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Reminiscences of Richard Jefferies

2019

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 Lecture, meetings, outings, special events, and the publication of an annual *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.

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Snowed up: A Mistletoe Story

['Edie's Avalanche: Snowed Up'¹]

Richard Jefferies
(author of 'A Midnight Skate' etc.)

The manuscript of 32 pages is held at the Hugh Walpole Library, King's School, Canterbury. It was discovered by William Baker, and then transcribed and formed the basis of *Literary Theories: A Case Study in Critical Performance* (Macmillan, 1996) edited by Julian Wolfreys and William Baker.² The short story is likely to be based on the exceptional snowfall of December 1874 which is also the subject in Jefferies' 'The Great Snow'. Text in square brackets has been suggested.

January 2nd. Papa has just given me such a splendid set of furs, I never saw anything so beautiful. I do believe they must have cost three hundred pounds. I must make a note of it, but I shall never be a good diarist, my last entry I see was a month ago. Oh dear whenever shall I reduce this giddy head of mine to something like order. It was old Mr., I mean the very reverend, at least I'm not sure about his title but he is canon or something at the Cathedral who persuaded me to begin keeping a diary—he said it would help me to classify my ideas, and bring my mind into shape. Of course he put it in much grander words than that.

I shall wear the jacket to the theatre tonight, Lord Bilberton escorts me, perhaps it is not *de règle*, but I *must* wear it, it is so pretty and so warm, and new, and I can take it off. How *can* people keep their new things a month before they try them on?

Aurelles will be mad if he sees me there with 'pantaloon' as he calls his lordship. Why are guardsmen always so nice and why have they never got ten thousand a year like Mr. Alderman Thrigg, who I believe has been lending paper money, and now I think of it I shouldn't wonder if these furs were bought with some of it. However I can't bother myself about that—a poor little girl like me has so much to think of. I wish papa would let us go to Nice as we used to instead of staying in this horrid Berkeley Square. Why—there's Lieut. Aurelles riding by again: why *does* he *always* ride by just at this

¹ Alternative title.

² The book includes chapters on: 'Snowed Up': A Structuralist Reading by Julian Cowley; Snow Me Again: A Poststructuralist Narratology of 'Snowed Up' by Mark Currie; Does Edie Count?: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on 'Snowed Up' by Jill Barker; 'Snowed Up: A Mistletoe Story': Feminist Approaches by Ruth Robbins; Agriculture and Anarchy: A Marxist Reading of 'Snowed Up', by Jessica Maynard; Power and its Representations: A New Historicist Reading of Richard Jefferies' 'Snowed Up' by John Brannigan; An Economics of Snow and the Blank Page, or, Writing at the Margins: Deconstructing Richard Jefferies? by Julian Wolfreys.

time? I do believe he knows I am up here in my room overlooking the square.

I feel so wicked. I've kissed my hand to him: but I'm certain he could not see me—you can't see in at a window at that distance off, now *can* you? He is so tall and strong and noble-looking, such a contrast to wizened little Bilberton, and stout Alderman Thrigg.

A poor girl is just like a shuttlecock or a tennis ball with all these gentlemen tossing her about one to the other. It *is* laughable when I think of it to see fat Mr. Thrigg jump up and open the door for me, and Lord Bilberton screwing up his face into a smile of approval (though he hates the Alderman) and Lieut. Aurelles scowling at them both, and trying oh, so hard to play chess—which he does not understand—with papa; and all just because. Well, I suppose I *am* pretty. I think papa wants to play chess with me as the queen. Lord Bilberton has immense influence with the Ministry, and papa wants to be an Ambassador, and Alderman Thrigg has mountains of gold which he made by selling green peas in the City somewhere, and papa's estate is encumbered. If guardsmen would only manage to be rich; but I'm not going to be sold exactly. We shall see!

Jan. 3rd. Phillip, I mean Mr. Aurelles, did see me, and smiled,—perhaps he saw me kiss my hand too. He is a *dear* man—he is a kind of Newfoundland dog of a man. There—I shall be a poetess some day. When we came out of the theatre it was so still and quiet in the streets, almost like death itself—the snow had come down, and the carriage wheels made no noise at all. Poor Lord Bilberton—I can't call him 'Charley' as he wants me to, such an *old* thing as that: he shivered and shook, and now today he has sent round to say he'll try and come to dinner but the snow has given him such a cold. Why it is beautiful! I wish I was snowballing Aurelles. I never get any fun now I'm a woman. I'm nineteen you know. Papa wants me in the study—that's certain to be something disagreeable.

How hateful it is of gentlemen when they come to the point as they call it! We girls never care about such nonsense. It spoils life, I'm sure it does and I reflect a great deal, this always coming to the point.

They have both done it. I hate them both, ugly, old—There I've no patience with such people! Lord Bilberton spoke about it yesterday, and Mr. Thrigg early this morning. Why didn't they ask *me* first, I call it an insult. I shan't marry either of them, and papa and I have had a desperate quarrel. I won't, and besides I don't see why I should; there is no hurry, and if I did I should run away with—with Mr. Aurelles or *somebody*, and—and—I could cry, but I am so cross.

Papa said in his nasty cynical way that I might have which I liked, it made no difference to him. Cool! As if it made no difference to me. He said the

ancient name of Audeley was in danger of disgrace—bankruptcy, or something, and either he must get a good appointment under Government, or his mortgages must be paid off. His dear Edie—me of course—would not let our house tumble down, that's not how he put it but I can't remember the fine words. And our luxuries, and horses and carriages, and the towers in the country, and I must be a heroine like Edith my namesake two hundred years ago. And he hoped I had not entangled myself with a penniless soldier. *That* was just what I wanted.

Didn't I fly at him! Entangle myself! I wanted something to quarrel with him about. So I rushed away and left him. Why can't papa see how handsome Aurelles is?

I do hate this wearisome snow. It keeps coming down so quiet and calm, and cold, it mocks at me—it does not care a bit about *my* misery. I hope though Aurelles won't look in this evening—it would be rather awkward. I must send him a line and tell him to wait a day or two till the air is more settled in here.

Jan. 4th. I shall soon have nothing to do but keep this diary, for it's impossible to go out in this horrid snow. I've got a fire in my bedroom tonight, and am writing cosily before I retire as the books say. It's very jolly and snug here—if one only had *somebody* to chat with. I wonder if I had *somebody* here every evening I should get tired of him! I can just fancy him curled up on this rug at my feet (he raves about my little feet and little paws, and littleness altogether, and wicked black eyes and and—but no matter). He would be on that rug like a great dog, and make love to me so *nicely* I do believe *forever*.

Lord Bilberton sleeps here tonight. I wonder how he could face the weather to get here with his poor shivering ancient body. He says Piccadilly is quite impassable with the snow, and Curzon St. blocked up, and his carriage could not get through it. I believe he was carried here on a man's shoulders. I daresay he is discussing me now downstairs with papa. But I *won't*, no I *won't*, and if I do I'll run away.

Jan. 5th. This snow is really something awful. Aurelles can't ride by every afternoon. Lord Bilberton can't go home. He says with his wretched attempts at gallantry that the snow is his best friend and he should like to be imprisoned forever with me—pah! Papa is fidgety and cross, for he could not get his *Morning Post* this morning, and no letters came. It will be fun if we really do get snowed up.

Alderman Thrigg has got here! He has scrambled through and over the snow and he is bigger than Falstaff was. Such a spectacle as he presented I never saw before—my hand shakes now with laughter. 'Ah,' said he, 'you need not laugh Miss Audeley, I assure you it is a very serious matter. But

never mind I've got here—I shall perish in company with an angel! You are the North Star—magnetic attraction you know'—and there he broke down fairly for want of poetical language and left his absurd similes unfinished.

But if it is all true that he says it really is a serious matter. No one could possibly have believed it till it happened. Thrigg has kept a memorandum of the depth of the snow. The day before yesterday it was 21 inches deep in Cornhill (some stupid place in the East I think). All the trains were delayed. The Scotch express never reached town at all, and there's no news of them, for it seems a rough wind has blown down the telegraph poles and snapped the wires. There were crowds at the station all day—waiting for the trains. The Flying Dutchman from Exeter was seven hours late: they had to dig a passage through the drifts twice—one at Bath, and again between Reading and Didcot. Yesterday it never came in at all and Thrigg says he believes it stopped on the [track] below Bristol. That's why papa has not heard from the steward at The Towers.

It was 33 inches deep yesterday in Farringdon St., and Thrigg is quite sure that no trains will be able to get in tomorrow: because of the deep drifts—though thousands of men are at work digging. But as fast as they clear it away it fills up again. I do wish Phillip would call—I wish I had not written him that note. I shan't be able to sleep for thinking of the snow.

I never saw anything like it. It has never ceased since we came home from the theatre. Papa in his nasty way says it serves us right for attempting to reach the North Pole—it's a judgment. Lord Bilberton—, who sits huddled up on the sofa with three carriage-rugs wrapped round him, is half silly with fright. One minute he chatters and grins and the next asks for a prayer book. To marry such a coward—pah! not for ten coronets.

Jan. 6th. Alderman Thrigg is in despair—he declares he shall be ruined. All his vegetables coming to London from fifty different places are snowed up on the way. He is a kind of gigantic greengrocer I think—very low. Still the snow comes down steadily. There is no wind today: and it falls all the thicker and faster.

All business in the City they say is at a standstill—the traffic is stopped, and the streets buried three or four feet deep. The milkman has not been for ever so long, nor the baker, nor the postman, nor anybody else; we have had to send for everything, and the prices are going up rapidly. A pint of milk the footman managed to get for tea cost half a crown! Tomorrow the shop-people said they should not have any for 'love or money'.

After all Mr. Thrigg is not so silly as Lord Bilberton. He can talk sensibly enough except when he tries to pay me stupid compliments. He seems to understand the position better than either papa, or anybody else. He says all the provisions people eat in London are brought in daily—the meat and

everything else, his darling cabbages and onions included. (Fancy marrying a man who sold *onions*!) If the railway service be blocked for one week like this, all the stores will be exhausted—for they do not keep great quantities now like they used to in Joseph's time in Egypt. At least I think that was what he said. Then he burst out and looked as if he were going to cry—because he might have made his fortune (as if he were not rich enough already) at such a crisis if he could only have got his onions and potatoes in. We are all to be starved in fact.

Jan. 10th. I do believe we *shall* be starved. What do you think—we can't get a joint of meat for tomorrow's dinner! The footman and the coachman have just returned from a foraging expedition, and there's not a pound of meat to be bought—it's all sold and eaten. The last leg of mutton was bought for ten pounds; and people offered thirty pounds for another in vain. Wherever *can* Phillip be?

Jan. 14th. Snowing still—nothing but snow. Troubles are coming faster and faster. All the servants have left us, except my maid Ruth Pardon. They said they could not live on flour and water, and there was nothing else in the house.

Such fun! The Alderman has been helping me in the kitchen. Bilberton is helpless. Papa who is an invalid sits and smokes and sips his port, and says he's *quite* comfortable, and shan't stir a foot.

The fire was gone out in the kitchen, and I was trying to light it, when Mr. Thrigg waddled in and down he dropped on his knees. I thought he was going to pop the question instead of which he began blowing the fire up with his mouth. He puffed away till we got a good blaze, and then begged my pardon, and took off his coat, and went to fetch some coals from the cellar—he said he could not work without taking his coat off. 'It's habit you know Miss Audeley. It's the memory of them old times. Ah!' and the creature actually sighed. But I think there is some good in him. At all events he showed me how to make a pudding.

I hadn't the least idea. He rolled out the dough like—like a cook, and patted it with his great fat white fingers (they are always scrupulously clean) till his diamond ring was covered with flour. He said it would be as hard as a brick for want of something—fat I think. Then he searched the kitchen, and the larder. 'You see,' said he, 'Miss Audeley in this 'ere crisis the first thing to do is to take stock' by which he meant to ascertain our resources. We found three apples, a lemon, some spice, about a pound of tea,—the sugar was gone; and that was all. The coal cellar was nearly empty; there was only just enough flour to complete the Alderman's dumpling (I always thought the only thing Aldermen ate was turtle soup). The beer barrels were out—the

servants having nothing to do had emptied them, and the brewer could not come round to his dray.

Meanwhile the dumpling or pudding was boiling away, ‘Oh dear,’ sighed the Alderman sitting down and panting, ‘After all the feasts I have been to—all the Lord Mayor’s dinners, and to come to a hard dumpling! Dear me—if we only had some potatoes or cabbage or anything, and there’s heaps in my warehouses—at least if the poor people have not sacked them.’

I could not help laughing though I was really hungry, and becoming anxious about Phillip; but at dinnertime it was no laughing matter. The dumpling was so hard one *could* not masticate it; and at last papa in a towering rage kicked it downstairs like a football and returned to his cigar and port.

Poor Bilberton was as cadaverous as a ghost. Mr. Thrigg was very thoughtful. Presently he started up ‘I’ll try,’ he said ‘I’m old and not so strong as I used to be but I’ll try and bring something from my warehouses.’ But when I went to let him out we could not open the door—the snow had drifted against it so high. Not to be daunted however, he got out of the first floor window and dropped onto the heap of snow. To my horror he sank up to his shoulders, and could not move. He puffed and struggled but the more he tried the worse it was, till I really feared he would be suffocated in the snow which kept drifting along.

Papa came up and they got the bellrope but he and Bilberton and I all pulled and pulled and pulled, but it was no use; poor Thrigg was so heavy. There he stuck. It was growing dark now (of course the gas had not been lit for days in the streets—luckily we always used lamps and had a can of oil left)—poor Thrigg was chilled to the bone. Papa shut the window, and laughed at him.

‘Ow—ow—ow!’ cried the miserable Alderman shivering, and stretching out his hand to me, ‘Don’t Miss Audeley—don’t leave me here in the dark! Ow—ow—ow! I’m perishing with cold! Please Miss—Miss—Miss Audeley!!’

It served him right for daring to ask papa to marry me; but I couldn’t see him left like that. So I put on my fur jacket and wrapped myself up well, and sat at that window in the cold room shivering, till it became dark, when I brought a lamp so that he might see a light at all events.

‘Miss Audeley—Miss Audeley—ow—ow—ow!’ I opened the window a little way. ‘Do please throw me a bottle of port wine or I shall die with cold.’

I threw it to him as well as I could, but then he had no corkscrew, so I handed him the poker with which he knocked the neck off. I suppose the wine revived him a little for he began to say that he suffered for me—it was his devotion to me that had brought him into that horrible—‘Devotion’ cried

a voice I knew well, and there was Phillip in the darkness, he had been guided he told me afterwards by my lamp at the window.

I couldn't help myself I was so glad. 'Oh you dear fellow,' I shouted. 'Do come in—make haste—don't step on the Alderman'—He came to the window sideways—it seems the Alderman had stepped into a place where the snow had only just drifted up, and it was hard all round. 'So you've been forcing yourself on Miss Audeley Sir, have you?' said Phillip, putting his foot on Thrigg's shoulder, and giving him a push deeper in the snow. There was a smothered 'ow! ow! ow!'

I begged and prayed Phillip to help him out, and at last he did pull him halfway up, but the Alderman was staunch; to every demand of Phillip's that he would cease to ask my hand he replied he would die first. So Phillip pushed him down again and I grew terribly frightened. I threatened to call the police if Phillip didn't help him out but he only laughed and said that there were none within miles and miles. However he pulled the Alderman up halfway.

'Do please say what he wants,' I cried. 'You are mistaken Mr. Thrigg. I could never have you though you do make such beautiful dumplings. All my heart is Phillip's.'

The Alderman uttered a groan, but gave the promise, and Phillip hauled him in at the window. Thrigg shook himself, and went down to the kitchen fire. Phillip slipped his arm—no never mind. 'And all your heart is mine dearest,' he said.

'No that it's not sir,' I replied and boxed his ears. I sat by Lord Bilberton on the sofa, and talked so sweetly to him. Phillip scowled at me. Papa smoked and smoked and smoked, and sipped his port. The Alderman walked in the kitchen. About eleven o'clock papa had a fearful attack of the gout brought on by the wine and Phillip had to carry him to bed. We had no supper at all. Presently Thrigg came up. I suppose he thought it over, and being a sensible man in the main saw how absurd it was of him to want to marry a mere slip of a child like me. He offered his hand to Phillip in a manly way, and they became fast friends from that moment. Then I altered my tactics—I addressed myself to Mr. Thrigg, and I believe I soon made up to him for his burial in the snow. If we had not been so hungry, we should have been jolly enough. Some one spoke of the dumpling, and poor Phillip was so sharp set that he actually hunted about, but the rats had eaten it. We could hear them all over the house—they came up the sewer no doubt, and were made bold by starvation and cold. Phillip told us of what had occurred out of doors. At first he said that people were merry over the snow, and played at pelting each other in crowds. Then when provisions disappeared, and all business was stopped, they seemed to grow despondent, and moped about. After a

while the roughs began to plunder the houses (lucky for us they had not come yet to Berkeley Square). His regiment was called out to put down the rioting, and there were some fearful scenes in the city: but at last the snow grew so deep the horses could not charge, sinking in up to the saddle girths, and the roughs had their turn. Besides which the soldiers had no food, and very soon the troop melted away. Phillip was thirty-six hours making his way from Knightsbridge to our house. He could not get along—the drifts were so high he had to climb every step of the road.

Just before we went to bed we could hear the east wind raving again, and as we had [a] last knob of coal every one spoke with dread of the [cold]. But I did not fear much now Phillip was with us.

Jan. 15th. My fingers are so numb I can hardly write: but I must do something to pass away the miserable time while Phillip is out foraging for provisions. Papa is in bed helpless. Bilberton is in bed helpless. The Alderman caught such a violent cold he too is in bed helpless, or nearly. Phillip and I are left alone—for the maid is so frightened and she is nobody. We—or rather he has broken up nearly all our chairs for fuel and has begun upon the tables. We have not tasted meat or vegetables or bread I don't know how long: except the cat — the gentlemen dined on my Persian cat. I *could* not touch it. It is terrible while Phillip is hunting for a little flour. I have twice heard the gangs of roughs go by tonight swearing most fearfully. We dare not show a light.

Jan. 17th. I am *quite* sure if papa and the Alderman do not have a little meat or soup they will die. Yet there is not a snap left in all London. Phillip has risked his life to find some ever so many times. Papa is so weak he can scarcely speak. I do believe I cried two hours last night on Phillip's shoulder. And he is fearfully thin and gaunt. What has become or will become of the poor people no one can tell. And all through a little snow—the despised snow—so fine and impalpable, yet strong enough to completely conquer our civilization. No trains can run. No ships can come up the river. No food, no light, no help. All through the weak, feeble despised flakes of snow!

Jan. 18th. Phillip has gone upon the last forlorn hope. He has previously visited every warehouse the Alderman could remember till this morning. Thrigg suddenly thought of a small grocer's and green grocer's shop just the other side of St. Paul's or somewhere out there, where it seems he was born. It is such a little out of the way place, it is possible there may be something up there. If not papa must die. An awful period of waiting for us.

Jan. 19th. Phillip came back about six this morning after being out all night—he was so exhausted he fell down on the floor and it was an hour before he came to himself. Fortunately although we had no food we had plenty of wine and brandy and the brandy revived him. He brought us eight

tins of preserved Australian beef, and a small bag of potatoes: and how he dragged them along I can't think. If it had not been dark they would have robbed and perhaps killed him.

Oh, what a feast we had this evening—the Alderman is still eating. Phillip is asleep on the sofa. How dreadfully worn and wearied he looks: yes, he has *all* my heart. He had such a journey: the state of London is something appalling. He had to make a long detour to reach the place he wished to find. The bitter east wind drives the hard frozen snow along so swiftly that it cuts the face—it struck him like the pellets from a shotgun. The draught through the narrow portals of Temple Bar kept them clear of drift but so savagely and fiercely did the frozen grains of snow drive in his face there that he could not get by. The people are mad—at least those left are. They could not light bonfires in the huts for the wind, so they set houses on fire, and stood near to warm themselves. Some prophesied about the end of the world—but I can't write these horrid things. The bonded warehouses and spirit stores are full of drunken men who have broken in. I shudder for the poor women and children.

Coming back he heard or saw that in Trafalgar Square there was a drift against the National Gallery quite eighteen feet deep. The entrance to the Haymarket was blocked up. The wind having a clean sweep along the Thames embankment kept it clear, but the Houses of Parliament formed an obstacle against which it accumulated in immense heaps. There is a report that an iceberg is aground in the Thames. I believe Phillip was half dazed with fatigue and wandered about on his return hardly knowing where he went.

Jan. 22nd. We had such a terrible alarm last night—three or four of the roughs found us out. Thrigg says they must have smelt our cooking, by the bye, we had to chop our beautiful walnut table that used to stand in the drawing-room for fuel. Phillip had a revolver fortunately (how nice it is to have a soldier by one's side!) and he fired till they went away. But this morning about three o'clock the rats came up and ran over our beds, we all rushed about in *deshabille* and I thought we should have been gnawed to pieces, but thoughtful Phil had foreseen this attack for some time, and opened a great tin of pepper which he flung over them. This held them at bay, but we can hear them all over the place—the sound of their sharp teeth makes me shudder at this minute.

Today papa got up for the first time and so did the Alderman. Papa thanked Phil in the great proud way he can employ when he is in his good moods, and said that we all owed our lives to him. The Alderman is always praising him. 'Better than gold,' he says, 'better than gold, courage is beyond banknotes in value.' Poor Bilberton began to feel that he has cut a sorry

figure, and is perpetually snuffling with his nose—a nasty habit he has whenever he is annoyed. As for little me I have lost all my spirits—Phil says I am as quiet as a dormouse—I'm afraid to look at myself in the glass, I am so pale and thin. Fancy having two invalids at once to look after, and see that they don't get into mischief—the fat Alderman and papa.

There is hope for us at last—a thick fog has come on, and the Alderman who knows everything is sure it means a thaw. However *did* this fearful storm of snow happen—no one can think: unless the Gulf Stream changed its course for a time. Certainly the houses are beginning to drip—I can hear the drops falling now. Papa says people will think this storm most extraordinary, but it's nothing at all to the convulsions of nature which the geologists have shown to have once taken place.

Jan. 24th. The sun at last! The fog still lingers though: and the streets and Berkeley Square are in such a state I can't describe it—one vast ocean of slush.

Jan. 25th. We have seen a hansom cab! Positively. We regarded it as a phenomenon: something like the olive branches brought into the Ark showing that the dry land had reappeared. Mr. Thrigg is closeted with papa, what for I can't imagine.

Well I'm sure, I am to be a commodity bought and sold like the Alderman's onions. He has bought me—for Phil. He has just handed me over to Phil as he would a basket of vegetables! 'Better than gold,' he repeated again. 'Better than gold Mr. Audeley: this is the man for your daughter Sir.' They never stopped to ask me first and even Phillip seems to take it as a matter of course that I shan't object. On the whole as a means of escaping Lord Bilberton perhaps I may as well agree. So the snow was not such a bad thing for—for Phillip. The Alderman showers his gold on Phil and me, and we are to be married in May—if ever May comes any more.

There's such a noise in the streets now—people are running about once more almost as if nothing had happened. If the sky was to fall they would forget it in ten minutes on the Stock Exchange. That's what Phil says. Certainly *I* shan't forget it. It has sobered me. I mean to settle down and be a good girl, and make Phil a first rate wife! That is if I live, my limbs are chilled to the marrow. I don't think I shall live so as to give a surprise. Mr. Thrigg pays Phil's debts [].

The Diary ends here. It's quite possible that a lady's fright may have exaggerated matters; but it is also pretty certain that if a fall of snow four feet deep occurred in London and remained on the ground—being supplied by fresh falls—for only one week, the great city of London depending as it does upon stores brought in by rail day after day, would find itself in a very awkward position.

Hyperion: The Young Jefferies and Homer

Richard Jefferies

This unfinished and untitled manuscript of seven pages in Jefferies' holograph was acquired by Samuel J. Looker. It was first published in *John O'London's Weekly*, 27 June 1947, p.453 along with a photograph of Looker and an extract and drawing from Jefferies' fifth Notebook (1879). The article below is reproduced from the newspaper and is headed: 'An Unpublished Jefferies Manuscript', and is introduced by the Editor with a credit to Looker who named the piece: 'Hyperion: The Young Jefferies and Homer'. The Editor completes the introduction: 'We may trust that the greatest natural observer since White of Selborne is coming once more into fashion to delight the growing thousands who have learned to look on nature.' Looker included the article in the 1948 Worthing Cavalcade edition of *Beauty is Immortal*, pp.51-52. Looker writes on pp.11-12: 'It breaks off rather abruptly and is obviously unfinished. The date is *circa* 1875... The opening references of *Hyperion* are not very flattering to Wiltshire at the time of Jefferies' youth... He had had great unhappiness there at times, much suffering and disappointment, yet he loved that countryside passionately, as a nature lover must needs love the native soil which shapes and fashions early dreams of English landscape.' As these same phrases appear in the editorial of *John O'London's Weekly*, it was clearly Looker who wrote the Editor's introduction.

There was once a youth in an obscure country village, quite lost in the rudest and most illiterate county of the west, who passed a great part of his time reading books and dreaming: so much so that he was useless upon the farm. His name was Hyperion, and he might have been seen any sunny afternoon in June reclining (while everybody else was hard at work haymaking) upon a pile of poles, thrown together under some young walnut trees which stood in the field on the verge of the garden.

Thus, with the foliage overhead to shield him from the scorching heat, and yet with the pleasant sunshine around him, and the green grass at his feet—grass on which the eye rests with such a sense of luxury, green hedges and noble trees a little farther away, and woods in the distance—he could enjoy the day and the summer with all his peculiar and delicate sensitiveness to beauty. The book, whatever it might be, was often put down on the poles at his side, the light wind turning the leaves as it wandered down from the June roses in the gateway, while Hyperion let his fancy present to him the real and lifelike—even more than that, the actual living and embodied figures of history and romance.

There is a mode of photography by which the picture, instead of appearing a flat surface, stands out away from the background with light all round it, like statuary. So Hyperion's fancy brought before his eye, not mere names and abstract men, but the persons themselves: the realities, walking, moving, acting their parts before his eyes, just as if they had fought on the sward at his side. If he had once seen a thing, or a face, or a landscape, he did not recollect it; that is, he did not recollect that he *had* seen it (which is what most people mean when they say: 'We remember'); he saw it again, standing as clearly before him as his own face in a mirror. It was not a flat surface, not an outline, but the thing itself, with light all round it. Time then rather strengthened than effaced the impression: so that after the lapse of fifteen years he could still see the dark hollows of the waves driven before the stormy wind which he used to watch beside the lake.

In the same way, the heroes of whom he read were not mere names: they were not words only, as words are arranged in a dictionary, of whom to say: 'We know, of course, Richard the First, Coeur de Lion, date ..., had a great reputation for courage. Oh, yes!' Hyperion *saw* these men of the old times. The days of yore, indeed, did not seem to have gone by at all. People were surely labouring under some immense and world-accepted mistake in believing that they lived many ages after all those things had happened.

He heard the distant whistle of the locomotive, but it could not remove the impression that the Greeks sailed for Troy only a day or so before yesterday. Yonder was the same sun, beneath the same earth, barren ocean still rolled the waves about the rim. The ships that were beached by Troy had indeed rotted and disappeared, not a nail remained, but from the moment the last nail lost its existence the intervening time ceased to be. You could shout across it to Ulysses: the warrior passed before him, his hyacinthine locks, his powerful frame, the far-seeing eye (the mind that could deceive, like the gods on Olympus).

Neither the swiftness of invincible Achilles, the strength of Ajax, the experience of Nestor, nor the chosen Agamemnon, none of these took Troy. It was Ulysses. It was Design, favoured by the gods, of course, since nothing can be achieved by man in a world of chance and circumstances.

Still, it was Design. Through all the terrors of the memorable voyage homewards, in danger from the One-Eyed Monster, or from the wiles of the Enchantress, there was always the same inventive faculty, the creative resource. This skill—shown, too, with the bow whose arrow shot through the ring—this exquisite and ever-present skill fascinated Hyperion. No matter what difficulty presented itself, Ulysses could think. His followers cowered in the cave of the giant; they were at once turned to swine by Circe's wand, but

Ulysses thought. His thought triumphed: even the gods gave way at last. This sank into Hyperion's mind.

As he could see Ulysses in bodily shape before him, bow in hand, so the mind of the classic hero was translated into his. He thought Ulysses: he lived Ulysses. He remembered, when annoyed, as he frequently was, when petty injuries were inflicted on him, that Ulysses was patient; that he never retorted, and never complained; above all, never burst into fits of passionate temper. This did not last, of course; he had, indeed, the real Ulysses at his side, to inspire him with such command of himself always; yet the spirit of it remained in him for years, and will, probably, to his end. He still further strove to exercise such inventive faculties as he had himself, small and insignificant as were the opportunities of so retired and unimportant life.

This latter influence stayed with him, except at intervals when suffering from depression of spirits: the determination to meet every difficulty with some resource or other, to create resources, never left him. Thus, Homer's man became part of his being, tinting his views, his hopes, and pointing his course.



Facsimile of part of a leaf from one of the notebooks Jefferies habitually used, showing comments on the weather and a flower and his sketch of a leaf.

To Richard Jefferies

Samuel J. Looker

First published in *Green Branches* by Samuel J. Looker,
(Billericay: The Grey Walls Press, 1941), p.19. Written by Looker in 1940.

IN HOMAGE

I

Now in the garden sings the missel thrush—
The Song you loved and praised, how sweet the sound!
When the full choir of the morning breaks the hush
At dawn, no greater loveliness is found;
All joy of spring in the voice of a bird,
All summer sweetness in the bag of a bee,
The rapture of all leaves divinely heard,
In the gentle breeze stirring a single tree;
Lover of the sky, whose colours enchant the mind,
Lover of the downs, the streams, the woods, the fields,
Where the true worshipper may ever find
Peace, and the savour that the country yields,
Or tranced with beauty in the evening cool,
Linger beside a deep and lonely pool.

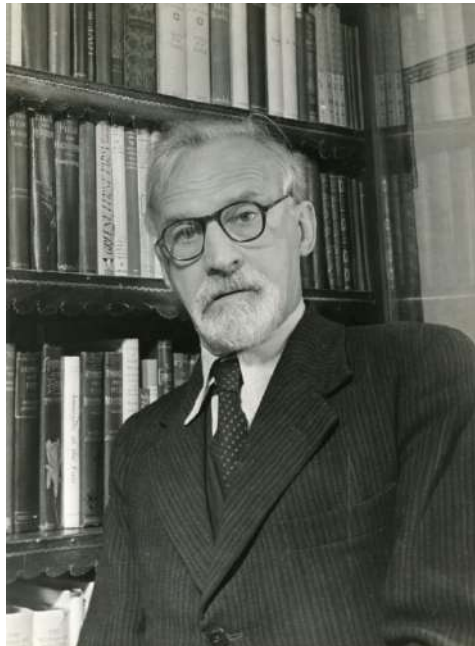
II

Master, you did not shirk the common toil,
Or shrink from pain to win an easy life,
Your books are racy of the English soil,
Your pen unblunted in the bitter strife;

The meadows glow with buttercups in spring,
So beautiful, it seems the lovely field
Might be the Paradise of which we sing,
The heavenly harvest of immortal yield;

The roadside pebble marked and stained with mould,
Wonderful in its place, and full of awe,
You loved and noted well, yet common gold
You scorned, to count the gold of Nature's lore;

Interpreter of the earth, her student true,
All England's heart holds memories of you.



Samuel J. Looker, 1948

Richard Jefferies' Letter to J. Goudge Esq.

Coate
Swindon
Wilt
April 24th 78

Dear Sir, I shall be pleased to
assist you in any way in my
power but I must frankly tell
you that my time is very much
occupied & I am therefore afraid
that I could not possibly undertake
to instruct a class. If however, your
means that I should be simply
required to examine the students at
the end of the term & to recommend
those deserving of 1st, 2nd & 3rd
prizes, I will endeavour to carry
out the wishes of the committee.

Faithfully Yours,
Richard Jefferies

J. Goudge Esq.

Coate
Swindon
Wilts
April 24th [1875]

Dear Sir,

I shall be pleased to assist you in any way in my powers but I must frankly tell you that my time is very much occupied & I am therefore afraid that I could not possibly undertake to instruct a class. If however you mean that I should be simply required to examine the students at the end of the term & to recommend those deserving of 1st 2nd & 3rd prizes, I will endeavour to carry out the wishes of the council.

Faithfully Yours
Richard Jefferies

J. Goudge Esq.

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This letter, in Jefferies' holograph, forms part of the Richard Jefferies Society archives held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham. No year is given but 75 is written in pencil after April 24<sup>th</sup>. Jefferies' signature and the words 'Faithfully Yours' are written in the same style as that in a letter addressed to W. Tinsley, publisher, dated 12 January 1875.<sup>1</sup> It is believed that Richard and Jessie moved from Coate to 22 Victoria Street shortly before the birth of their son Harold,<sup>2</sup> born on 3 May 1875. This might explain why Jefferies was 'very much occupied' and points to 1875 as the correct year for the letter.

Joseph Goudge was born in Westminster on 8 November 1843, the son of a dressing can maker. By 1861 he appears on the census living as a lodger in Swindon and working as a railway clerk. His father and brother remained living in Westminster albeit Joseph's mother had died by then.

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Richard Jefferies: His Mark' by Hugoe Matthews, *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* 19, p.12, signature 3.

<sup>2</sup> Addresses on letters indicate that Jessie and Richard Jefferies moved from Coate to 22 Victoria Street between 24 April and 3 May 1875. See *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies: A Chronological Study* by Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel (Oxford: Petton Books, 1994), p.69.

The late Trevor Cockbill (1930-1999), a former member of the Mechanics' Institute,<sup>3</sup> studied Annual Reports and the 1870 Alamanac of the Mechanics' Institute and notes the work of Joseph Goudge. In 1870 Goudge was a member of the Mechanics' Institute Council and their Education Secretary<sup>4</sup>. The records reveal that: 'many valuable Prizes are offered for the present year for proficiency in Mechanical Drawing, Freehand Drawing, Arithmetic, ... Book Keeping, English, Shorthand, Music &c. Certificates of Merit are also awarded in 1st, 2nd and 3rd Classes... Secretary: Mr. Goudge, Prospect, Swindon, of whom Programmes and Examination Papers for 1870 may be obtained'.<sup>5</sup> Goudge was celebrated for his calligraphy, and was much in demand for producing certificates, memorials and designing beautiful individual labels to paste inside prize books. Cockbill includes an image of the original memorial for Sir Daniel Gooch inscribed in 1871, that was held in the Gooch Gallery of the Great Western Railway Museum to reveal Goudge's 'excellent workmanship'.<sup>6</sup>

From at least 1874 to 1888 Goudge was also the Secretary of the New Swindon Improvement Company<sup>7</sup> and he was a Freemason.

Joseph Goudge married Mary Hall in 1868, the daughter of an engine stoker. They had five children. The couple remained living in Swindon but both died in 1916. Joseph is buried in Radnor Street cemetery.

