet not so long to be top-heavy. The last is a great fault.

It is generally recognised that the enlargement of the bore increases the killing power of the gun—an argument that were utility alone the object of sport, would be conclusive in favour of big guns. Every one would carry an 8 bore, or a 10 at least. But one cannot carry a small cannon into a pheasant preserve: that is if one wishes to repeat the visit next year. Nor are large bores at all necessary, for half the shooting done is in the more enclosed and cultivated parts of the country. This has been found out recently, and in consequence 16 bores and 20 bores—light guns with little tubes like a gas pipe—have become the fancy of many. There is a medium in this too, and probably for all descriptions of shooting nothing surpasses the 12 bore. Since breech-loaders have become universal half the old sizes have gone out of use; when would you see a 13 bore for instance now? One great advantage of using a recognised bore like 12 is that cartridges may be obtained for it everywhere; while if you have a converted gun of some ancient calibre it is ten to one if the ammunition for it is forthcoming when wanted, and you may wait a week till it reaches you from London.

Modern guns are almost all Damascus or the new laminated steel. There is a bitter enmity between the supporters of these materials. The first has in its favour that it has been tested by several generations of sportsman, very few of whom (provided that they have bought their guns of responsible makers) have

had accidents, except in cases where their own carelessness has been contributory. If a muzzle of a gun be choked with dirt it is not fair to charge the consequent burst upon the material of the barrel. It may then, be certainly believed that a good Damascus barrel is perfectly safe. It is said to wear more quickly if choke-bound which seems probable enough: though chokes are really too new yet for us to know much about them. On the other hand, laminated steel barrels have been subjected to most severe trials, and to be continuously firing without any sign of weakness. These results are on record and past disputing and it must be admitted that laminated steel has established itself as a good material. If two guns otherwise exactly alike and made by responsible firms were placed before a sportsman—one with Damascus and the other with laminated steel barrels—it would be hard for him to choose between them. Steel was for many years carefully excluded from guns in the belief that if they burst they split all to pieces, whilst ordinary metal only gave way in one place or bulged out. The modern processes of steel making have however quite altered the [property] of the metal and we now see it completely dispossessing iron for almost any purpose. Somewhere or other I fancy I have read of experiments which showed that the new steel was almost absolutely safe until it got heated to a certain point—much beyond redness—when it immediately lost its cohesiveness and ‘flow’. But of course no gun could possibly approximate to that degree of heat—the sportsman could not hold it, nor could powder be placed in it. Nothing need therefore be feared from that. Still there does not appear any reason why a gentleman who has good Damascus barrels should for a moment undervalue them because of the new invention. The very name steel conveys the idea of extreme hardness and for chokes—in which, say what you will, there must be a greater wearing process proceeding—it is very likely preferable. Nevertheless do not abandon a good gun because it has Damascus barrels.

Next to the invention of loading at the breech the best thing that has been accomplished in the way of improving guns is the application of the rebounding principle of locks. The rebounding lock which immediately after the fall of the hammer carries it back to half cock facilitates loading and at the same time decreases the chance of accident. The hammer is always at half cock except when just expecting game. It is now fitted to nearly all guns and should be insisted upon by the purchaser.

Hammerless guns are now carried to great perfection under various patents. But make them as perfect as they may hammerless guns have an uninviting incomplete appearance. The performance is doubtless all that can be desired, but somehow or other it does not seem like a gun. In Bulwer-Lytton’s *Coming*

*Race*² the scientific generation, who are to take our place upon the earth, are armed with 'vrill' [*sic*] tubes—a mere walking-stick from which at the will of the sportsman lightning darts and destroys a mile or so away, not even requiring skill in aiming. Such a weapon—hammerless and triggerless—might be the perfection of mechanism and service, but it would utterly abolish sport. Hammerless guns are very far from possessing the deadly precision of the vrill tube, but they in this sense resemble it in that there is an absence of some of the outward material appearances which are so associated with shooting. It is possible for a thing to be too perfect. To the coming generation perhaps they may seem natural enough—to a man who has shot from boyhood with hammers they will never handle so pleasantly.

A gentleman with a large landed estate would find it profitable to buy the very best and most expensive guns, and ought not to grudge £50 or £60 a-piece because such guns, after affording him all the shooting he can possibly enjoy during his lifetime, may safely be handed to his boys. The barrels being of the best metal will stand re-boring and be almost as good in fifty years time as today. A lad moreover feels a pleasure in carrying a gun by a famous maker. Or if some new invention is then the rage, the old guns will fill the gamekeeper's sack. To a man with a fixed family home, the most expensive guns are actually cheapest in the long run. Nor need we be afraid of new patents throwing them in the shade, for good barrels can be adjusted to any patent, and besides half the improvements so loudly trumpeted are only advantageous for some special purpose. If you buy new a gun fitted with the new discovery, at a long price of course, you will find that you still want the old gun, good all round, and everything just the same.

To a man whose shooting is more or less casual, and who varies it a good deal every season, such expensive guns are neither necessary nor a profitable investment. He ought to buy two guns for the price of the other one. His object should be to be always ready to start for the grouse moors, the pheasant covers, the seashore and even the forest. He may be prepared for all these for the expenditure of £100: which should be laid out in the purchase of a battery in this way. One good, ordinary bore, general gun 12 bore £25: one good choke, 10, or 12 bore £25: double-barrel rifle £25: Rook rifle £5: Long single duck gun about £17 = £97. Or the place of the duck gun—especially if the choke be a 10 bore—may then be taken by a second good all-round gun, ordinary bore, at £20, to use if the first gets out of order; or in great battues when the spare gun is wanted as the other fouls. A very decent gun may be bought for £15, and would be found quite satisfactory by those whose shooting is limited. The £25 guns are very

² *The Coming Race* is an 1871 novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, reprinted as *Vril, the Power of the Coming Race*. For a time the word 'Vril' came to be associated with 'life-giving elixirs'.

handsome, serviceable weapons, and a man has no need whatever to go beyond that price. A complete battery is not often seen. There is nothing more pleasing to a sportsman's eye than such a battery, particularly if it represents the accumulation of years and so includes bygone patterns, and patents which were thought highly of in their time, but have long since fallen into disuse. From the tiny toy-like rook rifle to which the Martini Henry breeching is now applied, and which is carried to such perfection that a hen's egg may be broken with it at a hundred yards, up to the ponderous elephant gun, there runs a gamut of weapons.

Light single barrels which were once in fashion with the dilettante, heavy single barrels for pigeon shooting made before the choke was invented, and when bore and weight of metal had to be resorted to, long barrelled single duck guns to fire from [a] rest, cannon-like punt-guns, brown twist barrels, light barrels without any ornamentation. Slender 20 bores, before which a cock-sparrow might in his impudent ignorance refuse to fly, but quite capable of pouring in a destructive fire. Express rifles—the perfection of the gunsmith's art. Short cover guns of old patterns, scattering tremendously at 30 yards. Long double 8 bores—a giant gun—and all manner of breechings, locks and so forth. Such a collection of course requires a room to itself.

A gun room is indeed a luxury to a sportsman—a place where he can spend many pleasant hours. They are perhaps rather out of fashion nowadays, on account of the growing disposition to hand everything over to attendants that can possibly be done by proxy. It is the unavoidable result of large shooting parties, battues, and grouse driving: yet it is destructive to the spirit of sport. When there are twenty guests to be entertained, the host has too much to do to be able to spare time to look after his gun personally. But when the twenty guests are gone, even now it may be worth his while to pass an hour now and then in such an armoury.

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GLOSSARY³

battues: a form of hunting in which game is forced into the open by the beating of sticks on bushes, in woodland etc. for the convenience of the shooters.

bore: a shotgun's gauge is determined by how many round lead balls of that diameter it would take to make a pound in weight. The smaller the bore the higher the gauge number. A 10 gauge round ball weighs 1/10lb, while a 28 gauge weighs 1/28lb. The most common gauge is 12. These spherical lead balls are a measuring device only and are not to be confused with lead shot in modern

³ The glossary of terms has been added by Peter Robins to aid the reader.

cartridges. A size 6 cartridge for a 12-bore contains 287 pellets.

chilled shots: highly polished, uniformly round, accurately sized and consistently dense lead shot.

choke: a tapered constriction of a shotgun barrel's bore at the muzzle end. The purpose is to shape the spread of shot in order to gain better range and accuracy.

damascene: metalwork decorated with wavy patterns of inlay or etching.

Damascus: Damascus or twist-steel barrels are made by layering alternate strips of steel and iron then welding them together. The strips are then twisted until they resemble a screw; three of these wound strips are then welded together, wound around a steel mandrel, then welded and hammered into a barrel tube. Laminated steel barrels differ in that they start with a ball of steel and iron that is hammered into long strips and twisted, wound around a mandrel, welded and hammered into a barrel tube.

hammerless guns: 'hammerless' is a misnomer, more correctly 'internal hammers,' which are hidden inside the weapon. Various designs evolved from the 1840s increasing in popularity after 1875.

hand-gonne: the hand-gonne was the very first black-powder operated hand-held firearm, used in Europe from the 14th century. The soldier was able to march into battle, load and fire the gun alone. These early firearms were forged from iron and the bullet was anything that could be found, lead balls, iron balls, stones, arrows etc.

Martini Henry: the Martini Henry is a lever-action breech-loading rifle developed as a quick-loading cartridge rifle for use with the British Army. The weapon saw extensive action in the Zulu wars and remained in use until it was phased out by bolt-action Enfield repeating rifles.

Westley-Richards: one of the oldest surviving traditional English gunmakers, founded in Birmingham in 1812.

The Shooting Book

George Miller

C. J. Longman of Longmans, Green & Co. was impressed by articles on country life appearing in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and published anonymously in June 1878 as *The Gamekeeper at Home*. He wrote to the publisher, George Smith, and asked him to forward a letter to the unknown author in which he proposed he undertake “a complete work on shooting”. We owe this information to Walter Besant,* who had access to letters between Longman and Jefferies now lost. Longman was to become Jefferies’ friend, supporter and publisher—but not of a book on shooting. Besant comments: “he was the very man to write such a book—and it would undoubtedly have proved a most popular book. Why, there is not a gentleman’s house in the three kingdoms which would not desire to have a copy of such a work.” But then Jefferies “could never do anything which did not spring from his own brain”.

In 1878 Jefferies had just come into success and popularity after years in the doldrums. He was full of ideas for new projects, and other publishers besides Longman were approaching him. On this crest of self-confidence he accepted Longman’s offer and promptly sent off a plan for the book, with chapters on the various aspects of the subject. At the same time he plied Longman with other projects: a novel, a pioneer work on socialism, a history of the English squire. Again quoting Besant: “He presently forwards a specimen chapter for the Shooting Book. That was in September, 1878. In October he formally accepted the business arrangements offered by the firm, undertook the work, and signed the agreement.” Longman returned the specimen chapter with the agreement, which is now in the British Library (BL58816). It stipulates a work of 500 pages.