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<sup>3</sup> The Mechanics' Institute was formed in 1844, one year after the railway Works was opened in Swindon. It was some eleven years later that Daniel Gooch and Mineard Rea, Works Manager, set up the 'New Swindon Improvement Company' that funded the building for the Mechanics Institute and offered an educational and cultural centre for local people.

<sup>4</sup> T.W. Cockbill, *Finest Thing Out*, A Chronicle of Swindon's Torchlit Days, The Story of the Mechanics' Institute at New Swindon, Part One 1843-1873 (Swindon: The Quill Press, 1988), pp.194.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p.179.

<sup>6</sup> Cockbill, *op.cit.*, p.202.

<sup>7</sup> There are many notices in the *Swindon Advertiser* for this period giving Goudge as the name of the Secretary. See footnote 1.

# Richard Jefferies

## *Frederick Greenwood*

First published in *The Scots Observer*, 2 Aug. 1890, vol.4, pp.275-277. In *Blackwood's Magazine*, Jan. 1910 (p.154), there is an anonymous tribute to Greenwood who had recently died in which it says, 'We all know the debt of timely aid and generous appreciation which Richard Jefferies owed him. Mr. [J.M.] Barrie has himself confessed in generous terms what Greenwood did for him. "He invented me," said Mr. Barrie. "I owe almost everything to him".'

Perhaps it was the erection of a memorial to Mrs. Craik at Tewkesbury —(Dinah Mulock, as she was first known, one of the truest and kindest women in the world she adorned, and one of the fiercest against wrong)—that suggested a similar memorial to Richard Jefferies in Salisbury Cathedral. But, however the suggestion arose, it is a happy one. In the noblest church in his native county his name will be kept in an honourable place before the eyes of many generations, should the cathedral live out its natural life; and so the intention of raising a memorial of him and the honour in which he was held in his own time will be accomplished in the best way. There can be no better choice for the purpose.

Yet it is doubtful whether Jefferies himself would not have had a word to say to the contrary. Not that he was insensible to the honour which such a memorial, in such a place and so bestowed, must be to any man. Like other unfortunates who have missed the distinction and reward they know themselves worthy of, Jefferies would declare himself indifferent to applause and careless of money to the point of despising its possession; but he had a pride that could be easily wounded, and there is a difference between the gauds of wealth and provision against actual need. Riches he certainly never coveted, money in heaps he could hardly have looked at with complacency; and, for himself, he would have scarcely have known what to do with more wealth than suffices to keep secure a cottage homestead, with a snug little book-room for luxury within, a garden and meadow for delight as he looked from the window of it, liberty to ramble in the country round about unburdened by too much thought of money to earn. Fame he did covet; and, though abundantly willing to do without echoed praise, he was keenly sensible of the poverty and neglect that he endured when his good day's work was already done. If then he had known that so many distinguished men would have come together to give his name an abiding place on the walls of the great Wiltshire Cathedral, he would have been proudly grateful for the knowledge. I do not doubt, however, that something would have

arisen in him to say that the right memorial would be one out of doors—out of doors even though the doors were the cathedral doors. And this he would have said not merely because his distinction was earned on the downs and in the fields and hedgerows, but because the very life in him drooped as soon as he passed within four walls. He would tell you that to be shut in was to feel at once a certain degradation or sinking of his whole mind and spirit. The town was odious to him; the streets an abomination; and whenever he spoke of them he talked with an obvious conviction that none but men of a mean nature could endure existence within their sordid precincts day after day. Deep as the content was that he found in woods, valleys, streams, and meads, it was not even there that he loved best to be. The downs were his delight. In the fields about the farm he could be happily busy; but—(this is not an inference from his books, but a repetition of what he would say of himself)—it was when he roamed about the long, rolling downs that he felt his life most full, his thoughts most clear, his spirit most exalted and yet most at rest. If he could have had that little cottage homestead where he pleased, it would have been in some such place; and I do not doubt if he could have made his choice he would have chosen his grave upon one of his Wiltshire downs, though not out of sight of the village, nor beyond the sound of the waggoner's whip, the whetting of scythes, the cattle-call at evening, and the many other pleasant noises that arise from the farm.

The preference here expressed was deeply indicative of a solitary nature, which accounted for some of his misfortunes and nearly all his merits: his merits, I mean, as judged in the world of letters. Mr. Besant has truly but mildly said Jefferies was not gregarious; but yet if he had been gregarious he would have been another sort of Jefferies and less to our liking. It is doubtful whether he would not have been more spoiled than bettered by the forced association of the training he lacked, and the lack of which has been regretted for his own sake. Though there was nothing of the wild man in the look of him—(on the contrary, he was as trim and town-like, when he came to town, as most young men who are not engaged in the city)—yet he was in many respects like the woodland creatures which he observed as they observe each other; and though the discipline of social intercourse might have helped Jefferies at some important points in his career, that would have been little gain if at the same time it tamed his spirit or lowered his confidence in his soaring thoughts and roaming speculations. To those who knew him it will not seem a far-fetched fancy that the resolute way in which he kept aloof from social intercourse, and all the various 'interests' in which the lives of many of us are frittered, may have been accounted for in part by a dread of these results. He feared to become less his natural self, to lose his native sensibilities, and perhaps to doubt them and put them in restraint. So,

at any rate, it appeared to me; and it can hardly be called an unfortunate sentiment, supposing him to have been really guided by it consciously or unconsciously. It is more to the purpose, however, that he loved to live apart in his own way through much the same natural instinct that segregates most of the denizens of field and forest. His shyness and silence was like theirs, his alertness in keeping aloof from anything that threatened to put him in captivity (of which politics and dining-out may be taken as examples), and his habit of never speaking borrowed sentiments or in borrowed phrase. What is more, he had the look and bearing of a man-creature of this sort. Perfectly composed and quiet, he was yet always on the start when approached with the assumption that he had any curiosity about the ordinary business of the world: and if the price had been himself and his freedom—(ten o'clock till five in the backroom in the city of London)—he would have soon as sweated a competence out of a pen'north's of tea and sugar as become chief cashier of the Bank of England. When it came to that, he made no distinction between one sort of gaol and one kind of servitude and another. Had there been nothing else to go by, I should have known that from the speaking candour with which he told me more than once that he would not live his life chained to such drudgery, in such surroundings, as he found me in for any earthly consideration. He meant it quite as certainly as that he was born to do far better things, and did them with no other reward than disappointment and poverty to his life's end.

The observer is not often a brisk person or gifted with animation. He is like still water, which receives without effort reflections that the rippling stream can never catch, Richard Jefferies was like still water. As he loitered under the open sky, all that he looked upon was reflected in a pair of quiet eyes clear as mirror-glass; and there was a musing mind within which in its full and calm receptivity was the complement of his vision. It has been said by one of the few who knew him intimately that he was naturally indolent, and would never have worked but for the pressure of necessity; and I believe that to be very near the truth. It was even more when he moved across a room than when he sat in repose. 'Long' and 'lounge' have much the same meaning at the root, and Jefferies' length, to which every feature contributed, was languid and loitering to a marked degree. He was a long man from head to foot: his legs long, his arms long, his hands, his head, and the features of his face, with its somewhat drooping eyelids and softly-drooping mouth. Both face and figure wore the look of having just missed strength to fall back at once into weakness and resignation to weakness. As may be seen in the excellent likeness prefixed to Mr. Besant's *Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*, his features were of the soldierly type rather than the student's: and his full and rich brown beard was so trimmed as to carry out that appearance: but yet the

expression of the face was no more martial than that of a woman. Not that I mean to suggest timidity: nothing of the sort: and, for that matter, many of the gentlest women are not timid. Receptivity and reflection were the mark of him all over; and it is easy to believe that if he had been born to a small competence few of his days would have been spent in labour. He would have carried his quietly observant eyes and musing mind about the fields, gleaning and garnering; but not much that he gathered would have been prepared for market. I say not much, because he was certainly ambitious of literary distinction, and the impulse to speak that commonly attends the poetic temperament would probably have moved him. No doubt, therefore, we would have had a book or two with the name of Richard Jefferies on the title-page, even though he had not been forced to write for bread. But they would have been written in a slow and leisurely way; and are more likely, I believe, to have taken the shape of novels, or of religio-philosophical speculation drawn from his meditations in the field and wood, than of those wonderful delightful books, *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *Wild Life in a Southern County*. Jefferies believed himself a novelist, spite of all his failures in that kind of writing. As we know from scores of beautiful passages written after the natural history observations appeared, his mind was alive with dreams of the sort above mentioned; and his speculation was always confident even when he ventured into fields where most untrained men would have felt timid. Not that he was unjustified in these ventures; for he had the poet's insight, and genius is incomplete without daring. He was not in the least afraid to say (though whether he did so in print I forget) that he had discovered in the hawk's ascending flight—a sweeping spiral flight, in which the wings do not seem to beat at all—a distinct law of motion unknown to the philosophers; and I fancy a learned duke has since discoursed on the same theme. But Jefferies' books of nature were the best that could have come from him, and I am with those who believe them unequalled of their kind.

To my good luck, they passed through my hands (in separate papers) to the press: *The Gamekeeper at Home*, *Wild Life in a Southern County*, and *The Amateur Poacher*. The first is the best, and so good that it was not necessary to read far in the small and difficult manuscript (on note paper) to learn that a greater than the famous White of Selborne had arisen. The business of editing is drudgery, but years of it are brightened for the whole term of life when the drudge finds his hand in that of some unknown genius, with the privilege of leading him out into the light. That has been my fortune more than once. But *The Gamekeeper at Home* papers did not strike upon public attention as immediately or as strongly as I believed they would. They were a 'success,' but a slow success, considering that their extraordinary merit was

as visible in the first two chapters as in the whole series. And to this day it remains a wonder that books of such perfect excellence, on subjects which have a charm for almost every Englishman, should be so little bought. They sell, of course, and by this time a good many copies have been distributed from the press; but they gave little profit to the author, and they have given little (so far) to their publishers either. But Carlyle's history had already taught that a man may be famous half the world over, while yet the works that make him so hardly earn money enough to lift their author above want. Jefferies was widely known and admired for years before he died in long continuing poverty, proudly concealed. He was broken by most painful illness, too, as we have learned from the little book of Mr. Besant's which few of us can read, I suppose, without a feeling of shame as well as sorrow.

Of the beauty and worth of Jefferies' work—(putting the novels aside, though there is some excellence in them)—it is unnecessary to speak. It is finer than that of the only two men who can be compared to him—Gilbert White and Thoreau—every one competent to judge at all knows why. As an observer Jefferies was as great as either: greater, because his vision was more of the effortless, mirror kind than theirs. Moreover, he was gifted with the poet's insight, which the one had not at all and the other not so much, the little being rather overstrained by cultivation. Again, Jefferies had a command of language more appropriate to the beauty and glory of Nature, and more capable of expressing the thought they inspire in many of us though we are unable to put it into a single sentence of adequate meaning. This may be said without derogation of the admirable Thoreau.



Frederick Greenwood  
[1830-1909]

# Doubting Thomas

William Beach Thomas was a war correspondent for the *Daily Mail*, a prolific author, and wrote a column on nature, gardening and country life for *The Spectator* for almost thirty years, ending in 1950. In his column published in the edition of 24 September 1937, he described Jefferies as a maker of 'romantic pictures of the country scene'. This brought a splendid defence of Jefferies' reputation from reader A. Irving Muntz, whose letter was published in the following issue of 1 October. Muntz had contributed articles on Jefferies to *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1892 and 1894. Beach redeemed his position in a front page article for the *John O'London's Weekly* ten years later.

*The Spectator* 24 September 1937

## A Rural Pioneer

In the search for anniversaries—which is a popular amusement—it is surprising that little attention has been paid to the death of Richard Jefferies, which befell fifty years ago. The date of his contribution to the literature of the country scene is of some historical importance. At the time when he was at his best, a young horticulturist made a round of all the chief newspapers in London with the object of persuading the editors to pay some attention to gardening, and he presented an article indicating the attraction of the subject. His idea was ridiculed and his contribution rejected with good humour as the absurd freak of a specialist. There was one exception. The editor of the *Star* thought the idea bold and strange, but liked it. The article was accepted; and within some twelve months similar articles were appearing in almost every London newspaper. This form of country literature had arrived and established a permanent place in journalism.

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The Call of the Downs

Richard Jefferies was not a pioneer in quite so definite a form as the young Davidson; but he made what may be called romantic pictures of the country scene attractive to 'those whom towns immure,' especially to editors and publishers. He was, I think, more popular in the town than the country. His own Wiltshire contemporaries thought him lazy and a moaner; and the idea that authorship is a lazy job is not extinct. Mr. George, whose *Wheelwright's Shop* was a pioneer book, opening a new form of literature, says ungenerously in his preface that he was growing lazy and averse from genuine work and so took to writing. As if writing were easy! Few men are

heroes in their own village; but however that may be, Jefferies soon had readers in all parts of the country. He expressed, sometimes very clumsily, in prose what the Lake poets had expressed fifty years earlier. He filled the scene with emotion. He was finally utterly subdued to that he worked in. Communion with wind and sea and down quite mastered his thoughts; and it is here that his supremacy lies in comparison with other and later writers who excelled him in language and in knowledge. The publication of a singularly well-chosen anthology, *Jefferies' England* (Constable, 8s. 6d.), should help to establish his reputation.

W. Beach Thomas

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*The Spectator* 1 October 1937

### RICHARD JEFFERIES

[To the Editor of THE SPECTATOR.]

SIR,—As one who, week by week, enjoys Sir W. Beach Thomas's article on 'Country Life,' I regret feeling compelled to protest against what seems to me its very inadequate appreciation of Richard Jefferies in your last week's issue, inadequate to the point of inaccuracy, though by no means wholly unappreciative. Richard Jefferies has always been in a class by himself as a writer and observer of country life and nature, and to describe him as one 'who made what may be called romantic pictures of the country scene attractive to those whom towns immure, especially editors and publishers,' is to damn a very remarkable man with very faint praise indeed. And it is not true. Richard Jefferies was a close observer of the country. He dealt accurately and with knowledge both with its human element and with wild nature. As to the former, *The Times* in 1872 published a two-column letter of his upon the Wiltshire labourer, sufficiently weighty for the Editor to devote a leading article to it; and later on the Editor of *The Spectator* singled out an essay of his called 'The Farmer at Home' (published, I think, in *Fraser's Magazine*), as the best article of that month. One has to admit, however, that this support came only from editors, whom towns immure, and apparently should not be taken very seriously. Without in any way associating myself with this view, may I pass on to Richard Jefferies as an observer of Nature? So far from his making 'romantic pictures of the country scene,' the usual contemporary complaint was of observation so detailed and minute that the ordinary reader, who had no particular passion for nature, was apt to weary of it. But its accuracy was never challenged. In his own field of observation, admittedly confined to the English countryside, nobody ever excelled him in knowledge and powers of description, nor, when at his best, in beauty and simplicity of language.

But he was also a mystic and a poet. In that strange book, *The Story of My Heart*, and in some of his other essays, he did express himself 'sometimes very clumsily,' because what he was trying to express was, in its nature, inexpressible; but it is also true that he often expressed himself in an unsurpassed beauty of language that a man must be very insensitive not to find moving. Some of his prose is, I think, very much nearer poetry than prose, and to say that 'he expressed, sometimes very clumsily, in prose, what the Lake poets had expressed fifty years earlier,' is altogether too depreciatory to give a just impression. Nor was what Jefferies expressed quite what the Lake poets had to give the world. It was something more pagan and more poignant—that passionate yearning of his for closer communion with whatever lay beneath the beauty and the wonder of the world, more pagan because no intimations of immortality came to him, more poignant because he knew even his mortal yearning frustrated, without hope of fruition.

But the accuracy of his observation, the eloquence of his praise of Nature, and the courage that would not allow even his last torturing illness to distract him from his passionate tribute to earth's beauty, should not go unrecorded in any obituary notice, even after fifty years. He was not an ordinary man. In his strange way he was a genius, and like all geniuses, subject to appraisal, but beyond patronage.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

A. IRVING MUNTZ.

*Ecchinswell House, near Newbury.*

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John O'London's Weekly, 28 May 1948

Jefferies 1848-87: As Nature Writer

Sir Wm. Beach Thomas

WHEN I first read a translation of the wonderful Song of the Creation by St. Francis of Assisi it struck me as pure Jefferies. It was written in formless verse, as much of Jefferies is in rather formless prose, but both possess a virtue that is rare in literature and correspondingly precious. Traherne had it and, in a more critical form, William Wordsworth. His phrase, 'the deep power of joy,' goes near to a definition of this quality.

Jefferies was the son of a Wiltshire farmer, and could write about his father almost in the vein of Mr. Street on his Wiltshire father. He was interested even in a gun and could write with zest of rabbit-shooting, of beer, apples and other farmers' fare; but when he came to full realization of himself he knew that the presence of the natural scene was to him as a cathedral, a place of worship; and he was aware of a mystic meaning in

things that he longed to unravel. He was not primarily a writer on natural history, though he principally dealt with that subject.

What concerned him first and foremost was the effect of external nature on himself—the ecstasy, not the observed fact. Sun and scenery, bird and blossom were no more than his alphabet and vocabulary, but the vocabulary was large. He was an industrious taker of notes; and these, according to the Wordsworthian formula, he ‘recollected in tranquillity,’ illuminating them, at his best, in ‘the light that never was on sea or land.’

Perhaps he took too many notes. He wanted to revive the delight that the rich scene had given, and so recapitulated all its details, as if all were of equal importance, as the best way of passing on the pleasure, the inspiration he had found. He does not picture a single bird, such as Hudson's stonechat or Gilbert White's grasshopper warbler, or Wordsworth's celandine, or even Traherne's wheat, but overwhelms us with accumulation of detail, as in the ‘Pageant of Summer,’ which is perhaps the most characteristic, and popular, of his essays. In one of his recently discovered articles is a glorious description of a farm gateway which becomes, before he has done with it, an entrance to the lives of a score or more of birds, many small mammals and insects, as well as the centre of a floral scene and a way for farm carts. As such the gateway appealed to him, and through the accumulated detail such it becomes to us, much more effectively than by any method of objective moralizing.

HE wrote almost exclusively about what his own senses had reaped, even when he let his imagination go in that strange, grim account of Nature's conquest of abandoned London. His best work is the harvest of a quiet eye; but it is garnered not so much for itself as for its influence on the reaper.

The mystic was never far off. In what is now called the blurb of one of his books he himself wrote: ‘The author himself describes the successive stages of emotion and thought through which he passed.’ It was always so; but he himself perhaps hardly realized the perfection of his own senses. He had very acute insight. Almost all the live things mentioned, however briefly, in that tale of the gateway do some little thing, or make some little gesture, that proclaim the seer. Only a first-class naturalist, a born and fond observer, could have made the list, even where it might seem to some a sort of catalogue.

Singularly contradictory opinions are and have been held about the value of his work. They are due to the philosophy of his readers: one half like him best when the mystic is farthest off, as in *The Amateur Poacher*; the other half when the mystic is nearest, as in *The Story of My Heart*. The variations were doubtless in some measure due to the morbidity of his body, which

threatened, as he well realized, an early grave. Whichever part of his work we may prefer, it remains that he gave something both to the naturalist and the thinker which no one else has given with like generosity—a sense of communion in things, observed with a fidelity, insight and affection commensurate with the ecstasy they inspired. He is to naturalists very much what Spenser is to poets. They could not spare his rhetoric, because it is the direct harvest of exceptional senses. Whatever it may lack in precision of style, it has full compensation in the mood it creates, in the vision it imparts. Summer is perennially richer for the tale of its pageant.

ALTHOUGH the heart of Jefferies is a sort of natural mysticism—and therein lies his distinction from others—yet it is difficult to insist on this without giving an inadequate, one-sided impression. His mysticism is never empty. He was a real and constant observer, of men as of things; a thoughtful reader and even a good journalist for papers concerned with husbandry and sport. The numerous articles and notes that his fond and hard-working votary, Mr. Looker, has recently unearthed from obscure papers and has now republished in books and magazines, bring out this side of Jefferies with a new emphasis. Like other mystics, he was no easy sentimentalist, nor in any sense vague. If *The Story of My Heart* is regarded by many as eccentric, it is the issue of a desire to get at the centre of things, especially his sure sense of communion with Nature. He gives the naturalist, not new facts about natural history, though most things are more real and vivid for his touch, but a stronger sense of the meaning implicit in a live and beautiful world. He has been pre-eminent beyond all the scientists is a maker of naturalists. ‘Love has eyes.’



William Beach Thomas, 1917
National Portrait Gallery

Richard Jefferies' Funeral

J.W. North

There is little information recorded about Richard Jefferies' funeral at Broadwater Cemetery, Worthing on Saturday, 20 August 1887. The following letter from Jefferies' good friend John William North, to *The Standard*, published on 27 August 1887, provides a brief insight. The following two articles about two clerics provide additional information.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD

SIR—I am glad to see in *The Standard* the letter from the Mayor of Salisbury and Mr. C. Churchill Osborne having reference to the formation of a fund for the assistance and support of the family of the later Mr. Richard Jefferies, and trust that I may without presumption express the hope that it will prove greatly successful. It is not, perhaps, always true that 'a prophet is not without honour save in his own country.' I may say that I have personally received scores, probably hundreds of letters from all parts of England and Scotland from all ranks of life, and of the most honestly enthusiastic character, expressing appreciation and admiration of his work and sorrow for his fate. . . . It is today (Saturday) one week since he was buried at Broadwater, in Sussex, by Worthing, in the gentlest, softest, sunny rain, that I ever knew. He was borne along the path to his grave in the grass, as the last part of the service for the dead was read, well and solemnly, and we left him forever. The large tears from Heaven fell fast and thick, and over and over again came to me the saying, 'Happy are the dead that the rain rains on.'

The modest home-made wreath of clematis and myrtle my wife had sent pleased me by happy symbolism, for, as the myrtle is, so will his memory be 'for ever green.'

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J.T. (*sic*) NORTH.
August 26.

A Friend in Reverend Blight?

Jean Saunders

There is an illuminating letter, reproduced below,¹ from *John O'London's Weekly* for 1 April 1949. It was penned by Frederick M.S. Blight, who was born in Lewes on 22 Feb. 1875. He recounts, when aged twelve, that he had visited Richard Jefferies several times in the last few months of his life along with his father, Rev. Robert Blight. Rev. Bright was a 'vicar of a neighbouring parish' and 'was one of the officiating clergy at Jefferies' funeral.'

Could Rev. Blight have been more of a friend to Richard Jefferies than just a vicar? During Jefferies' Crowborough period (1885-6) Edna Manning mentions: 'At this time a parson was one of his closest friends, but Jefferies constantly lost his patience with him and his illness only made him more sceptical about religion.'² Manning provides no reference nor a name. Might this friend have been Blight?

Robert Blight was born in Lancashire in 1844 and was based in Bredwardine, Herefordshire in the 1860s. He wrote papers for The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club (founded in 1815 'for the practical study, in all its branches, of the Natural History of Herefordshire & the districts immediately adjacent'.) The papers included a 'List of birds observed at Bredwardine during the years 1864 to 1869' and 'Reproduction and growth of mistletoe' (1870).

¹ 'I cannot agree that Jefferies was afflicted by morbid depression and that he was a victim of self-pity.

There can be but few who knew Jefferies personally, and who saw him during the last few months of his life at Goring. My father was the vicar of a neighbouring parish, and I accompanied him several times when he visited Jefferies. My father did not visit him to talk religion but to discuss natural history, the countryside, and topics of the day. I was only twelve years of age, but I can recollect perfectly well the composure with which the doomed man accepted his fate, the gentle voice, and, despite the near approach of death, the still keen interest in the things that had filled his life.

My father was one of the officiating clergy at Jefferies' funeral. I watched him leave the house, and soon afterwards I walked across the fields to the lonely sea-shore, where, while the author of *Bevis* was being borne to his last resting-place, I wept unrestrainedly over the sorrows with which death afflicts humanity.

In a few weeks I hope to visit Salisbury. In the most lovely of cathedrals I shall stand before the bust of Jefferies, and, although an agnostic, pray for the soul, wherever it may be, of a man who enriched English literature and whose pity was not for self but for the ill-used workers on the land in his days.' (Source: reproduced from Hugoe Matthews & Phyllis Treitel's *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies*.)

² *Richard Jefferies: A Modern Appraisal* by Edna Manning (G. Goldscheider, 1984), p.46. My thanks to Peter Robins for finding this reference.

On 17 August 1867 it was reported in the *Leeds Mercury* that Blight had gained a 2nd Class Honours BA in Latin (University of London) from Battersea Training College.

On 7 March 1871 the *Birmingham Post* reported that he was appointed as a priest in the Hereford diocese (the curate at Bredwardine) and is recorded as a curate at the Vicarage in Bredwardine on the 1871 census along with his future wife Sarah Spurway (b. 1845) and her parents who were servants at the vicarage. By December he had been appointed as the inspector of schools in the diocese of Chichester by the Bishop of Chichester. His job was to visit all the schools in the diocese to check that religious instruction was taught to good standards. For this he was paid £400 a year plus expenses. Many reports of his school inspections are recounted in the newspapers.

Robert and Sarah married in Plymouth during the third quarter of 1872. It is not until the 1881 census that we know where they were living—109 High Street, Lewes—along with four children, all born in Lewes and aged between four and eight, plus a governess, cook and maid.

Rev. Blight gave a talk on fungi in February 1877 to the Lewes and East Sussex Natural History Society (reported in the *Sussex Advertiser*). Perhaps the Blights were friendly with the Baxters of Lewes whom Jefferies knew so well from childhood. In 1878 Rev. Blight's Liberal views were expressed in a letter that was reproduced in the *Sussex Advertiser* (30 Jan. 1878) regarding his opposition to England being dragged into the war between Russia and Turkey.

The school inspections continued in 1886 and there is an announcement on 25 August 1886 (*Derby Mercury*) that Rev. Blight had been appointed vicar of Ferring Kingston and East Preston. He moved to The Vicarage, St. Andrew's Church, Ferring—very close to where Jefferies lived at Sea View, Goring. Perhaps Jefferies had met Blight already through the Baxters but their common interest in natural history could well have brought them together as friends. We know from Blight's son that in his last few months Rev. Blight and Jefferies discussed nature and the countryside, rather than religion.

St. Andrew's is a pretty church—not like St. Mary's, Goring where Jefferies did not want to be buried. But did he rule out St. Andrews too? Jefferies' son, Harold, recounted that his 'father very much disliked' the sombre St. Mary's Church in Goring³ with its equally gloomy churchyard. Evidently the vicar of this church lived next door to Jefferies and '[did] not seem to have gone out

³ 'Memories of Richard Jefferies', by Harold Jefferies, *Richard Jefferies: My Father*, The Worthing Cavalcade (Worthing Art Development Scheme, 1944), p.24.

of his way to be friendly'.⁴ J.W. North also recounted that: '[Goring churchyard] is one of those dreary, over-crowded, dark spots where the once-gravelled paths are green with slimy moss, and it was a horror to poor Jefferies. More than once he repeated the hope that he might not be laid there, and he chose the place where his widow at last left him—amongst the brighter grass and flowers at Broadwater.'



St. Andrews, Ferring

It seems that there were two tragic deaths—Blight's wife Sarah died on 22 July 1887; buried in Ferring on 26 July and then Jefferies on 14 August. It is no wonder that Frederick Blight recalls how he wept on 20 August—the day of Jefferies' funeral—with his mother's death so raw in his memory.

And then an incident of drunk and disorderly behaviour by Rev. Blight at the New Inn, Ferring threw his career and life into disarray. On Wednesday 11 April 1888, the landlord threw the drunk Blight out of the inn. But Blight returned demanding a drink and the police had to be called. After his appearance at Arundel Police Court on 16 April 1888, where he received a £5 fine with 12s costs, the story was major news in many newspapers, including the *Pall Mall Gazette*. No doubt the shame was too much for him to bear as he seems to disappear. Had he committed suicide? Had the death of his wife been the trigger? Did he have a drinking problem?

What we do know is that a newspaper advertised an auction of Blight's entire estate at the vicarage for 30 April 1888 that included 700 books, many on nature. By May, a new chaplain had taken over from Rev. Blight (*Sussex*

⁴ *Richard Jefferies, a Tribute*, The Worthing Cavalcade (Worthing Art Development Scheme, 1946), p.156. It would seem that the vicar at Goring church was Theodore E.M. Richards (1836-1904), the son of a vicar, born in Icklesham, Sussex. He attended Marlborough College, and remained unmarried—from census information. Rev. Richards is recorded living at Goring vicarage on the 1881 and 1891 censuses.

Agricultural Express, 26 May 1888). Over a year later, the *Sussex Express* reported on 26 October 1889:

The long services and great merits of Rev. Robert Blight, the first inspector, in organising and carrying on for 16 years the system of inspection, both for pupil teachers and scholars, has been generously recognised, and the whole diocese has lamented the sad close of a useful and honourable career. The friends who valued him in his better days have not been unmindful of the wants of his family, and I am sure the Conference will hear with satisfaction that the four children whom he has so strangely abandoned are well cared for, and means provided for their maintenance and education.

‘Strangely abandoned’ is an under-statement when we learn that he fled to America in 1888. He is recorded on the 1900 census living at Lower Providence, Montgomery, Pennsylvania which adds that he emigrated in 1888. There is a report of his death in *The New York Times* dated 29 March 1907:

Philadelphia, March 28—The Rev. Robert Blight, well known as a writer, died in the County Hospital here today as a result of injuries received yesterday, when a lamp exploded, in his home at Norristown. He was 60 years old. Mr. Blight was born in England and was educated in the University of London. He preached in England, but in this country devoted himself entirely to magazine and newspaper work.

It seems that Blight wrote a report for the Indian Conference in 1891.

Rev. Blight’s poor children must have had a rough time. To lose both parents so close together must have been hard and it seems no surprise that Frederick declared that he was an agnostic in his letter to the *John O’London’s Weekly*. Frederick, a civil servant, remained single and lived in Ceredigion for at least 50 years. He died in Camarthan in 1963 aged 88. His sisters, Lucy and Lilian, both went into teaching; Lucy became a headmistress, but neither of the ladies married. Around the 1920s-30s the sisters were living in Petworth, Sussex where Lucy died in 1930. Brother Robert married (according to the 1939 register), but there is no other census record that verifies this. Both Robert (1964) and Lilian (1957) died in Chichester—presumably they lived together; they had done so before according to the 1911 census.

There is no indication that Rev. Blight saw his children again—there are no passengers’ lists to America for the time that suggest otherwise. Could he have been such a bad father? That being said, it is highly likely that Rev. Blight’s visits to Sea View, Goring, to ‘discuss natural history, the countryside, and topics of the day’ with Richard Jefferies, were much appreciated by the dying writer.

‘Our dear brother here departed’: The Broadwater Funeral

Peter Robins

Whether or not Richard Jefferies died a Christian has been an enduring controversy¹, but in death he was afforded a Christian burial with all the solemnities of the established church. No newspaper reports of the funeral have been traced, despite extensive investigation, but recent research has discovered Jefferies’ entry in the Register of Burials, Broadwater Burial Ground, as follows²:

Year: 1887 Date: August 20th Name: John R. Jefferies Age: 38yrs
Rank or Profession: Author Abode: Goring Parish or District: Goring
Officiating Minister: E. Holroyde Registrar: W. Verrall

This is the first time we have learned the name of the priest who conducted the funeral at Broadwater. The Rev. Elkanah Holroyde was curate at St. Mary’s 1883-88 to assist the rector, Rev. Edward K. Elliott, who had been the incumbent since 1853 (finally retiring in 1905). As we have seen in Jean Saunders’ account, ‘A Friend in Reverend Blight?’ (pp.34-37 of this issue), the Rev. Robert Blight, vicar of Ferring, also took part in the funeral service.

In his letter to *The Standard*³, J.W. North, who was at the funeral, states, ‘He [Jefferies] was borne along the path to his grave in the grass, as the last part of the service for the dead was read, well and solemnly, and we left him for ever.’ As North makes no mention of a church service it is possible that the first part of the service took place in one of the chapels situated at the entrance to the burial ground⁴. Sarah Billing, Jefferies’ sister, was also in

¹ Walter Besant’s assertion in his *Eulogy* that Jefferies resorted to orthodox Christianity on his death-bed, based on North’s letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 16 Aug 1887, was challenged in the letters pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette* during Sept/Oct 1891. Subsequently, in correspondence with Henry S. Salt, Besant admitted the claim was to offer some consolation to his widow; ‘But, you are right. When a man gets as far as Jefferies did—when he had shed and scattered to the winds sacerdotalism and authority—he does not go back.’ (17 Oct 1891; quoted in Henry S. Salt, *The Faith of Richard Jefferies*, Watts & Co, 1906, p.10).

For a more recent debate on the subject see the exchanges between George Miller and Tom Wareham in *RJS Autumn Newsletter & Report 2010-11*, *Spring Newsletter 2013*, *Autumn Newsletter & Report 2012-2013*, *Spring Newsletter 2014*.

² Kindly researched by Debra Hillman, Friends of Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery.

³ 27 Aug 1887.

⁴ There are two chapels, now disused, one was used for Church of England services and the other for nonconformist services. Roman Catholic services were not catered for but held in the

attendance⁵ but we have no record of the other mourners.



Entrance to Broadwater Cemetery through the Chapels

An alternative ceremony to the Christian rite for the burial of the dead may have been more relevant for one who expressed agnostic views in his writings but options were limited and Jefferies had chosen to be buried at Broadwater,⁶ although we have no account as to his wishes during his last days, if any, regarding a religious ceremony.⁷ Some years earlier he had written in his autobiography, 'Could I have my own way after death I would be burned on a pyre of pine-wood, open to the air, and placed on the summit

RC church in Worthing. There are no records to show where the service took place.

⁵ 'Transcript of Christine Billing's address on the opening of the Richard Jefferies Museum at Coate June 24, 1960'. *RJS Journal*, Number 21, Autumn 2011, p.11. 'And I do remember most distinctly the day of Uncle Richard's funeral. To my great surprise I found my mother crying, and soon afterwards she went away in a black dress after telling my sister and me to take care of little Phyllis, who had just come to stay with us.'

⁶ Walter Besant, *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*, Chatto & Windus, 1888, p.359. Salt felt that Besant had been incautious in accepting without reserve the story Jefferies' return to orthodoxy. Besant's obituary (d.1901) in the *DNB* (1912 Supplement) declared 'he had no love of priests and religious dogma' so, perhaps against his better judgement, he maintained the narrative. He wrote the tribute in haste, as can be inferred from its loose, formless and discursive style, and it appeared in October 1888.

⁷ Tom Wareham mentions in *RJS Spring Newsletter 2013* that Swinburne had requested that he was to be buried with no Christian symbol or ritual. At his funeral in 1909 his coffin was draped in a purple pall with a white cross and the officiating clergyman, the Rev. Ffloyd Andrewes, proceeded with the full burial service to the cries of 'Scandalous' from some of the mourners, several of whom tried to prevent the rector from carrying on but were restrained.

of the hills. Then let my ashes be scattered abroad—not collected in an urn—freely sown wide and broadcast.’⁸ There was no regulation in place at the time to prevent open air funeral pyres but, although they occurred only in limited numbers, the practice was made illegal in Britain in 1930. Jefferies’ mention of an urn suggests he had been aware of cremation, the first working crematorium having been built at Woking in 1879.⁹

A suitable and practicable interment could have been arranged with the National Secular Society, founded 1866, which offered its own secular orders of service.¹⁰ These were not meant to be punctiliously observed but merely gave guidance on what might be most appropriate to say at particular stages. Christian clergy took different views of secular services, some disallowed them, some permitting but only to be read after the Christian one had finished.¹¹ A report of such a funeral at Broadwater appeared in the *Sussex Agricultural Press* 17 Jan. 1893 suggesting some tolerance by the local clergy:

FUNERAL OF COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT—On Saturday afternoon the remains of the late Councillor Elliott were interred at the Worthing and Broadwater cemetery, and, in the absence of a religious ceremony, an address was given by the hon. sec. of the National Secular Society, of which deceased was a member. In the course of his remarks the speaker said the deceased had long been free from the fears and misgivings of superstition. His religion was of this world, the service of humanity his highest aspiration, and he had devoted his time and influence for the benefit of those by whom he was surrounded.

Jefferies’ interment didn’t warrant the attention of the rector, Rev. Edward K. Elliott who, from reports in newspapers of the time, preferred to conduct services for the gentry and was frequently absent, lecturing in various parts of the country on the perils of Roman Catholicism, leaving his curate to carry out parish duties. This was not unusual in nineteenth-century England where curates made up close to half the clergy, prompting Charlotte Brontë to comment, ‘Of late an abundant shower of curates has fallen on the North of England.’¹² The curate was not usually high-born and subject to being removed at pleasure. Even the death of the incumbent didn’t imply the curate would ascend to the living and peers and gentry often held them in disregard.

⁸ *The Story of My Heart*, Longmans, Green, & Co. 1883. p.51.

⁹ In 1887 only thirteen cremations were carried out. The alternative to interment took a long time to be accepted due to the Christian belief in resurrection.

¹⁰ Annie Besant and Austin Holyoake, *Two Secular Burial Services*, National Secular Society, 1875. Annie Besant was married to Walter’s younger brother, Frank, but they separated because of their conflicting views of religion and politics.

¹¹ Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910*. Routledge, 1986. p.234.

¹² *Shirley*, 1849, ch. 1.

Elkanhah Holroyde was born in 1853 in Manchester, the second son of Caroline and Elkanah Holroyde, who practised as a GP and surgeon in that city for thirty years. Elkanah followed his brother, James, to Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1870, gained a BA four years later, when he went to Lincoln's Inn, and was finally awarded an MA in 1877. Ordained in 1878, Holroyde accepted, over the next five years, curacies in London, Oxford, and Nottingham, where he was additionally responsible for a new tin church, prior to the building of a permanent structure, appropriately named Emmanuel Church.

On 7 September 1880 he married Shaftesbury Violet Ditmas, aged twenty, daughter of the late Major Frederick Ditmas (Indian Army). The wedding took place at St. James', Dover, where the bridegroom's brother, James, who had also been ordained, conducted the ceremony.



St. Mary's, Broadwater

In 1883, Rev. Holroyde was appointed curate at St. Mary's, Broadwater but tragedy struck when Shaftesbury died suddenly on 19 November 1885, aged twenty-five. As noted in the account of the Rev. Robert Blight, his wife died aged forty-two on 22 July 1887, less than a month before Jefferies, but it did not deter him from assisting the Rev. Holroyde in conducting Jefferies' funeral. Jefferies' premature death would have been a poignant reminder of their wives' early demise.

In contrast to the Rev. Blight's subsequent actions and emigration to America in 1888, the Rev. Holroyde that same year returned to London for a

brief placement at St. Matthews', Hammersmith, before his last stint as curate at St. John's, Woking.

On 31 March 1891, the Rev. Holroyde, aged thirty-eight, married Mary Charlotte Cahusac, aged twenty-nine, at St. Clement's, Bournemouth. Two sons were born while at Woking, Arthur Gordon Cahusac and Francis James. In 1894, after sixteen years of remaining a curate, the Rev. Holroyde was appointed rector of St. Paulinus, St. Paul's Cray, Kent. Here the Rev. Holroyde enjoyed a large rectory and some stability after his peripatetic calling and he and Mary had a further son, Reginald Elkanah (perpetuating the family naming tradition) and five daughters, Norah Constance, Agnes Mary, Edith Beatrice, Ruth Monica and Margaret Stewart. A nurse, cook and housemaid completed the household.

Whilst rector at St. Paul's Cray, the Rev. Holroyde was invited by the Colonial and Continental Church Society¹³ to take services in Switzerland. Part of the Society's mission was the provision of Anglican evangelical clergymen for communities of British residents on the continent of Europe. The Rev. Holroyde spent some time, usually September, in Eggishorn or Evolène in the Alps. When not fulfilling clerical duties, Holroyde found time to paint watercolours, two of which were accepted by the Royal Academy for their annual exhibitions in 1903 and 1911.¹⁴ His brother, James, also had other qualities as well as being a priest and wrote hymns and *English Scenery: A New Poem*,¹⁵ illustrated with engravings by E. Whymper, W. J. Palmer and others.

Holroyde's youngest son, Reginald, served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in the Great War and was taken prisoner in March, 1918 but after the armistice in November he was repatriated on Christmas Day. Two years later he emigrated to Australia.

After thirty-four comfortable years as rector, Holroyde died aged seventy-five in 1928 and was interred in the graveyard at St. Paulinus. The next war brought tragedy to the remaining family when Mary, his widow, and daughter Norah, a nurse, were killed in an air raid on Bromley in 1941.

A month after the Rev. Holroyde officiated at Jefferies' burial the grave bore only the remains of North's home-made wreath of clematis and myrtle. At some time after this a marble cross was erected.¹⁶ A further memorial, a marble bust of Jefferies, was installed in Salisbury Cathedral in 1892¹⁷ which,

¹³ Flourished 1861-1958.

¹⁴ 'The Tomb of Rehere, St. Bartholomew the Great' (now held by Bromley Historic Collections), 'North Aisle: Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Abbey.'

¹⁵ London Literary Society, 1885.

¹⁶ Jean Saunders, 'Richard Jefferies' Grave', *RJS Newsletter Spring 2017*.

¹⁷ Kedrun Laurie, 'Margaret Thomas, Sculptor of the Bust of Richard Jefferies in Salisbury

with its needless line of inscription mentioning Almighty God, irked Edward Thomas prompting his comment, ‘perhaps the commemorator hoped thus to cast a halo over the man and his books.’¹⁸

In today’s more secular, perhaps post-Christian, society the controversy may seem of no great importance. But in the late nineteenth century the claims of religion occupied a large part of the nation’s life and it was no easy matter for anyone to disavow the faith in which they had been raised and to which their family had subscribed for many generations. Some late-Victorians did take anti-religious stands supporting free-thought, rationalism, agnosticism, humanism and secularism, denying God and Christianity putting forward instead ideas of a ‘life-force’.¹⁹

Jefferies’ grave has been visited by many individuals and groups over the years as Jean Saunders has related,²⁰ sadly some of them vandals who had toppled and broken the cross which, at the beginning of this century was laid flat on the grave. Here the breeze now blows through the grasses and wild flowers that have been encouraged to grow, concealing the cross, no longer triumphant.



Richard Jefferies’ grave, July 2016. Photograph: courtesy of Michael Parrott.

Cathedral.

RJS *Journal*, Number 13, 2004.

¹⁸ Edward Thomas, *In Pursuit of Spring*, Nelson, 1913, pp.138-9.

¹⁹ For a study of Victorian religion see Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1973. Ch. VI.

²⁰ Jean Saunders, *op. cit.*

Richard Jefferies' Religion

T. Hanson Lewis

This article is reproduced from the *Western Mail*, Thursday, 24 September 1891.

The person recounting his associations with Richard Jefferies is the barrister, Thomas Hanson Lewis, born 9 June 1841.

Some of the admirers of Richard Jefferies' works—and they, if not legion, are numerous—are interesting themselves in defending that writer from the aspersions cast on him because of his heterodox religious views. I had some years ago (writes a correspondent to the *Pall Mall Gazette*) a long conversation on the general subject with Mr. Jefferies himself. He was living in Victoria-road, Eltham, when I called upon him. It was in the year 1885, I think. He was a tall, lank figure, with the air of an invalid. He had a waxen complexion, wan cheeks, sunken eyes, and was generally full of languor. A devoted wife and a lovely child comprised his home circle, and it was evident that he was in very straitened circumstances. Before you had been ten minutes in his society you discovered that you were in the presence of a proud nature, sensitive to a degree, and that sensitiveness was doubtless the keynote of Jefferies' troubled life. He was a man of moods, and like many invalids his temper was very uncertain; one moment amiability itself, at another bitter as gall in his remarks on men and things. He gave me the impression from certain observations that he had suffered some inconsiderable injustice in early youth at the hands of a local family in Wiltshire, but afterwards in a letter he repudiated the notion. 'There has been no great sorrow overshadowing my life,' he afterwards wrote to me, ascribing his worried look to ill-health. 'Suppose the strong Hercules tied by the leg just like a dog to his tub for three years—do you think he would look jovial? While you sat with me talking I felt on the verge of fainting the whole time. It is a ghastly feeling—fainting hardly expresses it. I kept up by resolution.' Richard Jefferies was [of] an incomprehensible nature; I doubt if he understood himself—he was so full of contradictions. He assured me that *The Story of My Heart* thoroughly represented his views (at that time, at all event). I remember rallying him on the uselessness of his pursuing such philosophical writing, urging rather that he should stick to his country descriptions as much more saleable ware. 'Ah, I wish I had more of your practical temperament. When I get better I will take your advice and wake up,' he said wearily.

I had several letters from him, and some extracts may be interesting. ‘The philosophy,’ he wrote to me on one occasion, ‘in fact the whole of the thoughts and so on in the autobiography, are entirely original. They are obtaining adherents in the most unexpected places; in the beautiful coral islands of the Pacific Ocean, and in the practical city of Edinburgh. If you will think them over you will find my theories built on the solidest rocks of fact. But am I a theorist? Not a cabinet theorist at all events, for here are my favourite lines from Goethe’s *Faust* (Filmore’s translation):

All theory, my friend, is grey,
But green is life’s bright golden tree.

He thought ‘Dryden the finest writer in power of words; his strength, simplicity, and mind-picture far surpass all others. I think Byron was a splendid politician.’ In the same letter he said he wanted people to know that ‘I am quite as familiar with London as with the country. Some people have the idea that my knowledge is confined to the fields; as a matter of fact, I have had quite as much to do with and in London—all parts of it too—and am very fond of what I may call a thickness of the people such as exists there. I like the solitude of the hills and the hum of the most crowded city; I dislike little towns and villages. I dream in London quite as much as in the woodlands. It is a wonder place to dream in.’

Richard Jefferies may have accepted the Christian religion when he removed to Crowborough before he died. When I knew Jefferies he was certainly agnostical, but ready to find the truth if it were to be found. Indeed, he seemed more eager to solve the mysteries of Life and Death than most so-called Christians. Being so intimately in touch with the poetry of Nature, it is not unlikely that he realised a Creator in whom he could put his trust at the last.

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Thomas Hanson Lewis was born in Hackney in 1841. In 1871 he married Lydia Catherine White in Wandsworth. They settled in Frant near Tunbridge Wells, and by 1881 seven of their children were born there. Hanson Lewis was a barrister but he also gave his profession as a journalist on the 1891 census. Amongst other findings on searches through old newspapers, he wrote for *The Army & Navy Magazine*—‘Military Ballooning’ (Reported in *St. James’s Gazette*, 29 March 1884) and a one-act musical farce: ‘The Earthly Twins’ performed in 1896.

In a letter dated 9 October 1884 from T. Hanson Lewis to Jefferies he wrote: ‘Thanks for *Red Deer*, a really charming book. I felt the exhilarating breeze of the west country blowing full in my face as I trod with you knee deep through the heather.’ It is clear that he had an interest in hunting—he and his wife are listed as guests at the West Kent Hunt Ball in 1888.

## ‘An Interview’ with Charles Jefferies

The *Pall Mall Gazette* received a considerable amount of correspondence regarding the question posed ‘Did Jefferies Die a Christian?’ following on from an attack in a letter to the Editor dated 7 September by a Mr. William B. Fotheringham of Hornsey that was published on 8 September 1891. Mr. Fotheringham had just read *The Story of My Heart* and he was ‘so painfully impressed with the pernicious character of many of the ideas set forth’ that he had to bring it to public notice. He ended the letter saying that ‘It seems to me that the book is calculated to do an immense amount of harm, to unsettle many, to put many upon the wrong track altogether’ that he could not allow this to go unchallenged. The following extract titled ‘An Interview with Jefferies’s Brother’ published in the *PMG* 22 September 1891 is recounted by an anonymous third party correspondent and its accuracy cannot be verified. The incorrect spelling of ‘Coate’ alone sheds doubt. The second section of the article was titled ‘Recollections of One who Knew Jefferies’ and is reproduced in this *Journal* - see previous article by T. Hanson Lewis.

A day or two ago (writes an occasional contributor to the *Pall Mall Gazette*) I had an interesting chat with Mr. Charles Jefferies, a younger brother of the author of *Wild Life in a Southern County*.

I had little compunction in approaching him upon the subject, because of the brotherly interest he takes in Richard Jefferies’s works. He treasures a goodly collection of articles which, though containing some of the best work from that gifted pen, have as yet never been republished in book form. He prefaced his remarks by expressing astonishment that, after this lapse of time since *The Story of My Heart* was published, Mr. Fotheringham should have discovered its ‘pernicious’ character. Neither did he think it fair to single out this book and adduce from it such bold statements as to the author’s religious beliefs, but pointed out, what is well known to readers of *Hodge and His Masters* and other of his brother’s writings, that there are many passages upsetting the ‘pernicious’ argument. For instance in *Wild Life in a Southern County* one reads a clear and sympathetic description of a cottage preacher, who with rude oratory describes to his rustic audience the tortures of the Inquisition. ‘This incident, I believe,’ added Mr. Jefferies, ‘took place in a small Methodist mission-room, almost opposite Coates (*sic*) Farm, which my father assisted to some extent, and shows that the narrator was not cynically antagonistic to the message thus delivered.’

I concurred in these sentiments, and inquired, ‘What kind of religious training did your brother have in his younger days?’

‘You know,’ he replied, ‘my parents were related to some London publishers who regularly stocked us with all sorts of books, while my father always manifested a love of reading which he early instilled into us as boys. His favourite volumes were the Bible and Shakespeare, and alternately he regularly read to us from their pages, explaining and elucidating as he went on. I believe that I have these literary treasures still. Richard early in life emulated my father's pleasure in reading. His acquaintance with the good old Book was very extensive, and it was difficult for anyone to puzzle him with questions concerning it. As boys we were fairly regular in our attendance at the parish church, and for reporting the sermons for two years my aunt gave Richard a silver watch. At a somewhat later period, services were regularly held in our farmhouse by the clergy. My father set apart a covered courtyard, where we used to make butter, for the purpose, and while at home my brother attended these gatherings. When he went to London he took advantage of the public libraries, and read assiduously religious controversial books. Naturally his views of theological matters became wider, and there is little doubt that he held sceptical opinions for a time, I remember that when he came home to Coates (*sic*) for holidays he held many arguments with my father on these points, and with the knowledge thus freshly obtained the younger was able sometimes to worst the elder in a wordy battle. For the moment, there are many personal incidents that have escaped my memory, but on one occasion, as I was reading Knox's work on the *Races of Men*, Richard told me that he acquiesced in the views of the author to a greater extent than he did in those of Darwin, though he admired his genius as a writer. Turning once again to *The Story of My Heart*, I believe that the opinions there enunciated were the expression of one groping in the dark along a painful way for a gleam of truth. These sceptical views were held for a time, and I know that he died ‘listening with faith and love to the words contained in the old Book.’

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See the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, Spring 1996, No. 5, pp.7-13 for more information about Charles Jefferies (1858-1934) that was written by his granddaughter, Nancie Cator.

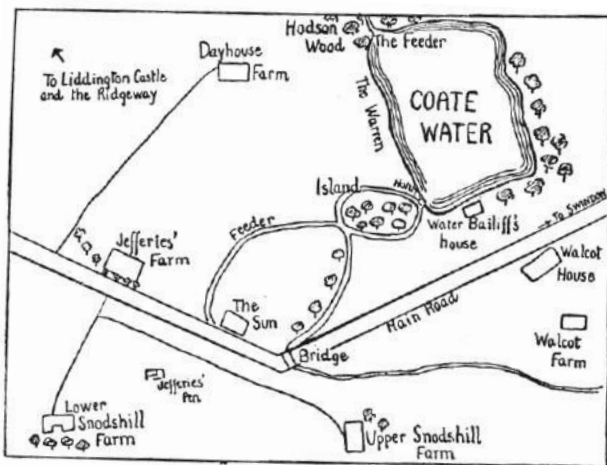
Reminiscences of Richard Jefferies

Audrey Horsell

First published in *The Countryman* in April, 1936.

Audrey Horsell 1909-1998

Readers of his books used to ask Richard Jefferies if there were such a place as Coate. The people who lived in Coate looked around them and said, 'Why, here are only a few farms, a few labourers' cottages, fields and a great pond, and nothing but bare downs beyond'. 'No one else', said Jefferies, 'seems to have seen the sparkle on the brook, or heard the music at the hatch, or to have felt back through the centuries; when I try to describe these things to them they look at me with stolid incredulity.'



THE VILLAGE OF COATE

showing the Jefferies Farmstead

Both my grandfather, Henry Brunsdon, and my grandmother, Emma Freeman, who were contemporaries of Jefferies in Coate, said that he was without honour in the village. The cottagers called him a 'lazy loppet', and everybody was sorry for his parents.

All the farmers were intimate with each other—the Jefferies at Coate House, the Badens at Dayhouse Farm, the Coxes, the Freemans of Walcot. These families had lived on their farms for many generations. My grandmother remembers Coate House when it was thatched and how the musk smelt in summertime under the window in the keeping room.

Now that the thatch has gone the place has a mean look. The Jefferies no longer live there, and the house has been purchased by the Swindon Corporation as a memorial.

There is still in our family a little low baby-chair in which Richard sometimes rode pannier-wise upon a pony, with his sister balancing him in a fellow chair. In the 'fifties all the boys from the farms went to 'Daddy Hanks' school in Swindon, and all the girls went to the neighbouring village of Wanborough. Daddy Hanks was a terrible wielder of the cane, and Jefferies suffered as often and as sharply as the livelier boys for his own lack of liveliness. He was not a shining scholar, although he 'always had his head in a book'; it seems that he was put down as rather a dullard. It was a practice at the school to make a new boy run the gauntlet of two lines of boys armed with small stones tied in handkerchiefs, to initiate him into the life there with good hard blows about his back and head.

My grandfather and Harry Jefferies were a year or two younger than Richard, and were very devoted friends, calling each other 'Ally' and 'Sloper', from the name of a character in a comic weekly of the time. Harry was strong, energetic, and bubbling with high spirits. He and Richard had a profound contempt for each other's character, mixed up with an affection that sometimes made an awkward appearance. They were all three good skaters, and they were all three very handy with a catapult. The brother and friend both appear in Jefferies' writing, in particular in *Bevis*. The swing is there too, and the summer-house where they kept their bows and arrows and wooden swords, and sometimes allowed the girls to do their dolls' washing. Richard would never join in the usual boys' sports, cricket and football—he left the others alone one spring, while he built a canoe.

He had a reputation for being a sullen, unsociable fellow, although the others were glad enough to play his adventurous and imaginative games when it suited him. He was always a domineering leader. Grandfather Brunsden said, 'he was always ordering us about'. He told them blood-curdling stories of ghosts and murders, and sometimes persuaded them to join with him in scaring the village women at night. Two maiden ladies who lived at Coate told my mother that one night they were almost frightened out of their lives at the haunted James' Pen by supernatural manifestations afterwards traced to young Jefferies. The boys would often scare themselves worse than their victims.

The village had no church until the late 'sixties, when a little chapel of ease was built at the roadside. Sunday services were held in the afternoon in the parlour of Coate House. Richard Jefferies and Henry Brunsden drove the vicar of Chiseldon to and from the house.

Richard's pride of spirit and self-sufficiency isolated him a great deal from the young people, and irritated the older folk. He was rarely asked to festivities and amusements. My grandmother, however, remembered a party at the Cox's house, when she wore a white dress with a blue sash. Richard was there, and the Baden girl whom he later married. Grandmother said that she could see him quite clearly in her mind's eye—a lanky, stooping boy, and 'not at all amusing'. But the white dress and the sash and the wearer with her heavy curls did not go unappreciated. Harry Jefferies and Tom Cox were both stricken and sent her valentines all roses and violets and elegant paper lace.

When Richard Jefferies was sixteen he had an adventure—the only outward adventure of his outwardly quiet life. He persuaded another boy to consider a walk through Europe as far as Moscow. They sought omens by reference to the wagging of a dog's tail. The dog's tail wagged and the two boys ran away to France for a week. Where did the money come from? My grandfather can account for the origin of some of it. Jefferies sold his watch.

At this time the Jefferies family began to respect Richard's talent a little. They gave him a room in the attic next to the cheese room, where he could be quiet and undisturbed. From this window he could see the Roman Camp of Liddington Castle¹ and the long, quiet, satisfying curves of the Wiltshire downs. Grandmother says that there was a bird that used to come into his room and sit upon his bed rail. He sat a great deal in the summer-house and wrote. He also sat in contemplation at the foot of an oak tree in the Home Field, while the haymakers, in a torment of midges in the island field, said that such laziness did not ought to be allowed. The villagers often found him at the loneliest corner of the reservoir. The place is dark and cool and crowded with minnows. He would sit like a rock and study them for hours.

His few friends were mostly of the humbler sort. He was fond of an old cobbler in the village, and talked much with Job Lawrence, the water bailiff, and with William Brown, a labourer who worked for my great-grandfather Brunsden. This man, who appears with the others in the books, earned the usual wage of six shillings a week, rising to eight shillings at the birth of his first child.

Jefferies went about with a gun under his arm. W.H. Hudson in *Birds in a Village* is scandalized that a man who called himself a naturalist should shoot kingfishers. My grandfather expressed the feelings of the village when he said, 'In my opinion that man is an out-and-out atheist'.

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<sup>1</sup> The windows in the attic study looked west and north. Liddington Hill is to the south-west. However, a window in the cheese room might have given Jefferies a view of the Downs.

## Editorial notes: Brunsden and the farming community.

There is a sad story to relate about Audrey Horsell's great grandfather, Henry Brunsden. He should not to be confused with Audrey's grandfather, also named Henry (John), who recounted his memories of Richard Jefferies and was born in 1856 at Snodshill – closer in age to Jefferies' younger brothers.

Henry Snr. was born at Snodshill Farm, Coate in 1826. Tragedy struck the family and Snodshill in 1849 when his mother, Martha died on 10 January aged 57 of a heart attack, followed on 7 February by his grandmother (?) Betty aged 82 who died of old age and then on 16 March, William, his eldest brother, died of tuberculosis aged 31. His father, John, died a few years later in 1854. However, Henry kept up the family tradition and by 1881 (census information) he farmed 238 acres at Snodshill employing five men and two women.

However, an article in the *Swindon Advertiser* for 30 April 1887, reported a meeting of creditors. Henry Brunsden was bankrupt and owed money totalling £1529. 5s. 6d. after assets were deducted. This included debts to his landlords, although the year's rent had been settled, and £200 to William Woolford for milk (see later). In *The English Dairy Farmer 1500-1900* (Routledge, 1966), G.E. Fussell drew attention to a fraud at that time that had affected farmers. Fussell reported that Henry Brunsden 'who had nursed the infant Richard Jefferies', had been swindled by a London firm who had contracted him to supply 260 gallons of milk a day. The company was bogus. In the meantime Brunsden had been taking milk supplies from neighbouring farms to make up this large quantity and had gone into debt paying them. According to the article in the *Swindon Advertiser*, Brunsden was also accused of using some of his sister's assets: Jane Wright was a farmer's wife at The Marsh, Wanborough, who had died in 1884. Henry Brunsden was an executor of her will. He denied any wrong-doing but it was clear that he had not been keeping good records of income and expenditure on the farm or in his role as executor. Henry Snr. retired from farming but remained living in Coate until his death in 1913 aged eighty-seven.

His son Henry John (Audrey Horsell's grandfather) farmed at Lower Snodshill but died on 10 August 1907, aged fifty-one, leaving assets of £278. 15s. to his wife Emma. Horsell's grandmother, to whom Harry Jefferies took a shine, also came from a farming family. Emma Plummer Freeman (born 1854) was the illegitimate daughter of Sarah Elizabeth Freeman – the daughter of Henry Freeman of Walcot Farm. Emma's mother married William Woolford in 1859, who was later owed money for milk as a result of the Brunsden scam. The Woolfords were another farming family at Snodshill and Westcott. It was William Woolford's brother John who took in the

wayward Richard Jefferies in 1870 when he was ashamed to return home. Richard had written<sup>2</sup> to John Woolford in late September 1870 to say that he is in great financial difficulty and has no-one else to turn to. He could stay on with his Aunt but does not wish to impose on her and cannot go home. Could he stay at Snodshill until he can re-establish himself? He will eventually repay any debts and, as security, gives a list and rough valuation of all his possessions: small silver watch £4, small gold chain £3, massive gold chain 8 guineas, diamond scarf-pin 10 guineas, double-barrelled gun £7, a gig, 200 books costing £60, and a gold piece. He has only £1 in cash. Also, he writes, 'I could not object to bear a hand upon the farm ... I know something about it, having done so for amusement at home'.

Whilst these characters and relationships are difficult to follow, it does demonstrate the very close ties and family connections in the farming community.



Photograph reproduced from *An English Village* by Richard Jefferies, facing p.102. The book is an American edition (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1903) of *Wild Life in a Southern County*, and recent photographs were taken at Coate for this publication by Clifton Johnson. The farmhouse shown is believed to be Upper Snodshill.

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<sup>2</sup> The letter is reproduced in the Edward Thomas' biography: *Richard Jefferies, His Life and Work* (London: Hutchinson, 1909), pp.70-72.

# Walter T. Spencer: Bloomsbury Bookseller

*Peter Robins*

'I was never quite able to fathom Richard Jefferies. He was as retiring in his ways as Walter Pater was, though in the case of the author of *Marius* you felt it was natural shyness, while the author of *The Gamekeeper at Home* seemed hardly ever at the ease you instinctively expected from his type. Perhaps his rather delicate health had something to do with it.'

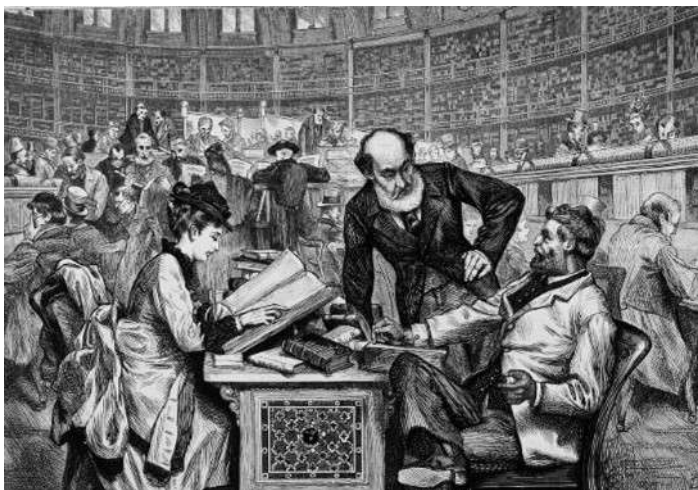


Walter Thomas Spencer

This recollection of Jefferies appeared in Walter T. Spencer's memoir, *Forty Years In My Bookshop*, published by Constable in 1923. Spencer had opened his shop selling antiquarian books and prints in June 1883 at 27 New Oxford Street, a short walk from the British Museum and shrewdly opposite Mudies' Circulating Library. Spencer, known as 'Tommy' in the trade, dealt in prints, plate books, bound sets, the Romantics, Americana, and first editions of the time including Dickens, Thackeray, Wilde, Conrad, and Galsworthy, arranged over four floors. He counted among his clients, Gissing, Lang, Swinburne and Meredith as well as wealthy British and American collectors such as George Vanderbilt and Henry J. Heinz.

Jefferies could not have been a regular caller at the shop due to his poor health, which Spencer had intuited, as Besant concluded in his biography of Jefferies that, ‘the period of the greatest suffering seems to have been the year 1884.’<sup>1</sup> By April/May of 1885 Jefferies had moved from Eltham to Rotherfield in Sussex and did not return to London after that.

There was another reason Jefferies was an infrequent visitor to Spencer’s shop. During 1883 and 1884 Jefferies’ disenchantment with books emerged in his autobiography and a published essay: ‘Sometimes I came from the Reading-room [at the British Museum], where under the dome I often looked up from the desk and realised the crushing hopelessness of books, useless, not equal to one bubble borne along the running brook I had walked by.’<sup>2</sup> A few months later he repeated the theme: ‘Yet the magic of books draws one here [the British Museum] time after time, to be as often disappointed. Something in a book tempts the mind as pictures tempt the eye; the eye grows weary of pictures, but looks again. The mind wearies of books, yet cannot forget that once when they were first opened in youth they gave it hope of knowledge. Those first books exhausted, there is nothing left but words and covers. It seems as if all the books in the world—really books—can be bought for £10.’<sup>3</sup>



Reading-room, British Museum, drawn by Charles Gregory, published in *The Pictorial World*, 5 Dec 1874.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Besant, *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies* (Chatto and Windus, 1889), p.331.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of My Heart* (Longmans, Green, and Co. 1883), p.91.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Pigeons at the British Museum’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 January 1884. Collected in *The Life of the Fields* (Chatto and Windus, 1884), pp.254-5.

Yet, just a few years before, Jefferies had expressed enthusiasm, even reverence, for books in a passage in his essay 'Choosing A Gun'<sup>4</sup> in which racks of guns at a gunsmith's evoked a memory of enjoying a library: 'Is there anything so delicious as the first exploration of a great library—alone—unwatched?...You walk gently round the walls, pausing here to read a title, there to draw a tome...finding a little work whose value, were it in the mart, would be more than its weight in gold.' This class of library was beyond Jefferies' means. Although his personal taste included Walter Scott, Charles Reade, Ouida, Miss Braddon, Goethe and Dryden, he never cared for Dickens, Dante, Jane Austen, Victor Hugo or Anthony Trollope. The books he wanted were reference books, particularly Johnson's *British Wild Flowers*<sup>5</sup> and Gerard's *Herball*.<sup>6</sup>

Walter T. Spencer would have been a likely source for these items and Jefferies recalls in one of his last essays: 'Just then the only copy [of Gerard] I could hear of was much damaged. The cunning old bookseller said he could make it up; but I have no fancy for patched books, they are not quite genuine; I would rather have them deficient; and the price was rather long, and so I went Gerardless.'<sup>7</sup> Jefferies didn't name Spencer but his description matches the Bloomsbury bookseller; 'cunning', 'patched books' and 'the price was rather long' were his hallmarks. Samuel J. Looker, who bought books from Spencer, added 'curmudgeon'.<sup>8</sup>

Spencer's recollection of Jefferies continues:

When he died I purchased many books, pamphlets and manuscripts from his widow. Among them were a number of political pamphlets, such as 'Jack Brass' and 'Suez-Side' (*sic*), 'The World's End' (*sic*) and his first book, 'The Scarlet Shawl'. These were all written before Jefferies found himself. Many of my customers have expressed very poor opinions of his work previous to 'The Gamekeeper at Home', and it is, I believe, quite worthless. Still, Jefferies is Jefferies, and I paid a guinea apiece for those early books. Although Jefferies is not much read in these latter years, I believe he will some day be much sought after, in spite of the curious vagaries associated with his book-prices. 'The Gamekeeper at Home' was once valued at £2 5s; today the price of a good copy

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<sup>4</sup> Unpublished. Probably written 1878/9. Collected in *The Hills and the Vale* (Duckworth, 1909), p.8.

<sup>5</sup> Besant, *op. cit.*, p.172. C.P. Johnson, *British Wild Flowers*, illus. by J. E. Sowerby, published by John E. Sowerby, 1860.

<sup>6</sup> John Gerard, *The Herball or A Generall Historie of Plantes*, 1597.

<sup>7</sup> 'Nature and Books', *The Fortnightly Review*, 1 May 1887. Collected in *Field and Hedgerow* (Longmans, Green and Co., 1889), p.27.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel J. Looker and Crichton Porteous, *Richard Jefferies Man of the Fields* (The Country Book Club, 1966), p.xvi.

is only fifteen shillings. Nine of his books, however, remain at the price of fifty shillings to three pounds each.<sup>9</sup>

Spencer's anecdotal memoirs concern his book-dealing and we learn little about his background or personal life. Public records show that Walter Thomas Spencer was born in 1864 at 270 Holloway Road, north London. His father, Thomas Walter, gave his occupation as 'carver & gilder' at the same address in the 1871 census but Walter recalls the shop also sold pictures and bric-a-brac. Walter had two younger brothers, Henry and Ernest, and a sister, Alice, who died in infancy. Thomas Walter died prematurely at the age of forty-four in 1878, leaving his widow, Elizabeth, aged thirty-five, to find an income and support the family. The 1881 census suggests Elizabeth carried on with the shop declaring herself as 'curiosity dealer' with the teenaged Walter as 'assistant'. By this time a sister of Elizabeth, Sarah, aged twenty-six, had joined the family. A year later an entry in a post office directory for the same address described Mrs. Elizabeth Spencer as a bookseller,<sup>10</sup> perhaps reflecting Walter's contribution.

Although Spencer tells of his teenage years chasing bargains at the various second-hand bookshops and stalls, it seems remarkable in the modern age that a nineteen-year-old could open a shop in Bloomsbury to compete with the established antiquarian booksellers, Quaritch, Sotheran, and Ellis. Stock was limited at first, he says, but he had an early success with the sale of a set of original monthly issues of 'Dombey and Son', which, he proudly states 'gave me my first step upwards on the ladder of good fortune'. Spencer soon became known as a Dickens specialist and so comprehensive was his collection that he occasionally loaned items for exhibitions. His shrewd dealings made him wealthy within a few years and in 1885 he married Mary Sheppard. By 1891 he had bought Culver House, in Shanklin, Isle of Wight, where Spencer established his mother who ran it as a guest house and where he would stay when the opportunity arose.

Much of his buying was from individuals though he acquired stock at Hodgson's in Chancery Lane and other auction houses. On one occasion he bought a bundle of presentation copies which bore the name of Thackeray's daughter and suspected that they had been stolen. Spencer returned the books to the grateful owner who found in the bookseller a trustworthy purchaser of Thackeray manuscripts, drawings, letters and first editions.

Presentation copies particularly interested Spencer and one particular example, recorded in his book, involved some volumes inscribed by Jefferies:

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<sup>9</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, p.216.