There follows a gap in Besant’s correspondence file until December 1882. A letter from Jefferies refers to a book on shooting that Longman had published in the interval, and comments: “I see you have got out the Shooting-Book ... No wonder; I could not expect anyone to be more patient than you were. But even now I hope some day to send a manuscript”. Besant makes no further reference to the project, but he does record that in January 1885 Longman sent Jefferies a copy of “the Badminton hunting-book”. This was in fact the first volume in the comprehensive and celebrated *Badminton Library of British Sports and Pastimes* published by the House of Longman. Jefferies’ reply on 29th January was that the gift had made him miserable—not because the honours had gone elsewhere but because he was “on all fours”, or “nailed to the uneasy chair”, and could no

* *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*, Chatto & Windus, 1888, pp. 193-5 & 212.

longer enjoy the physical contact with nature and the open air that the book evoked. "I can still see it all plainly—the rocks and the rush of water, and the oaks of June above." The following year saw the lid placed firmly on any possibility of a Jefferies shooting book with the publication in the Badminton Library of two volumes on the subject, with subtitles *Field and Covert*, and *Moor and Marsh*, by Lord Walsingham and Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey. Together they comprised over 1000 pages.

While working on the Bibliography with Hugoe Matthews I wrote to numerous American university libraries, keen buyers of British literary MSS, to enquire if there was anything by Jefferies in their collections. One positive result came from the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory, Atlanta. As well as some ALS they sent copies of two bulky MSS, in Jefferies' holograph but neither with a title in his hand. One has the heading 'On Choosing a Gun' in ink, with 'On' crossed out. This, as 'Choosing a Gun', was published in *Hills and the Vale* (Duckworth 1909) by Edward Thomas, but the title is not his writing either. There's a large encircled 'i' also in the heading and the name 'Jones': other surnames (of the compositors who set the type) occur throughout the text. Thomas gives no idea of the source of the MS but presumably it was Mrs Jefferies as Longman had returned it to Jefferies, and Thomas had been in contact with her regarding his biography. The annotations are presumably Duckworth's, unless Longmans had set it in type before returning the MS.

The other MS, on the same subject, is on the same size paper and in identical handwriting, and the fact that they both ended up together at Emory suggests they had always been a pair. The heading written faintly on this one, perhaps in pencil: 'The Choice and Description of Guns', is in Mrs Jefferies' hand. There are no markings to suggest it was ever submitted for publication. But despite the similarity of title and physical match, the treatment of the subject could hardly be more different. The first is very much "by the author of *The Gamekeeper at Home*": a personal account of the author's daunting encounters with high class London gunsmiths, and not in the authoritative manner one would expect for a complete treatise on the art of shooting by an acknowledged expert. But the second is certainly a valiant attempt at that, with almost an excess of technical detail.

There's no way of telling which of these was written first but it's fairly certain that one or both of them was connected with the Shooting Book. 'Choice and Description' seems the most eligible one to have been submitted as a specimen, but perhaps 'On Choosing' was sent first, and then Jefferies realised, or perhaps Longman suggested, it was not quite the right approach for a 500 page manual. Either way there was certainly an on-going commitment to the project. Besant, founder of the Society of Authors, chose to portray Jefferies as an unworldly genius with no idea how to manage his career; but Jefferies would have been

well aware, as poverty and illness set in, of the market potential of such a work. However his first-hand knowledge of the shooting world was from the underside—the gamekeeper and poacher, the small farmer's son. He complains in one letter of lack of information. He would have had to put himself about, and a great deal more than when writing the *Memoir of the Goddards*, to encompass the entire gentrified world of battues, grouse shooting, wildfowling and the rest. He could have done it, as he did stag hunting on Exmoor in *Red Deer*, if his health had held out, but at what cost, we wonder, to his other work. Would we have had *Wood Magic*, *Bevis* and *The Story of My Heart*? He might well have been richer but we certainly would have been the poorer if he had taken this direction.

And besides it wasn't his style. He may have written 'A Defence of Sport' for Alfred Austin in the *National Review*, but for him the organised slaughter of preserved game with the more lethal new choke bores and other refinements he describes here, were not congenial. Rather, as we see in essays like 'Sport and Science' and 'The Single Barrel Gun', a solitary ramble with a favourite old gun that gave the quarry, if there was one, a sporting chance, was more to his liking; the gun really just a passport to being in the open air at all times, breathing it in and alive to all the beauties and mysteries of nature. In *The Times* letters and other early writings he adopted the pose of the expert, but it was his spontaneity and vitality, and the infusion of his personality that made his later work exceptional, then and now. A letter to W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, about a review he had written for the journal, shows that this way of writing was one he came to choose, and believe in:

14 Victoria Road
Eltham
Kent

Aug 14th [1884]

Dear Sir,

I enclose the review of Sport in the Highlands. The different handwriting is because I dictated it. I find the book a good one & had the author given a full record of his own personal experiences & confined himself to them, it would have been of very unusual interest.

I remain

Faithfully Yours

Richard Jefferies

Broad Church Transcendentalism? Remarks on the Lost Essays of Richard Jefferies

Simone Kotva

In the British Library holding of Richard Jefferies' manuscripts there is an intriguing letter written by the then but twenty-four year-old employee of the Gloucester *Standard*, struggling to earn a living by his pen. The letter is composed at Coate, dated February 19th 1873, and addressed to the publishers R. Bentley & Son. Eager to promote his name to these gentlemen, Jefferies mentions to them his latest endeavours: 'At the present moment I have a series of articles "Poetry of the Bible" appearing in the *Broad Churchman*'. The *Broad Churchman* was a small, short-lived Victorian weekly showcasing liberal Anglican theology in the Coleridgean spirit: Romantic, enquiring, with a streak of the radical and heterodox. Launched on 30 January 1873, the *Broad Churchman* lasted only until 8 May (issue 15) the same year, presumably due to precarious finances.¹ The British Library possesses only issues 1, 13, and 15 of the *Broad Churchman*, leaving February and March uncollected, regrettably the very months when Jefferies' essays, according to his own testimony, would have been presented to the public. Thus the biographies are silent on 'Poetry of the Bible', and on its related question: Jefferies' association with Broad Churchmanship. Even when lost, however, the very fact of these essays' existence makes them worthy of closer attention. In what follows, I will sketch out some thoughts on the importance of considering these essays as a part—a vital part, even—of the intellectual biography of Jefferies.

We can assume that 'Poetry of the Bible' treated, in Romantic fashion, the intersection of aesthetics and Christian *theology*. Theology, of course, has always been contested ground in the study of Jefferies, a figure whose free-thinking anticlericalism was defended as early as 1894 by Henry Salt in the debacle regarding Jefferies' alleged death-bed conversion (or, perhaps better put, re-conversion) to Christianity, in which a dying Jefferies attests: 'I have given myself unto God and Christ, and you pray for me; dear, merciful God, merciful Father'. The question continues to be discussed, as witnessed by the recent contretemps between George Miller and Tom Wareham in the Richard

¹ The letter mentioning the essays for the *Broad Churchman* is also cited in Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel, *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies: A Chronological Study* (Oxford: Petton, 1994), p. 57. There are extraordinarily few records of the *Broad Churchman*. In recent publications, I have been able to locate only one, a short bibliographical note in Lawrence Crumb, *The Oxford Movement and Its Leaders: A Bibliography of Secondary and Lesser Primary Sources* (London: Scarecrow, 1988-1993), p. 291.

Jefferies Society's Newsletter, where Wareham revives Salt's arguments against Miller's attempt to read the conversion narrative continuously with Jefferies' mysticism.² Miller makes the insightful observation that, rather than apply an Occam's razor of orthodoxy (or indeed, of heterodoxy) to Jefferies, we should read his tortured 'Sun Life' meditations as an expression of the often heterodox and unconventional theology we find in the tradition of Christian mysticism, beginning with the desert fathers and the anchorite ascetics. To this end, Miller invokes Edward Ingram Watkin's *The Philosophy of Mysticism* (London, 1920), where Jefferies is studied as an example of just such a tradition of Christian mysticism, allowing us to read Jefferies' mysticism holistically. Watkin offers the lee-way necessary to encompass the doubt, anxiety and internal contradictions we find in Jefferies' mysticism, a spirituality which ranges from the optimistically pantheistic, to the pessimistically agnostic: Compare the conclusion to *The Amateur Poacher*—"Let us be always out of doors [...] A something that the ancients called divine can be found and felt there still"—to the notebook entries from 1887, where God is a 'Deity as cold as cobble-stone' and 'If there be anything in the universe outside matter than that something is uniformly higher than any idea of a god'.³

Miller, however, acknowledges that there are limitations to Watkin's usefulness in the recuperation of Jefferies the Christian mystic, since Watkin 'appropriated Jefferies to his own belief system'. Put differently, Watkin's argument is logical, that is, it presents an abstract thesis of the mystical tradition, and shows how Jefferies fits into it. But it is not genealogical, that is, it does not show how Jefferies' mysticism emerges from the influence of movements proper to Jefferies' own historical period and milieu, what German scholars refer to as a writer's *Denkraum* or 'thought-world'. This problem of determining Jefferies' theological thought-world is one which, as far as I am aware, has not been answered satisfactorily in the secondary literature on Jefferies. The lost essays for the *Broad Churchman*, however, offers us some steps towards its solution.

What, then, is the Broad Church? Put very briefly, the Broad Church was a 'party', visible from the 1840s until, roughly, the close of the nineteenth century,

² For the full exchange, and an excellent overview of Salt's role in the conversion controversy, see George Miller, 'Discoveries 7: Did Jefferies die a Christian after all?' (RJS Autumn newsletter 2011, pp. 22-25); Tom Wareham, 'Simply a Biographical Issue?' (RJS Spring newsletter 2013, pp. 15-18); Miller, 'Discoveries 10: Did Jefferies die a Christian after all?—revisited' (RJS Spring newsletter 2013, pp. 19-21); Wareham, 'Did Jefferies Die a Christian—a last parry' (RJS Autumn newsletter 2013, pp. 17-18); Miller, 'Jefferies and Christianity followed by a passage from *After London*' (RJS Spring newsletter 2014, pp. 15-19). I cite from Miller's arguments in Discoveries 7 and 'Jefferies and Christianity'. The question is also usefully discussed by Samuel Looker in Samuel Looker (ed.), *The Notebooks of Richard Jefferies* (pp. 236-237), where Looker defends Salt's position.

³ Richard Jefferies, *The Amateur Poacher* (London, 1925), p. 240; Samuel Looker (ed.) *The Notebooks of Richard Jefferies* (London, 1948), p. 236.

defined by its *resistance* to partisanship. The phrase ‘Broad Church’ was popularised by William John Conybeare to refer to that which was neither Low nor High, but representative of a new, radical yet liberal middle-ground, deeply attached to the Church of England, yet critical of establishment Anglicanism.⁴ Historians discern two distinct ‘schools’ within the movement. On the one hand, a less influential Oxford phalanx that emerged as a reaction to High Church Tractarianism; on the other hand, the more robust Cambridge arm under the spell of Coleridge’s religion of reason, professing a Romantic theology influenced by the German philosophers and poets then being conveyed to the Anglophone world. This latter Broad Churchmanship was often Unitarian in flavour; its most significant spokesperson (though he eschewed the label of ‘Broad Church-manship’) was F. D. Maurice (1805-1872), a Unitarian-turned-Anglican.

With these tendencies, the Broad Church shared much in common with the contemporary developments across the Atlantic amongst the so-called American Transcendentalists, or what Catherine Albanese has called the nineteenth-century development of America’s ‘metaphysical religion’.⁵ It is no coincidence that John Sterling, a mentor to F. D. Maurice, was greatly taken with Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Nature*, corresponded with the author, and would come to consider him an intimate friend.⁶ This theological connection between Broad Churchmanship and Transcendentalism dovetails with the more familiar comparisons between Jefferies’ school of British nature writers and their New England siblings.⁷

By the 1860s and ‘70s, ‘Broad Church’ was a familiar term, itself broadening and expanding with the times, which were marked by two significant circumstances: first, the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859), and second, the growing popularity of spiritualism. Thus Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), a student of F. D. Maurice, argues that Darwin’s discoveries forecasted not the end of Christianity, but a broadening of its theological horizons. ‘Now they have got rid of an interfering God—a master-magician, as I call it—[theologians] have to choose between the absolute empire of accident,

⁴ William John Conybeare, ‘Church Politics’, *The Edinburgh Review* 98/200 (October 1853), pp. 273-342.

⁵ Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007).

⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *A Correspondence Between John Sterling and Ralph Waldo Emerson, With a Sketch of Sterling’s Life* (Boston, 1897). The most comprehensive study of the Broad Church movement and its theology is Tod E. Jones, *The Broad Church: A Biography of Movement* (Lanham, 2003). For the Coleridgean school in particular, see Charles Sanders, *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement* (Durham, 1942).

⁷ See for instance ‘New England and Nature’, *Spectator* (12 November 1892), p. 13: ‘If we may judge from the evidence of books, there now exists in New England a counterpart to the great and growing appreciation of Wild Nature, which has left such a mark on recent English literature’.

and a living, immanent, ever-working God'.⁸ Not unlike Jefferies, Kingsley sees God quasi-pantheistically as coterminous ('immanent') with nature, nature itself being understood in quasi-theological terms as a living, thinking organism; a plastic form in a process of constant evolution. After the twentieth-century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, theologians would later identify this as 'process' thought, and its anticipations are a common trope in Broad Church literature, as it is in Jefferies' *The Story of My Heart*. Compare, for instance, the title of G. E. Comerford's manifesto of 1891, *The Broad Churchman: A Catechism of Christian Pantheism*.

Responding to spiritualism as well as evolutionism, the little-known but fascinating work of Charles Maurice Davies (1828-1910) is of particular interest with regards to Jefferies. Davies followed a singular though not untypical route for a Broad Churchman: starting out a disillusioned 'ex-Puseyite', he finds his way to liberal Anglicanism, embraces pantheistic ideals, and subsequently attaches his name to the 'Broad Church'. Davies was also interested in the occult, and his work, promoting and thus shaping Broad Churchmanship, works hard to expand liberal Anglicanism in the direction of a new supernaturalism, the kind which Victorian London was harbouring among the denizens of its spiritualist societies. In 1873, Davies was busy writing short reportages documenting the religious life of London, both of the established church and of the less visible congregation of the new spiritualists, later collected as *Unorthodox London* (1874), *Heterodox London* (1874) and *Orthodox London* (1874-1875). At least one of these pieces, 'Canon Liddon at St. Paul', first appeared in the *Broad Churchman*. No doubt there were more such articles in the brief life of the journal; if so, it is not unlikely that they appeared alongside the lost essays of Jefferies.

Did Jefferies read Davies, the Broad Churchman *par excellence*? Quite possibly, seeing as both writers were fellow contributors to the same small, idealistic and pioneering journal. Certainly Davies' peripatetic habits, and his documentation of London life, in part resembles the style of Jefferies' life and later prose, and perhaps the young journalist was impressed by this seasoned observer of human nature. That following year, 1874, both writers published books with the same house, Tinsley Brothers (Davies' *Unorthodox London*, Jefferies' *The Scarlet Shawl*). Perhaps Jefferies also saw the advertisement, in 1875, for Davies' *The Broad Church: A Novel*, as it came off the press?

These speculations aside, what we do know with certainty is that Jefferies, rather than (in a gentle riposte to Watkin) merely carving out for himself the lonely spirituality of a Christian mystic, was gravitating toward a growing

⁸ Francis Kingsley (ed.), *Charles Kingsley: Letters and Memories*, Vol. 2 (London: Co-operative Society, 1899), p. 175.

‘church’ which was attracting the attention of like-minded individuals all over the nation. It would be no exaggeration to claim that in Victorian England, the Broad Church was the only inn spacious enough to accommodate the new generation of post-Darwinian, Romantically inclined, anti-establishment Anglicans to which Jefferies belonged. ‘Anglican’ is important here, for the Broad Church functioned as a receptacle for a radical yet *national* spirituality, concerned with the stewardship of English rural life and customs—like the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Arts and Crafts movement, Broad Churchmanship thus overlapped with the Romantic medievalism of Tractarianism. However, because Broad Church theology was, in the main, unequivocal in its suspicion of excessive (‘Catholic’) traditionalism, it could allow its members to dispense with doctrinal consistency in favour of the kind of free-roaming speculations Davies conducts in his final work, *The Great Secret and its Unfoldment in Occultism* (1895), and Jefferies in his ‘Sun Life’ meditations—and which, quite possibly, would be found nascent in ‘Poetry of the Bible’, if, and when, the pieces are found.

Now, Jefferies’ association with the Broad Church movement cannot be said to make him a Broad Churchman, but then the question is a moot one, for very few thinkers (unlike Davies, who is the exception that proves the rule), chose to identify with a party which, as mentioned earlier, was characterised by its resistance to party politics. F. D. Maurice famously refused to call himself a Broad Churchman. The picture of this ‘Anglican’ movement is complicated further by the fact that it was not uncommon for Broad Church clergy to resign their orders. But these resignations were acts of political protest against the establishment, rather than of unbelief; not unlike Jefferies’ own spiritual journey from childhood piety, to the Sun Life conviction that God must exist beyond (established) Christianity, to a final reconciliation with a ‘broader’ Church.

To conclude, then, I propose that one possible way of reading Jefferies’ mysticism and attitude towards religion holistically and historically, is to read it as an expression of Broad Church spirituality. If we choose to understand Jefferies in this way, we avoid reading inconsistencies where there is invention, and we allow Jefferies to become a window onto the fast-paced and complex developments in the Anglican imagination which took place over the course of the decades following ‘Poetry of the Bible’, the reverberations of which are felt today. Though the banner of Broad Churchmanship went out of fashion towards the end of the nineteenth century we should be careful, as Stephen Prickett has recently pointed out, not to be over-hasty in our judgements of this apparent demise.⁹ In America the ‘metaphysical religion’ of nature writers and

⁹ Stephen Prickett, ‘Review: Tod E. Jones, *The Broad Church: A Biography of a Movement*’, *Victorian Studies* 48/3 (2006), pp. 522-524, p. 524, an insightful discussion of the literary offspring of the Broad Church movement.

Transcendentalists was, as it were, naturalised into the literary imagination of both American nature writing (never far from an apperception of the numinous in the natural world) and fiction. Likewise, in British letters the once-radical theology of the Broad Church fed into both the dark, troubled visions of God which stalk Edward Thomas' wayfaring prose, as well as into the brighter yet no less troubled phantasmagorias of George Macdonald (like Kingsley, a student of F. D. Maurice); and, via Macdonald, to C. S. Lewis and the Oxford Inklings. These outposts of Broad Churchmanship, in their turn precursors of the psycho-geography of our 'new nature writing' and fantasy fiction, allow their authors to range intrepidly, very Broad Churchman- and Jefferies-like, over a vaster terrain of vital spiritual enquiry than would be possible in theological works proper. Today this broad 'church', to which much of the British literary imagination, both fantastical and non-fictive, can trace its heritage, has become the haven for metaphysical speculation and mystic piety—a haven removed from the narrower confines of both confessional theology and the equally confessional strictures of the 'new atheists'. All the more galling, then, that Jefferies' lost essays should be his first theological work, since it is work which would bespeak the theology of an Anglican sister to Transcendentalism, and the 'metaphysical religion' of British nature writing. We must hope for the speedy recovery of the essays on the 'Poetry of the Bible'.

Advertisement for the first issue of *The Broad Churchman* which appeared in *The Spectator*, January 25, 1873.

Ready January 30, price 6d, the First Number of
A NEW WEEKLY PAPER.
THE BROAD CHURCHMAN.

The BROAD CHURCHMAN is designed to represent the third party or section of the National Church, which, revolting from Ecclesiasticism on the one hand, and from Puritanism on the other, desires to render the Church more adequate to the exigencies of the age. The BROAD CHURCHMAN will adopt a strongly humanitarian line. It will deal with all political and social subjects independently and liberally, and will treat questions of art and science from an earnest and sympathetic point of view.

Offices, 8 Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, E.C.

Woman in the Works of Richard Jefferies

Caroline A. Foley, M.A.

A paper read before a London club for ladies. Published in The Scots Magazine, 1st February 1891— pp. 218-231.

It is good to note, in Mr. H. S. Salt's thoughtful & sympathetic *Life of Henry David Thoreau* the reappearance before the reading public, if only by way of comparison, of the name and the genius of Richard Jefferies. One would imagine we have a surfeit of writers like these men, that the latter of the two, at least, should already be, by a vast majority, passed over and unread. Yet, in the works of Jefferies, we trace, and by his untimely death, we lost a genius more truly individual, and therefore more rare, than it often bechances a nation to produce.