<sup>10</sup> *Post Office London Directory 1882*, p.77.

And Richard Jefferies, whose market for a long period seemed to be undergoing depreciation, is now gaining comparative popularity. Twenty years ago I remember disposing of nine volumes of his best works, first editions, for twelve guineas. Each book was inscribed with an autograph presentation to one and the same person, who had inked out his own family name before selling them. But the fact of the volumes remaining with unopened sheets is a melancholy evidence that this particular friend of poor Jefferies was careless in his connection with such an unrivalled painter of country life, scenes, and people. Jefferies pen-dates each book in its year of publication: which is a fair ground for assuming his friend was highly regarded. 'Bevis, the Story of a Boy', in three volumes, 1882, is the most important single work by Jefferies. I recall that it used to be priced at thirty-six shillings: today it will fetch £3.<sup>11</sup>

About 2005, George Miller bought one of these books and after some investigation concluded that the recipient had been W.H. Mudford, editor of the *Standard*, to which Jefferies had regularly contributed.<sup>12</sup>

Reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always amount to autobiography, which are often self-indulgent. Spencer's reputation among London dealers was suspect with one commentator claiming, 'He was a constructor of false provenances, a maker-up of questionable sets of Dickens in parts and would 'sophisticate' books with unacknowledged facsimiles.'<sup>13</sup> Spencer advertised for specific authors and illustrators in various journals and an example shown below is from the 7 Jan 1888 edition of *The Era*, a weekly theatrical newspaper.

Books.

**WANTED, Books. High Prices Offered for any**  
 with Comic Illustrations by Cruikshank, Leech,  
 "Phiz," Rowlandson, Aiken, &c.;  
 or of a Sporting Character, published before 1860.  
 Terms, cash. Established 1856.  
 WALTER T. SPENCER, 27, New Oxford-street, W.C.  
 (Opposite Mudie's Library,).

Books.

**WANTED. — High Price Offered for Thackeray's**  
 "Vanity Fair," in Monthly Parts, with Yellow Paper  
 Covers, 1848; also any of the Works of Leigh Hunt, Robert  
 Browning, Charles Dickens, and Michael Angelo Pittmarsh,  
 Published before 1860. Any by P. B. Shelley, Charles Lamb,  
 and John Keats, Printed before 1820. WALTER T. SPENCER, 27,  
 New Oxford-street, W.C. (Opposite Mudie's Library,).

<sup>11</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, p.191.

<sup>12</sup> For a full account of this see George Miller, 'Discoveries 2. W. H....?' in *The Richard Jefferies Society: Autumn Newsletter & Annual Report 2007-2008*, pp.29-30.

<sup>13</sup> "Awesome Books Wants List from 1920s": 21 July 2007. [http:// www.bookride.com](http://www.bookride.com)

To add pedigree to his new business he claimed falsely in this advertisement that it was established in 1856. For his ‘sophistications’ Spencer’s catalogues usually appealed for ‘imperfect copies or odd vols of any books or odd plates in this list’ as seen in the example from 1920 shown here.<sup>14</sup>

**BOOKS AND PRINTS**  
 SPECIALLY WANTED TO BE PURCHASED  
 - BY -  
**WALTER T. SPENCER,**  
**27, NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.C.**  
(Opposite Mudie's Library and near the British Museum).  
*Telephone No. 5847 Central. Telegraphic Address- "Phiz, London." Private Address-*  
*CULVER HOUSE, THE ESPLANADE, SHANKLIN, ISLE OF WIGHT.*  
 Bankers - LONDON & COUNTY (New Oxford St. Branch).  
 Any Parcels of Books sent, I willingly pay carriage both ways, if we do not come  
 to terms.  


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*Cash always sent by Return Post. Established 1884*  


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**— Shall be glad to hear of Imperfect Copies or Odd Vols of any Books or  
 odd plates in this List.**

Catalogue issued in 1920. WANTS included Jefferies’ *Reporting, Editing etc.* n.d.; *Jack Brass*, 1873; *The Goddards*, Swindon n.d.; *The Scarlet Shawl*, 1874; *Restless Human Hearts*, 3 vols, 1875.’

This shady side of Spencer didn’t appear to deter custom. One wealthy American industrialist, Owen D. Young, regularly bought from Spencer’s catalogues in the 1920s, visiting his shop when occasionally in London. In a letter to a friend, dated August, 1927,<sup>15</sup> Young enthuses about an outing to Spencer’s shop where he and Spencer were delving in a pile of dust-laden books and pamphlets when ‘we pulled out a volume in folio-size, bound in old calf and when we opened it, it contained editions of Pope and best of all a copy of Dr. Johnson’s ‘London’, which sold a few weeks ago at Sotheby’s for 285 pounds...Spencer and I got up and danced around the room, and no winners at any form of gambling were ever more hilarious.’<sup>16</sup> Surely a scene worthy of Dickens’ imagination and Cruikshank’s pen. Young’s biographer, his daughter, commented, ‘Young knew he was dealing with a rascal. Indeed, Spencer had a rather dubious reputation among dealers in London, and Young wrote to him many letters of advice, and stern admonitions as well.’<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> George Miller has seen a copy of *The Gamekeeper at Home* in Swindon Public Library in which a first edition title page has been added to a later impression, which has Spencer’s ticket in it. The Richard Jefferies Society: *Autumn Newsletter & Annual Report 2007-2008*, pp.29-30.

<sup>15</sup> Spencer continued to trade at 27 New Oxford Street after the publication of his book.

<sup>16</sup> Josephine Young Case, *Owen D. Young and American Enterprise: A Biography* (D. R. Godine, Boston, 1982), p.408.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, p.407.

Young apparently enjoyed haggling and usually could achieve a discount of 25 to 30 per cent on Spencer's original asking price.<sup>18</sup>

The Wall Street crash in 1929 and the subsequent economic depression in the UK put an end to high-priced collecting for many previously wealthy US and British clients of Spencer. Like the shares bubble, books had been driven up in price far beyond the levels that were supported by their significance and their rarity. Spencer's enthusiasm for a deal, however small, remained undiminished and is revealed in a letter he wrote from Bank House, Shanklin, dated 23 Feb 1931, to a wealthy, female client in Kensington: 'I have just come across a vol of Flowers and Birds, Drawings on Paper, that I thought you might like. I have never seen anything quite like them before, and being in a double case, thought they might be the work of a famous artist.' The price was £20. In a follow-up letter of 26 Feb he urges her, 'to secure those Drawings, even if only as an investment...I feel somehow at the back of my head, that they are very valuable because I have never seen anything in a double case, and as you know I have seen a good many of these things.'<sup>19</sup> One imagines Spencer's sales technique of this nature was relentless over his active fifty years. In his narrative Spencer admits to sending frequent 'tempting letters of persuasion'.

One mystery remains about Spencer. Having had an abundance of rare books, manuscripts, letters and drawings pass through his hands, he greatly respected a collector and friend, Thomas James Wise, and lauded him at the end of his book; 'One of the foremost collectors in Europe and his library is easily the first private library of its kind in England...a priceless library, I may add,'<sup>20</sup> Spencer wrote with some reverence. Wise is one of five in the book's Acknowledgments who 'revised the passages in this book dealing with facts in which they are specially interested and personalities with whom they are familiar.'<sup>21</sup>

In 1934, two antiquarian book-dealers, John Carter and Graham Pollard, exposed Wise as a forger in their book *Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets*.<sup>22</sup> In their book they revealed that Wise together with an antiquarian bookseller, Harry Buxton Forman, had since 1886 forged and sold large quantities of first editions of Georgian and Victorian authors. The forgeries were not just simple piracies of existing works or improved imperfect books. Using their knowledge of literature and poetry they created fictitious works, passing them off to collectors as

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p.850.

<sup>19</sup> 2016 Catalogue entry: Richard M. Ford (ABA): <http://richardfordmanuscripts.co.uk>

<sup>20</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, p.274.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, p.xv.

<sup>22</sup> Constable, 1934.

previously unknown editions. Carter and Pollard's investigations realized that many of the pamphlets could not have appeared at the time of the alleged imprint dates because either the paper or the type was not yet in existence.

Just before Forman died in 1917, he and Wise brought an end to their productions, but not their sale, before the market was flooded. Wise then sold his stock to an unsuspecting and innocent bookseller, Herbert Gorfin. When challenged, Wise initially blamed Forman then remained stonily unresponsive until his death three years later in 1937. When his library was sold by his widow for £66,000 to the British Museum the works were compared with the museum's former collection, at which point it was discovered that 206 book leaves were missing and 89 of these were found in Wise's volumes. Subsequently, 60 of the missing leaves were discovered in books sold by Wise to the American collector John Henry Wrenn, later acquired by the University of Texas.

Walter T. Spencer appears only once in Carter and Pollard's remarkable piece of detective work, citing a fake by Richard Herne Shepherd of a volume of verses by Swinburne offered in his 1890 catalogue. There is no allegation or suspicion that Spencer was involved in the Wise and Forman affair, the authors concluding that Wise acted alone at the British Museum with Forman as his outlet.

Spencer and Wise, both Holloway boys, had scoured the London bookstalls as teenagers together and had remained friends; 'To me he has always been a true friend,' Spencer recorded<sup>23</sup> and often visited Wise at his Hampstead home. Is it possible the astute bookseller was unaware of his friend's dishonesty or Wise unaware of his friend's 'sophistications'?

Walter T. Spencer died in London 28 July 1936. Probate value of his estate, left to his wife, Mary, was determined at £20,000, the equivalent of a million pounds in today's value, testament to all those 'long prices'.

Spencer's book was in no way a definitive account of the antiquarian book trade (yet to be written) and being of a self-publicising character, we learn only of his triumphs—his dark side remains obscure. Fred Snelling, auctioneer's clerk at Hodgson's for many years said of Spencer that, 'much of what he knew has certainly gone into limbo...some of the best tales I ever heard of Spencer's dealings never got into his book.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, p.274.

<sup>24</sup> "Awesome Books Wants List from 1920s": 21 July 2007. [http:// www.bookride.com](http://www.bookride.com)

# The Charm of Three Great Idlers

*Florence Bone*

This article was first published in *The Young Man*, June 1906, pp.208-210. The publishers were Horace Marshall & Son. Florence Bone (1875-1971) was born in Liverpool, daughter of a Methodist minister; was educated at a Moravian School; wrote three girls' stories and several historical and romantic novels set in Yorkshire. Some of her work was published by the Religious Tract Society.

Vagrant melodies, the winds which bore  
Them earthward, till they lit;  
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower,  
The fruitful wit  
Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew  
Where'er they fell, behold,  
Like to the motherplant in semblance, grew  
A flower all gold.

The twentieth century is absorbed in occupation. It passes, a brilliant pageant of personality, wherein each man is a specialist. And the rush for notoriety, the cult of games, is followed no less strenuously than the pursuit of wealth. Yet this is an age in which transiency prevails. We do not take time to mellow our thought. A book is old and forgotten almost as soon as it leaves the publisher's house. To keep his name before the public a writer must be constantly pouring forth a literary stream, whether ready for the world or no. There are many little idlers nowadays, but there is no time for great ones to grow. Very early in the nineteenth century there was born in a New England village, beside the Concord river, Henry David Thoreau, a dreamer and writer of prose pictures and old-time thoughts whose charm will surely be eternal.

There was Celtic blood in his veins and more than a tinge of mysticism in his spirit, but the natural trend of his philosophy had much in common with the thought of older India and that elusive wisdom which we have come to associate with the rose gardens of Persia.

Thoreau grew up in an old farmhouse, where amid beautiful surroundings the symbolic meaning of outward beauty sank into his soul and made of him the great idler that he became. He knew something of the cultivation of fields. He was by occupation a pencil maker and surveyor of land. But his real life was lived in the boat that glided swallow-like for many days together between the trees of twilight that fringed the Merrimac river under the

magic of starlight, when he encamped for the night, and when he was living the simple life amid quiet fields that grew about his cottage at Walden.

It was in these places that his musings fashioned themselves into the thoughts that he left behind him and that were to him so much more real and eventful than transient happenings.

A fleet and elusive fancy that developed slowly into a lasting thought was to him a precious possession, a priceless heritage. 'The most glorious fact of our experience,' he says, 'is not anything that we have done or may hope to do, but a transient thought or vision or dream that we have had.'

He turned from the material side of life to seek the invisible. During hours of reverie in the waking woods or beside the brace of cornfields he felt that something intangible, wonderful, far above and yet allied to himself, crept into his life and stayed there.

Then idle Time ran gadding by  
And left me with Eternity alone;  
I hear beyond the range of sound,  
I see beyond the range of sight.

Thoreau has quaintly said that if he stayed within four walls he speedily began to rust, and that a wanderer through woods and over hills must become one by a special vocation. One of his chiefest delights was to watch for the coming of the spring—that slow dawning of witchery and waking earth which so few people see and which he has written with a tender touch. Thoreau did not go out into the woods in search of copy. He lingered there because he loved the places which the fairies haunt, and he wrote about them because he could not help it.

He was a lover of the word saunterer for its real meaning. It was derived from idle people who roved in the Middle Ages and asked charity under pretence of going à la Saint Terre. In time the word used became Saint-Terrers, or saunterers. Thoreau regarded every walk as a crusade whose quest was the beautiful, and this is the crux of his ethical teaching. He took no count of time, and would gladly spend a summer day in watching one phase of beauty, or listening to the birds, whom he loved with that personal affection which reminds one of Saint Francis. 'Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in,' he said; 'I drink at it, but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is.'

The music of thought, the brown robe of earth which he girt about him, were to Thoreau part of eternity and not of time. He crushed in himself the desire of the flesh, he lived the simple life, that his intellect and his mystic vision might dominate all his being. He was not an ascetic, but he was a man who lived near to the primitive heart of nature, who saw symbols in stars and wonderland everywhere. Only a great idler could have written these words:

Those first stars whose silver beams on high,  
Shining more brightly as the day goes by,  
Most travellers cannot at first descry,  
But eyes that wont to range the evening sky,  
And know the celestial lights, do plainly see,  
And gladly hail them, numbering two or three;  
For lore that's deep must deeply studied be,  
As from deep wells men read star poetry.

Twenty-five years ago Edward Fitzgerald was still living his life of eccentric idleness fraught with wonderful genius at Littlegrange, near Woodbridge, in Suffolk. All his life he was an idler, and it was passed in the uneventful setting of a quiet English countryside. He never knew the spur of poverty, the stress of tragic moments. He moved through life serenely and at his own sweet and sometimes wayward will. Its events were all inward ones, which left no mark save on his soul.

Tennyson has given us a picture of 'Old Fitz,' as his familiar friends called him, in the dedication to his volume of poems entitled *Tiresias*. We see him there, seated under a tree at his old-world grange, regarding 'the wheeling orb of change' with a smile that kept aloof from it and with white doves circling about his shoulder.

Dreaming in a garden, plodding through the often miry lanes about his home, or sailing in a small yacht near Lowestoft with his fisherman-friend 'Posh,' Fitzgerald was in his natural atmosphere. He liked to wake early upon a summer morning, and lie reading old books while the rose-fragrant breath of daylight played about him through an open lattice window. Yet his was at times a lonely idleness, although he had a genius for friendship and many famous friends. Some of the words into which he has translated the quatrains of Omar Khayyam came straight from his own heart and belong more really to Fitzgerald than to the Persian poet of old. Surely these are among them:

Here, with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,  
A flask of wine, a book of verse, and thou  
Beside me, singing in the wilderness,  
And wilderness is paradise now.

It was in an idle moment that Fitzgerald determined to study the Persian language, which was to be fraught with such notable consequences to him and the world. He was visiting Professor Cowell, who lived at the time near Ipswich in a charming cottage covered with japonica and surrounded by a garden full of old-fashioned flowers. In this garden he and his wife studied Persian, and Fitzgerald joined them. They may be still seen in the Bodleian Library at Oxford the wonderful little manuscript of Persian poetry, bordered

with purple and scattered with gold, which is the very volume of 'youth's sweet-scented manuscript' that Fitzgerald translated.

This old poem of passion and regret made him famous as the years went by. Its innumerable editions prove its charm to-day.

Fitzgerald looked out upon life from his quiet hermitage with shy, wistful eyes that shrank from all whom he did not know. But he was tender-hearted. He hated the roar and traffic of London with an almost personal hatred, but he would face it if an old friend wanted him—if an old comrade was in distress. Some of his close friends were very lowly ones, with whom he smoked a quiet pipe in farmhouse kitchens. Fitzgerald outlived many of them, for his life of distinguished idleness was a long one. Did he not think of these when he translated this verse?

Lo, some we loved, the loveliest and the best,  
That Time and Fate of all their vintage prest,  
Have drunk their cup a round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest.

In the middle of the nineteenth century shepherds wandering over the Wiltshire Downs, perchance through a snowstorm, in search of lost sheep, were wont to meet a growing boy, whom they regarded with no little contempt. 'Seed ye owt on the downs?' one would ask another as the grey dusk was falling. 'Nobbut Dick Jefferies mooning about,' would be the invariable reply.

From his earliest childhood Richard Jefferies was misunderstood. In this twentieth century a child showing any dawning literary gift is hurried into precocious prose by its eager parent. But fifty and even twenty years ago such a thing was usually regarded askance and obliged to grow in spite of many obstacles. Perhaps the gift grew straighter and stronger in consequence, though it advanced with less speed.

That wonderful autobiography of thought and feeling, *The Story of My Heart*, which he wrote in after days of pain, is the result of hours of great and mystic idleness. Jefferies never outgrew his dreams. He tells us there how very early in the summer dawn he would go out upon the Downs to see the sun rise, hiding beneath the elm trees lest he should be seen and ridiculed. He would watch its majestic coming over the line of hills while he seemed to be alone in a wonderful world.

My thought or unconsciousness went up through the illumined sky, and I was lost in a moment of exaltation. . . . The light coming across the grass and leaving itself on the dew-drops, the sound of the wind, and the sense of mounting to the lofty heaven, filled me with a deep sigh, a wish to draw something out of the beauty of it, some part of that which caused my

admiration, the subtle inner essence. . . . Nothing is of any use unless it gives me a stronger mind, a more beautiful body, a soul life now.

Thoughts such as these permeated the spirit of Jefferies as he lay in the fields apparently idle, watching the sheen of acres of pale sweet cowslips or listening to the thrush in a hawthorn tree. But he read poetry everywhere—behind the sordid aspect of East London, in the circling pigeons about the black pillars of the British Museum. His books are made up almost entirely of beauty of observation and depth of mystic thought. He saw ‘an inner and esoteric meaning in all the visible universe.’

It was impossible for Jefferies to make friends. One has said that his only real and close friend was ‘the man in the tumultus.’ This was a forgotten warrior, buried centuries ago under a mound on the Downs, where Jefferies used to sit and think until he ‘felt back’ through the centuries.

It was only during these hours of reverie that Jefferies really lived, and he could never get enough of them. He has described his longing for an eternity for this kind of life.

The longer we can stay among these things so much the more is snatched from inevitable Time. . . . The invisible shadow goes on and steals from us. These are the only hours that are not wasted—these hours that absorb the soul and fill it with beauty. This is real life, and all else is illusion or mere endurance.

Jefferies died at the early age of thirty-nine (*sic*), a weary and in many ways a disappointed man. The world in which he lived was unheeded by the busy passer-by, who did not want his books. He fought with poverty and a frail, worn-out body to the end. It is characteristic of him that he expressed a desire to be burned on a pyre of pinewood, open to the air and on the summit of a hill. He desired that his ashes might be scattered abroad to wind and earth. This last longing, like so many others, could not be fulfilled. But not very far from Worthing, in a place of beauty, where the birds sing their way to the Downs and the sea, the heart of this passionate mystic lies still.

# Richard Jefferies' 'Nurse'

This brief announcement was published in the *Western Daily Press & Bristol Mirror* dated Monday, 12 June 1939.

## LINK WITH WILTSHIRE POET SEVERED

The death was announced on Saturday at her home at Redcliffe, Crudwell Road, Malmesbury, of Mrs. Matilda Boulter, who died at the age of 94 years.

By her death one of the last surviving links with the Wiltshire poet, Richard Jefferies, is broken.

Mrs. Boulter was born at Coate, the hamlet two miles from Swindon, where Jefferies was born, and nursed him at his home.

She knew Jefferies as a delicate young man, and used to describe him as a person of distinctly solitary habits.

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Matilda Boulter's maiden name was Cavey or Calvey (both spellings appear on censuses). She married Tom Boulter at the end of 1870. On the 1861 census, aged 15, she was the 'domestic servant' at the Jefferies' farm at Coate. The dates of Richard Jefferies' illnesses (1866-68) fit in well with her time with the family and what she said about him. In his late teens Jefferies exhibited the first symptoms of tuberculosis. In his *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*, Walter Besant writes that Jefferies was seventeen when his friends feared he would go 'into a decline', but this was 'happily averted—perhaps through his love for the open air'. He suffered serious illness again between 21 July and 2 September 1867. On 5 September 1867 Jefferies wrote to Aunt Ellen and reported that he was 'still wo[e]fully weak and thin'. In June 1868 he fainted in church and was very weak; unable to walk far without getting tired. Later that month he was again weak, and 'so much inclined to faint'. In August he was once more very ill, indeed near death, and later, still 'miserably weak', his legs 'as thin as a grasshopper's'. He did not fully recover until the end of September. No doubt Matilda Cavey did help him through his early bouts of illness.

Matilda was born at Medboune (the Liddington end of Dayhouse Lane) on 17 November 1844. Her father Young Calvey was also born in Liddington in 1812 and so too was her mother Sophie née Herrick born in 1806.

Matilda's husband, Tom Boulter, was a brickmaker. No doubt he worked at the brickworks at Badbury Wick at that time where Matilda might have met him. Tom Boulter (originally from Malmesbury) lived in Wootton Bassett when first married and then the couple moved to Malmesbury.

Reminiscences of Swindon and the Jefferies' family

The following information was written in 1937 by Richard Jefferies' first cousins, Fanny Catherine Hall¹ (aged 87) and Florence (Hall) Bott² (aged 81) for their nieces Mabel (Mrs. Helen Mabel Lewis) and Kathleen (Miss Kathleen Mary Sewell). Their mother, Martha Hall, was James Luckett Jefferies' sister.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF FANNY CATHERINE HALL

Swindon, Wiltshire, 80 years ago and more [was] then a country town with few excitements and perhaps a somewhat exalted opinion of its importance over the then young and struggling suburb at its foot.

Swindon Town is now much altered in appearance. When I first recollect things, there were two cottages in Wood St. with a narrow border of flowers and palings, and on a portion of the spot now occupied by the Corn Exchange³, were some picturesque gardens and pretty cottages. There was also a grim-looking house standing far back from the road in Wood St. nearly opposite where a jeweller's shop is now.

There was a small general grocer's shop also at the top of Wood St., where a Mr. and Mrs. Knapp sold, among other things, slate pencils, then used in all schools, with their distinctive scratchings on slates. The old couple must have been pretty 'warm,' as their two sons, William and Edwin each set up in business—one at the top of Wood St., and the other at the bottom, in quite big shops.

The principal boot and shoe maker was Mr. Ball, who had a large family, with whom ours was somewhat intimate. Further down the streets lived a Mr. Frampton (Builder) also with several children; and somewhat lower, at Mr. Pruce, Hairdresser, a most cantankerous fellow, who often made me squirm on pronouncing on the coarseness of my hair! His wife was a tall, handsome woman who presided over the toy shop, the only one of its kind in town. Opposite was the famous confectioners, Mr. Prinbury's—whose succulent buns and cheesecakes were things to be remembered.

The Goddard Arms was, and is, the premier hotel, though The Bell and the King's Arms now run it somewhat close. Where there is now a toyshop in High Street was formerly a Music Shop, kept by a real old character, Isaac

¹ Fanny Catherine Hall, 1850 -1937.

² Florence Bott, 1856-1939.

³ The Corn Exchange opened in 1866.

Ann. His 3 daughters and 2 of his sons were all more or less musical, but the daughters were lacking in beauty of form or feature. I remember how convulsed with laughter my brother Joe was on the occasion when they sang at some 'Penny Readings,'—'We are a happy family/ we are, we are, we are.'

Where the Wilts and Gloucester Bank now stands derelict, lived an old white-haired gentleman Mr. Joseph Gay—whose brother John, with his son John were the principal doctors in my young days.

Where now is a large garage—once lived Mr. J.H. Shepherd, a wine merchant, I think. He was a cheery looking individual, who always wore a grey top-hat—whilst his old father came out in a white beaver one. Then there was the draper's shop kept by a Mr. Matthews, where antiques are now offered to the public—exactly opposite my grandfather's big old place, of which more anon.

Prospect has altered considerably too. When we first went there in about 1855, the 'Terrace' faced a large strip of land let out in gardens. My father⁴ secured a fine portion and was a very successful cultivator. Then when we moved from No. 5 to No. 8 (afterwards called 6 North St. it being a corner house with front door in that street) it faced a long array of allotment gardens. We used to call the pathway to New Swindon, the 'three hills'—first the gardens, then a gateway, the second hill being between green fields—then another barrier and fields again, terminating with a stone stile. There was a little copse at the top of the last field on the left going down, and I recollect my delight on finding there one 29th May, a fine oak-apple!

Soon the Building Mania began. We did not at all like to see a big inn put up in a portion of our dear old garden—then other houses arose and the allotments were speedily covered with many houses and streets. We were delighted when Longford Villa, The Sands⁵ was built by our father—and we moved into a better locality, with more space for our activities and a splendid garden.

My parents were regular attendants at the Parish Church (Christ Church) and for years we filled Row No. 9 (north Aisle). The services were much longer than at the present time. We used to sing in the metrical version of the Psalms when I first went, with their many dull tunes—but soon had hymns. Bickersteth's Psalmody being later superseded by Hymns Ancient and Modern. I believe it was on the death of Prince Albert in 1861 that the pulpit was entirely covered in dense black cloth. The first organist I remember was Mr. Richardson—then followed Mr. Cammidge—and later, Mr. Whitehead. Mr. H.G. Baily Junr. occasionally favoured us—and Mr.

⁴ William Hall, 1815-1898.

⁵ Now Bath Road.

Bambridge of Marlborough College delighted us with his performance on the organ...⁶

The National School was used on Sunday mornings. Dear Miss Jenner took her afternoon class at her own beautiful house in Cricklade Street. In summer time we were taught under the spreading branches of a fine mulberry tree,—and sometimes the dear kind old lady would take us through the conservatory. The house is now turned into offices.

[My] first school [was] kept by a Miss Preece at No 2. Prospect Terrace. It was a mixed school of all ages from a dot of 4 to a huge boy of 14 or 15. [My] second school [was] kept by a Mrs. Haines—the wife of a jeweller in the town, whose private house was in Victoria St, now turned into the offices of the old Advertiser and North Wilts Herald. [My] Third School: for one quarter I was sent to Moredon House School, near Swindon, as a boarder. The Principals, Mrs. Large and Miss Cox and the second-in-command was a personal friend of Mother's...⁷

I feel I must say something about our grandfather's house at Swindon. It has long since passed from the family, and has been converted into two shops. When I was young it was a very important place to us children; so I will try to give some impressions of it. A large, rambling place, it held a mysterious charm for us all. Built 3 sides of a square—the fourth being occupied by sheds of sorts—and a large back door leading out into the Square. On one side were the kitchen and outhouses: on another the best parlour—over it the best bedroom—and an alcove leading out from which were three bedrooms facing the street, as well as a large front-room—with a delightful window looking up the whole length of High Street. A storey higher, 3 more bedrooms—one of them approached by a tortuous passage—and another with steps leading down to it—with mysterious trapdoors—from which we were all excluded.

The dining room usually called 'Grandpa's Room' was pleasant, and we liked it because high up in a corner cupboard was kept a plentiful supply of sugar candy in a wooden bowl. There were two staircases—one leading from the kitchen had the bedroom occupied by grandfather—then came a largish space in which stood a big box-mangle—which I recollect seeing the Aunts and maid using laboriously—and on which I recollect seeing collected once about 20 or 30 huge straw bonnets evidently being turned out during a spring-clean.

⁶ Then follows further details of vicars and curates.

⁷ There follows accounts of further schooling in Marlborough, Deal, and of teaching appointments.

Then came a long, dark passage which we usually scrambled through as speedily as possible—then another stairway leading down to the huge bakehouse itself—and so to the ground floor again.

Grandfather was very literary and he had a really remarkable family. They all received a good education and several of them were much in advance of their era. The fourth son, John Lockett⁸ was an artist and music-lover, the special favourite of my mother, who considerably helped him in his career. Then Mother⁹ herself, a remarkably intelligent and intellectual woman, had a good school of her own, which she gave up on the birth of her third child—the long wished-for boy.¹⁰ My father was so disappointed that I was not of the other sex that I was nearly called ‘Josephine,’ instead of bearing the names of my two grandmothers. I remember once, as a young troublesome child, being pulled from the jaws of the machinery of the ‘Old Mill,’ now nothing but a memory itself. There is an old legend extant that I was never taught my A.B.C.; that when Mother began, she found that I knew them all! It appears that the nursemaid used to take her charges into Holy Rood churchyard, and that, as I went from tomb to tomb, she taught me to read! However that may be, I do recollect standing by my grandfather at the age of 4 and reading to him out of a New Testament (I can visualise its brown cover now) and being given a crown piece for my pains.

Our principal excitements were the Fairs and Circus. On such occasions we were all asked down to Grandfather’s, to see all out of the big front-room window. I first experienced a real fright on going through the Fair—with the maid—I saw in front of a booth a strange masked figure dressed in green and dancing madly—Oh! I was scared and did not recover till safe up into that dear old front room.

Aunt Sarah¹¹ was a stern disciplinarian—I had a bad habit evidently of putting my elbows on the meal-table, and after warnings I distinctly remember the tearing of my arms by a huge carpet-pin, stuck into the cloth. No doubt I deserved it—but it was a bit drastic. Then my fat curls—done up in rags nightly—would come out sometimes—a straight lock of hair hanging down—this must have annoyed my Aunt greatly, for on one occasion when staying there on a short visit—she took me to the hairdresser and had my hair cut shortish. My Mother happened to come down the same evening, and did not at all approve. Still, I have very pleasant recollections of the old Bakehouse in spite of the savage old tortoise-shell cat which seemed

⁸ John Lockett: born 1st September 1824.

⁹ Martha Hall was born on 12th July 1818.

¹⁰ Joseph Hall was born on 2nd January 1854.

¹¹ Sarah Jefferies was born on 3rd March 1820. Unmarried, she lived with her parents at the bakery.

specially fond of attacking the bare legs of children—though grandfather himself was much attached to the animal.

Little Aunt Sewell¹² was always very kind and saved the riotous ones of us from many a scrape, we all loved her.

I hope I have not tired out my dear nieces with my fragmentary reminiscences and trust that what I have put down may interest in some small degree, the younger generation.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF FLORENCE BOTT

[After writing about the absence of indoor sanitation, 80 or so years previous] ... 'The one big house of Swindon, 'The Lawn', then the seat of Ambrose Lethbridge Goddard Esq., was in the same condition; rich and poor houses were all alike, and to point the moral in this year of 1937, this house now lies derelict and condemned—it has still no main drainage!'

Servants were plentiful and cheap but few could either read or write. They were mostly pleasant girls who stayed for years. Telegrams were unknown, and later, when they did come, they were principally signals of death or disaster—I hate them to this day. The postman, (there was only one) was a personal friend of every household, his name was Robert Goodman.

There were no fish shops; what fish we had came round on hand-carts, and was a great treat, and though you'd scarcely believe it, was quite fresh enough to eat! The fish was mostly of the cheaper kind, salmon being a luxury, and only obtainable when Father went to London.

Prinbury, the one confectioner, sold the most delicious cakes and buns, made of real butter, no margarine, Trex or Spry in those days. He was an elegant old man with two very refined daughters, and a nephew George, who greatly smitten with Emily, who refused to smile on him.

There was a Holy Well, on Drove Road, near the Church Fields,<sup>13</sup> and another Spring on the Wroughton Road that was celebrated for its pure and sparkling water. Aunt Sarah<sup>14</sup> used to visit it constantly to bathe her eyes.

This Spring was diverted or lost when the Marlborough Railway<sup>15</sup> was built, and the other was closed when laid-on water became general.

I must mention here what an extremely unusual family, for the time, my Mother's was. Her father was merely a baker you will say, but he was also a well-educated and intelligent man who had to give up his printing and publishing to take over, from his father, the flourishing baking business in

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<sup>12</sup> Eliza (Jefferies) Sewell was born on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1813.

<sup>13</sup> The present Churchfields School, adjoining this site is named after them.

<sup>14</sup> Sarah Jefferies 1820–1864.

<sup>15</sup> The Midland and South Western Junction Line started 1875.

Swindon. It soured him, and rankled in all his family who were unsatisfied, rather morose, and inclined to be melancholy, that is, the male members. The women were alert, well-read, intelligent and full of character.

Mother, for example, was extremely well-read, a good French scholar, and an excellent pianist, a beautiful writer with great breadth of expression, and of handsome, commanding presence.

She gave her firstborn, Fanny, an insight into all the well-worth poets and writers, and Fan can, to this day, find an apt quotation for any subject that comes up (often in these days received with the blank stare of ignorance, despite all our High Schools). She can recite such poems as Gray's *Elegy*, or pages of *Paradise Lost*, (awful things!); whole chapters of the Bible.

She must have had a receptive mind. Emily was not like that, and I came fourth, and was not so well looked after. I can truthfully say this—that in our present circle of middle-class wives of well-to-do tradesmen, bank managers, clergy etc., there is not a woman who is a patch on my mother for learning or breeding.

The one thing I have against her is she was too retiring—not fond enough of society for her family's sake, so her unusual talents were unknown outside her family circle, and consequently they did not hold the position in the growing town which was rightly theirs.

Grandma Jefferies<sup>16</sup> I never saw, but the tales of her kindness and beauty are a legend in the family.

Uncle John<sup>17</sup> died before I can remember him, but he comes down to us as a romantic figure, good-looking, elegant. He played the piano and guitar and, had he lived, he would have been an artist—but, alas, he was marked down by consumption, as we called it then, and died early.

Aunt Cox<sup>18</sup> was definitely Miss Jefferies, the eldest of the family, born in 1812, considered very good-looking, and her father's favourite. She spoilt her chances by marrying a poor farmer, but she was always an outstanding personality, and though she had to work very hard, never lost her individuality.

Aunt Sewell<sup>19</sup> married a dour Scotchman, a tailor, whom none of the family ever liked, but she was a dainty little lady, never said or did a vulgar thing, and was truly, loved by us all.

Uncle Jefferies<sup>20</sup> [James Luckett] was a mixed character, sometimes he would take us children around the fields and show us intimate and delightful

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<sup>16</sup> Fanny (Ridger) Jefferies died in 1858, when Florence was two.

<sup>17</sup> John Luckett Jefferies 1824 – 1856. Buried at Christ Church.

<sup>18</sup> Fanny Jefferies married William Cox of Snodshill Farm, Coate.