Time will re-adjust our estimates no doubt. Meanwhile, since I have met educated women, who had never even heard of Richard Jefferies, I need not fear overmuch to be repeating a twice-told tale, if I approach this man's thought-life by the way indicated in my title.

I take it there are few, if any, more important criteria of a modern practical philosopher, than are afforded in his attitude towards the problems of the distribution of work and the development of women. What men say of women, look for and hope for in women, what they appreciate and depreciate in our characteristics and in our tendencies past and present, cannot but have a special interest for us. For to whatever extent they may have erred in repressing or suppressing women, men, in developing their lives with relative freedom in every direction, have accumulated a store of experience from which we, in striving after an equal freedom of development, cannot too often draw both warning and instruction. And Jefferies, as a man and a writer, has contributed to that store.

But in that I treat of an estimate taken of women by Jefferies as a critic of life and a creator of ideal characters; his *prima facie* claim on our consideration is indefinitely strengthened. We look in that criticism for woman as she is and as she ought to be. We expect among those characters to find lovers, choosing from among women as they are, one who is (to them) woman as she should be. And this beloved ideal becomes in turn the judge of all they have hitherto held sacred and important. As Jefferies wrote in *Greene Ferne Farm* —

When a thoughtful man feels an over-powering love, a great passion rising within

him, his ideal of her becomes a kind of judge. All the creed of life that has grown up in the mind is passed in review... [can its dicta] stand before the new light thrown upon them by the love that is in itself a faith?

If this is so, then every woman, whether as a potentially, actually, or once beloved one, or as a philosopher and reformer, is interested to see what sort of sister she finds in life, in criticism or romance, set up as inspiring so great a change, and to note how far there is conformity with her own ideal of her sex.

But when the creator of ideal women is a strongly individual and independent genius, and “dear child of nature” like Richard Jefferies, who, as he says of Noel in *Restless Human Hearts*, “being a real man, took his feelings from himself, and did not persuade himself into feeling what books told him he ought,” our interest grows into a keen curiosity to know which, if any, among female types he conceives as most fitted to—

Show us how divine a thing
A woman may be made.

II.

And first, what were the general ideals in the philosophy of Jefferies, and what the conditions of their approximate realisation?

They are most fully set forth in *The Story of my Heart*, a prose-poem, at present, alack! out of print, the burden of which is the yearning of a living soul for fuller life; of a finite being for that less finite being which is its Infinite. Give me, he prays, worshipping on the sun-lit downs, to have in myself the secret and meaning of the earth, the golden sun, the light, the foam-flecked sea. Give me, he sighs, before human forms perfected in sculpture, to live the soul-life they express... Come, O greater life! come, greatness of soul, irradiance of mind, deeper insight, broader hope! Nature, Beauty, Love, the poet’s Trinity, the three priceless treasures of mankind, blend for Jefferies in “the unity of our higher self.” Beautiful Felise, in *The Dewy Morn*, listening to her lover, finds “all that she had once found in her solitary communings among the woods come to her in the tones of his voice!”

Out of this vague afflatus there emerged for Jefferies a more definite threefold desire and effort, on behalf of himself and of all men.

For a more powerful pervading soul-life, for a more perfect physical life, for a more prevailing and effective power to carry out the will; constituting together fulness of life and glad length of days.

It should be the sacred and sworn duty of every one, once at least during lifetime, to do something in person towards this end—to roll back the tide of death, and to set our faces steadily to a future of life.

¹ cf. J. A. Symond’s *Essays*, I. p.148, 1890.

How might these ideals be brought more near?

Well, he went down once from his hill-worship, and “at home put down two sentences,” adding no more for two years. He had realised that the wonder and ineffableness of life was in his own soul, in himself. With an untrained mind, and knowing but vaguely of the vistas of the infinite ascending-scale of life which evolutionary science was revealing, he longed to lead men’s minds beyond the circles of data wherein, they seemed to be “tramping round and round like a horse turning a mill, each following in the other’s footsteps,”² and to effect this, the first essential was to know, apprehending and comprehending, at first-hand; to see for himself, to judge for himself: and then only, and only so far, to suffer the expressed result to “drop from him simply and directly, as a stone falls to the ground.”³ Nature was advising him as Thoreau, her elder child, had advised another:—“Let me suggest a theme for you—to state to yourself precisely and completely what that walk over the mountains amounted to, for you.”⁴ Herein may all be poets and scientists, and all attain to originality of thought and expression. A difference in aspects is to a certain extent a difference in things. “Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return,” is true generally, but we are each of us a peculiar and unique mixture of dust, moulded by conditions never quite constant, and to the extent of resultant difference, we have each an original, line to follow, an original view to take, an original message to give.

The fullest development possible to each organism in mind, body and character, loyalty or truth to a growing Universe through loyalty or truth to the growing Self—such is the outcome of these aspirations of the man who saw the toiling of mankind, that it was joyless and of little avail to make life lovely and mighty and glad. “The grand design of the Contriver of the Universe,” he wrote before his prime, “is the perfection of the whole of His creation, and that perfection is reached through the development of each individual.” And, again, “modern science teaches us that the primary object of every living being is to develop itself to the full (*sic*) of its power.” He too, like Thoreau, demands “leisure and elbow-room, that each individual mind, instead of being crushed and warped in the struggle of life, may have space to develop its own distinctive qualities and follow the bent of its own natural temperament.”⁵

As to the medium in which mind and character might most harmoniously develop themselves, and in which the more perfect bodily life could alone be cultivated, Jefferies insisted on the open air, the life of the fields, the life in close touch with the simple and ineffable influences of Nature. He was not blind to

² *Restless Human Hearts*.

³ Thoreau’s words. Cf. Mr. Salt’s *H. D. Thoreau*, p.254.

⁴ R. L. Stevenson, *Men and Books: Thoreau*. Cf. De Maupassant, *Pierre et Jean*, Introduction.

⁵ Mr. H. S. Salt, *op. cit.*, p.231.

the intellectual and artistic, as well as social, benefits to be gained through contact with city life. He, too, frequented shrines of art and learning, and was affected by a sense of human solidarity in crowded thoroughfares. He, too, could be mindful of “the dear sky and air” in Trafalgar Square, and of a “voice from the woods” in the dead brown leaves driven by the wind round street-corners. He could even recommend “the freer atmosphere of a great city” as a remedy for the backbiting uncharitableness of some country folk. But to live “in an atmosphere of smoke and a scenery composed of brick walls” choked him physically, mentally, and morally. “It is an instinct; I cannot help it. I recoil from the stone wall, the *hewn* stone,” he wrote. As George Sand said of Venice—“Other cities are like prisons which you put up with for the sake of your fellow-prisoners,” so felt Jefferies of every city. In the town, men become newspaper-reading⁶ borrowers of opinion; while

In manners, mode of thought, and way of life, there is, perhaps, no class of the community less uniform than the agricultural. The diversities are so great as to amount to contradictions. Individuality of character is most marked, and, varying an old saw, it might be said, so many farmers, so many minds.⁷

He pleads especially for children:

Take them to the woods and hills, and give them the freedom of the meadows if you wish their highest education, that of the heart and soul to be completed. Therein shall they find a secret— a knowledge not to be written, not to be found in books.⁸

And he warns us, that

All beautiful women come from the country. Though the accident of birth may cause their register to be signed in town, they are always of country extraction. It takes 150 years to make a beauty — 150 years out of doors. Open air, hard manual labour, or continuous exercise, good food, good clothing but most especially open air, must play their part for five generations before a beautiful woman can appear.⁹

III

Such were Jefferies’ ideals in the abstract, and such the medium and methods essential to their being made flesh.

And if we review his writings, we are struck by the fact that we never find a relatively complete embodiment of, or a many-sided approximation to, those

⁶ “God never meant us to live in such conglomerated, heterogeneous, newspaper-reading masses as we live in now.”—General Booth.

⁷ *Hodge and his Masters*. Preface.

⁸ *The Dewy Morn*.

⁹ ‘Beauty in the Country,’ *The Open Air*.

ideals except in a woman.¹⁰ True, it is not easy to meet with any work of fiction, literary or dramatic, where the author has created, in both hero and heroine, an equally powerful ideal embodiment. Usually the one is dwarfed and overshadowed by the force of character and vitality in the other. But Jefferies' unvarying choice of their sex remains for women a fact of interest, and much more so in that these elect women, while they excel in traditionally feminine qualities, possess over and above these—some more, some less—a breadth, depth, and force of constitution, mental, physical, moral, such as is more often attributed to the hero. Mr. Walter Besant, in condemning outright Jefferies' novels as such, enumerates his disqualifications for novel-writing, one of which is that “he was too self-contained as a novelist; he could never get rid of his own personality.”¹¹ This we may prove to be true, and still from another, and my present point of view, find a source of interest in the repeated presentation of that strongly-marked, many-sided personality of Jefferies. Considered thus; the notion emerges, that whereas he depicts in his heroes his own *unidealised* disposition, as *e.g.*, in Felix,¹² with his proud, morose reticence, “his indecision, his too impressionable disposition, which checked and stayed the force of his talent, and counteracted the determination of a naturally iron will,”¹³ and, perhaps, also in Neville,¹⁴ in his heroines, on the other hand, we see his *idealised* personality precipitated.

If we consider, in the first place, his portrayals of physical perfection, and turn for a moment from the unread tales to the better known essays, we find that whenever Jefferies eulogises, beauty, expressed not only, and not so much, by tender grace, as by strength and vigour, it is to woman he refers. He can be wrong-headed to the extent of asserting that a woman's physique is more typical of strength—strength without effort—than a man's.

Merely as an animal, how grand and beautiful is a perfect woman! Simply as a living, breathing creature can anything imaginable come near her? There is such strength in shape, such force in form. Without muscular development shape conveys the impression of the greatest of all strength—that is, of completeness in itself. The ancient philosophy regarded a globe as the most perfect of all bodies, because it was the same—that is, it was perfect, and complete in itself from whatever point it was contemplated. Such is woman's form when Nature's intent is fulfilled in beauty, and that beauty gives the idea of self-contained power.

A full-grown woman is, too, physically stronger than a man. Her physique excels man's. Look at her torso, at the size, the fulness, the rounded firmness, the depth of the chest. There is a nobleness about it. Shoulders, arm, limbs all reach a

¹⁰ The character of the boy Bevis is too immature to be reckoned an exception.

¹¹ *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*. 1888, p.151.

¹² Cf. Mr. Besant, *op. cit.* p. 33.

¹³ *After London*.

¹⁴ *Restless Human Hearts*.

breadth of make seldom seen in man. There is more than merely sufficient—there is a luxuriance indicating a surpassing vigour. And this occurs without effort. She needs no long manual labour, no exhaustive gymnastic exercise, nor any special care in food or training. It is difficult not to envy the superb physique and beautiful carriage of some women. They are so strong without effort.

Again, in more guarded terms:—

A really beautiful woman is, in proportion, stronger than a man.¹⁵

And again, in the fine study entitled ‘Nature in the Louvre,’¹⁶ the one statue he holds supremely worthy as representing “the beautiful made tangible in human form,” “a beautiful embodiment of loving kindness,” “full of the energy of exceptional vitality,” “a woman perfect as a woman,” the “Venus Accroupie,” differs from the typical Venus in the manly strength of her splendid torso. “She is not all, not too feminine; with all her tenderness, she can think and act nobly as a man.”

Reverting to Jefferies’ serious attempts at fiction, through which, crude and faulty as they are in style, matter, and composition, the story of the passionate aspirations of his heart runs like a complex thread of gold, we shall be impressed, in the maidens he portrays, by nothing so much as their unsurpassed physical vigour and exceptional vitality. From Nora, his first-born, to Amaryllis, his latest creation, we pass through a gallery of splendid “statues warmed into life,” women in the, glow of perfect health, freshness, and vitality “emanating from them like a sudden radiance,” strong and graceful in moment, untiring in active exercise. Some more, some less, but chief of all is Felise, that young Brynchild of “the dewy morn,” who ravishes us by sheer delight in the glory of her strength, as she wanders revelling in the beauty of the summer dawn, sighing in the joy of simply feeling herself to be, running without faltering up the high Downs to greet the rising sun, diving like a Naiad into her lake, her whole being quivering with intensity of life, throbbing with “an immense strength to love” before Bernard polarised that love. Nor is Carlotta, the ideally wicked woman one whit inferior in superb vigour of body. “Beauty of the highest order is inseparable from health; it is the outcome of health—centuries of health.” Never does Jefferies keep us in the company of a sickly, languid woman, except once, when he watches a brief space with injured Heloise. Even then he has a word for the strong young nurses “glowing with health.” And nothing, says this man belonging to the votaries of Nature, “who do not laugh, and do not make others laugh,”¹⁷ “nothing so thoroughly enchants one as the woman who laughs, from her heart in the joyousness of

¹⁵ *The Open Air*. ‘Beauty in the Country.’

¹⁶ *Field and Hedgerow*.

¹⁷ Mr. Besant, *op. cit.* p. 189.

youth.”¹⁸

Of such are the women in these abortive works. Wooed by sun and wind, lovers of the trees, the grass, and the sky,¹⁹ they are Jefferies’ true daughters, calling us “house-folk” out into the open air, breathing invigorating influences on the brows of their sisters, intent, “poor street-struck creatures,”²⁰ on shop-windows, or bent over books. One thing is *needful!* is their cry, the sanity and serenity of health, “les éternelles joies et les éternelles jouissances du GRAND AIR.” Nor can steady progress attend women in the development of their lives and work until the great majority grip this truth as an eternal *must*. Jefferies elsewhere expresses the opinion that “there is no work a woman cannot do with the best results for herself, always provided that it does not throw a strain upon the loins.”²¹ He is referring to physical work, yet, when on the other hand, we pause before the only erudite maiden in his dream of fair women, Georgiana, we see a splendidly-formed Athene, large-limbed, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, “moulded in a generous and full-developed manner by the great artist, Nature.”²² Never, perhaps, except at Sparta, were manly sports more cultivated by some women than at present, but so long as the great bulk of our sex, whether residing in town or country, do not feel it as an imperious necessity to seek frequently, regularly, and at all seasons, the greater air, the ministry of “sun and shower,” “that volatile-essence of woods, and fields, and hills,” muscular development as such will not, any more than mental culture as such, result in that noblest healthfulness, the expression whereof is to be sought in their faces

Who saw life steadily and saw it whole.

By such a woman alone may the message of Jefferies’ women be understood, and though she be not moulded like a goddess, yet

beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

As closely allied to his estimate of the potential strength in woman, Jefferies has faith, too, in her courage. We should not look for cowardice in his maidens of the country-side and the “open air,” but he finds courage evinced even there where women usually evince the greatest pusillanimity—I mean, in bathing—especially when it is contrasted with the pluck exhibited by the few who master their dread and awkwardness in the unfamiliar element. He watches the gently-nurtured creatures, clinging to their machine-ropes on the Brighton beach, and suffering huge breakers to bowl them over again and again on the rough

¹⁸ *Hodge and his Masters*. Country Girls.

¹⁹ *Restless Human Hearts*.

²⁰ Mr. Besant, *op. cit.* p.189.

²¹ ‘Beauty in the Country.’

²² *Restless Human Hearts*.

shingle.

The courage and endurance women must possess, [he exclaims] to face a groundswell like this! National untaught courage—inbred, and not built of gradual instruction as it were in hardihood. Yet some people hesitate to give women the franchise! Actually, a miserable privilege which any poor fool of a man may exercise.²³

Another precious trait in Jefferies' heroines is that they have, nearly all of them, breadth of mind and magnanimity of feeling, in which they remind me of the women of George Sand. They are not above occasional jealousy, but they are above permitting it to shake their self-respect or cause them to act maliciously. They can inspire and guide their lovers; they can also help them to develop their lives even as they claim to develop their own.

This liberty for self-development in mind and character, which I hold it misleading to term individualism, should not be conceived as an undiscerning recommendation to women to shape both character and action into the greatest possible conformity to a masculine model. Room to find adequate but fit outlets for her energies in work and duty, *quâ* woman, is the interpretation of "rights" put by Jefferies into the mind of his student-heroine, Georgiana.

She was an advocate of the mental and moral rights of women—not confining her conception of those rights to the power to sit in Parliament, or to vote, but looking rather to the aesthetic side of the question, arguing that women should receive a higher education, should be placed on a broader and freer platform. She did not attempt to prove that woman was equal, or ever could be equal, to man in strength, bodily or mental; what she did most earnestly believe and most earnestly advocate was, that in her own particular way, woman had gifts parallel in utility to those of man. Woman should not strive to emulate or mix indiscriminately with man. Her platform should be distinct but equally high, and equally free and open.²⁴

Fearless and strenuous and self-contained development of heart and mind tends, as is shown by Jefferies, and indeed by many another novelist,²⁵ to emerge in "truth to self," *i.e.*, to the promptings of the soul trained in noble and beautiful wisdom. He held that if every side of being were developed in a pure environment, fed on the best nutriment, regulated by wholesome exercise and discipline, there would be a direct outcome in conduct peculiar to, and lawful for, the individual, which no blind sheep-like following of *anybody else* will suffer him to realise. When the time for action came, the training might be trusted to bear its natural fruit. Conduct should be the efflorescence of character—*thy* conduct of *thy* character. Let the "resolut zu leben" flow

²³ *The Open Air*. 'The Bathing Season.'

²⁴ *Restless Human Hearts*.

²⁵ "The humblest novelist could never make out his three volumes without the eternal contrast between conventionalism and genuine feeling." *Macmillan's Magazine*, March 1876. *Natural Religion*, VI.

spontaneously from meditation “im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen.” This is best shown in the fearless unconventionalism of Ella²⁶ and in the single-minded determination of Felise. The former pursues her art-studies abroad, associating fraternally and without other protection with her old playmate and fellow-student, Claudius, heedless of the “world’s” condemnation. The latter, “unswervingly true to herself,” when she loves and her beloved has sealed his heart against her, “thrust away from her mind the contemplation of the powerlessness of women and concentrated her ideas upon the way it could be done—” how she might carry out to heart’s content. Soul’s purpose; turn each thought to very deed.

In Heloise’s more delicate, highly-strung temperament, we see a similar though inferior training involving her in a mortal struggle between her inclination and the duty of carrying out the penalty entailed by the hideous error she made in marrying Louis.

Sturdy, fiery, shy, young Amaryllis has developed, as the outcome of her culture, or absence of culture, a rare independence and self-respect, which stands out twice in high relief. She alone cannot stoop, for the chance of inheriting his fortune, to cajole her miserly grandfather; had she sat at his table “with naked feet she would have been prouder than ever, and that is why I always loved her so,” is the author’s comment; “she was not to be put down by circumstances, she was above external things.” And when taken to afford a pastime for the idle sons of the squire, she stifles her resentment for a brief space to please her grandfather, then turns and makes her escape, exercising on one at least a moral influence and a power of character, which Jefferies likens to the commanding presence of genius.

The powerful influence over man of a “perfect woman nobly planned” through the harmonious effect of her mere presence meets us in Aurora²⁷ of whom we would fain have heard more. The sensitive, moody Felix, jarred by jealous doubts, feels that it was not so much what she said and did “as the mere fact of her presence so near that brought him to himself. The influence of her steadfast nature, of her clear, broad, straightforward view of things, the decision of her character, the high unselfish motives which animated her, all together supplied that which was wanting in himself.”

Finally, in *The Scarlet Shawl*, the crude yet vigorous production of Jefferies’ 26th year, the evolution of the vitality of Nora’s love and Percival’s is, in spite of all defects, consistently worked out. The expansion of their lives through mutual love is repressed by a slight disagreement, and their lowered vitality seeks gratification in what is artificial and conventional. The critical spirit saved

²⁶ *Restless Human Hearts.*

²⁷ *After London.*

Nora for a time, and the stirring voices of art and nature call to her true self. But she is naturally assimilative, and becomes tamed into an engagement with a highly-refined and respectable man, who, while he “gave her insensibly a higher standard of minor morals,” and gratified her artistic taste, was greatly her inferior in breadth of mental sweep and had lost his soul in a fanaticism for details.

IV.

Here I must leave the women of Jefferies. I have spoken only of the goddesses among them, because I was dwelling on ideals. On the “modern woman,” her fetishism²⁸ and her artificiality, he can speak as acridly as any critic—is it not an easy thing to do? Good for us, however, as are such denunciations, the “Blasts” against our weaknesses may in the long run avail less than the sunshine of a generous faith in what we may become, based on a critically artistic estimate of what we are capable of at present. Jefferies will not become immortal, as immortal he surely will be, through his novels, yet so long as the novel continues to be the popular form in which the many seek ideals of life, they may do worse than learning to know those of Jefferies through his fiction. His characters have been called “puppets that never could have lived,” yet some may find his heroines at least brave company, radiating fulness of beauteous life. Well for such if they can catch therefrom some fire which will not leave them merely contemplative, but “spur the imitative will” to an individual appropriation of that ideal spirit. As there is an originality possible for all, so may all enter upon a much larger heirloom of art and nature than they do. There is a portion of ideal truth in the anarchist dream of a future wherein all, and not a few, shall be poets, artists, and leaders of men. *Sie kann die Kunst und ihre Uebung nicht vom Leben trennen.*²⁹ For every woman can share in the lofty ideals of Jefferies, can let grow the wings of her soul, and give due play to character, can cultivate a deeper intercourse with the natural universe, and mould her taste by the noblest standards of art. All this, it is true, calls for strenuous effort, but for effort akin to the “unhasting, unresting” serenity of Nature herself, to the full but steady pulse of rich life.