<sup>19</sup> Eliza Jefferies married George Sewell of Swindon. He was the uncle of William Sewell who married Emily Hall.

things in the hedgerow. Sometimes he would wear an ear of corn in his buttonhole, and if asked why, would expatiate on its beauty. How much squarer and longer and fatter the ears were than in his boyhood days. Then they looked more like rye-grass, and he was proud of the downland farmers who selected and bred from the best of straws, and could produce the wheat we see today. He always carried several ears in his pocket and when the children accompanied him on his lazy stroll round the fields, we all had one under his directions, rubbed it between palms, blew away the chaff, and munched away happily. 'A man could go all day,' he said, 'on a handful of corn and a drink of water.'

One day, he caught an adder, the island was full of them, pinched its neck and made it open its mouth, to show us it was not the quivering forked tongue that was the danger, but the sharp tooth further back in the jaw. He could always find us the wren's little hooded nest, and was the first to spot the lovely blue hedge-sparrow's eggs; but the eggs of thrushes and blackbirds were never taken. He had a pet blackbird in the rickyard that used to come running when he whistled a certain stave. He usually had a bit of bacon for it. Sometimes we sat in fear and never dared to speak, and he didn't either. He owned a lovely little freehold farm at Coate, but it was too small for money-making, and he was always too heavily handicapped—no ready money, and the haunting certainty that he would not be able to hold it. He married so very unsuitable a wife—a Londoner—and had not even a pony-trap to drive her to market in! She did her best I am sure, for she used to make butter and cheese, and that was work in those days, but she never had any money to spend as she liked, and the heart was taken out of her by the lack. She was very kind to us children, gave of what she had lavishly. She was very good-looking, with dark eyes and a bright complexion.

Some of my happiest recollections are of Coate, and I am passionately attached to the place. Butter and cheese-making were carried on at most of the farms in those days, all done by hand; the only machines, the churn and the cheese-press. Many a time have I helped churn; the handle was of steel uncovered, cold and shiny, and revolved in one's palm—polishing that! Sometimes the butter would not 'come' for hours, and we used to chant a slow sort of dirge, to encourage it, I suppose,

Milk the milk in a wooden pail,  
Come, butter, come,  
Take care the cow don't dip in her tail  
Come, butter, come.

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<sup>20</sup> James Luckett was Richard Jefferies' father.

The cheeses were mostly thin Gloucester, and there is nothing like them now—they were made of skimmed milk, and were not very rich. There was always a spacious well-aired room, called the cheese-room, to store them in on long open shelves, and they had to be turned every second day. I believe I could make cheese today, as it was made then, one slow process after another. Aunt Cox used to raise the press and trim the fresh curd to shape, giving us always this ‘curd’ as a treat. I loathed it, but thought it impolite to say so, but Fan and the others enjoyed it. I remember once hiding it in my hankie, then at dinner, pulled out my hankie and out came the curd all over the floor. Fortunately, the old spaniel—Dash, was near and eat it up quickly, and it was not noticed.

All the farmers kept pigs in old filthy sties, and fed them on the strangest food. The dairy waste all went into a big pit, and to this was added all scraps from the house; the mixture was appalling, almost black, and it was used to mix the meal, or fill the troughs for drink. There was a long-handled dipper and just a loose cover to the hole, which was dangerous and would be thought deadly nowadays, but the pigs seemed to do well enough, and to thrive on dirt. The old sows were most appreciative if you came with a rough stick and scratched their backs, yet note the lovely clean pigs of today to know what they can look like, if properly cared for.

Gradually, all the farms we visited gave up dairy work, and sent their milk to Centres. This relieved the hard work of the farm, but left such a lot of rooms and sheds and outbuildings empty and useless; no dairy, no pigs.

[After relating an adventure in a horse-and-trap, Florence goes on] ... the Plough Hill was the scene of this comedy, and the old inn half way up it, then bore a sign with the following verse on it:—

In hopes we live  
In hopes we die  
In hopes we are bred.  
And I am here  
To sell good beer  
In hopes to get my bread.

When we made trips by ‘brake’ to Marlbro’ Forest we always looked out for this old sign.

The country folk wore clogs or pattens when the fields were deep in mire. Clogs are still used in places, heavy wooden jointed shoes, but pattens were oval iron rings, quite two inches off the ground that had no ‘give’ in them, cut out nice shapes in the mud, and wanted an apprenticeship to use. I can hear the ring of them now on the stone-flagged dairy or yard. All kitchens

were stone-paved in those days. Longford [Villa] was the first house of ours that had a wooden kitchen floor.

There was a lovely old iron fireback representing the flight into Egypt. I wonder where it went. There were settles either side of the fire and you could roast yourself there, look up the great, wide chimney, and see a very bright star looking down. There was a great iron thing (I forget the right name for it<sup>21</sup>) fixed over the fire; you could hang a pot on it, and regulate its distance from the flame and you heated wine or milk in a pointed pot that was pushed right into the hot logs (that had a special name too<sup>22</sup>) and elderberry wine hotted in it on a cold night before walking back to Swindon was a dream.

There were at least 10 fields to go through, stiles to scramble over and just planks over brooks, and yet we used to come this way any time of the night, and get landed just below the church, but still a good walk to home. The other was that long walk along what was through seven fields to the road just outside Coate Farm, and there was that long walk along what was then quite a country road—yet this never prevented our going to Snodshill whenever possible—it was a most hospitable house, and there were plenty of boys about only too glad to make up a party.

Weather. Then, in the days of our youth what different weather we had. The winters were so cold, fresh and consequently frozen ponds lasting with good skating for weeks. Often the water in one's ewer was frozen, and if neglected burst the jug. The summers as correspondingly hot, week after week of blazing sunshine, often at night the most terrific thunderstorms, when everyone lay in fear the house should be 'struck.'

We had no ices, no aerated waters, or cooling drinks of any kind except those made at home of lemon and bicarbonate. The soda-water bottles were oval-bottomed, and could not stand up and were sold only and solely for diluting spirits—for the men! The consequence was children would drink of any water, anywhere and fever was common. We all went through this trouble in turn, and it was not considered out of the way. Fan had it very badly and her hair was cut off close; a terrible loss in those days. Measles was common and considered as inevitable as teething, children were quite expected to have it, and if it attacked one child the rest took it as a matter of course. There were no hospitals save in the large towns; the only house approaching this being the 'Pest House' that was ready for the emergency: cases of tramps with small pox, that most dreaded of diseases. I think the

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<sup>21</sup> Called a crane.

<sup>22</sup> Called a muller – hence mulled wine.

road where this house stood is now called 'The Mall,' with fine modern villas in it.

Consumption was very common, and not fought on the modern lines; windows were hermetically sealed, wraps and scarves heaped on the poor victim, and often a respirator worn.

Yet Fan and I at the respective ages of 87 and 81—in this year of Grace 1937, say 'Yet I think the race was harder in those days.'

Think of it, you young people, eighty years or so ago there were no motors, no cinemas, no wireless, no trams, no buses, no lavatories, no hot water laid on, no phones, few wires, which came later, only one paper a week, no steam laundries, just washerwomen, no bathing pools or baths.

But we had the Penny Post!

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NOTES BY FANNY CATHERINE HALL

Coate Farm was not purchased by Swindon Corporation as a memorial of Richard, but as a home for the custodian of the Reservoir, now called Coate Water.

The BRUNSDENS lived opposite nearby the Jefferies' Farm, and in my earliest recollections, 2 brothers were the farmers—one is said to have aspired to the hand of Miss Mary Jefferies of Swindon—daughter of the owner of Coate Farm, Mr. John Jefferies.²³

Until the thatch was replaced by slate roofing, it was picturesque—I have a dim recollection of going over one summer afternoon with an Aunt, and finding the living-room still in the workmen's hands—and with a lovely big window-place,²⁴ where afterwards I spent many happy hours over the *Arabian Nights*. That must have been in 1853 or 4, as I can visualise the second son, Harry, as a wee baby! The musk was a delight! Now, not a trace of the former, sweet-smelling flower.

I never heard of Daddy Hanks. The only schools that I remember were kept by Mr. Nurse, assisted by a daughter; the former not living in Swindon; with (Mr. Steger) a clergyman's son, that was [?] to which school I always thought Richard went. Mr. Steger was a weird-looking man, with so poor a flair for figures, that once, when he had applied for a post as clerk in the G.W.R. offices, my father was so astonished at the poor result of an examination, that he said to him, 'Why Jimmy, how on earth did you teach boys?' To

²³ John Jefferies was Richard's grandfather. His daughter Mary, the fourth child, never married. She died in 1862, aged 47, and is buried at Christ Church.

²⁴ This is the bay window in the room on the right as you enter the front door.

which the slow-wit replied, 'Oh, we just took them in and did our best for them.'

Richard was domineering, never a favourite with his cousins of either sex. Yet in maturer years, he made love to a cousin (your mother²⁵) for a time.

James's Pen was in a field across the road, and was not much used when I was young—I recollect it well.

Sunday evening services. These were not held in the parlour of Coate Farm, but in the Skillen,²⁶ which was always made very fit for the Sunday evening services. Uncle James assisted materially too in the erection of the little Mission Church on the high road. If I remember rightly, it was the Vicar of Liddington who usually officiated, the Rev. Henry Munn.

The 'other boy' to adventure with him on his famous walk through Europe to Moscow, was his own Cousin, James Cox.

Job Lawrence, the Curator of the Reservoir, and who later became the owner of Coate Farm, was a pleasant, rubicund man, and well-liked.

As to the expression that 'that man is an out-and-out atheist,' it should be treated with the contempt it deserves.²⁷

Wm. Brown was a tall, gaunt man, with a slight squint. Very honest and straightforward, he lived at 'Brown's Cottage,' now demolished—on the side of a hill on Coate Road. He was glad, no doubt, to add to his meagre wage, by employing his leisure hours with the neighbouring farmers. I remember him bringing up to Swindon on one occasion, a large washing-basket of apples—from Uncle's orchard.

Abner Webb was the head man, or perhaps the only one in my young days at Coate Farm. A typical Wiltshire labourer of his time.

The Freemans of Walcot came occasionally to Snodshill.

²⁵ Emily b. February 1852. Later married William Sewell.

²⁶ The 'skillen' or 'Skilling' was a portion of a paved or pitched courtyard that was roofed in. It might run the whole length, of one side of the house, and be enclosed by a brick wall, with one or two gates opening from it. (See 'An English Homestead,' in *The Toilers of the Field*.)

²⁷ A reference to ideas expressed in *The Story of My Heart*, which some held to be subversive of the Christian faith.

Richard Jefferies: Field-Naturalist and Littérateur

Oswald Crawford¹

This article was first published in October 1898, in the illustrated monthly magazine *The Idler* (1892-1911), Vol. XIII, No. III, pages 289-301.² The article was keyed, and has been edited and annotated by Janice Lingley. Minor spelling errors and misquotes have been corrected, whilst conserving nineteenth-century spelling as appropriate.



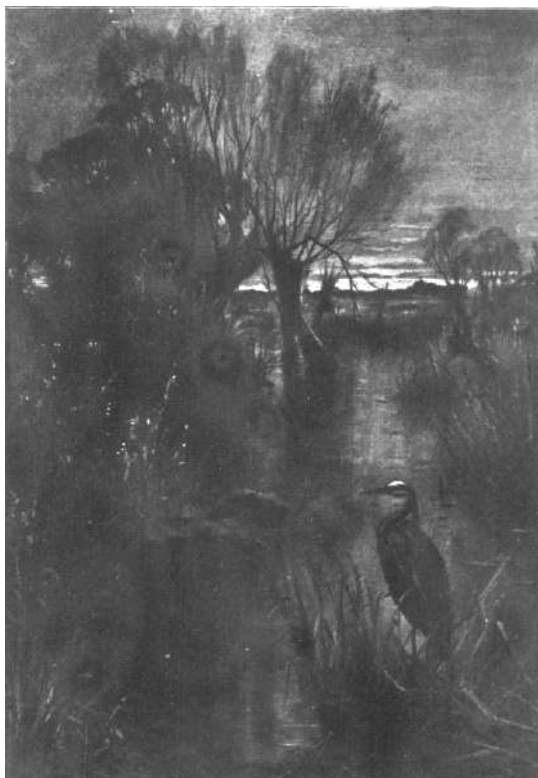
There is a private and particular reason why I should write about Richard Jefferies, and with that reason I shall deal presently. I know of only one

¹ Oswald Frederick Crawford (1834-1909), is described by the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, as 'a typical minor writer of the later Victorian era'. Crawford, educated at Eton and Merton College, Oxford, was by profession a diplomat in Portugal, but he also wrote several novels, drama, essays and poetry, besides being an editor. He contributed to *The Times* and leading periodicals, and was a director of the weekly review magazine *Black and White*, founded in 1891, and also of Chapman & Hall, established in the mid-19th century, publishers of work by Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

² *The Idler* was an illustrated monthly magazine founded in 1892 by the novelist and short-story writer Robert Barr (1849-1912), and co-edited by the writer and humorist Jerome K. Jerome (1859-1927), whose best-known work is *Three Men in a Boat* (1889). *The Idler* featured work by many leading and popular writers of the time, including Conan Doyle, Kipling and Mark Twain, and well-known artists and illustrators: source, Wikipedia.

Crawford's article was illustrated by the British painter Val Davis (1854-1930), a distinguished member of the Royal British Academy. The illustrations included two full page views, one three-quarter page, and one half-page view of Coate Water; also three vignette scenes of Coate farmhouse.

Englishman who stands near Jefferies as an observer of the facts of natural history, and as a literary recorder of those facts: Gilbert White, of Selborne,³ the father of English field-naturalists and the greatest literary artist, after Buffon,⁴ who ever dealt with the animal kingdom. The Rev. Gilbert White was a scholar who took his degree at Oxford, and a gentleman in comparatively easy circumstances, with influential friends. Richard Jefferies was the son of a poor Wiltshire farmer, delicate in health from boyhood and quite unfit for farm life, who turned in youth to provincial journalism—the most unkindly branch of a precarious profession—made a very poor hand of that, attempted fiction-writing again and again, with constant and disastrous



A secluded pool

³ Gilbert White (1720-1793), author of *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789). Jefferies provided the preface to an edition published in 1887. For comment on the preface, see George Miller and Hugoe Matthews, *Richard Jefferies: A Bibliographical Study* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), pp.504-507.

⁴ George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), French naturalist.

failure, possessing, indeed, not one of the gifts or opportunities that make a novelist, and was a shy, proud recluse all his life long. Then, suddenly, and unexpectedly to himself and his friends, he reached a world-wide fame, and even began to make money as a writer on country matters.

The morning of his life had been clouded with care, trouble, doubt, and debt. Only towards noon-tide was his day brightened, and then, immediately afterwards, the darkness came down again. A fatal disease, of which the seeds had long lain dormant, struck him, and he died of consumption in his thirty-ninth year, just when the world had discovered and acknowledged his eminence, and, of course, long before his Wiltshire neighbours had even guessed that the wayward and thriftless son of the Coate farmer was anything but one of life's failures.

With this extraordinary and delightful man—I had almost said, with this genius—I had an acquaintance that lasted over several years. It was, I regret to say—for I never saw him or had speech with him—only an acquaintance, by letter—perhaps I ought not to call it an acquaintance at all, for can one know a man through the post? No; certainly not an ordinary man; but such a retiring, nervously shy, and proud man as I have since ascertained Richard Jefferies to be, I think may be better known from his letters even than from his speech. It is not every man, and certainly not every Englishman, who can reveal himself by word of mouth. The art of social intercourse is hard to acquire for any Englishman, and is not to be learnt in a small farm-house or on the remote downs of Wiltshire. It is certainly not to be picked up in the office of a small provincial journal. Had I ever met Jefferies in the flesh, his rustic manner—between peasant and gamekeeper—his rustic utterance, his natural reticence, and his awkwardness, would probably have hidden the real man from me. His tongue would never have bewrayed⁵ his truer and nobler and intensely sensitive and sympathetic self; but he had a better and more eloquent interpreter than his tongue, that wonderful pen of his, and with this he spoke to me quite plainly, as man to man, and so it is that I dare say to myself—I knew this man.

The business part of my transactions with Richard Jefferies may be disposed of in a few words, but I must deal for a moment with a personal matter. Residing officially in Portugal, in and about the year 1876, I thought well to alleviate the cares and worries of official routine by editing, anonymously if I remember rightly, an important and successful periodical for an eminent firm of London publishers.⁶ Richard Jefferies had sent me two

⁵ This now obsolete word here means 'to reveal, make known'; *OED*, *bewray*, sense 4.

⁶ Crawford refers to the *New Quarterly Magazine* (1873-1880), published by Ward, Lock & Tyler, London, and described as a quarterly 'High-Class Literary and Social Periodical'; Miller and Matthews, *Bibliographical Study*, *op.cit.*, p.35.

or three contributions on rather dry subjects, dealing with country life, and I had published them. One paper was on 'Village Organization'⁷ and prefigured our modern County Councils; the other was entitled 'Allotment Gardening',⁸ and anticipates a great deal that has been done since in that beneficial direction.

I was immensely struck with the lucidity of these papers, the rare faculty of co-ordination possessed by the writer, and the strong, nervous, simple English which he had taught himself to use. In his way of writing I thought I heard a fresh rhythmic note in style, the stamp of an original artist in the use of our English tongue.

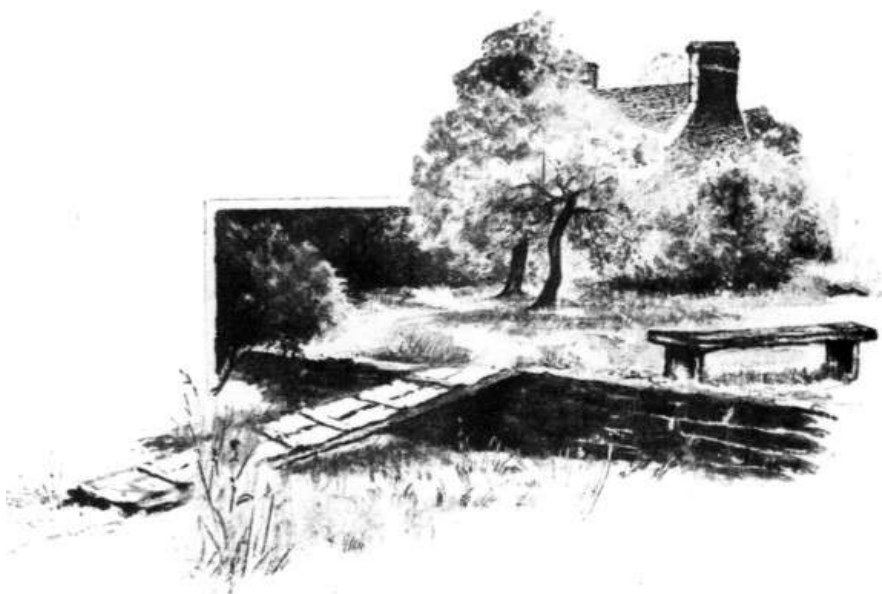
I did what an editor can seldom spare time or trouble to do; I wrote to my contributor to tell him how I admired his work. I think appreciation, from the great, unknown, outside public, was rare with Jefferies. Is not the unbiased praise from strangers too rare with every good workman? Anyhow, Jefferies was grateful, and wrote me a very pleasant letter. This is how our correspondence began.⁹ It lasted three years and ended, as agreeable correspondence mostly ends, by pressure of business on both sides.

A little time after Richard Jefferies' death, happening to find myself in the neighbourhood of Coate, I drove over to visit it. I found it a plain, small, bare, rather poverty-stricken farm-house, by the roadside that leads from Swindon, and about three miles from that town. The view of the house from the road through an imposing archway, which our artist gives, is the view which I saw, and which visitors in Jefferies' days saw. The back of the house is more picturesque. There is meadow land there, through which a path goes, leading to the reservoir, made eighty years ago, and already a picturesque and partly tree-embowered mere. This reservoir, which fully deserves to be called a lake, played, as will be seen by one of the letters written by Jefferies to me, a very important place in his boy-training as a naturalist. At one side of this mere, or lake, is a really beautiful avenue of trees—or, rather, a winding path bordered by tall trees. It was, as may be imagined, a favourite

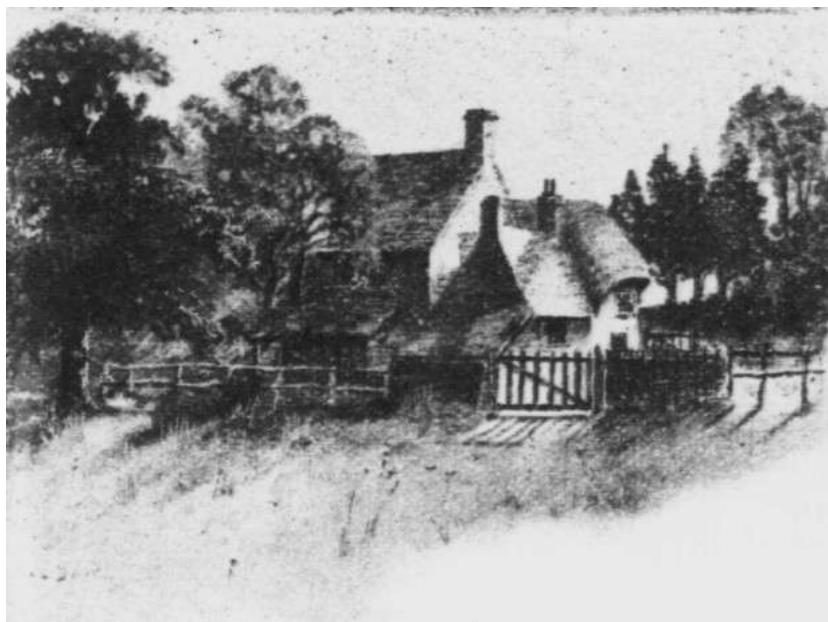
⁷ Published in the *New Quarterly Magazine*, in October 1875, and collected in *The Hills and the Vale* (1909), the essays selected and introduced by Edward Thomas.

⁸ First published in the *New Quarterly Magazine*, in April 1875, and reprinted in *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, Summer 2017, No. 32, pp.5-32.

⁹ This correspondence is apparently no longer extant, apart from the extracts which Crawford quotes in the article.



Jefferies' seat in the garden (at Coate)



Coate from the back

haunt and place of study for the great field-naturalist, for it is the resort, taking the year round, of nearly every small bird that flutters and twitters in our South of England woodlands. The avenue terminates, and expands into a sort of swamp wilderness, with pools partly overgrown with willows and alders, and encumbered by tangled briars, water-weeds, rushes, reeds, and sedge, haunted by coot, moorhen, sedge-warbler, heron, and wild duck. Our artist has made drawings of every one of the 'bits' I have enumerated above and also of a picturesque dell formed by the entrance of a tributary stream from the west. Outside all this water and woodland lie the grass-fields and plough-lands of an ordinary English hunting country, for we are here midway between the Badminton country and the even more famous Vale of White Horse—and, beyond them, the landscape is horizoned by the turf-covered Downs, bare of trees, with their rounded forms rolling towards the sky-line, changeless since the Saxons and Danes fought for mastery in England.

This is the region where Jefferies spent, in his neighbours' opinion, a dreamy, shiftless, idle and unpractical boyhood and youth;¹⁰ and not an incident of bird, animal, and insect life escaped him, nor the growth of a bud into flower or leaf, nor the fall of an acorn or beech mast, nor the twirl of a creeper's tendril in the hedgerow; nor any of the larger aspects of Nature—the rain storm, the wind, the snow, the frosts of winter, and the cloudscape, the sunlight falling on meadow, wood, or hill, the gathering of yellow dawn, or the ruddy glory of the setting sun; the still larger things of human life he recorded, too, for, though he knew nothing of the town and quite mis-read the ways of *Vanity Fair*¹¹ from books as ignorant as himself, he knew everything of the people who inhabit the countryside, the peasants, men, women and children, the farmers and loafers, the poachers, and their enemies the gamekeepers. All this knowledge he took in with marvellous sympathy and receptivity, and held in the vice of a strong memory; but where did he learn the art he had of telling of all this, so that men should see it, spell-bound by the vividness of the picture he drew, piecing together under his magic touch their own slurred recollection of things half seen and wholly forgotten?

For all Jefferies' power and all his ultimate success, the strange thing was that neither he or his friends ever suspected that he possessed this rare faculty of observing and of expressing his observation. The fault was more

¹⁰ This view of Jefferies presumably was gained from enquiry when Crawford visited Coate; in his biography, *Richard Jefferies* (1909) (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), p.43, Edward Thomas corroborates, and gives further details of this aspect of Jefferies' youth.

¹¹ A location in *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), a Christian allegory by the writer and Puritan preacher John Bunyan (1628-1688).

with him than them—this fault, indeed, always does lie with a man himself, for certainly no one can really help another man to find the vein in him that leads to success or fortune.

He had shown me several short stories of his—I now remember nothing of them but their execrable taste and false sentiment—and I had refused to take them; but even he was beginning to discover, in the spring of 1875, that his novel writing was in vain, for in May of that year he wrote to me—forgetting, no doubt, how often he had besieged me with impossible fiction:

You may possibly have seen that I am a novelist, and I could write you a short tale, but I cannot recommend myself in this department, for I have never received a single favourable notice of a novel of mine! Tinsley Brothers, the publishers, say that the books are too original and too bold to take for some time.¹²

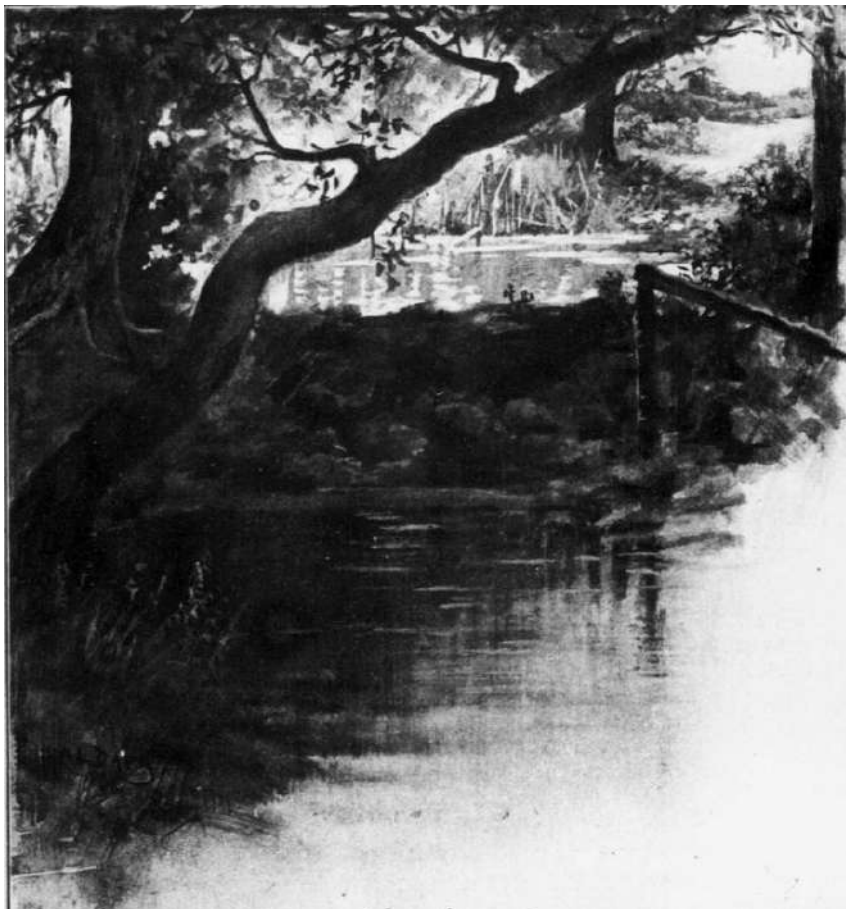
They were not 'bold,' but bald, and, so far from being original, they were pale copies of the mild fiction-stuff that had charmed sentimental school-girls and school-boys a generation before; but poor Jefferies still believed in his ideals. His folly, that all but ruined his life-work, is one that nearly all of us have committed or are committing. Our first-formed and mostly mistaken ambitions are the Slough of Despond¹³ into which we carelessly and joyfully plunge at the outset of life, and have to wade through and struggle in, and sometimes all but sink deep and stifle in, before we win to the hard ground beyond. A cobbler's son, playing in St. James' Park, sees the troops go by, the bands playing a stirring march, the field-officers in their brave uniform, and swears he will be a General. All 'the pomp and prodigality of man'¹⁴ passes before his boyish eyes; all the danger, all the daring, all the glory; he himself, in his day-dream always keeping, by incredible good fortune and forethought, in the centre of events—favoured by fortune—promoted from post to post—heading the armies of his countrymen—the winner of a hundred fights! Then at last, full of years and honours, he sees himself returned from victorious campaigns in far-off lands, and leading armed men through the familiar Park with the fanfare of trumpets and the shouts of the people in his ears—while the ineffable smile of accomplished triumph is hid-

¹² This letter is cited and commented upon in Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel, *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies, A Chronological Study* (Boars Hill: Petton Books, 1994), p.70.

¹³ Another location in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (see Note. 11).

¹⁴ A quotation adapted from Thomas Gray's (1716-1771) poem 'Stanzas to Mr. Bentley', addressed to Richard Bentley (1662-1742):

But not to one in this benighted age
Is that diviner inspiration given,
That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
The pomp and prodigality of heaven.



A tributary stream

-den behind his own grizzled moustache! A noble dream, but all the while the boy has no turn at all for soldiering and a distinct genius for shoe-making. He will, in process of years, after a painful passage through his own particular Slough of Despond, have to abandon his first ideals and find himself safely landed in the shoe-making line, make a revolution in 'uppers' perhaps, or successfully meet a demand for improved 'clump soles,' fight his way to fame that way, be known (by advertisement) everywhere within the four seas, and win a name that the bagmen in provincial centres 'will not willingly let die.'¹⁵

¹⁵ A quotation adapted from the Introduction to John Milton's (1608-1674) *The Reason of Church Government* (1641), Book II: 'by labour and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this

Jefferies remained in his own Slough many a long year, longing for the accomplishment of his mistaken ideals, and, at last despairing, the black waters nearly closed over his head.

I flattered myself at the time that I had, perhaps, myself helped him to see where his true strength lay. After getting a long letter from him in December, 1876, of which the following is an extract, I should have been blind indeed not to have seen how he was misusing the great talents he had.

I had already begged him urgently to let me have a series of papers on Natural History, and had asked him to call upon me if he should come to town. This is his answer:

I should certainly be greatly pleased to meet you personally. My personal connection with farming is now almost at an end, though my father still retains his property at Coate. I find literature far more congenial to my tastes, and have spent the greater part of the year near town. I expect I shall be there in the spring most of the time. I stay in Sydenham Park, at Shanklin Villa, where, if you should be in England, I should be glad to meet you. With respect to the Natural History papers, my principal ideas are these. While at home, having very little to do, I studied natural history from Nature—excuse the tautology. I used to take a gun for nominal occupation, and sit in the hedge for hours, noting the ways and habits even of moles and snails. I had my especial wasps-nest, and never was stung. The secret with all living creatures is—quiet. Be quiet, and you can form a connection, so to say, with everything, even with such a brute as the pike-fish. This went on for six or seven years—idle, you will say. Whether it was summer or winter, I would always find something to interest me, and, in time, extend these observations to the great Downs adjacent, which are literally teeming, so to say, with matter for thought. I own that the result has been a profound optimism—if one looks at Nature metaphysically. Since that pleasant time, which I still regret, I have corrected my notes and endeavoured to organise them by reading the best books I could find on such subjects, including geology.

There is at Coate a reservoir—it is sixty years old, and looks quite as a lake—of some eighty acres of water. I think I could write a whole book on that great pond. I mapped it, and laid down the shallows and sand-banks, when I was a schoolboy, and I learnt how to manage a sailing boat on it. Even the mussels slowly crawling on the bottom, I believe, have taught me something. You can trace the action of the rain and frost and the waves on its banks, just as Lyell delineates the effect of the ocean on our coast line; of course, on a smaller scale, but the illustration is perfect.¹⁶ You can trace the action of the brook which

life), joyn'd with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die.'

¹⁶ Charles Lyell (1797-1875), British geologist: in the first volume of his influential work, *Principles of Geology: being an attempt to explain the former changes of the Earth's surface, by reference to causes now in operation*, published in 3 volumes, 1830-1833, Lyell devotes several

feeds it—the sediment and sand carried down have formed shallows and banks, like the delta of a river. If the birds, which I and others have shot there, had been preserved—as I now wish they had been—they would form a little museum. My brother shot a brace of grebes there last week. The auk, the Northern diver, gulls of almost all varieties, come occasionally after storms. I should not attempt a laborious learned description, but rather choose a chatty style. I would endeavour to bring in some of the glamour—the magic of sunshine and green things and calm waters—if I could. It would give me much pleasure to write such articles for you.¹⁷

This paper never was written. It was saddening when I looked at this beautiful piece of water at Coate, after Jefferies' death, and remembered his promise to tell the story of his explorations of this wonderful and interesting pool.¹⁸ He had evidently already turned his thoughts in the true direction of his genius, but it was yet nearly two years before he brought out *The Gamekeeper at Home*,¹⁹ the first of his great Natural History series.

I said that Jefferies' place in Natural History was beside Gilbert White, of Selborne. In point of fact he achieved more than Gilbert White ever attempted, for he not only observed, catalogued, and recorded the ways and doings of wild animals, but he saw all aspects of wild life through the eyes of a poet and interpreted them to us. Jefferies was a quite extraordinarily close observer of the material facts of the life he studied, but, unlike some of the great literary realists of to-day, he went further and supported a high idealistic doctrine on these hedgerow and woodland documents.

The field-naturalist, to work at his very best, must have a good many qualities that belong essentially to the Teutonic race. He must possess the simple, naïve nature of a White or a Beckstein.²⁰ His philosophy must be of the plodding, inductive kind which finds facts first and fits theories very cautiously to the facts. If he looks for facts only to accommodate brilliant theories thereto, he is a lost naturalist. Then, he must be a man of high principle—truthful to the brink of prosiness—for if he is not that, what are his facts worth to us? I see that I am narrowing the field of Natural History and warning a host of professional persons from the gate, politicians,

chapters to the effects of running water, tides and currents.

¹⁷ This letter to Oswald Crawford can be dated December 1876, and was perhaps written from Swindon or Coate; see Matthews and Treitel, *op. cit.*, pp.80-81. Extracts from the letter are quoted and commented on by Edward Thomas, *Richard Jefferies*, *op. cit.*, pp.113-114, in connection with Jefferies' 'First Country Books' (Ch. IX).

¹⁸ The emphasis of Crawford's article is on Jefferies' non-fiction, so perhaps this is why he does not refer to *Bevis, the Story of a Boy* (1882); see Andrew Rossabi, *A Peculiarly English Genius, A Biography of Richard Jefferies, Volume 1 The Early Years, 1848-1867* (Foulsham: Petton Books, 2017), Chapter XIII 'Bevis: Fiction or Disguised Autobiography', especially pp.397-408.

¹⁹ Published by Smith, Elder & Co., London, in June 1878.