²⁸ “No woman can exist without a fetish.”—*Restless Human Hearts*.

²⁹ *Auerbach* “*Waldfried*.” She cannot separate Art and the exercise of it from life.

Afterword about Caroline A. Foley

Peter Robins



This is an early piece of journalism from the pen of Caroline Augusta Foley and rather outside her studies of economics, philosophy and psychology at the University of London, from where she had graduated with a BA in 1886, completing her MA in 1889.

At the time of presenting this paper to ‘a London Club for Ladies’, possibly The Alexandra or the University Club for Ladies, Foley involved herself in various societies for children’s and working women’s welfare and later became active in supporting the women’s suffrage movement. Concurrent with these commitments, Foley served on the staff of the *Economic Journal*, published by the University of London, and would have no doubt continued with these interests had she not been introduced to and married, in 1894, Thomas William Rhys Davids, a man in his fifties and Professor of Pali and Buddhist Literature at the University of London. This partnership was to change the direction of her life.

Caroline Augusta Foley was born in 1857 at Wadhurst, Sussex, the daughter of John Foley of Wadham College, Oxford and sometime vicar of Wadhurst, and Caroline E. Windham of Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk. In 1855 six Foley children had died within a month of diphtheria but two sons survived. Not only was Caroline’s father ordained but her grandfather and great-grandfather had been

rector of Holt in Worcestershire and vicar of Mordiford in Herefordshire respectively. It is all the more intriguing then that despite this Christian heritage, and encouraged by her husband, Caroline took up Orientalism in which Thomas had gained such distinction and they closely collaborated in Pali and Buddhistic research and translation. Pali died out as a literary language in India in the 14th century but survived elsewhere until the 18th, nevertheless, Pali was and is still studied mainly to gain access to Buddhist scriptures. Although husband and wife pursued the same studies, Caroline independently researched Buddhist psychology and the place of women in Buddhism and, over time, wrote or translated many works under the name of C. A. F. Rhys Davids, a number of which are still in print.

Caroline and Thomas had two daughters, Vivien Brynhilda (1895), Nesta Enid (1900) and a son, Arthur (1897). In October 1917, Arthur, a fighter pilot, was killed in action and, after the death of Thomas in 1922, Caroline's thoughts turned to various forms of psychic communication with the dead, attempting to reach her son, whose remains were never recovered, through séances, automatic writing and clairaudience. At this time she was Lecturer in the History of Buddhism at the School of Oriental and African Studies, a post she held until 1933.

Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids died suddenly at home in Chipstead, Surrey on 26 June 1942, aged 84. In an obituary, *The Times* commented, 'her profound scholarship did not dim her humanism and charm' and praised her final book, *Poems of Cloister and Jungle* (John Murray, 1941), a Buddhist anthology. Her papers are held in the University of Cambridge Library Archive and at Senate House Library, University of London.

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Further consideration of women in Jefferies' fiction can be found in Andrew Rossabi's introduction to *Restless Human Hearts* (Petton Books, 2008) and his article 'Richard Jefferies: the Sensation Novel, and George Gissing's *New Grub Street*' in *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, No. 29, 2015.

Richard Jefferies, Journalist

Barry Sloan

*The script of the Birthday Lecture presented to the Richard Jefferies Society
at Liddington Village Hall on 7 November 2015.*

In choosing to speak about Richard Jefferies as a journalist, I am mindful of the fact that he must be one of a relatively small number of literary writers whose reputation rests largely on work originally produced for the columns of periodicals and newspapers. At risk of telling this particular audience things they already know, I want to take a few moments to recall the scope and scale of his journalistic contributions. The records show at least 350 articles by Jefferies were published in newspapers, magazines or journals in the period between the late 1860s and the time of his death in 1887, and the great majority of these appeared from 1877 onwards. His work was included in at least 27 different publications, most notably the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *St. James's Gazette*, which were daily London evening papers, and the *Standard*, a London morning paper; in the weekly *Live Stock Journal*, and in the periodicals, *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* and *Longman's Magazine*. Furthermore, the non-fiction books for which Jefferies is remembered all originated in serial articles for the press: so, *The Amateur Poacher*, *The Gamekeeper at Home*, *Wild Life in a Southern County*, and *Round About a Great Estate* all derived from Jefferies' contributions to the *Pall Mall Gazette*; while *Hodge and his Masters* developed from articles written for the *Standard*. It is also worth highlighting the rate at which Jefferies the journalist was producing his work: no sooner had he completed the articles that would make up *The Amateur Poacher* in 1877 than he began on the series that would lead to *The Gamekeeper at Home*. These appeared over 1877-78 and were immediately followed by the articles that would lead to *Wild Life in a Southern County*. At the same time, between 1878 and 1880, Jefferies was writing a series for the *Standard* which later appeared as *Hodge and His Masters*. And in a different vein, between April 1879 and February 1880, he was contributing a chapter a month of his novel, *Greene Ferne Farm*, for *Time*. Even this record does not take account of his regular contributions to *The Live Stock Journal* throughout 1877-78, and other occasional contributions to various publications. Jefferies, we can safely say, was a very busy man, and it is surely a mark of his ability and aptitude for this kind of writing that he produced so much that has outlasted the ephemeral interest of most journalism, especially when he was following such a hectic schedule.

It is also worth commenting briefly on some of the publications with which Jefferies was particularly associated. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, which was

Conservative in its politics, was owned by George Smith and edited by Frederick Greenwood, who resigned in 1880 after the paper passed to a new owner who wished to use it to back the Liberals. Greenwood had been instrumental in encouraging Jefferies and giving him the opportunity to develop the kind of writing that quickly became his hallmark. After his resignation from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Greenwood became the first editor of the *St. James's Gazette* which was itself launched to take up the Conservative cause in the space left by the change of politics at the *Pall Mall Gazette*. It was easy, therefore, for Jefferies to follow his supportive editor and to become a regular contributor to the new newspaper. A somewhat similar pattern emerges in Jefferies' dealings with *Fraser's Magazine* and *Longman's Magazine: Fraser's*, which was again Tory in its political sympathies, had been in existence since 1830. Although it had enjoyed wide circulation in its heyday, by the 1870s it was in decline, and it ceased publication in 1882, only to be immediately succeeded in the same year by *Longman's Magazine* which aimed to fill the gap in the periodicals market. When we consider that the readers of these publications were largely urban—indeed, London-based, particularly when one thinks of the newspapers—and one should include the *Standard* here, too—then the question arises about the nature of Jefferies' readers: who are they likely to have been, and why should the work of a writer who specialised on matters rural have been of any great interest to a metropolitan audience?

A sentence in John Price's article in the Richard Jefferies Society Autumn 2015 Newsletter is particularly pertinent here. John writes: 'The popularity of Jefferies' work amongst the new urban classes in the late 19th century must have depended to a considerable extent on nostalgia for the countryside that many of them had recently left.' Indeed so: it is easy to forget just how rapidly the urban population of England expanded in the decades after 1851 when the census first showed that rural dwellers no longer constituted a majority. Jefferies' short life coincided with a period of constant haemorrhaging of the population from the country to the towns and cities—and, of course, this was the direction he himself followed, becoming a member of that rapidly forming social group known as suburbanites. Like other journalists of the time, Jefferies had access to an increasingly literate audience with the resources to purchase papers and among whom there was a growing culture of reading both newspapers and periodicals. But this was also an audience which included many people who were still relative newcomers to urban life and who had recent links to the countryside and to country life—links which they had not necessarily cast off in favour of their new urban lives; no doubt there were some who missed the countryside and were pleased to recall or recapture it in Jefferies' columns.

It is notable, too, that far from regarding urban or suburban life as wholly unsympathetic to nature and the natural world, Jefferies is very good at showing

how natural life continues to flourish around built environments. Think, for example, of *Nature Near London* published in 1883. This book brought together yet another series of articles Jefferies had written for the *Standard* between 1880 and 1882 under the overall title of 'Rural London'. The book sold 1000 copies in just over two months—a considerable commercial success. The individual items had titles such as 'Wheatfields', 'Woodlands', 'Nightingale Road' and 'Magpie Fields' and perhaps I can show something of Jefferies' technique by looking at a couple of passages from a piece called 'A Brook'. This is how it opens:

Some low wooden rails guarding the approach to a bridge over a brook one day induced me to rest under an aspen, with my back against the tree. Some horse-chestnuts, beeches, and alders grew there, fringing the end of a long plantation of willow stoles which extended in the rear following the stream. In front, southwards, there were open meadows and cornfields, over which shadow and sunshine glided in succession as the sweet westerly wind carried the white clouds before it.

The immediacy of the writing draws us in from the start by giving us precise details of location, and of the surroundings both near and more distant, and by appealing to our senses. This is journalism which shares the characteristics of the opening of a good short story, instantly arousing our curiosity and encouraging us to keep reading. Jefferies was very skilful at this, and I will digress for a moment just to illustrate that point from a deliberately varied selection of examples. Consider the following opening sentences: 'One dark night, as I was walking on a lonely road, I kicked against something, and but just saved myself from a fall'; 'If a thoughtful English peasant-woman rejoiced that in her house a son was born, it would be, not because "she had gotten a child from the Lord", but a thanksgiving that it was not a girl'; 'The wild red deer can never again come down to drink at the Thames in the dusk of the evening as once they did'; 'When in a fashionable suburb of London, and in the month of September, the harvest month, when new wheat is flowing into the market, ninepence is charged for the half-gallon of bread, people begin to ask what lies at the bottom of this state of things?'; "John Brown is dead," said an aged friend and visitor in answer to my inquiry for the strong labourer.' (I wonder of you recognised all of those: the first was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and collected in *The Amateur Poacher*; the second is the opening of 'Field-Faring Women', originally published in *Fraser's Magazine*; the third example is the opening of 'The Modern Thames', again first published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*; the fourth opens one of Jefferies' contributions to *The Live Stock Journal* titled 'Our Winter Food'; and the final example is the start of one of his last pieces of work, 'My Old Village' which appeared in *Longman's Magazine*. Each of them shows the writer's awareness of the need to engage his readers from the outset, whatever his subject matter, and each demonstrates his

ability to do just that.