²⁰ Johann Matthäus Bechstein (1757-1822), a German naturalist.

company-promoters, actor-managers, wine-merchants, horse-dealers, dentists, and so forth!



Supposed hulk of Jefferies' boat

One circumstance that of itself renders Jefferies' work more valuable than Gilbert White's, is that, when White wrote, we were in a state of ignorance about Natural History that is difficult now to conceive. We did not even know what to call the creatures we wrote about. We were still speculating as to the mystery of bird migration; and as to a hundred queer facts about wild birds and beasts that are now settled for good. This, however, makes Gilbert White's writings all the more interesting and delightful. I will defy the sternest scientific naturalist to read without some slight thrill of interest the old naturalist's speculations as to whether swallows and martins do really leave these islands, and whether they do not hide and hybernate among us in secret places. He writes, on November 23rd, of the year 1773, to the great naturalist, Pennant:²¹ 'Do these small, weak birds, some of which were

²¹ Thomas Pennant (1726-1798) was a Welsh naturalist, antiquarian, and writer. White's letter

nestlings twelve days ago, shift their quarters at this late season of the year to the other side of the Northern tropic? Or, rather, is it not more probable that the next church, ruin, chalk-cliff, steep covert, or perhaps sand-bank, lake or pool, may become their *hybernaculum*, and afford them a ready and obvious retreat?

Since Gilbert White's day, we have been to the 'Northern tropic' to see, and found our English swallows and martins there in winter; and we have explored countless ruins, cliffs, and sand-banks, and dragged countless pools, and found them not there; and so the theory of hybernation for these species has been demolished, and the doctrine of migration established.

Then again, Gilbert White wrote at a time when our literary English was at its very stiffest and most sesquipedalian,²² and at its very unfittest to deal with such every day matters as the story of our fields and hedges, but, fortunately, he mostly forgot, even when he was writing to learned men, to write in the learned, Latinised English tongue that Dr. Johnson had made fashionable. He speaks nearly always in the beautiful mother-English, that has made him famous in literature. There is, to be sure, just a flavour of pedantry here and there, but these touches lend an additional old-world charm, and give a touch of individual character to his work.

Gilbert White had, with a pretty wit of the milder sort, a turn for quiet humour, both extremely useful attributes in a savant—as delivering him from a certain class of error—but which attributes a good many eminent scientists made a point of doing altogether without. I have not found any trace of either wit or humour in anything written by Richard Jefferies. Perhaps I have looked carelessly, or not been in sympathy with his particular form of wit, or his humour, but I incline to the opinion that these things were non-existent in him. His repeated transgressions into poor fiction almost prove my case, and the simple fact that, in one of his novels, he devotes six pages—or is it sixteen?—to a description of the muscles, sinews, tendons, and bony anatomy of a young lady's knee!²³

Richard Jefferies was little of a controversialist, after the fashion of so many of our modern Natural Historians. He saw, he noted, and drew his conclusions from what he saw and noted, but he did not care to dispute about what to him were the eternal verities of nature; there was much less in him of the scientist than of the poet and the artist. A great deal that he wrote, particularly in his earlier work, was little more than the setting down

(No. XXXVIII), referring to house-martins, is actually dated 15 March 1773; Crawford omits an aside - '(as a more northern naturalist would say)' —following 'lake or pool'.

²² A Latinate word, referring to long words of many syllables (*OED*).

²³ Richard Jefferies, *The Dewy Morn* (1884) (Longcot: Petton Books, 2009), introduced by Rebecca Welshman, pp.50-52.

of his field notes, but with what art does he co-ordinate and marshal them! The statements of fact, which, in an inferior word-artist's hands would be little more than a dull catalogue, are by him grouped and arrayed into a living picture.



Coate Reservoir

Here is a sample of his realistic method. It only describes an English hedgerow, and every peasant, every farmer, every keeper, every squire will agree to the truth of every word of it—and yet we may swear that they never saw the picture as the reader can now see it.

A wild 'plum' or bullace, grew in one place; the plum about twice the size of a sloe, with a bloom upon the skin like the cultivated fruit, but lacking its sweetness. Yet there was a distinct difference of taste: the 'plum' had not got the extreme harshness of the sloe. A quantity of dogwood occupied a corner; in summer it bore a pleasing flower; in the autumn, after the black berries appeared upon it, the leaves became a rich bronze colour, and some when the first frosts touched them curled up at the edge and turned crimson.²⁴

Then there is his method of dealing with the wider outlooks on nature—or sky, mountain and sea. It is the same patient, careful method. He always writes as an artist, as one who is careful to mould and mint his words or phrases, so that they shall reach the reader in the form and with the heat

²⁴ Richard Jefferies, *Round About a Great Estate* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1880), Ch. V, p.34.

wherewith they live in the writer's own mind and heart—the true craftsman's way in all arts. There have been men at all times who feel and think like philosophers and poets, and have a great message to deliver, but have never yet bridged the gulf that always lies between writer and reader. Their genius has been great but their art small. Their fame lives awhile in the breath of their disciples, but when they themselves die, and their disciples die, their fame ceases and dies too. The world is too busy to go on for ever wrestling with an author's meaning, as a school-boy wrestles with a proposition of Euclid. Jefferies was not of this kind. He was a true artist from first to last—never for a moment forgetting that art is the sword of the literary worker that must for ever be kept sharp and bright.

In the passage I now quote, Jefferies speaks of the sea seen from a height. I wish I had space to quote the whole passage.

So the white spray rushes along the low broken wall of rocks, the sun gleams on the flying fragments of the wave, again it sinks, and the rhythmic motion holds the mind, as an invisible force holds back the tide. A faith of expectancy, a sense that something may drift up from the unknown, a large belief in the unseen resources of the endless space out yonder, soothes the mind with dreamy hope.

The little rules and little experiences, all the petty ways of narrow life, are shut off behind by the ponderous and impassable cliff; as if we had dwelt in the dim life of a cave, but coming out at last to look at the sun, a great stone had fallen and closed the entrance, so that there was no return to the shadow. The impassable precipice shuts off our former selves of yesterday, forcing us to look out over the sea only, or up to the deeper heaven.²⁵

I have shown how learned Jefferies was in wild-nature knowledge. It is a department of education somewhat neglected in these days of rush and hurry, and yet the wisest and wittiest men who ever wrote on education would have approved of the training of Jefferies. 'I would have thee,' says Pantagruel (I quote from memory and away from books)—'I would have thee, my son, to be acquainted with every beast that walks on the earth; with every fish that swims in the seas, the rivers, brooks, and pools; with every bird that soars, or flutters in the air; and with every insect that flies or crawls. Thou shouldst know the properties of every plant and flower and tree, from the Hyssop on the wall to the Cedar of Lebanon; the qualities of every gem that lies hidden in the earth; and every precious drug in all the Southern land.'²⁶ A not very exaggerated compendium of what Jefferies had actually

²⁵ From 'The Breeze on Beachy Head', in *Nature Near London* (1883) (London: Chatto & Windus, 1905), p.114.

²⁶ François Rabelais (b. 1483-1494, d.1553), *Gargantua and His Son Pantagruel* (c. 1532 – c. 1564), translated by Gustave Doré, Book II, Chapter 2. VIII: 'Now, in matter of the knowledge of the

taught himself; but with him all this was but the portal to things seen beyond—the window through which he caught glimpses of the great problem of life—of that which lies for all of us behind the veil of our dull, daily existences.

Here is a passage that may, perhaps, persuade the reader that I have not said too much for Jefferies in this line:

On the wings of the dragon-fly as he hovers an instant before he darts there is a prismatic gleam. These wing textures are even more delicate than the minute filaments on a swallow's quill, more delicate than the pollen of a flower. They are formed of matter indeed, but how exquisitely it is resolved into the means and organs of life! Though not often consciously recognised, perhaps this is the great pleasure of summer, to watch the earth, the dead particles resolving themselves into the living case of life, to see the seed-leaf push aside the clod and become by degrees the perfumed flower. From the tiny mottled egg come the wings that by-and-by shall pass the immense sea. It is in this marvellous transformation of clods and cold matter into living things that the joy and the hope of summer reside. Every blade of grass, each leaf, each separate floret and petal, is an inscription speaking of hope. Consider the grasses and the oaks, the swallows, the sweet blue butterfly—they are one and all a sign and token showing before our eyes earth made into life. So that my hope becomes as broad as the horizon afar, reiterated by every leaf, sung on every bough, reflected in the gleam of every flower. . . .

Let the shadow advance upon the dial—I can watch it with equanimity while it is there to be watched. It is only when the shadow is NOT there, when the clouds of winter cover it, that the dial is terrible. The invisible shadow goes on and steals from us. But now, while I can see the shadow of the tree and watch it slowly gliding along the surface of the grass, it is mine. These are the only hours that are not wasted—these hours that absorb the soul and fill it with beauty. This is real life, and all else is illusion, or mere endurance. Does this reverie of flowers and waterfall and song form an ideal, a human ideal, in the mind? It

works of nature, I would have thee to study that exactly, and that so there be no sea, river, nor fountain, of which thou dost not know the fishes; all the fowls of the air; all the several kinds of shrubs and trees, whether in forests or orchards; all the sorts of herbs and flowers that grow upon the ground; all the various metals that are hid within the bowels of the earth; together with all the diversity of precious stones that are to be seen in the orient and south parts of the world. Let nothing of all these be hidden from thee.'

This quotation has apparently been freely adapted and conflated with I Kings 4:33: 'And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.'

The Rabelais quotation perhaps alludes to the correspondence quoted in Walter Besant's *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1888), p.26, expressing the vital influence Jefferies' father, James Luckett Jefferies (1822-1896), had on the development of his son's genius.

does; much the same ideal that Phidias²⁷ sculptured of man and woman filled with a godlike sense of the violet fields of Greece, beautiful beyond thought, calm as my turtle-dove before the lurid lightning of the unknown. To be beautiful and to be calm, without mental fear, is the ideal of nature. If I cannot achieve it, at least I can think it.²⁸

Richard Jefferies is here no longer a mere observing naturalist, no longer a mere artist in literary expression, but a prose poet, who uses the rhythmic cadences that come naturally to a true singer. 'This strain I heard was of a higher mood!' ²⁹

He is a pantheistic votary,³⁰ singing in the great temple of nature, who sees beauty and salvation for himself, even though, at the moment of inditing this great pæon of praise and triumph, he was, and knew that he was, himself swiftly nearing the inevitable grave.



Gateway at Coate

²⁷ Phidias (c. 480 – 430 B.C.), Greek sculptor, painter and architect.

²⁸ From 'The Pageant of Summer', in *The Life of the Fields* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1884), pp.4 and 14.

²⁹ From the poem 'Lycidas' (1637) by John Milton (1608-1674).

³⁰ For comment, with quotations, on this aspect of Jefferies, see Rossabi, *A Peculiarly English Genius*, *op. cit.*, pp.48, 116-117, 178, 261, 380, 479 and 685.

The Forbears of Richard Jefferies

Jefferies Luckett

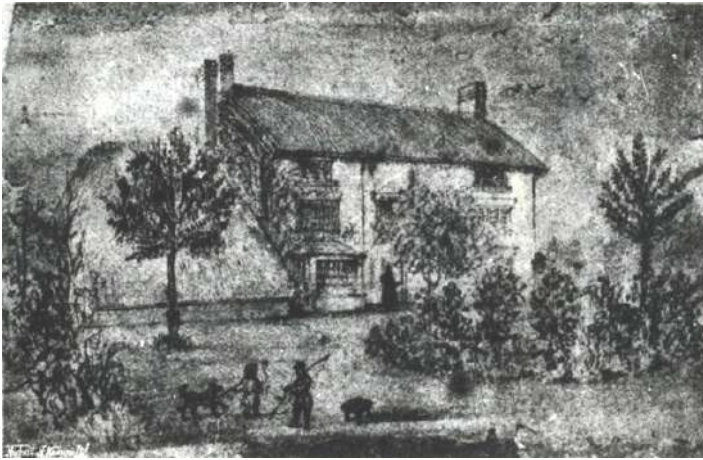
This illustrated article was first published in *Country Life* on 14 March 1908, pp. 373-376, with the above title. Jefferies Luckett was the nom de plume of Fanny Catherine Hall (1812-1902), Richard Jefferies' first cousin. Her parents were William and Martha Hall. Martha was the sister of Richard Jefferies' father, James Luckett Jefferies. Fanny wrote from 'Longford', Cotham Side, Bristol.¹ The text was keyed, with some extra paragraphing, and annotated, by Janice Lingley.

So much misconception hangs round the youth and early manhood of Richard Jefferies, so many incorrect statements have been made thereon, that it is felt by those in the closer circle of blood relationship that it is time the mistakes should be cleared away at once and for aye. In nearly all—if not quite all—the notices that have appeared of Richard Jefferies, much stress has been laid on the fact of his poverty. It is true that a superfluity of this world's goods was not the portion of this particular family; but the home was a comfortable one, a freehold farm and until later years, when Richard was able to fend for himself, there was a sufficiency for all needs. Too little appreciation of the author's father and forbears generally has been given. It was through his father and grandfather that the literary aptitude can be traced. Both sides of the house, in fact were noted for their mental activity, as I hope to show.



Richard Jefferies (as a young man)

¹ See Andrew Rossabi, *A Peculiarly English Genius, A Biography of Richard Jefferies, Volume I 1848-1867* (Foulsham: Petton Books, 2017), pp.103-105, for a discussion of Fanny Catherine Hall, and the article she wrote for *Country Life*.



Coate Farm sketched by John Luckett Jefferies.
Figures in foreground believed to be of Dick and Harry.

In the year 1738 was born at Draycott Foliatt, Wilts. Richard Jefferies, who in 1772 married Fanny Luckett at Lechlade, Gloucestershire.² Their early married life was passed at Rodbourne Cheney, Wilts. The house is still standing where James Luckett and John were born; the only other child, a daughter Fanny (who died unmarried) was born at Lechlade. The father appears to have been a man of force of character, while his wife, from traditions carefully preserved in the family, must have been a woman not only of parts, but of means and refinement, her many journeys to Bath being noted at a time when only the wealthy and the high-born frequented that 'city of waters.' She died in 1805, while her husband survived her twenty years. He increased his possessions by purchase of land in Swindon and the neighbourhood, acquiring the chief milling and baking business in the town—then a simple market town, possessing no historical or architectural features—and ultimately coming to reside there. Situated on top of a high hill, and intensely healthy, it was the cradle of a particularly hardy race.

The records relating to this Richard Jefferies that have been preserved show that he was a shrewd man of business. He objected to pay more than he thought justifiable to the Rev. C. Tudway, vicar of Chiseldon, Wilts., in the matter of tithes and tenths. I have before me a letter from the latter gentleman, dated March 19th, 1805, time-stained, but in a beautifully clear handwriting, wherein he says:

² Richard Jefferies (1738-1825) and Fanny Jefferies (1748-1805): Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, pp.99-103. A Jefferies' Family Tree is shown on the website of *The Weald of Kent, Surrey and Sussex* (theweald.org).

Not having heard from you respecting your Tythes I beg to know in writing by the bearer whether you are inclined to pay me Mr. Brown's valuation of your composition for Tythes due on Monday next, £6 16 6. If not I must be under the necessity of requiring you to bring your Tenth measure of milk entire without fraud or diminution to the church porch at Chiseldon according to the Ecclesiastical Law.

Then there is another shorter note, dated November 23rd, 1815, in which the Rev. Mr. Tudway 'begs Mr. Jefferies to inform him whether he is satisfied with the new value of composition as paid by his agent Mr. Brown, and if so, to pay the first half-year's instalment to him on Monday next, between the hours of 11 and 1 o'clock.' In July of the same year there is a formal notice served on the contumacious Richard, which evidently had not much effect, for under the date April 8th, 1817, there is a bill of costs headed 'A Modus Question in Chancery,' too long to quote *in extenso* from Mr. Crowdy of Highworth, in which it is stated that Mr. Jefferies' portion of the bill of costs, which came to £52 10s., was £8 15s., 'being 1 part in 6 of the above expense.' The only known scrap of writing attributed to this stalwart yeoman, Richard Jefferies, written clearly and firmly when eighty-two years of age, I must quote verbatim:

I, Richard Jefferies, am willing to pay Mr. Tudway the accustomed sum which I before have paid, 14/6 yearly, 11th May, 1820.

And overleaf:

Composition for Tythes due to the vicar of Chiseldon valued in June, 1815 at £5 16 6 per ann. by Mr. Brown, and agreed to by all the Farmers at that time. Five years' composition up to Lady Day, 1820, £29 2 6.

Evidently his son, John Jefferies,³ inherited the firm and obstinate character of his father, for there is a further note from a Mr. Bullock, the then vicar of Chiseldon, *re* the same troublesome 'tythe.' This vicar seems to have been of a milder disposition than Mr. Tudway, 'being unwilling to go to law with my parish,' for on January 25th, 1832, the Rev. J. T. Bullock tries to make a compromise and says:

I will meet you halfway and consent to receive £3 8 3 yearly. I shall be glad to hear your determination as soon as possible, because in the event of your refusing my offer, which I beg to state is without any detriment to my claim of £6 16 6, I shall be necessitated to proceed at once to obtain my just rights.

Again Mr. Jefferies is requested to send him the sum of '£3 6 0 due as four years' tithe on Tuesday, the 14th, 1833.' Under it in my grandfather's writing appears:

³ John Luckett Jefferies (1784-1868).

J. Jefferies' composition 4 years at 14/6 a year: £2 18 0

The poor vicar had to accept that sum; for his receipt dated May 24th, 1833, reads:

Received of Mr. Jefferies the sum of £2 18 0 for tithes under a supposed Modus
for two years.

THOMAS BULLOCK

I have quoted thus lengthily to show how strong are the chains of heredity, the determined nature of the great-grandfather being reproduced in his son John, again in James Luckett Jefferies his grandson, and not a whit the less in his great-grandson, John Richard Jefferies, the author.

Richard Jefferies' eldest son, James Luckett, was possessed of eccentric habits, and subject to violent fits of temper, yet was not without recurrent phases of repentance. Tradition has it that he was a terror to children and dressed in a style to cause remark if nothing else—boots unlaced, trousers hitched up in a way peculiar to the owner, and shaggy hair and beard. Still, there are one or two persons who remember him in their early youth as one, if not exactly to be loved, whose peculiarities have been too darkly limned by a recent writer.⁴ His sister Fanny, who died many years before his death, must have been even more of a care and anxiety to my grandfather and his wife, with whom they both lived and died.

The youngest son John, born May 7th, 1784,⁵ inheriting the tastes of his mother and, undoubtedly, her intellect, early went to London and entered the firm of Mr. Taylor, printer and publisher, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street. Here he remained for some years, married, and with his wife and four children returned to Wiltshire in 1816, owing to the wish of his father, and the inaptitude of his brother to manage the business, which at that time was an excellent one. Four more children were born in Swindon, the first one being my own mother. John Jefferies and his wife must have had a particularly trying time, for, in the house, which was a large old-fashioned one, built round three sides of a square courtyard, lived the eldest son in his apartments and the elderly maiden aunt in hers. The naturally fresh and active young life of the children was checked by the presence of those who cared not for, and could not understand, the exuberance of youth.

When John Jefferies returned from London—and he engaged the whole inside of a coach for his family—he took up the burden of his uncongenial occupation manfully, but it was none the less ever distasteful to him. He was a man of strong will and marked individuality. He felt it, therefore, his duty to carry on a business he loathed for his children's sake, turned his back for ever on the great city, though he never ceased to love all things pertaining to

⁴ James Luckett Jefferies (1775-1850): Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, pp.136-138.

⁵ Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, Chapter V 'Grandfather John Jefferies', pp.139-165.

books and literature. His father disliked banking his money, and hidden in various parts of the old, rambling house large sums were found. With these the son built two houses in Swindon—private residences then—now long since turned into shops. The farm, which figures so largely in the history of Richard Jefferies, the author, had been for some time in the possession of the family, and when the children of John and Fanny Jefferies were growing up there was never any lack of means. In fact, had my grandfather been a business man and seized the opportunity, when the Great Western Railway made Swindon their headquarters, to obtain some of the contracts offered to him, he might have become very rich. But he would have nothing to do with any ‘interloping train’ (the new railway was a mile and a half away from the town, down field-bordered lanes), and so the tide was not taken at the flood. He never entered a train in his life, or returned to London after leaving it in 1816. He was very greatly set against all railway men, holding off for a long time the acceptance of one as his son-in-law;⁶ but, eventually, coming to regard that one as the prop and stay of the family. His line of action was peculiar, as he was a man of intelligence and parts, ‘a prodigy of learning’ (as a lady still living remembers him), a great lover of the country and its sights and sounds. He was extremely fond of driving across the uplands near the town to see the waving, golden corn; and at an age of much over seventy would climb up two flights of stairs in a daughter’s house to sit at an upper window and gaze his fill at the swelling undulations (now long since blocked from view by houses), which extended for miles across a fertile green valley to an answering chalk ridge.

As a child I remember distinctly two large bookcases—how we sigh for them now, absolutely typical pieces of Chippendale as they were!—filled with books and MSS., which occasionally I was allowed to handle; but alas! in 1868, owing to some family arrangement, not really understood until too late, all but some score of books, including the three-volume Family Bible, was scattered to the winds, a dealer coming from Bristol and purchasing the lot! Treasured possessions of the family are still preserved among some of us in the shape of old china, ancient deeds, silver, furniture, etc., which have of late years greatly increased in value even to the possessors, as the craze for old things has grown. The books in my possession, to me, are priceless. They are, as in the case of Nelson’s ‘Fasts and Feasts,’⁷ annotated by my

⁶ William Hall, father of Fanny Catherine Hall, an Irishman, who was the chief cashier of the G.W.R. at Swindon, and subsequently chief accountant in the locomotive department; Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, pp.150-151, 154-155.

⁷ Robert Nelson (1656-1715), *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England* (1703). The book is now in the possession of Andrew Lewis and on loan to the Richard Jefferies Society and is on display at the Richard Jefferies Museum; Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, pp.155-156

grandfather and contain notes on various past events of interest. It was grievous to have parted with the others. A relative suggested that Richard should have a portion at least of the library as the inheritor of his grandfather's literary tastes; but the proposition fell through, probably from the reason that the contents of the house were practically left to the daughter, who had married a Scotchman, with the proverbial hard head for a bargain.⁸

This same John Jefferies loved reading and reflection, and though endowed with the warm temper of the family, was a man of singular generosity and kindness under the crust of reserve. When he disliked he did it thoroughly; but he was a conscientious upholder of Church and State, proud of his children's leaning towards things intellectual and literary. For many years prior to his death he distributed on his own birthday to each of his numerous grandchildren a sovereign apiece. He would give a house here, a meadow there, when he wished, to 'even things up' to his own children. His wife, 'Fanny Ridger,' a bright, handsome, amiable woman, to whom her children were devoted, died in 1858, while the summons did not come for him until April, 1868.

The eldest boy, James Luckett (father of Richard, the author), born in 1816, felt the effects of the repression alluded to, never got on well with his father, and in 1837 left home for America. Hearing, through an outside friend of the family, that unless he came back, the farm—this very one of Coate—would go to an elder sister's husband, he returned and took possession of it. A cordial understanding was, unfortunately, never established between father and son; the former, perhaps, expected more deference and respect than he received, while the latter, inheriting also the family trait of obstinacy, and feeling sore at the constant coolness and disapproval of his actions, gradually drifted from the old home and scarcely ever visited his father. He married Elizabeth Gyde, daughter of a former colleague of his father's at Taylor's, a town-bred woman with a beautiful face and a pleasure-loving soul, kind and generous to a fault, but unsuited to a country life.

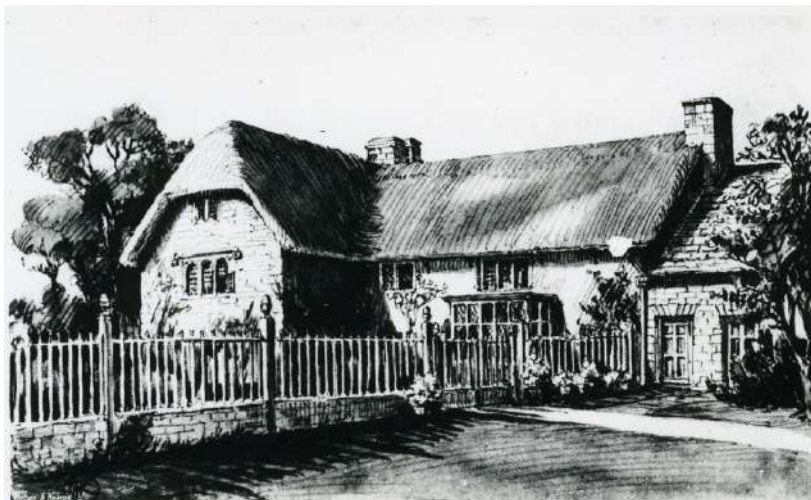
Therefore, the grandfathers on both sides were of literary bent; one of Mr. Gyde's sons was a clever engraver on wood, and all of them were more or less gifted. James Luckett Jefferies had two brothers; one, the youngest, also named Richard, died young, aged ten; the other, John Luckett, passed away at thirty-three. The latter—a youth of rare promise—developed into an artist of no mean powers; architecture, music and singing held great charms for

and Note.

⁸ Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, p.156 and Note: 'The daughter was Eliza (1813-1894), wife of George Sewell, a Swindon linen draper, later grocer, of Scottish descent, a man 'not at any time noted for his amiability'.'

him and he excelled in all. Many are the choice little pencil sketches, fine-line drawings and water-colours treasured by the family, together with his guitar and many volumes of music copied with a skilful pen.⁹ His sisters were all exceptionally educated women for the time, the eldest and fourth daughters being specially endued with a high order of intelligence and capability.

James Luckett Jefferies, the father of Richard, has been always placed on a line with the ordinary small tenant farmer, but this is a very grave error, as the possession of land in all time has been productive of very different sentiment to that arising from occupation by tenancy.¹⁰ That the original name of the hamlet was pronounced 'Cote' may be taken for granted, as in an interesting bill dated June, 1805, 'Mr. R. Jefferies is Dr. to B. Morland to the amount of £29 6 2 respecting the purchase of land at Cote.' The farmhouse in which Richard was born was the freehold of his father, presented to him on his marriage by his father, John Jefferies, and anyone who ever lived or even visited at the old home, would know how every individual inch of the ground, every sapling tree, every flowering shrub or



The Original Home of the Jefferies Family.
(After an old sketch by John Luckett Jefferies)

⁹ John Luckett Jefferies (1824-1856): Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, pp.151-152; Fig.6, p.113, Fig.7, p.114, Fig.11, p.137, Fig.13 (top), p.154.

¹⁰ For a description and maps of the small landed estate at Coate purchased by Jefferies' great-grandfather, see Rossabi, *A Biography*, *ibid.*, pp.136-138; biographical details of Richard Jefferies' parents, James Luckett Jefferies (1816-1896) and Elizabeth Jefferies (1817-1897) are given in Ch. VI 'Father and Mother', pp.166-223.

nest-hiding hedgerow was loved and treasured by its owner. The elder man was handicapped from the start by insufficient working capital. The land was his—a little Naboth's vineyard,¹¹ much coveted by surrounding landowners—but it was not large enough to run a big dairy on—the grass was too good for sheep—there was no corn land, and the days of poultry-farming were not. It was not large enough to keep a family upon without a balance at the bank for emergencies, and this James Jefferies never had, though he knew there was plenty of money lying idle in the paternal account, and he, the eldest, the only living son, could not touch it, nay, was grudging even a loan from it! Therefore, I wish it emphatically to be understood that James Lockett Jefferies was not born a poor man, though in manhood he was a heavily handicapped one.

The real reason of the creeping poverty that eventually laid its hand on the homestead, resulting in the final break-up of the place, was the dreamy impractical mind of its owner; he hated the mart and the market-place, shunned his fellow-men, if things went awry let them slide, content to live like one of his own farm hands, provided only God's earth was his to enjoy in his own way. Then, again, this man was, for his time and circumstance, an educated man. It is true he laughed and joked with the cottagers, he spoke their language, and, apparently, thought their thoughts and the villager then was of a lower type than is to be found now, even in rural Wiltshire—but this was a deliberate intention with him; he drowned thought and regret for wasted opportunity by living down to his neighbours. Those of us who know can look back, and are unable to tell on the fingers of one hand men in the same sphere of life as James Jefferies with a quarter of his innate refinement, knowledge, or education. The generality of farmers in that part were unlettered, ignorant, hard-drinking men; many of them made money—and this, I own, added to the bitterness of the Jefferies outlook of life—but there are letters still in the possession of the family, showing what this man, who has been classed in most people's minds as a mere rustic, really was. When Sir Walter Besant wrote his famous 'Eulogy',¹² time was young for some of us, and the thought of putting down in printed words the refutation of such things as were hurtful or misleading had not borne fruit. This paper is written purely with the intention of rebutting the accusation that Richard Jefferies was an offshoot of poverty, and that his exceptional gifts were the more extraordinary on that account; and to give Richard's father his due as the one who trained his son to notice and admire the beauties of Nature.

¹¹ A Biblical allusion: I Kings 21.

¹² Walter Besant, *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1888)

I do not think special notice has been taken of the sort of home this was before the wearing years of creeping want had taken the heart out of everything and everybody. Originally a thatched cottage, the larger portion of the dwelling-house had been added by John Jefferies; but the extravagant, one might say the refined, tastes of the son are shown by the improvements he gradually made. The long and handsome stone wall, topped by a wide coping, we all know about, was put up by Richard Jefferies' father. It was he who brought a water-finder with his witch-hazel to the farm, and who made the long tunnel through the fields to bring the water into the house (by the by, this water is gone from the old home now, and the cottagers used to say, 'ould Mr. Jefferies, he stopped it, afore he went away!'). It was he who rooted up all the rough, old cider apples, and stocked the orchard with the sweet, delightful codlins and russets it now possesses; he planted the pear trees on the walls, the Siberian crab and the yew tree on the lawn, and the luscious, and then little-known, egg plums; the box hedges, in Richard's youth just at their prime, taller than a man and a dense cover for birds. He scattered the musk seed, so that each year the delicate-scented little plant would crop up between the paving-stones under the 'parlour' window. He built a ha-ha (wild extravagance! it is levelled now with the outer field) and a summer-house, round and thatched, coloured inside an egg-shell blue, and paved in exact radiating lines with round, tide-washed pebbles (kidney-stones as he called them), for which he sent for miles a hired cart. His garden produce was always of the best; no one else ever grew such red carrots, yellow parsnips, juicy cucumbers! He planted horse-chestnuts and filberts. (I remember how he cut down the whole hedge, in a rage, one day, because the men from the New Town, as it was called, had rifled the nuts in the early morning!)

Then his gates! They must still be standing as a memento of his handiwork! No one has mentioned his gates, except his son in his luridly untruthful, pathetically truthful, 'Amaryllis at the Fair.' Yet it is true, as he says there, that he spent days together on the manufacture of one gate. I can remember yet the smell of the freshly-sawn wood and the long talks that went on between master and man as they rested together on the sunny side of the hedge!¹³

John Richard Jefferies, the author, was born November 6th, 1848, at Coate Farm, near Swindon. Very fond of reading and walking, Richard early developed a love for solitude, a trait inherited from several ancestors on his father's side. As a boy and youth he had a wonderfully clear complexion, very

¹³ *Amaryllis at the Fair* (1887), introduced by Carolyn Clarke (Longcot: Petton Books, 2009), pp.184-186.

fair hair, widely-open prominent blue eyes, somewhat large mouth with slightly pendulous lower lip, well-shaped nose—on the whole a handsome lad, though spoiled by a tendency to stoop. Not particularly amiable, somewhat supercilious, not caring much, if at all, for outdoor games; fond of shutting himself up at the top of the house near the ‘cheese-room,’ where he spent much of his time in the production of blood-curdling romances. He invented, too, a sort of roller-skate, and many is the perilous journey about the ‘cheese-room’ we made on these rudimentary articles. He was educated fitfully. Never very strong, as a boy he alternated between Coate and Sydenham, the extremes of country and town life—one as free as air, the other dainty, elegant, closed in.

He attended the only boys’ school in Swindon more or less regularly. Times are changed, but I do not think he ever greatly distinguished himself as a pupil, neither was he popular with the boys. As I write this I distinctly remember him, then a boy of ten or twelve, reading to his grandfather in the ‘little parlour’ of the old house in High Street, Swindon. He would call ‘gaol’ goal, and, though sharply pulled up, persisted in it, and was eventually ordered out of the room in disgrace. This early exhibition of contumacy makes one frame a parallel in one’s own mind between himself and his autocratic namesake and progenitor, Richard Jefferies.



The Sun Inn before the Fire, (after an old sketch).

Melilot, Cushat and Merle

Peter Robins

In the Summer 2018 issue of *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, George Miller related how the poet William Sharp had sent to Jefferies at West Brighton his recently-published volume *Earth's Voices, Transcripts from Nature, Sospitra, and Other Poems*. In his letter of thanks, dated 12 June 1884, Jefferies praised the verse, commenting, 'I light on a verse describing a wasp—"a yellow flame he seems to be"—these lines are truly a transcript from nature.'

That same month Jefferies received a selection of poems from F.B. Doveton, a resident of Eastbourne, which began a brief correspondence from 28 June, interrupted by Jefferies' move to Eltham. Five letters from Jefferies to Doveton were sold by Sotheby's in 1912 and the auction catalogue revealed snippets of some of them. Of one poem he writes, 'There is not a rough sound all through the little poem you have sent me,' and of another as 'gradually increasing in power till they culminate in a distinct picture, and leave that picture on the reader's mind. The last twelve lines draw the whole to a point and enforce it.'

Established at Eltham some time the following month, Jefferies wrote to Doveton on 18 July: 'I have just had the paper and your pleasant letter; I have left Brighton and the above is now my address [14 Victoria Road]. I do not think I have ever seen the Melilot brought into a verse before. Not every poet however can be expected to be a botanist'. The melilot⁴ occurs in Doveton's poem 'A July Idyll'.

Jefferies' notebook XIII f34 has 'Melilot—like yellow vetchling/gruyere cheese'. This entry has been attributed to the 3/4 July 1884, shortly before Jefferies received Doveton's poem. It is not fanciful to think that Jefferies was somewhat surprised to see mention of the plant so soon after his own note about it.

¹ George Miller, 'Jefferies, Whitman and William Sharp', *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No. 33, Summer 2018, pp.58-68.

² Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel, *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies*, Petton Books, 1994. See entries: 28 June, 18 July 1884.

³ Doveton had contributed an item on the flora of Eastbourne to the *Journal of Botany*, XXI, 1883.

⁴ 'Local names: Hart's Clover, King's Clover. The species is kingly among clovers and the racemes of yellow bloom suggested the golden spikes of a crown.' See Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora*, Paladin, 1975.