But let us return to 'A Brook' for a few moments. We have seen how Jefferies immediately draws his reader into a vividly realised scene on the outskirts of the city. As he proceeds, he tells of how over a number of visits to the same spot he observed anglers turning up to fish, and of his puzzlement that they all gathered round an 'almost stagnant pond' rather than fishing in the brook itself. The fishermen include 'well-dressed lads with elegant and finished tackle' who arrive on bicycles; 'poorer boys, with long wands cut from the hedges and ruder lines' and 'grown men of the artisan class, covered with the dust of many miles' tramping'. Fishing in almost total silence, they attract the attention of passers-by—and here we are reminded that this is not a remote or isolated place: 'People driving along the highway stopped their traps, and carts, and vans, a minute or two to watch them; passengers on foot leaned over the gate, or sat down and waited expectantly'—but very little was caught, and all the while the brook flowed past behind the fishermen and was ignored by them, although there was nothing to stop them using it. 'This', says Jefferies, 'seemed to me a very remarkable fact'. And then his account develops further. Let us just look at the next two paragraphs:

After a while I noticed another circumstance; nobody ever even looked into the stream or under the arches of the bridge. No one spared a moment from his float amid the scum of the pond, just to stroll twenty paces and glance at the swift current. It appeared from this that the pond had a reputation for fish, and the brook had not. Everyone who had angled in the pond recommended his friends to go and do likewise. There were fish in the pond.

So every fresh comer went and angled there, and accepted the fact that there were fish. Thus the pond obtained a traditionary reputation, which circulated from lip to lip round about. I need not enlarge on the analogy that exists in this respect between the pond and other things.

Jefferies goes on to tell how when he investigated the brook he soon saw a sizeable trout which the fishermen were quite unaware of, but what I want to highlight is the way he has taken quite a simple episode, used it to indicate the proximity of the urban and rural, shown the appeal of a rural sport to town dwellers, but also perhaps suggested their growing cultural distance from the countryside—would country fishermen have made the same mistake about where to cast their lines?—and then, in the last paragraph I read, Jefferies also sees the incident as a fable or parable which tells us something more general about the common human folly of blindly following what other people say. Even in a piece like this we can see indications of Jefferies' more philosophical interests and his ability to extrapolate a more general observation on human nature and behaviour from a specific, even mundane, incident. Clearly, then, this is journalism which aspires to be more than reportage.

In addition to the appeal of Jefferies' celebration of nature or country life to a newly urbanised audience, we should also remember too that the changes taking place in the countryside and to agriculture were matters of considerable public interest and concern in this period. In some of my research, I have found significant numbers of journal articles, particularly from the 1860s onwards, which focus either on 'the agricultural labourer' and what is to be done about his wages, housing, education, voting rights, terms of employment, and so on; or on the crisis facing agricultural production because of changing markets, a shrinking pool of labour, and the rising costs to landowners and tenants resulting in their insolvency and in instability in employment for rural workers. Many of these articles are of considerable length—often between 10 and 20 pages; most of them are written from the perspective of employers; and frequently they turn to the question of the allegedly low intelligence and improvidence of the labourer and how these are to be managed. With the emergence of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union (NALU) in the early 1870s, many workers were also seen as increasingly unbiddable and lacking the deferential attitude to authority much preferred by landowners and tenant farmers. Jefferies, of course, first attracted public attention with his letters to *The Times* in 1872 where he took a position that was sympathetic towards the farmers and dismissive of the idea that the agricultural labourer was a victim of exploitation. As we have seen, in his career as a journalist, Jefferies repeatedly wrote for politically conservative papers and journals, so it is perhaps all the more striking that over time his continued engagement with issues to do with agriculture, farm labour and the lives and future prospects for the rural labouring population includes considerably more complex and often progressive and forward-looking views. In the rest of this talk I want to use a number of examples to illustrate that claim, and also to suggest more about the range of Jefferies' journalism and its evolution into an increasingly ambitious and complex form of writing. Some of these extracts may be familiar; some, I am hoping, may be less obvious.

I will start with an article published in *Fraser's Magazine* in May 1877 under the title, 'Unequal Agriculture'. This was the period when Jefferies was making weekly contributions to *The Live Stock Journal*, which was very clearly aimed at those involved in agriculture. Many of his themes there—e.g. the market prices of grain; the impact of foreign imports; the need for better and cheaper means of transporting produce to market; labour issues—were highly topical and of obvious interest to what must have been a relatively specialist audience. *Fraser's Magazine* appealed to a more diverse readership, and Jefferies takes a different approach to that in his *Live Stock Journal* columns while still commentating on similar issues. He provides three specimen examples of different farming regimes—one that is unchanged since Corn Law days where the labourer uses a

wooden plough and broadcasts the seed, and where the land is wholly unimproved by drainage and fertilisers; one where the farming is highly mechanised, scientific and industrialised, and where the steam plough in particular is characterised as an irresistible monster, and coincidentally anticipates Hardy's description of the threshing machine in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*; and one which practises what Jefferies calls 'intermediate agriculture' where a horse is still used for ploughing but the plough itself is a modern iron implement, and where some improvements have been carried out on the land. These paradigms are set against each other to illustrate and measure their relative effectiveness, with Jefferies clearly coming out as a moderniser and insisting that investment in agriculture is essential, that changes must take place, and that these changes will be beneficial both to farmers and labourers, leading to better livestock or grain production and the creation of jobs. Two points are worth highlighting in particular. First, he rebuffs the sentimentality or ignorance of casual observers at agricultural shows who go away after viewing the prize livestock with the 'idea that under every hawthorn hedge a prize bullock of enormous girth is peacefully grazing'. Successful breeding and high quality crops do not simply happen, he argues: they are the outcome of investment and the application of modern agricultural methods. And then, secondly, Jefferies contests the idea that rural labourers are wholly resistant to change, writing as follows:

What scope is there for work upon a stagnant dairy farm of one hundred and fifty acres? A couple of foggers and milkers, a hedger and ditcher, two or three women at times, and there is the end. And such work!—mere animal labour leading to so little result. The effect of constant, of lifelong application to such labour cannot but be deteriorating to the mind. The master himself must feel the dull routine. The steam plough teaches the labourer who works near it something; the sight must react upon him, utterly opposed as it is to all the traditions of the past. The enterprise of the master must convey some small spirit of energy in to the mind of the man.

Jefferies is often a close observer of physical work, of the effort, harshness, drudgery and repetitiveness it so often involved, and of how it aged men and women prematurely, damaging their bodies and leaving them constantly exhausted. Perhaps his own physical frailty heightened his attention to this, but it is a recurring theme in, for example, pieces like 'Field-Faring Women', 'A Labourer's Daily Life', 'Golden Brown', or 'One of the New Voters', where he aims to communicate something of the reality of rural labour to readers who were distanced from it or inclined either to romanticise or to ignore it.

Another aspect of this may be seen in a section of 'Chronicles of the Hedges' where Jefferies writes about the billhook. This appeared in a publication called *Land* in 1881 and is a piece of informative occasional writing directed principally

at a non-farming audience. The billhook is characterised as ‘the national weapon of the English labourer’, equivalent to the knight’s lance or the cavalier’s rapier. We learn how and when it is used, the technique that is essential for both efficiency and personal safety, and how a boy learns this technique from watching and imitating his father. But we are also given some precise, very specific details:

The handle is hard, not exactly rough, but to you or me certainly not smooth. The labourer does not care for the handles of his tools to be so absolutely free from projection as the amateur, for his palms have become coated with a flexible horn which dulls their power of feeling. For the same reason he likes the handle rather flattened than rounded; it is awkward and has an angular touch to others, but if it were perfectly smooth and rounded he would fancy it slipped in his grasp.

Here Jefferies highlights the difference between the perspectives of the country labourer and the amateur or urban dweller, as he also does when he emphasises their contrasting relationships to the land and the weather. So, in another passage we read:

Rusty and clumsy, awkward to the amateur to handle, in its iron hardness [the billhook] is a symbol of that ceaseless struggle which, even in our highly cultivated country, must be carried on against thorn and bramble. The labourer and the farmer stand face to face with nature in a way that it is difficult for the folk of cities to understand. Rain and sunshine, snow and frost, and wind, have a significance to those that dwell on the land far beyond the petty inconvenience they may cause to the town.

Thus Jefferies positions himself between the labourer and the urban reader: he is not an expert in the art of using the billhook, but he understands its history and its significance both as a symbol of rural work and as an indispensable tool in shaping and managing the environment, and he has seen it used in multiple ways. Equipped with this knowledge he writes in a way that is authoritative and at the same time engaging and sensitive to the probable ignorance of many his readers which he wants to redress.

Two years later, in 1883, Jefferies was invited to contribute to an occasional series of articles in *Longman’s Magazine* in which, in the editor’s words ‘the peasantry of different parts of the United Kingdom will be discussed by writers with special local knowledge’. The magazine had already carried pieces by Justin McCarthy on ‘The Irish Peasantry’, by James Purves on ‘The Lothian Hind’ and by Thomas Hardy on ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’—an article which has been the subject of extensive discussion, not least by Roger Ebbatson. Jefferies’ contribution on ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’ is both interesting in itself and also in the very different stance he takes from Hardy. This is not the occasion to discuss the article at length, but I will highlight several features. First, the further one reads, the clearer it becomes that Jefferies is campaigning for

attention to a particular issue—the need for labourers to have security of housing—which he identifies as crucial to the future of rural life. He links this with the right of agricultural labourers to be given parity with urban workers, particularly in terms of their remuneration: ‘It is useless blinking the fact that what a man wants in our time is good wages, constant wages, and a chance of increasing wages. Labouring men more and more think simply of work and wages. They do not want kindness—they want coin’, writes Jefferies. ‘A man cannot drift up into a corner of some green lane, and stay in his cottage out of the tide of life, as was once the case. The tide comes to him.’ He invites his readers to contrast the visible human consequences of a factory closing in a town with the relatively invisible effects that follow ten thousand acres being taken out of cultivation; and also to imagine the outcry that would follow if a London bank required its employees to live in houses which it owned, and then forced them out of those houses if a dispute rose with the employer—but, says Jefferies, that is exactly what happens to the rural labourer, and that is why there is growing instability:

You cannot have a fixed population unless it has a home, and the labouring population is practically homeless. There appears no possibility of any real amelioration of their condition until they possess settled places of abode. Till then they must move to and fro, and increase in restlessness and discontent. ... A race forever trembling on the verge of the workhouse cannot progress and lay up for itself any saving against old age. Such a race is feeble and lacks cohesion, and does not afford that backbone an agricultural population should afford to the country at large.