Jefferies' sketch and note about the melilot
in Notebook XIII f34.⁵

Jefferies' passion for colour—"To me, colour, is a sort of food; every drop of colour is a drop of wine to the spirit."⁶—was dominated by an interest in the colour yellow. He had picked out the 'yellow flame' wasp in one of Sharp's verses and among the colours strewn among the verses of Doveton's 'A July Idyll'—"gold", 'green', 'white', 'dun'—it was the yellow melilot Jefferies remarked on. In Jefferies' last year of life, the long, first paragraph of his essay 'Nature and Books', explores the yellow-ness, or otherwise, of the dandelion.⁷

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### A JULY IDYLL

Once again are the roses fair,  
Bashful roses that burn and blush  
All unseen in their leafy lair,  
Where the musical rilletts gush.  
Once again are the roses sweet,  
Clust'ring, twining, trailing, they—  
Shielding now our dim retreat  
From the the fiery glance of day.

Once again does the swift strong sun  
Fiercely beat on the broad bare wold,  
Whilst the landscape that erst was dun  
Is dipped deep in a bath of gold.

<sup>5</sup> Jefferies was in the habit of crossing out the page number and entering another; f34 is correct but he had renumbered it 35.

<sup>6</sup> 'Outside London', *Chambers's Journal*, 17 Jun 1885. Collected in *The Open Air*.

<sup>7</sup> 'Nature and Books', *Fortnightly Review*, 1 May 1887. Collected in *Field and Hedgerow*.

Once again to the cool green shade  
Far in the forest do we hie,  
Lightly loitering down the glade  
With some bright lady in bright July!

Stilled alas! are the waves of song,  
Lately borne to the ravished ear,  
Paeans poured by the sylvan throng  
Through the solitudes far and near—  
Yet does melody linger still—  
Girls laugh low where the stream slides by,  
Women—pretty ones—work their will  
With us easily—in July!

Steal we down to the sad sea-shore,  
Rhythmical there is the ebb and flow,  
Over us smoothly the sea gulls soar;  
Seawards and landwards the white sails go!  
Through the long hours the waters roll  
Lazily over the golden sand,  
Luring the listener's listless soul  
Into the silence of Lethe's Land.

Now do we dream through the mid-day glare,  
Whilst the bees in some warm bright spot  
Drowsily humming here and there  
Woo the sweet clover and melilot!  
Roam we slowly, through woodland ways,  
Where the shadows are dark and deep,  
There forgetting the scorching days  
In the rapture of silken sleep.

O sweet to feel o'er my burnt cheek blown  
Delicate ripple of glossy curls!  
And sweeter far is the ring-dove's moan  
When it is blended with the voice of girls!  
Ah! vex us never, ye soulless *men*,  
Beneath this sapphire cloudless sky!  
Leave us to *ladies* just now, and then  
We are contented in bright July!

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Frederick Bazett Doveton (pictured left) was born in 1841 at Exeter, the eldest son of Frederick Brickdale Doveton and his wife Harriet Eliza (née Pilkington). Frederick Brickdale had been a Captain in the Royal Madras Fusiliers, retiring in 1839, and wrote a respected account of the Burmese war.⁸ After a private education Frederick Bazett joined the Royal Canadian Rifles at the age of twenty, and married Annie Elizabeth Douglas in 1867, transferring to the Army Control Department a year later until he retired in 1879. From then on he lived a literary life in which he rejoiced, declaring 'No Profession' as his occupation for the 1881 census. In his short story 'That Blessed Baby'⁹, Doveton introduced his agreeable status into the plot, 'We were travelling to

Reading, Jones and I, on a fine afternoon in September 18—. I was independent of a profession and my friend was a barrister whose briefs occurred at long intervals.'

Doveton's talent, prompted by events of the day, was to create humorous prose and light verse, a form of poetry on trivial or playful themes that was written primarily to amuse and often involved puns, nonsense and wordplay.

Within a few years Doveton's prolific output of verse, parody¹⁰ and prose was a regular feature in a number of periodicals including *The Illustrated London News*, *The Graphic*, *The World*, *Girl's Own Paper*, *Society*, *Truth*, *Pictorial World* and *Dramatic Review*. The best of his work was published by Sampson Low as a 500-page volume in 1886 as *Sketches in Prose and Verse*.¹¹ The content was reprinted from periodicals with some new material added. 'A July Idyll'¹² was included along with two other poems prompted by Jefferies' work.

⁸ F. B. Doveton, *Reminiscences of the Burmese War 1824-25-26*. Allen and Co., London, 1852.

⁹ F. B. Doveton, *Sketches in Prose and Verse*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, London, 1886. p.30.

¹⁰ William Hamilton, *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors*, Reeves & Turner, London, 1889. This collection includes Doveton's parodies of work by Thomas Gray, William Cowper, William Wordsworth and Edgar Allan Poe.

¹¹ Doveton, *op.cit.*

¹² *ibid.* p.309.

Jefferies' essay 'A Shortest-Day Scene' had been published in the *St. James's Gazette* of 22 December 1884 inspiring Doveton to compose a poem of the same title¹³, with its odd use of dialect words in the penultimate line:

A SHORTEST-DAY SCENE
(SUGGESTED BY RICHARD JEFFERIES' RECENT
ARTICLE IN THE 'ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE')

Draws to its death the dull December Day,
In the far west the pale light fades away,
The leafless tree-tops covered far and nigh
With hardy rooks, that cut the wintry sky
In sable masses; motionless and dumb,
The dreary twilight would appear to numb
Their cheery 'caws'—their solemn silent flight
Heralds the advent of the long dark night,
As the grey frost-mists gather with the gloom,
Through freezing vapours indistinctly loom
The dauntless birds, who, spite of icy rain,
Still cling to their aerial domain—
Though the bare boughs be clad in coat of mail,
And bleak blasts blow—The 'Heroes' do not quail!
While merle and cushat¹⁴ seek a cover dense,
When the keen air proclaims the frost intense.¹⁵

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Another poem collected in Doveton's volume is 'The Beauty'<sup>16</sup> which reflected two of Jefferies' early fictional sketches that were first published in *London Society*, an illustrated, monthly magazine of 'light and amusing literature for the hours of relaxation.' 'Out of the Season'<sup>17</sup> appeared in the issue of September 1876 and 'Kiss and Try'<sup>18</sup> February 1877. These were reprinted with contributions by other authors in two volumes as *Society Novelettes* in 1883 and again in 1886.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* p.264

<sup>14</sup> Blackbird and wood pigeon.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel J. Looker reproduced this poem in the 1949 Lutterworth Press edition of *Wild Life in a Southern County*, claiming in his notes that Doveton sent it to Jefferies in 1879 after reading the book.

<sup>16</sup> Doveton, *op. cit.* p.303.

<sup>17</sup> Reprinted in *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, Autumn 2011, No. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Reprinted in *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, Spring 2012, No.22.

<sup>19</sup> *Society Novelettes*, by various authors. 2 Vols. Vizetelly & Co., London 1883. Vol. 1 was reprinted as *No Rose Without a Thorn and Other Tales*, Vol. II as *The Dove's Nest and Other Tales*. Vizetelly & Co., 1886.

THE BEAUTY  
(SUGGESTED BY MR. RICHARD JEFFERIES'  
ARTICLES IN 'SOCIETY')

Upon a lawn that sloped towards the west  
She stood beneath a roof of lipping leaves,  
One crimson rosebud nestling at her breast,  
And in a sunny reverie she weaves  
A charm of fairy fancies; linking so  
The present hour to the unborn years—  
A chain of light, without a shade of woe,  
Or any presage of potential tears.  
She is so fair, that, as in awe you gaze,  
Her radiant beauty to your eyes has grown,  
Unseen the blooms that all around her blaze,  
For she has made their loveliness her own!  
So lovely is she that she seems to lure  
All light and bloom into her form and face;  
Beside its tints the pansy seems less pure,  
And the pale lily shorn of half its grace.  
See how the morning sleeps upon her brow,  
And how its beams are netted in her hair!  
Those wondrous eyes, that look beyond the 'Now'  
To where the Future glimmers strangely fair;  
Dwell on the dazzling whiteness of her arm,  
So delicately rounded, yet so strong;  
Those full red lips, whose pretty pout would charm  
A new Saint Anthony—whose voice is song.  
Watch her pink fingers, as they lightly try  
With slender sprays of gold and scarlet bloom;  
Her quiet pose, so graceful yet so coy,  
Within the grateful, softly-chequered gloom.  
All—reverently watch her, for you see  
A *perfect picture* that will hardly die  
Within your brain—this maiden, fancy free,  
Reflects the glories of a day gone by!  
Three hundred years, amid this wealth of green,  
These blushing roses, and those pleasant fields,  
Her stainless ancestors have dwelt serene,  
And drunk the vintage lavish Nature yields.  
Three hundred times the cheery swallow came  
Beneath the eaves to rear her bonny brood;  
Three hundred springs appeared the first faint flame  
Of celandines in yonder little wood;  
Gay sunburnt children picked the primrose there

In the dim past, and pulled the hawthorn's snows,  
 By day exulting in the sweet pure air,  
 And lulled at night by owlets to repose;  
 Three hundred years the sportive zephyrs swayed  
 The yellow tresses of the ripened wheat,  
 And all that time the lusty trout have played  
 In yonder brooklet tinkling at your feet;  
 As Time wore on the daughters fairer grew,  
 Their locks still lovelier, whilst their laughing eyes  
 Caught a still deeper, more entrancing blue  
 From the soft witchery of summer skies;  
 And here, the last, the loveliest of her line,  
 Who owns the sorcery of seventeen,  
 Reaps the rich harvest, glorious, divine,  
 Of that sweet subtlety of sound and sheen!  
 But seventeen! Yet in that girlish frame  
 Is locked the magic of three hundred years!  
 Their moonlit nights, their summer's ardent flame,  
 And all the freshness of their April tears!

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Press reviews of *Sketches in Prose and Verse* began well with the critic for the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*²⁰ praising the work as:

Themes grave and gay, pensive and burlesque, are treated by the author gracefully and felicitously. They show him to have a lively fancy, a good ear for rhythm, and ample command of language.

The London periodicals were less charitable with the *St. James's Gazette*²¹ remarking:

If a man were in a mood to be pleased, he might think the more serious of these compositions passable, and would note in approval that they expressed the sentiments of a respectable churchgoer and a loyal if slightly puzzle-headed Briton.

*The Illustrated London News*²² commented:

To gather up the fragments of his literary work is not always a wise act on the part of a writer. The events of the day have prompted much of Mr. Doveton's verse, and to put the events into well-formed metre appears to have been an easy task—possibly too easy for in poetry, as well as in prose, there may be an excess of fluency. It is generally unwise to mix prose and verse together in one volume: and Mr. Doveton's prose sketches do not form an exception to the rule.

²⁰ 25 Nov 1886.

²¹ 1 Dec 1886.

²² 25 Dec 1886.

But the most acerbic criticism appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.²³ The piece was unsigned but was from the pen of Oscar Wilde:²⁴

Mr. Doveton divides his poems into grave and gay but we like him least when he is amusing, for in his merriment there is but little melody, and he makes his muse grin through a horse-collar. When he is serious he is much better, and his descriptive poems show that he has completely mastered the most approved poetical phraseology. Our old friend Boreas is as 'burly' as ever, 'zephyrs' are constantly 'amorous,' and 'the welkin rings' upon the smallest provocations; birds are 'the feathered host' or 'the sylvan throng,' the wind 'wantons o'er the lea,' 'vernal gales' murmur to 'crystal rills,' and Lemprière's Dictionary supplies the Latin names for the sun and the moon. Armed with these daring and novel expressions Mr. Doveton indulges in fierce moods of nature-worship, and botanises recklessly through the provinces. Now and then, however, we come across some pleasing passages. Mr. Doveton apparently is an enthusiastic fisherman, and sings merrily of the 'enchanted grayling' and the 'crimson and gold trout' that rise to the crafty angler's 'feathered wile.' Still, we fear that he will never produce any real good work till he has made his mind up whether destiny intends him for a poet or for an advertising agent, and we venture to hope that should he ever publish another volume he will find some other rhyme to 'vision' than 'Elysian' a dissonance that occurs five times in this well-meaning but tedious volume.

Wilde's judgement may have had a salutary effect on Doveton for his next literary venture, published four years later, was a prose work, *Maggie in Mythica—What She Saw in Fairyland*.²⁵ This also gathered poor reviews with *Punch* describing it as an 'undeniable imitation of *Alice in Wonderland*'.²⁶ Reverting to versification, *Songs, Grave and Gay*,²⁷ half the extent of the earlier volume, was issued in 1893, of which the *Pall Mall Gazette*²⁸ remarked that it included 'an almost impossibly idiotic love story'. A *Fisherman's Fancies*²⁹ followed and a notice in the *Western Daily Mercury*,³⁰ although positive overall, asked readers 'to exercise clemency towards a man for whom the opportunity to pun seems altogether too much.'

²³ 1 Feb 1887.

²⁴ Wilde contributed more than eighty reviews and articles to the *Pall Mall Gazette* between 1885-1890. By not signing his pieces Wilde distanced himself from being perceived as a journalist rather than as a writer. His review of Doveton was collected in Oscar Wilde, *Reviews*, Methuen, London, 1908, pp.174-5.

²⁵ Swan, Sonnenschein and Co, London, 1890.

²⁶ 8 Nov 1890.

²⁷ Horace Cox, London, 1893.

²⁸ 17 Feb 1894.

²⁹ Elliot Stock, London, 1895.

³⁰ 23 Feb 1895.

After the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901, Doveton was invited to contribute to a book of remembrance titled *The Passing of Victoria—The Poets' Tribute*.³¹ His poem 'The Night of Sorrow' is mercifully free of puns or wordplay but mawkish in expression; the final stanza gives a flavour of it:

In cot and palace there is weeping now,
She is at Peace—unbroken is her rest,
A holier diadem now decks her brow,
Within the shining mansions of the Blest.
All eyes are wet—we speak with bated breath—
The land is lying in the shade of Death.

More than seventy-five poets were represented in the volume and Doveton must have rejoiced to be in the company of Thomas Hardy, W.E. Henley, Clement Scott, Ella Wheeler Wilcox and many others. This recognition, so late in his writing career, was manna after so much scorn from the press, and perhaps persuaded him to publish a further collection of verse in December of that year. *Mirth and Music*³² consisted of about seventy verses reprinted from periodicals with a little new material and was issued at 2s.6d. by a small West Country publisher. Any joy at seeing another compilation of his verse in print quickly evaporated when the *Pall Mall Gazette* reviewed the book in March 1902.³³ Consistent with the newspaper's estimations of Doveton's earlier volumes, the anonymous critic declared:

Humorous verse! How is it that the words arouse in our minds so few mirthful associations and convey on the whole, a suggestion of boredom and exasperation...How dreary the funny man can be.

So exasperated was the author that he wrote a letter to the Editor of the *PMG* which, to its credit, it published, complaining that the reviewer had been unfair, his appraisal 'all so ludicrous—I have laughed till I cried at your critic's crass ineptitude'.³⁴

For the last decade of his life Doveton lived in Torquay where he was a regular contributor of light-hearted articles and letters to the *Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser*. He died in December 1911 and was interred in Torquay cemetery—and the welkin rang a final time.

³¹ Ed. J. A. Hammerton, Horace Marshall & Son, London, 1901.

³² J. Baker & Son, Clifton, 1901.

³³ 8 Mar 1902.

³⁴ 15 Mar 1902.

Memories of My Father

Richard Harold Jefferies

These memories, by Richard Jefferies' son Harold (1875-1942), were collected and edited by Samuel Looker and published in the *Worthing Cavalcade: Concerning Richard Jefferies* (Worthing Art Development Scheme, 1944), pp.17-28.

ELTHAM [1884-85]

In writing down these memories of my father I find it difficult not to dwell too much upon my own connection with the little incidents. But perhaps, in the circumstances, this is unavoidable.

In appearance Richard Jefferies was a tall, slight man with a very deliberate and majestic walk. I well remember some very pleasant people at Eltham, the McCourts, going out of their way to make his acquaintance, and they told my mother privately that at first they thought from his bearing he was a foreign nobleman. Father often wore a short cloak, which perhaps gave him a somewhat picturesque and continental look.

I remember he always chose to wear a rather unusual type of hat. It was something like a topper, but was made of hard felt, and the upper rim rounded. The hat and his clothing were usually of a brown shade.

He must have had a very small foot, because at the age of thirteen, when mother and I were living at Dunster, soon after his death, I was able to wear a pair of his boots without discomfort.

He was of a pale complexion, and, in general, of a most kindly but serious expression; the eyes and brows gave one this impression most clearly. None the less he had a keen sense of humour, and when at ease with his intimates—especially with his brother Charlie, of whom he was very fond—he could laugh as heartily as any man.

I remember purloining his cigarettes when opportunity offered; he always smoked *Three Castles*, as the doctors had, I believe, forbidden cigars, which he liked much better. While on the subject of doctors, he was treated by many, but my impression is that not one of them knew definitely what his real trouble was, or how it should be handled.

Father liked a glass of good ale, and we always had a supply on hand when funds would permit, but even more he enjoyed sparkling Burgundy and wines of that type, but was always moderate in their use.

It was whilst we lived at Eltham that my little brother Oliver Lancelot died from meningitis or something of that nature which was epidemic. This was a

terrible blow to father. His suffering, which was far greater than that of the child, prevented him from attending the funeral, and mother and I were, I believe, alone in the coach to Eltham church. The agonised expression on father's face, as he stood at the open door watching the little cortege slowly move away, haunted my mind for many years.

Richard Jefferies was an omnivorous reader right from early boyhood. The old Hall's encyclopaedia, which is referred to in *Bevis*, contained many interesting articles, particularly a long one on the building of the old three-deckers and other vessels. I think it was here he also found the cabalistic signs and mysterious symbols associated with chemistry, astrology and astronomy. Unfortunately this book and many others of value were sold by mother and myself.

He took a great delight in the classics, and had a set of Bonn's translations of Aristotle, Plato, Aurelius, etc., and I remember later on when he enjoyed Ruskin's works and those of many contemporary philosophers and Nature writers, notably Gilbert White, for whose book he wrote a preface. And old John Burroughs, the great American writer and nature lover. I have a letter from Burroughs stating that he fully intended calling on father when he visited England, but somehow he failed to do so. I also have an interesting booklet on Mr. Burroughs.

Shakespeare naturally was one of his great favourites, and mine too. I know I used to pore over the two or three big tomes, which were finely illustrated with wood and steel engravings, some of them cut by a relative, Charles Gyde. The Caliban pictures especially fascinated me, and so did those in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Father had some fine editions on British grasses and British butterflies, illustrated with four-colour process plates; also several of Sir John Lubbock's books on ants, bees and wasps, etc. Years later Sir John (who was by that time Lord Avebury) gave me an introduction to Sir Alfred Jones, head of the Elder Dempster Shipping Company, and I got a job as third mate in one of their small steamers, S.S. *Congo*, which made the West African trip and called at dozens of ports from Bathurst down the coast to Fernando Po in the Bight of Benin.

There were scores of other books in his library, but I cannot remember any more except a very fine edition of *The Arabian Nights* which he gave me when I was about six or seven. There was also a copy of *Don Quixote*—another fascinating volume. His set of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in seven volumes, was a bit too steep for me, but I enjoyed every moment of Froissart's *Chronicles*.

SURBITON [1877-1882]

My earliest memory at Surbiton is of my unbounded delight when father ordered a fine and expensive swing for me. I was tremendously excited and for some days *lived* on the swing. Towards the end of the summer, however, the novelty began to pall, and I contrived to turn the swing into a ship!

At this time, not far from our house, there was some cultivation going on, and one day I heard the hum of an engine. I was soon watching this new attraction. After watching the tilt-plough crossing and re-crossing the field for a long time, I began to feel hungry and left for home and a meal. But the fascination of the machine was so great that I walked backwards in order not to miss a moment's view of the procedure. In doing so I stepped neatly into a deep ditch full of black mud. Fortunately one of the labourers saw my predicament and hauled me out. He then scraped my clothing all over with his clasp knife and led me home. My father handed him a shilling for his trouble, and for many weeks after this man showed up with some kind of a story which never failed to extract a sixpence for beer.

Our home was on the main road to Epsom, and at Derby time the vehicles, from donkey carts to great coaches, passed in an unending stream. People on the big coaches were very hilarious, and would throw coins to any small boys who could run alongside and turn handsprings. I wished very much to try my own hand at this, but was forbidden to do so, and was kept indoors during the height of the traffic.

I was sent to a kindergarten school at Surbiton, but did not last long there. I had my knuckles sharply rapped with a slate for inattention, and when my father heard about that he promptly took me away. He had a tremendous and overwhelming sympathy for those who appeared to suffer from any kind of injustice. No doubt this was what inspired his early letters to *The Times* on the subject of the Wiltshire labourer. And I think that this trait in his character is distinctly visible in much of his writing. At the same time, he could be very severe on occasion. It was at Surbiton that my only sister Phyllis was born, and as the time drew near I was warned more than once about being noisy. My favourite playroom was directly beneath mother's bedroom, and one day I planted a hassock or footstool in the centre of the room, and, imagining myself a steeplechaser, I started running and jumping over the obstacle. I was very quickly interrupted and got such a lecture I was quite careful—for a few hours!

Once, later on, when we lived at 'The Downs,' Crowborough, I was chasing Phyllis for some reason, intent on revenge for a fancied outrage of some kind, when she fell and cut her hand rather badly on a piece of glass. Howls and tears of course followed, and I was ordered to my room. Later father

appeared and lambasted me pretty smartly, but I am sure it hurt him more than me.

There was also the time when he got me a fine bow and arrow, which he loved himself, and in hunting some wild animals (sheep) in the adjacent fields I did some rather serious damage to my prey. This was observed by one of my enemies, and the result was again howls and tears!

Next was the fateful day when I found, in company with another boy, a half-empty canister of gunpowder in the ditch where some careless sportsman had left it. Of course, we had to immediately light a small bonfire and experiment with the explosive. At first small quantities gave us a thrill when thrown on the blaze. Finally I became impatient for greater glories and started to pour the powder on the flames. More howls and tears! I was lucky not to lose my sight as well as eyebrows, lashes and hair. This time my plight brought lots of loving care and sympathy, but unfortunately I did not tell the whole truth of how I got burnt and so—howls and tears again!

BRIGHTON [1882-1884]

The waterfront is naturally the great attraction at Brighton, and father loved it in all weathers, but most of all when the rough westerly winds piled up big seas. We—father, mother and myself—used to spend many hours in the shelters just watching the surf on the beach. At other times father took long walks over the downs at Rottingdean, and he took us to see the Devil's Dyke one windy day. A great event in my young life was the wreck of a ketch laden with maize at Shoreham. Father spotted her drifting helpless, with her sails in ribbons, towards the west, so it must have been a south-easterly gale. After some time it became certain she must come ashore, and we obtained a cab and hurried towards the scene. The little ship came ashore in the surf just before we arrived, and a great crowd was watching the heavy seas break over her; there were two or three men in the rigging. The coastguard after great efforts got a line over her and saved all but one. I remember a big red-faced man ploughing up through the heavy shingle towards us dripping with water. I think he was the master of the wrecked ketch. He seemed a great hero to me. Soon the maize began to come ashore as the vessel broke up, and this was a godsend to all the shore loafers who kept a few hens and to many who did not.

We loved watching the launching of the big Skylark yachts, especially in rough weather. The West Pier and the old Chain Pier were both fascinating to all of us. My memory centres on the small midday gun which was automatically fired by a magnifying glass when the sun's rays were strong enough at noon. There was also another thing which fascinated me, the jawbones of a large whale which had come ashore near by a good many years

before. I noticed that it still held a very definite odour—like nothing else I know of.

Father frequently treated us to a visit to the Aquarium, which was a great delight, especially if one could get there at feeding time. The seals were well worth watching, and there was a big alligator (or was it a crocodile?) that held me spellbound. The delicately-formed little seahorses always came in for a share of our admiration, and small sharks roused a feeling of detestation. Amusements in the shape of vaudeville were pretty good, or so I thought, and once Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, charmed a tremendous audience.

One of my first adventures was to get lost on the long parade. Mother gave strict orders that this episode was not to reach father's ears.

Whilst we lived at Brighton father went to Paris, as he was very anxious to see the Louvre and other art centres. He brought back a number of photographs. Whilst he was absent at Paris, mother one day declared that she saw him or his semblance walk up to our front door. She went to admit him, but nobody was there. This of course upset her terribly, as she thought something dreadful had happened. But nothing had, and as far as I remember father was not even thinking of home at the time.

Father bought me a tricycle whilst we lived at Brighton, and I had great fun until, turning too sharply, I capsized, broke the backbone of the machine, and badly bruised my arm from shoulder to wrist. It was some time before I could persuade him to have the thing repaired.

At Lorna Road on summer evenings large numbers of bats—a small variety—made their appearance, and I made many efforts to capture some with a butterfly net, but without success.

A very pleasant family of Jews lived next door, and, finding us friendly, they used to send in little gifts to father, such as passover bread, which we all enjoyed very much.

CROWBOROUGH [1885-1886]

The country around here was ideal for a wanderer like my father, a rather wild, rolling hilly country, well wooded, and with many small streams. From the little stone house, 'The Downs,' there was a superb view in every direction. If I remember rightly, Tunbridge Wells was several miles to the east, across a wide valley, and we could see the setting sun flashing on its windows. To the south was a heavy pine forest over which we could see a hop-kiln. The woods were a favourite place with father, and I used to love the hop-kiln, and inhaling the sulphurous vapour used in drying the hops. Near by was a good-sized farm, and we used to explore the outbuildings, barns, etc. Barn swallows were very plentiful, and one day I got hold of a

young fledgling not yet ready to leave the nest. I did not realise what an unpardonable crime I had committed, and showed the bird to my father. He was horrified, and for some reason would not allow me to clamber back and replace the bird. He probably realised that the parents would desert the nest. Anyway, I was ordered to dash the bird on the hard ground and thus save it further suffering.

There was a great deal of hunting in that country, both of the fox and hare, and I spent much time, and often wore myself out, by following the hounds on foot; making short cuts through wild ravines and over ridges in order to keep up with the hunt. I think father rather liked me to do this, as it was strenuous exercise in the open air and no doubt healthful. I always started out with a hunk of bread and cheese for the day's provision, and if I had a few pennies would often persuade some labourer to get me a tankard of ale in a pub.

In one direction near our house was a big wood with lots of chestnut trees, where the public were allowed to help themselves. I sometimes gathered a sackful of the nuts, and father and the rest of us enjoyed them roasted on the stove and also boiled.

Ferns were very plentiful in the district, and father specially loved the bracken, with its pungent peculiar odour when crushed. The hart's tongue, and other varieties not known to me, were frequently seen.

A well-known artist of the time, named Firmin, had a pleasant house on Crowborough Beacon, an eminence from which on a clear day we could get a glimpse of the sea, and as I was supposed to have some talent for drawing I was sent there for lessons. I was horribly shy and sensitive, and the lessons were agonising and I fear not very successful. Firmin started me with a charcoal on a large board to copy a plaster model of the human foot, after a long lecture on the anatomy, and an examination of my own foot, which he said was nearly perfect! I mention this to show father's deep interest in art and beauty of whatsoever nature. If I had shown any real or lasting talent I am sure he would have given me every opportunity, in spite of his straitened means.

Father was very good as a pencil artist. I remember some very delicate sketches he made, notably one of the hop-kiln showing above the pines. I do not think he ever essayed oils or water-colours.

One thing delighted him and me too: it was more often than not very windy, and he always had to climb one of the many hills to enjoy it the more. One other thing he loved to hear, and that was the staccato notes of the huntsman's short horn as he urges on the beagles. This may seem rather anomalous, as the sound was a token of and a part of a cruel practice, but I know the sound is highly exciting, like that of martial music.

Father insisted on quiet at meals; in fact, we hardly dared say anything at those times, and this must have made a very strong impression on me, because I find myself always trying to keep my family as quiet as possible when eating. This regulation is not in the modern manner and is not very popular.

GORING-ON-SEA [1886-1887]

I understand that Goring is now a part of Worthing, but in my time there was a good stretch of country road between them, along which I pedalled to school daily on my tricycle, a loving gift from my father. We stayed a little while near the sea at Worthing before selecting 'Sea View' at Goring as a permanent residence. My school at Worthing was presided over by a gentleman named Petit, and I remember my father was not very well pleased at times with the progress I made. Save for the sombre church, which my father very much disliked, it was a lovely spot, and from our breakfast-room window we could often see coasters and luggers reaching in to the shore. I inherited a passion for the sea and ships from father, and it was satisfied at Goring, where wind and weather brought vessels close in. Sea Lane has always been prominent in my memories of our days at Goring. It was, to me, the highway to the great, mysterious sea. When at liberty I never failed to head for the lonesome beach and commune with the sun, the shingle and the sea. Many hours I spent, alone, longing for a storm which would pile up the big breakers, and conversing with old Hunnisett, the fisherman, and his two young sons. On one or two occasions they took me out to sea to lift the lobster pots, and we boys certainly did most of the work.

Notwithstanding our nearness to the sea there were many fine trees around, mostly 'everlasting' (ilex) oaks, which were in leaf all the year round.

My memories, at least those intimately connected with my father at Goring, are very sparse, owing to him being mostly confined to his room where my mother took his dictation in longhand. His health at this time did not permit him to take long walks. In fact, I do not remember that he ever came down to the solitary beach with me. I know that he took short walks on the footpaths around the village, but not often. Our garden, surrounded by a brick wall, with an old well at the south end and fruit trees trained to the wall, was sufficient for his fresh air need and a little exercise. I remember the well was shaded by a damson tree, and the garden, the fields to the sea in front of the house, and the sea itself, formed a very pleasant spot for a boy of my age. Once there was a shipwreck a few miles to the west, and on this occasion father hired a cab to take me to see the tragic scene.

I was very fond of making model boats, although I found it very difficult to get the smooth, rounded contours. After a good many trials I suddenly

realised that a sailing barge, such as I had seen on the Thames, would be far more simple to make. So after a good while I had a barge 18 inches long, nicely hollowed out, bow and stern with fair shape, mast, sprit-sail and rudder complete. Having given her a trial trip down at the foot of Sea Lane I went upstairs with great pride to show off my skill. Father said: 'Yes, the barge looks all right, but the bargee smells rather smoky!' I was rather crestfallen. I knew he did not like a boy of twelve smoking, and I did not like to disobey and hurt him, but the temptation was so very great that I often succumbed. I mentioned the clay pipe habit before, and when my family want to please me in these days they buy me some Wills's shag so that I can smoke the old clay, indoors of course. Shag is the only tobacco worth a tinker's cuss in a clay.

When we first moved into the Goring house I think father must have been fairly well, because I remember more than once asking him about the rig of different ships which we could see from the breakfast-room window. He always knew the answer, and although I do not think he did much in the way of sailing, except on Coate water ('the New Sea'), he knew, or so it seemed to me, everything about sails and sailing. I do not remember whether he was ever well enough to walk with me down my favourite Sea Lane to the beach. Perhaps not, or I should surely have retained that memory? He did, however, receive permission to walk round the large estate known as, I think, Lyons. Probably he was solitary, or accompanied by my mother. I often used to trespass there at night, tempted by other boys who had clap-nets in which they caught quantities of sparrows. I never dared to take home a share of the spoils.

I was taken up to see him after he died, but nothing of memory remains to me except the calmness and repose of his face and the feeling of awe. I was not old enough to realise the nature of such a loss.

After my father's death, my mother and I went for a visit to Mr. J. W. North, at Washford, near Dunster, the painter who had been a great friend of my father's. They had much in common, both being lovers of the beautiful. I had great fun at Washford, where there was a splendid orchard with many fine varieties of apples and other fruit. The orchard was on a considerable eminence; in fact, at the rim of a railway cutting where I could indulge one of my favourite pastimes, watching trains.

The Cupid at Coate

Joseph Hall

Joseph Hall (born 2 Jan. 1854) was Richard Jefferies' cousin. These memories, dated 1926, were sent to Harold Jefferies shortly after Jessie died and were collected and edited by Samuel Looker in the Worthing Cavalcade: *Concerning Richard Jefferies* (Worthing Art Development Scheme, 1944), pp.35-37.

The announcement of the death (after nearly forty years of widowhood) of the lady who was for some twelve years the devoted helpmeet of Richard Jefferies, it is said, was a surprise to many of his admirers who were under the impression that he died a bachelor. To these, a few reminiscences of his wooing, and of his previous amatory experiences, may not be without interest.

In the early sixties Jefferies had at last settled down to regular work, and was employed on one of the Swindon newspapers as a reporter. As his biographers have hinted, he had the reputation among his relatives of being, if not a ne'er-do-well, at least a shiftless and irresponsible youth, with a distaste for serious work. His tardy adoption of a profession paved the way for his restoration to grace, and he was now received with a somewhat patronising tolerance. It must not be assumed, however, that he was troubled in the least by the attitude of his kin one way or the other: he was always ready to meet indifference with indifference, and to repay contumely in similar currency. He could, nevertheless, be courteous and charming when given the opportunity, and on congenial topics would talk freely and fluently. His bearing towards his family connections at this time is faithfully mirrored in *Amaryllis at the Fair*, for he has endowed the heroine of that work with many of the prejudices, tastes, and aspirations that characterised his own youth.