There are things here one might pause over—for example Jefferies’ repeated use of the word ‘race’ here which might appear to suggest that he regards the labouring population as in some way different to or separate from the rest of society, or the ideological implications of casting them as the ‘backbone’ of the country; but what is very clear—and it is evident again and again in the article—is his focus on what needs to change rather than on the kinds of loss that change is bringing in its wake which figure so prominently in Hardy’s article on ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’. Jefferies recognises the transformative power of education, including the way it raises people’s aspirations and expectations, and he is not critical of the growing material desires of the labouring population or of the ambitions of the young to move out of manual work, even though he also wants to see circumstances change in ways that will regenerate rural life.

I characterised ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’ as having a campaigning note, and of course Jefferies showed himself equally ready to take up a position in other articles. One good example is the 1884 piece, ‘After the County Franchise’. This again appeared in *Longman’s Magazine*, and was accompanied by a note from

the editor making clear that his journal was not promoting a political position by publishing the article, but merely allowing readers to consider what he calls 'a forecast of those changes' likely to follow the passage into law of county suffrage as presented by 'a writer whose close acquaintance with the country is well known.' In the article Jefferies embraces the prospect of revised local government based on an enlarged franchise leading to a reshaping of power at village level with the election of representative working people on terms of equality with landowners, famers and tenant farmers. One of his core concerns is with the administration of poor-law arrangements over which those currently without voting rights have had no say, although, of course, many of them were among the people most likely to be affected by those arrangements. According to Jefferies, the divisions created by a system 'wherein many parishes of the most diverse description and far apart are thrown together anyhow as the gardener pitches weeds into his basket, have done serious harm in the past'. This has compromised the sense of 'personal responsibility', created an unfeeling bureaucracy, and pushed important questions out of sight: 'The shifting of things out of sight—round the corner—is a vile method of dealing with them', declares Jefferies. I want to move straight from this judgement to a later point in the article. The subject is the same, but notice the way in which Jefferies comes at it here:

Nothing can be conceived more harshly antagonistic to the feelings of a naturally industrious race of men than the knowledge that as a mass they are looked upon as prospective "paupers". I detest this word so much that it is painful for me to write it; I put it between inverted commas as a sort of protest, so that it may appear a hated intruder and not native to the text. The local government existing at this day in country districts is practically based upon the assumption that every labouring man will one day be a "pauper", will one day come to the workhouse. By the workhouse and its board the cottage is governed; the workhouse is the centre, the bureau, the *hotel de ville*.

Which, of course, is why Jefferies believes it must change and hopes that the extension of the franchise will ensure this. But there is something quite extraordinary here in Jefferies' self-reflexive way of highlighting the word 'paupers': first he places it inside an unexpected set of inverted commas, and then he provides a commentary on what he has done and on his rejection of the term as a way of labelling a whole social group in a prejudicial way. It seems to me that Jefferies takes a really bracing stand here and calls upon his readers to stop and question the common, unthinking rhetoric of the time relating to the poor and poverty, rather as a journalist today might perhaps challenge contemporary readers over the casual use of terms like 'benefits cheat' or 'welfare scrounger'. 'After the County Franchise' is therefore another illustration of the strength of Jefferies' feelings and beliefs about the social injustice and moral unacceptability of some of the conditions within which the more

vulnerable members of rural communities lived. Here again we have the journalist as both social commentator and critic.

In what was to be the closing stage of his life, Jefferies also produced a number of articles which are marked philosophical considerations and meditative in style, and in the last part of this talk, I want to refer to one of these. Published in May 1886, again in *Longman's Magazine*, 'Hours of Spring' is in a very different register to 'The Wiltshire Labourer' or 'After the County Franchise', and certainly seems to testify to Jefferies' growing sense of his own mortality. 'The earth is all in all to me, but I am nothing to the earth: it is bitter to know this before you are dead', he writes. Faced with that realisation, and without the hope or consolation of religious faith, he proposes that 'we must think ourselves into an earthly immortality', and 'find that which shall enable us to live a fuller life upon the earth'. Here I suggest we see a continuation of the thinking that lay behind that most personal of Jefferies' works, *The Story of My Heart*. He seems caught between a Romantic or transcendental sensitivity to the beauties and wonder of the natural world, and a post-Darwinian understanding of nature as unfeeling, indifferent, irresistible process. In such a world, compassion and help are found only in our fellow humans, an idea he illustrates through the story of a starving vagrant labourer:

Nature, earth and the gods did not help him; sun and stars, where were they? He knocked at the doors of the farms and found good in man only—not in Law and Order—but in individual man alone.

The insufficiency and vulnerability of humans is in contrast to the self-sufficiency and reliable—even relentless—self-regeneration seen in natural processes. As 'Hours in Spring' moves to its close, Jefferies' elegy for the transience of human life, and for his own frailty is juxtaposed with his celebration of the continuity of nature and expressed with poetic intensity. It is difficult to illustrate this adequately in a short quotation, but this comes from the penultimate paragraph:

Through the bars of my prison I can see the catkins thick and fallow-grey on the willows across the field, visible even at that distance; so great the change in a few days, the hand of spring grows firm and takes a strong grasp of the hedges. My prison bars are but a sixteenth of an inch thick; I could snap them with a fillip—only the window-pane to me as impenetrable as the twenty-foot wall of the Tower of London. A cart has just gone past bearing a strange load among the carts of spring; they are talking of poling the hops. In it there sat an old man, with the fixed stare, the animal-like eye, of extreme age; he is over ninety. About him there were some few chairs and articles of furniture, and he was propped against a bed. He was being moved—literally carted—to another house, not home, and he said he could not go without his bed; he had slept on it for seventy-three years. Last Sunday his son—himself old—was carted to the churchyard, as is the country custom, in an open van; today the father, still living goes to what will be to him a

strange land. His home is broken up—he will potter no more with maize for the chicken; the gorse hedges will become solid walls of golden bloom, but there will never again be a spring for him. It is very hard, is it not, at ninety? It is not the tyranny of anyone that has done it; it is the tyranny of circumstance, the lot of man. The song of the Greeks is full of sorrow; man was to them the creature of grief, yet theirs was the land of violets and pellucid air. This has been a land of frost and snow, and here, too, it is the same. A stranger, I see, is already digging the old man's garden.

Contrasts, resonances and implications abound in this passage. We have the ill writer whose room has become a prison because he cannot leave it and from which he watches the advance of spring and the evidence of new life. The literal weakness of his hand is contrasted with the strength of the metaphorical hand of nature. Then there is the poignant story of the old man whose transport in an open cart to a strange place both anticipates his own funeral and recreates his son's recent removal to the churchyard—did you notice that both men are said to be 'carted'. Furthermore the cart with the old man is travelling on the same road as other carts full of labourers going to the fields to prepare the hop-fields for the new season. His misfortune is, as it were, to have outlived his time and to have seen his home broken up around him before he has died—and isn't there something particularly poignant in the last detail of all—that a stranger is already digging the garden the old man will never again walk in, preparing for spring and new planting. And at the heart of it all there is the sober assertion that none of this is anyone's fault; it is 'the lot of man'.

It is evident that Jefferies has moved into a new kind of journalism here, using the article to reflect on the most fundamental questions of all: the purpose, if any, of life; and how to face the inevitability of death in a time dominated world which offers no immunity or hope beyond life itself. Jefferies returned to the same questions elsewhere, most notably, perhaps, in that outstanding and probably better known article, 'My Old Village,' which was published after his death.

I will end with an admission and two hopes: first, I readily acknowledge that this has been a rather rapid dash across Jefferies' achievements as a journalist and that I have been highly selective in the examples I have used. I can well imagine that some of you are thinking 'and what about this or that article which you might have mentioned.' However, I hope it has served to remind us of the scope of Richard Jefferies' journalism, ranging as it does from the mundane and pedestrian to the imaginative and thought provoking; from the prosaic to the poetic; and from the topical to the timeless. I hope, too, that it invites reconsideration of Jefferies' skills in addressing a variety of audiences, and of how as a writer he found unexpected capaciousness within the constraints of the newspaper or journal article and honed his literary skills to become a master in this form.

Index to *Journal* Numbers 26-30

Roger Ebbatson:	
The Marabar Echo: Forster and Jefferies	28.26
The Windhover and Richard Jefferies	26.9
Caroline A. Foley: Woman in the Works of Richard Jefferies	30.21
Phyllis Hargrave: Two letters to Samuel Looker	28.8
W. E. Henley: W. E. Henley on Jefferies	28.30
Richard Jefferies:	
A Little Stream	28.3
Beatrice and the Centaur: A Fantasy	26.2
Choice and Description of Guns	30.2
The Grave of the Last Abbot	29.12
Jefferies' Convolvulus—pencil sketch	28.4
Letter to his mother	26.29
The Monkbourn Mystery	29.2
<i>Suez-Cide!!</i>	27.3
William Jefferies: The price of flour in 1788	
– letter to Richard Jefferies' great grandfather	26.28
Eric Jones: Sources of Protein for Rural People	
in Richard Jefferies' Day	26.21
J. B. Jones: The Man in the Tumulus	26.34
Eliza Keary: 'The Goose-Girl. A Tale of the Year 1999'	27.14
Simone Kotva: Broad Church Transcendentalism?	
Remarks on the Lost Essays of Richard Jefferies	30.15
Janice Lingley:	
'Jefferies' Land' and Kipling's <i>Puck of Pook's Hill</i> Stories (Part 1)	27.19
'Jefferies' Land' and Kipling's <i>Puck of Pook's Hill</i> Stories (Part 2)	28.11
Samuel Looker: Introduction to 'Beatrice and the Centaur'	26.6
George Miller:	
The Gothic Jefferies	29.14
The Shooting Book	30.12
The Story of <i>The Scarlet Shawl</i>	29.26
Brian Morris: Richard Jefferies and Bird Life	26.14
John Price: Richard Jefferies' Broomrape Sketch	28.5
Rosamond Richardson: Richard Jefferies and the	
Metaphysics of Wild Flowers	28.36

Peter Robins:	
Afterword about Caroline A. Foley	30.31
Afterword about W. E. Henley	28.33
Jefferies à la Carte	27.32
William Strang: The Jefferies Portrait	29.16
Andrew Rossabi:	
Introduction to 'The Goose-Girl'	27.9
Jefferies praises Besant	26.30
Melancholy Accident at the Coate Reservoir	27.29
Richard Jefferies, the Sensation Novel, and George Gissing's	
<i>New Grub Street</i>	29.33
Barry Sloan: Richard Jefferies, Journalist	30.33
Book reviews:	
Roger Ebbatson's <i>Landscape and Literature 1830-1914</i>	26.37
Eric Jones' <i>Revealed Biodiversity</i>	27.43

Back numbers are available. See front inside cover for details.

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