At this period he was a lanky lad, with fine eyes, intellectual features, and a wealth of light brown hair. He had overcome the predilection of his earlier adolescence for Samsonian locks, which at one time almost reached his shoulders and frequently evoked derisive comments from the Swindon youths. He lived at Coate farm, where his father wrung a scanty living from the soil, and walked the one and a half miles to and fro daily. It was his custom to call at his grandfather's house in town occasionally with a message for his aunt, or to take a cup of tea, and it was noticed that his visits were more frequent when a female cousin of his happened to be staying there. She was the elder daughter of his father's sister, who tenanted a farm half a

dozen fields away northward from the family homestead, and it was her ingenuous charm that first aroused the calf love of 'Dick'. This attraction, which was obviously mutual, aroused some anxiety in the household and, during the admirer's visits, a certain small boy—another cousin—was always told to go and play in the front room. [*The small boy was Joseph Hall.*] Regard for the principles of Mistress Grundy was more deeply engrained in those Victorian days than in these more spacious times, and the function of the small boy, though he knew it not, was to represent the proprieties. The front room was the state apartment of the house, and it was there the young people were allowed to enjoy each other's society. What a delightful old-world room it was! Solid Georgian furniture; paintings by a deceased son of the house, who had been a Royal Academy student; and big, glazed book-cases, holding the literary treasures of old John Jefferies—a great attraction to Richard, these. It was a perennial treat to the smaller fry to be allowed to rummage in the dark, cavernous cupboard, constructed in the thickness of the wall, a good three feet deep. Here, among the toys used by generations of children, one would suddenly come upon extraordinary implements, long laid by and forgotten, the very uses of which were unknown to the discoverers. Who, for instance, would guess that this coffin-shaped plank was a backboard, designed to straighten the spines of hoydens inclined to stoop; or that the carved ivory hand that tipped a short wand was a scratcher, fashioned to relieve irritation in parts of the body inaccessible to the fingers! The wide window, with the capacious, cushioned window seats, overlooked the market square; it was here that Amaryllys peeped out at the wonders of the fair. Well does that small boy—now a veteran of seventy-two—remember the frigidity with which his unwelcome intrusions were regarded, and how artfully Dick would suggest that a game of pirates in the brew-house should appeal much more forcibly to an active lad than playing with a Noah's ark on the hearthrug. Although he dared not venture to say so, the unconscious enactor of the duenna role was equally convinced that whispering and giggling, interspersed with indifferent renderings of simple tunes on the cottage piano, were contemptible pastimes for a pair nearly eligible to be classed as 'grown ups'. The shafts of Cupid rarely inflict more than superficial wounds on the hearts of growing striplings, and Richard, whose pericardium was but lightly scarred, as precipitantly as Romeo flitted from the bower of Rosaline to the orchard wall of the Capulets, transferred his attentions to the younger sister of his erstwhile inamorata. After a grudgingly conceded period of probation, the couple were allowed to become provisionally engaged; but Richard's ardour gradually cooled, and the girl, whilst visiting in a distant county, was successfully wooed and won by another suitor. The years passed on, and Richard slowly realised that the

writing of fiction was not his true vocation. The letter to *The Times* on the agricultural labourer had aroused considerable interest and controversy, and its author found that the pages of leading reviews and magazines were open to articles from his pen. The production of such works as *The Scarlet Shawl*, and *Greene Ferne Farm*, was gradually, and rather regretfully, abandoned, and he set himself steadfastly to cultivate the branch of literature in which his strength lay, and upon which his true fame now rests. But Cupid was not to be baulked, and the young author, having in the interval indulged in several fleeting flirtations, resumed his serious search for a mate. This time he turned his face towards the south, where ten minutes' walk from his home, on the western bank of the lake which was the scene of *Bevis* and *Mark's* exploits, was Daye House Farm, the residence of Mr. Andrew Baden. The offspring of the two neighbours had been acquainted since their childhood, and it was on Jessie, the elder daughter of Mr. Baden's second wife, that Richard now fixed his affections. It was quickly made apparent to him that his pretensions were unwelcome to some of the male occupants of Daye House, and on one occasion, at least, opposition passed from the verbal to the physical stage. The scions of the house of Baden were stalwart six-footers in the prime of life—two of them had been troopers in the Lifeguards—and the delicate, willowy writing-man, although his courage and spirit were beyond question, was no match for one of them when it came to fisticuffs. It was not surprising, therefore, that Richard, to the horror of his mother, returned from the encounter battered, dishevelled, and, to use the maternal description, smothered in blood. But he was not one to let such an incident interfere with the course of his wooing, and he pressed his suit with increased ardour until his persistence broke down all opposition, and in the year 1874 the young couple were married at Chiseldon Church. In the registers of this parish there are entries referring to many generations of the Jefferies family, and the bones of most of them lie in the adjacent churchyard. A tiny church has since been erected in Coate hamlet, on the ground given by Richard's grandfather; but previous to this it had been the custom for the vicar of Chiseldon to hold periodical services at Coate Farm in the skillen during summer, in the roomy old kitchen during winter. Only the few who were admitted to the intimacy of his home know how cheerfully and conscientiously the lady who Jefferies was fortunate enough to marry carried out her wifely duties; how tenderly she nursed him through his long and trying illness; how cheerfully she humoured his whims and fancies; how unweariedly she wrote at his bedside the articles he dictated; and how solicitously she kept from his knowledge the shifts and artifices she had to practise to keep the home running on an income that was frequently inadequate, and always precarious.

List of Author Inscribed and Associated Copies of Richard Jefferies' Books

George Miller

Jefferies' inscribed presentation copies are rare, and the following list represents the tally known or seen as of June 2018, updating Hugoe Matthews' article 'Richard Jefferies. His Mark' in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* 19. It is not easy to assess the proportion of the whole these examples represent. Smith Elder gave Jefferies six free copies for each of seven publications, counting the illustrated *Gamekeeper* as one of them, and 18 of the 42 can be accounted for. Six was probably a standard quota, though publishers could be flexible if sales were sluggish, or stock unsold. C.J. Longman, a friend and supporter of Jefferies as well as a publisher, gave him fourteen copies of *The Story of My Heart*, before selling the remainder as waste. The Longman ledgers show bestowals of 9, 6 and 'further copies' of *Red Deer* on separate dates, prompting him to write testily to enquire if Jefferies' friends couldn't buy their own. We know of just two (possibly three with Mudford – see below) of *The Story*, and seven on the same basis of *Red Deer*.

The inscriptions follow a consistent pattern. From *World's End* onwards they are all dated and none have his signature. They are decidedly formal, his mother being 'E. Jefferies' and his cousin and childhood playmate 'Horton Harrild Junr. Esq.' rather than 'Horty' as referred to in letters to Aunt Ellen. The one exception is the copy of *Amaryllis* to 'Sally, with love'. Apart from this to his sister the expression of love is reserved for his mother, aunt, wife, and his friends John and Alice Brook. For all others it's 'With the Author's complts.', or more minimally 'from the Author' ('author' always capitalised). There are no messages beyond these wordings, apart from a first impression of *The Gamekeeper at Home* given to Frederick Greenwood in which Jefferies pays tribute to Greenwood's encouragement and advice.

From the outset Jefferies sent copies to people who might advance his fortunes as a writer. With the first two titles he appears to be thinking of his profile in Swindon, though curiously the Goddards themselves, (A.L., H.N. and the Rev. Francis) were not on the list. Perhaps that was thought unnecessary. No inscribed copies of the first two novels have turned up. His father reports a neighbour's opinion that *The Scarlet Shawl* was immoral. Jefferies was now angling for a London audience, or at least a less provincial one, and given the book's dedication to his aunt he couldn't have thought she would have found it offensive. He must have been very upset by the

deflating typo in the dedication, followed by the misspelling of his name on the spine when a cancel was inserted, and this may account for the absence of an inscribed copy to her. But as she doesn't appear in the list until *Wild Life in a Southern County* comes to her 'with the Author's love' it is safer to assume that some copies to her are lost or out of sight.

By contrast to its predecessors *World's End* has no less than six inscribed recipients. They include his mother, and according to Matthews he sent all his subsequent books to her with the exception of *The Dewy Morn*. Again the 'morality' problem (which so bedevilled Hardy) might be the reason why *The Dewy Morn* was withheld. Other family members were given copies of *World's End*, Harrilds, and Billings and a close associate of the Harrild empire, Samuel Bremner, but after *World's End* the wider family doesn't reappear. The future trend is set by the inclusion of two London editors: Arthur Locker, editor of the *Graphic*, and the most important of them, Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* published by Smith Elder.

Greenwood's role in Jefferies' development and success has been widely recognised, and is reflected in the dedication to him of *Wild Life* and the inscriptions in the other Smith Elder titles except *Round About a Great Estate*. After three with 'best wishes' this is perhaps just another mislaid rather than omitted, but no later Greenwood copies are known. In 1880 he left the *Pall Mall* to found and edit *St. James's Gazette*, but in itself this is unlikely to have affected their relationship. Jefferies was an equally prolific contributor to *St. James's*, quite possibly by invitation, while continuing to place work in the *PMG*. His persistence in plying an indifferent editor with complimentary copies is illustrated by the case of W.H. Mudford, editor of the *Standard*, a newspaper he contributed to throughout his career. The bookseller Walter T. Spencer recalled buying a cache of nine Jefferies first editions uncut and unread, all with the same inscription to a W.H. followed by a name scribbled over.¹ The *Gamekeeper* and *Hodge* listed below are two of these, and close examination reveals the name Mudford. In reminiscences² Greenwood spoke of feeling some 'shame and sorrow' on reading Besant's life of Jefferies. Like Besant he thought the country books and nature writings Jefferies' true sphere, the novels a failure and the 'religio-philosophical speculation' in no way comparable with *The Gamekeeper at Home*. Perhaps he had communicated these views to Jefferies with regard to his later books, and declined gift of further inscribed copies to him, while pleased to continue publishing his descriptive country pieces.

¹ 'W.H. -----?' in Richard Jefferies Society Autumn Newsletter and Annual Report 2007-2008.

² 'Richard Jefferies' by Frederick Greenwood, *Scots Observer* 2 Aug 1890, v.4 pp.275-277.

Like others who knew him Greenwood speaks of Jefferies as a reserved and solitary character, but his correspondence shows openness to interested enquiry and readiness to engage and form friendships with kindred spirits. The surviving documentation is probably an incomplete picture of his social and intellectual life and the inscriptions an even paler reflection. Nevertheless there are some interesting names: William Hepworth Dixon, John and Alice Brook³, J.W. North⁴, F.W. Joynes, Fred G. Heal⁵, William Sharp⁶, Richard Garnett, T. Hanson Lewis and W.T. Stead.

Against this his background and family seem to have receded. As we have seen he sent all but one of his books to his mother, and perhaps to the aunt who meant so much to him from tutelage to maturity. But Ellen has only four to her name, and there is a curious pattern to the inscriptions themselves, progressing from 'with the Author's love' (*Wild Life*, 1879) to 'from the Author' (*Bevis*, 1883) to just 'Ellen Harrild' and the date (*After London*, 1885), and finally back to 'with the Author's love' (*The Open Air*, 1885). Does this indicate some estrangement, and reconciliation as the end approaches? The family ethos was devout and prosperous and the Church central. It's hard to imagine a sympathetic reading of *The Story of My Heart* in Shanklin Villa, or much common ground between the impoverished, visionary artist and the successful men of business that his cousins and brother in law became.

According to Robin Harrild who has researched his family's history, Ellen and Thomas Harrild treated Richard, who came to live with them aged four 'as if he were their own son'. Thomas died in 1867, but Jefferies continued to write to Ellen and visit 'throughout his life.'⁷ And yet the last letter preserved is dated 1873 and no later visits are known of or recorded. Also it appears that Jefferies never returned to Coate or visited his parents in Bath, and it is strange that he did not include his father in the dedications. James Lockett Jefferies was certainly a complex character, irascible, masterful, yet thoughtful and sensitive. And his relationship with his son was also complex, especially during Richard's last days at Coate when he was desperately struggling to succeed as a writer while his father was desperately failing as a farmer. One of only two known letters to his mother was written in February 1886 from 'The Downs', Crowborough⁸. He has wanted to write for sometime

³ 'John, Alice and 'Squire' Brook', *RJS Journal* 32, Summer 2013, pp.117-124.

⁴ 'Richard Jefferies and John William North' by Steve P. Milton, *RJS Journal* 32 pp.132-149.

⁵ *Richard Jefferies: a Bibliographical Study*, Scolar, 1993. pp.375-381.

⁶ 'Jefferies, Whitman and William Sharp', *RJS Journal* 33, pp.58-68.

⁷ 'Fame and Fortune: Robert Harrild (1780-1853)' by Robin Harrild, p.17.

⁸ 'Jefferies' letter to his mother'. *RJSJ* 26, p.29.

but too weak and in pain. The cold is intense—see (‘Winds of Heaven’⁹). He is concerned for his mother’s health and asks after his father, still ‘the governor’, whom he has not heard of for a long time, and then goes on to talk lovingly about his children and their activities. He ends: ‘With much love to yourself and the governor always your affectionate son, Richard.’ The letter is a moving witness to a suspension, not cessation, of close family ties, in deep winter when Jefferies is brooding on his final masterpiece which will recreate Coate in its summer glory and celebrate its people in all their complexity, with his father, Iden, presiding like a disgruntled Prospero.

It is unfortunate that the enquiries of a well-wisher resulted in sentiments of bitterness and scorn in letters written by James Luckett in old age. Coate was the worst place in England and his son’s writings hardly less contemptible. The biographers Looker and Porteous use this material to diminish James’s character and his influence on his son¹⁰, but his latest and most thorough biographer does not fall into this error. The reminiscences of a lady who knew the couple at this time¹¹ shows an inner strength and a close bond between them, and inscribed copies also tell a different tale. It seems that while Richard was sending copies to his mother James was buying them (and books were not cheap) to send to his daughter, Richard’s sister. The dedications in *Round About a Great Estate*, *Greene Ferne Farm*, *Wood Magic* and *Red Deer* (and perhaps there were others) from the ‘father of the author’ show nothing but pride in his son’s achievement. James also bought copies for himself, which included *Round About a Great Estate*, the book to which his own stories and country lore had contributed, and White’s *Selborne*, edited by Richard Jefferies—his final appearance in book form.

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### Reporting, Editing and Authorship [1873]

- ‘For my Dear Aunt Ellen | With her affectionate Nephew’s love’ (MM)
- ‘Geo. North Esq. | With the Author’s | Complts.’ To a Swindon police superintendent. (MM)
- ‘George Stroud Esq. | With the Author’s | Complts.’ To a former school friend. (Maggs)

### A Memoir of the Goddards of North Wilts. [1873]

- ‘Aunt Ellen | With the Author’s Sincere | Love | August 13<sup>th</sup> 73.’ (MM)
- ‘James S. Lang from F. Goddard Aug 26<sup>th</sup> 1873’ From the Rev. Francis Goddard. (MM see intro)

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<sup>9</sup> *Field and Hedgerow*.

<sup>10</sup> *Richard Jefferies: Man of the Fields*, by Samuel J. Looker and Crichton Porteous, John Baker, 1964, pp.3-5.

<sup>11</sup> *Country Life*, 21 March, 1908.

- 'Mr. Stone | with the Author's Complots.' To a landowner mentioned on p.26. (MM)
- 'C. Jefferies' Copy belonging to the author's brother Charles. (MM)
- 'From the Author' (RJ's hand?) with a letter dated 20 February 1875 to James F. Fuller, author of *Omniana: the Autobiography of an Irish Octogenarian*, 1916, with part of letter in facsimile. (Davis 29 – MM)
- 'C.A. Wheeler Esq. | With the Author's Complots.' To a noted Swindonian. (MM)
- 'A.L. Goddard | 1873' Copy of Ambrose Lethbridge Goddard MP of The Lawn, Swindon. (MM)
- 'T Sotheron Estcourt' Copy of Thomas Sotheron Estcourt, MP for Cricklade, Home Secretary in 1859, with a letter to him from Horatio Nelson Goddard concerning Jefferies. (Maggs)

### **Jack Brass, Emperor of England**

- No inscribed copies known.

### **The Scarlet Shawl: A Novel**

- Printed dedication to this aunt: ...'In the belief that success in after life chiefly depends on early impressions, I wish to dedicate this book to Ellen Harrild, as an acknowledgement of my early trainin[g], and of my esteem for her gracious disposition. R. Jefferies.'
- 'Car Jac Longman | 1891' Bookplate of C.J. Longman, Jefferies' publisher and friend, in a 1891 remainder copy of the second edition. See 'The Story of The Scarlet Shawl', *RJS Journal*, Winter 2015. (GM)

### **Restless Human Hearts: A Novel**

- 'Jefferies. Coate' on fly leaf of each vol. ('copy came from a family source'. (Sadleir 1312)

### **Suez-Cide!!**

- Jefferies sent a copy to William Hepworth Dixon, editor of the *Athenaeum*, with a letter dated 4 February 1876, in which he says that Dixon had read the MS. (GM – ALS)

### **World's End**

- 'E. Jefferies. With the Author's love. July 5<sup>th</sup> 1877' to his mother. (Sadleir 1318 – MM)
- 'S. Bremner Esq. | With the Author's Complots, | July 13<sup>th</sup> 1877.' (Davis 80 – MM)
- 'Arthur Locker Esq. | With the Author's Complots, | July 5<sup>th</sup> 1877.' to the editor of the *Graphic*. (CSmH – MM)
- 'Mr. and Mrs. R.T. Billing | With the Author's Complots, | July 6<sup>th</sup> 1877' to his sister and brother-in-law. (D. Winter 145)

- 'F. Harrild Esq. | *With the Author's Complts*, | July 9 1877' to Frederick Harrild, a cousin. (GM)
- 'F. Greenwood Esq. *With the Author's Complts*, July 6<sup>th</sup> 1877' to editor of PMG (Maggs)
- 'Ellen Harrild | *With the Author's Love* | July 10th 1877.' (Sotheby's Catalogue 13411, Lot 101, 10/12/2013)

### **The Gamekeeper at Home**

- 'E. Jefferies, *With best love from her son the Author*, June 25<sup>th</sup> 1878.' (Davis 22 – MM)
- Bookplate of William Algernon Locker, son of Arthur Locker editor of the *Graphic*, with two ALS from Jefferies to Arthur Locker. (Davis 21 – MM)
- 'F. Greenwood Esq. | *With the Author's sincere acknowledgements of friendly encouragement | & literary advice* | June 26<sup>th</sup> 1878.' (Maggs)
- 'W.H. [*'Mudford'* scribbled out] Esq. | *From the Author* | Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> 1879'. (p.c.)

### **The Gamekeeper at Home, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, illustrated, 1880**

- 'F. Greenwood Esq. | *With the Author's best wishes* | Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> 1879.' (MM)
- 'Horton Harrild Junr. Esq. | *From the Author* | Dec 11<sup>th</sup> 1879.' (MM – D. Winter 148)
- 'R S Chambers' rubber stamped. A copy containing an ALS from Jefferies to R. Chambers, editor of *Chambers's Journal*, 25 January 1884. (GM)

### **Wild Life in a Southern County**

- 'E. Jefferies | *With the Author's Best love* | Feb 11 1879.' (D. Winter 149)
- 'Ellen Harrild, *with the Author's love*, Feb 11 1879.' (Wolff 3626)
- The book is dedicated to Frederick Greenwood, so he's certain to have been sent a copy.

### **The Amateur Poacher**

- 'Frederick Greenwood Esq. | *With the Author's best wishes* | October 13<sup>th</sup> 1879.' (GM)
- 'E. Jefferies | *With the Author's best love* | October 13<sup>th</sup> 1879' (D. Winter 150)

### **Greene Ferne Farm**

- 'Fanny Baden. *From, the Author*, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> 1880' To his sister-in-law. Possibly the only known contact with his wife's family. (Davis 32)
- 'E. Jefferies | *With the Author's best love* | Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> 1880.' (D. Winter 151)

- 'Frederick Greenwood Esq. | With the Author's best wishes | Feb 4<sup>th</sup> 1880.' (Maggs)
- 'To My Daughter Sarah | From her Father | Jas. Luckett Jefferies | Bath | Feb 4<sup>th</sup> 1880.' (HM)
- 'Geo H. Harmer' Copy of George Henry Harmer, editor of the *Wilts and Gloucester Standard* while Jefferies was associated with it. (SPL)

### **Hodge and His Masters**

- 'F. Greenwood Esq. | With the Author's best wishes, | March 26<sup>th</sup> 1880.' (MM)
- 'W.H. ['Mudford' scribbled out] Esq. | With the Author's best wishes | March 25<sup>th</sup> 1880.' (GM)
- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's best love | March 26 1880.' (D. Winter 152)
- 'To Sarah Billing | With her Father's Love | James Luckett Jefferies | Bath | April 5<sup>th</sup> 1880.' (D. Winter 153)

### **Round About a Great Estate**

- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's best love | Aug 6<sup>th</sup> 1880.' (D. Winter 154)
- 'Mrs. Billing | With Father's Love | J.L. Jefferies | Oct 6/80.' (D. Winter 173)
- 'Jas L Jefferies | 48 King Str | Bath', Jefferies' father's copy. (D. Winter 171)
- 'R.M. Campbell | Kati Kati N.Z. | Jan 1881' With an ALS from Jefferies to Smith Elder regarding a correspondent in New Zealand. (GM)

### **Wood Magic: a Fable**

- 'John & Alice Brook | From the Author | May 24<sup>th</sup> 81.' See fn.3 above.
- 'F.W. Joynes Esq. | From the Author | May 24<sup>th</sup>.' Frederick William Joynes, sub-editor of the *PMG*. (GM)
- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's love | May 23<sup>rd</sup> 81.' (D. Winter 155)
- 'Mrs. Rbt. Billing | With her Father's best | Love | Jas. L. Jefferies | June 8<sup>th</sup> 1881.' (D. Winter 156)
- 'Horton Harrild Junr. Esq. | From the Author | May 23<sup>rd</sup> 81.' (p.c.)

### **Wood Magic 1882**

- 'To | Richard Theodosius | With love and good wishes from | the Author's niece, C.E. Billing. | April 1945.' (GM)

### **Bevis: The Story of a Boy**

- 'Ellen Harrild from the author, July 1882' 'E.H. from R.J.' pencilled on the title of volume III. (Sadleir 1305)
- To his mother dated July. (*Forward Life*)

- 'Geo. H. Harmer' in all three volumes. (SPL)

### **Nature Near London**

- 'Jessie Jefferies | April 6<sup>th</sup> 1883.' (MM – D. Winter 174)
- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's best love | April 6<sup>th</sup> 1883.' (D. Winter 159)

### **Nature Near London, 3<sup>rd</sup> impression, 1887**

- 'S.E. Billing | In Memory of the | dear Author from | his only Sister. | Oct 1887.' (D. Winter 173)

### **The Story of My Heart**

- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's best love | November 6<sup>th</sup> 1883.' (Davis 65 – MM)
- 'Geo. H. Harmer.' (SPL)
- 'C. Jefferies', his brother Charles's copy. (D. Winter 160)
- 'J.W. North | From the Author | Oct 13<sup>th</sup> 1883' to his friend, the artist and illustrator. (GM)
- 'Mrs. Richard Jefferies' in pencil on the title. (Bradfer-Lawrence 232)

### **Red Deer**

- 'J.W. North | From the Author | Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1884' With North's corrections. (GM)
- 'W.H. [*Mudford* scribbled out] Esq. | from the Author | Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1884.' (pc)
- 'J. Comyns Carr Esq. | From the Author | Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1884' to the editor of the *English Illustrated Magazine*. (MM – D. Winter 163)
- 'Fred G. Heal, Esq. From the Author, Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 1884' to son of Arthur Heal, Huntsman of Devon and Somerset Staghouads. (MM)
- Jefferies is known to have sent copies to Richard Garnett and T. Hanson Lewis (see MM introduction to *Red Deer*, pp. 375-381)
- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's best love | January 14<sup>th</sup> 1884.' (D. Winter 162–Robert Brown)

### **Red Deer, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1892**

- 'James Luckett Jefferies | Father | of the Author | Aug 1895' in a bold proud hand. (HM)

### **The Life of the Fields**

- 'Ellen Harrild/From the Author/ May 29<sup>th</sup> 1884' (Jarndyce Catalogue, 2018). Aunt Ellen inscribes the book to her niece Jessie Metzner on 15 May 1909.
- 'Jessie Jefferies | June 8<sup>th</sup> 84 | With all the Author's love.' (GM)
- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's love | June 7<sup>th</sup> 1884.' (MM)
- 'William Sharp Esq. | From the Author | June 12<sup>th</sup> 1884.' See fn.6 above.

## The Dewy Morn

- 'C. Jefferies' on both title pages. (D. Winter 164)
- 'J.W. North Esq. From the Author. Sept 8<sup>th</sup> 1884' (Anderson Galleries, New York, 13/10/1925)

## After London

- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's best love | April 1<sup>st</sup> 1885.' (Davis 1)
- 'John and Alice Brook | From the Author | May 10<sup>th</sup> 1885.' With a pencil sketch signed by Jefferies. See fn.3 above. (Sotheby – MM – D. Winter 165)
- 'Ellen Harrild | April 1885.' (D. Winter 166)

## The Open Air

- 'Ellen Harrild | With the Author's love | Nov [25<sup>th</sup> crossed out] 23<sup>rd</sup> 1885.' (MM – D. Winter 167 – Robert Brown) Aunt Ellen inscribes the book to her niece Mrs Billing (i.e. Sarah Jefferies) on 28 May 1889.
- 'E. Jefferies | With the Author's love | 23<sup>rd</sup>.' (*Forward Life*, 23 Nov 1885)
- 'John & Alice Brook With the Author's Love Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 1886.' (MM – D. Winter 166)

## Amaryllis at the Fair

- 'John and Alice Brook | From the Author | March 22<sup>nd</sup> '87.' (MM)
- To his mother, March 17<sup>th</sup> 1887 ( *Forward Life*)
- 'Sally, with love, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, '87.' (D. Winter 168)
- 'W.T. Stead Esq. | From the Author | March 17<sup>th</sup> '87.' (GM)

## White's Selborne edited by Jefferies

- 'James L. Jefferies | 10 Sep 1887' (HM)

### References:

- (RJS) Richard Jefferies Society  
(MM) *Richard Jefferies: a Bibliographical Study*, Scholar, 1993.  
(Maggs) *Agriculture and Country Life*, Cata 1395, Maggs Bros. 2006.  
(GM): My collection.  
(Sadleir) Michael Sadleir, *XIX Fiction*, Constable, 1951.  
(Davis) G.M. & R.C. Davis, *Richard Jefferies 1848-1887*, Catalogue of part of Bradfer-Lawrence collection.  
(CSmH) Henry E. Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California.  
(D. Winter) *Children's & Illustrated Books, Modern First Editions*, Dominic Winter, Catalogue of sale 12 December 2013.  
(Wolff) Robert Lee Wolff, *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, NY Garland Press, 1981-6.  
(SPL) Swindon Public Library.  
(Bradfer-Lawrence) Sale catalogue of part of H.L. Bradfer-Lawrence's Jefferies collection.  
(HM) 'Richard Jefferies: His Mark', by Hugoe Matthews, *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* 19, 2009, pp.12-17.  
(*Forward Life*) Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel, *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies*. Petton Books, 1994.  
(p.c.) Known or assumed to be in a private collection, with no known published listing.

# Letter to Dr. Alfred Theodore Rake from Jefferies' Father

*James Luckett Jefferies*

The letter was first published in *Richard Jefferies: Man of the Fields* by Samuel J. Looker and Crichton Porteous, (London: John Baker, 1965), p.2-3. James Luckett 'was then aged eighty and within a month of his own end'. Looker retained the original spelling and punctuation. The original transcript is held in the Looker archive and reproduces the letter in full along with some additional notes as below.

From James Luckett Jefferies to Dr. Rake (26 November 1896<sup>1</sup>)

Address on envelope:

Mr. Alfred Theodore Rake, 8 Sherrif Road, West Hampstead, N.W.

48 N. K. Str.  
Nov 26<sup>th</sup> 96

Dear Mr. Rake, — I have been obliged to delay. Your kindness in sending that cheque made me go a little beyond my usual coolness and then thinking of all you had asked me, brings things to one's mind, and as I wish'd to give as true account as I could, and have had a little letter writing to do was afraid of confusing myself.

The marble mason has just placed a plain headstone and border to the loving memory of the Mother and also Richard Jefferies. I wanted to see his names. Should like to have seen his best book on Rural Life, but could not decide and as Mrs. Harrild<sup>2</sup> and Mrs. Billing<sup>3</sup> had promised to bear the expense or share I had to consult them. They neither seemed to wish it. I have let Mrs. B. know it is completed and as far as I can tell in a workmanlike and satisfactory manner. Whether they will come to see it before Christmas as it is so near I have not heard. I do not know whether Mr. Bull is still at Swindon, should you call on Mrs. R. Jefferies she will converse with you, her daughter's name is Phyllis, and the Boy a great Tall, Bold youth, has taken to

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<sup>1</sup> SJL notes: 'It is curious this - although the old man's letter is dated Nov 26. 96, The envelope in postmarked Nov 21.'

<sup>2</sup> Sister-in-law of James Jefferies.

<sup>3</sup> James Jefferies' sister [*sic*. Ed: Mrs Billing should refer to Sarah Billing - his daughter].

the Sea. Hope he will not change his mind, for I delight in Sailing Ships has did Richard, on the Lake and his innamorata Jessie the Lake was what puzzled the readers of his descriptions they said the Lake where all in the North, one had noticed he had said something about chalky rock it begins in Burderop Wood a mile and a half from his home, the character you mention who saw the rats running up the wall, was a Brother of Mrs. J. W. Baden her father had two wives and a long family by the first and several by the last. W.B was sad character had been a Life Guards Man and also sent to engagement in West Indies, but could do good nowhere, rabbiting trapping and ferreting and drinking was all his delight.

I did not see Richard's writings or take any delight in them. A gentleman of Position in Swindon had spoken to me about the Novel he had brought out the *Scarlet Shawl* it was not moral he ought not to go on with such writing but I knew but little about it, and when writing all his earliest of rural life, did not know about it, until the world almost was talking of them, how he could think of describing Coate as such a pleasant place and deceive so I could not imagine, in fact nothing scarcely he mentions is in Coate proper only the proper one was not a pleasant one Snodshill was the name on my Waggon and cart, he styled it Coate Farm it was not worthy of the name of Farm it was not Forty Acres of land his Wife and Friends lived close by Dayhouse Farm nearly 300 Acres and quite Modern Newly built House the old one was all thatch and destroyed by fire some years ago, all excellent meadow land and well timbered, Fine Elms and the best grown Oaks I ever saw. Tall and a good size, a large piece of Land call'd the Plain bounded by the Lake on one side always a favourite place to walk over, a bunch of Old Sycamores looking as if they had been there for centuries.

My old house was originally thatch. Thatched roofs was preferred for the Cheese Rooms. I have not seen it since Blue Slates as been put on the House was built the whole of the Dwelling House when I was a Boy about seven, and remained empty for years, I was the first that lived in it, after leaving school at 14—my Eldest Sister<sup>4</sup> as Housekeeper and Dairy Maid managed it for Father who had a large business in Swindon as Miller and Baker.

I was not obliged to leave Coate but I should have been, we were all so glad to get away, had I stay'd much longer. It was badly planned house to live in not a room fit to live in. As I grew up I found the house very different to what it ought to have been, but could do but little improvement, and since I left know there has been almost Hundred lay'd out on it, there was a respectable look about the place by the side of the Turnpike Road on a Hill or rising ground, good and substantial stone wall in front in Front and round

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<sup>4</sup> Sarah

the garden mostly my doing my garden was like no one else. My nieces now grown to Womenhood says there was no place in the world like it to them, they were there with my Children playing about the Arbour and Summer House

I had planted almost all kind of Trees (some I destroyed before I left) Mulberry My Father always call'd it Shakespeare's Tree. My Ideas when very young have been that he who Planted Trees years ago, must have been of the greatest benefit to his fellow creatures, there was some noble Walnut Trees growing at Swindon on the Goddard Estate and many other Trees showing they had been planted and well taken care of when young. Richard wrote a Book Memoirs of the Goddard Family now highly priz'd by all the Family. Shall never bring my scrawl to an end my fingers are cramping and candlelight.

(Signed) Jas L. Jefferies.



James Luckett Jefferies with his grand-daughter Phyllis (Richard and Jessie's daughter), c.1884, by a photographer in Eltham (British Library MS 58828).

# *Twenty Years of My Life* [extract]

*Douglas Sladen*

Douglas Brooke Wheelton Sladen (1856-1947), journalist and prolific author, emigrated to Australia in 1879 but returned to London in 1884. A letter from Jefferies asking Sladen about Australia is mentioned in Sladen's memoir<sup>1</sup> and must date between 1884 and 1887, the year of Jefferies' death.

Sladen also recounts<sup>2</sup>: 'I must mention my two closest Australian literary friends — Arthur Patchett Martin and Margaret Thomas. Margaret Thomas, who was brought up in Australia, though she was actually born in England, began life as a sculptor. She won the silver medal of the Royal Academy, and executed, among other public works, the memorial to Richard Jefferies in Salisbury Cathedral'.<sup>3</sup> Sladen lists amongst his literary friends Walter Besant but the letter is not mentioned in Besant's *Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*. The letter appears to be lost.<sup>4</sup>

On p.258 Sladen writes as follows:

Richard Jefferies never came to see me at Addison Mansions [Kensington]; he was dead, I think, before we went there. But I have a long and pathetic letter which he wrote to me some time before he died, setting forth the cross-fire of diseases from which he was suffering, and asking me if I thought the climate of the exquisite Blue Mountains of New South Wales would afford him any relief. One can picture how the genius of Jefferies would have blossomed forth amid that matchless gorge scenery (where you hear the bell-birds calling) and amid the natural history curiosities of a new land.

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<sup>1</sup> *Twenty Years of My Life*, Douglas Sladen (London: Constable, 1915).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.249.

<sup>3</sup> Kedrun Laurie includes information about Thomas and Sladen in her article: 'Margaret Thomas, Sculptor of the Bust of Richard Jefferies in Salisbury Cathedral' (*Richard Jefferies Society Journal* 13, 2004). In Reference 11 Laurie notes that Sladen was the 'editor of *Who's Who*, nephew of former Prime Minister of Victoria'.

<sup>4</sup> Sladen left all his papers to Richmond upon Thames library/archive. The collection starts from 1888 and Jefferies is not listed in the index. Information provided by Peter Robins.

# November Sixth

*Donald Culross Peattie*

Donald Culross Peattie (1898-1964) was a Harvard-educated botanist, author, novelist and nature columnist for several US newspapers including the *Washington Star*. In 1935 Putnam published a collection of pieces by Peattie under the title *An Almanac for Moderns*. This was a series of short essays, one for each day of the year, and the daily diversions took in the lives of notable scientists and authors with Peattie's discussions on philosophy. Peattie devoted November Sixth and Seventh in the almanac with his appreciation of Richard Jefferies.

## NOVEMBER SIXTH

On this day in 1848 in a fine old farmhouse near Swindon, was born Richard Jefferies, that naturalist and poet of nature whose works in influence and literary quality stand in English letters with those of Gilbert White and Hudson. Of the three he is the best known in America. Hudson was a cosmopolite, and Gilbert White almost universal – universally parochial. Jefferies stands deepest rooted in the soil; he melts into his scene and becomes its voice, speaking for it, as a dryad speaks for the oak she inhabits. He has the intense awareness of the genius of a spot that the classic nature lovers had, and in *Round About a Great Estate*, *Life of the Fields*, and *The Gamekeeper at Home*, he seems straight from Theocritus, the Sabine Farm and the *Bucolics*. He can make an acre of ground ring with lark song and glitter with dew. More than all other peoples, the English appreciate their nature; Jefferies is this love in its pure fonthead.

A failure as a novelist, Jefferies in his nature writing benefited by a novelist's power of self-expression. He has that choice of a fresh word, that eye for the quietly dramatic, with which White was entirely unacquainted. Yet he wrote out of a conscientious naturalist's first-hand information, with religious fidelity to truth. If, through all his work, and most of all in his autobiography, *The Story of My Heart*, there is a strain of melancholy, a way of narrating things as though he were remembering happy days, it is because much of his life he was writing of Nature from hospital beds, from poor city windows. Consumption, the malady of poets, slowly and very painfully destroyed this poet of the wild breeze on Beachy Head, of the hearty health of farm and soft-breathing beast, of granges packed to the door with sweetening hay.

## NOVEMBER SEVENTH

The sudden feelings evoked by musing over Richard Jefferies' tombstone are not that disease so crippled and embittered a life intended for manly health and fertility, but that his works have since been buried with him. Yet the influence of Jefferies, not only a nature writer but as a novelist with a deep and exciting sense of the elemental, is felt in modern literature. He had a way of peopling his Nature with human figures that throws the scene into a most comprehensible – the men, the children, the girls, just such as we would expect to meet on a wild down, in a copse roaring with the autumn wind, in a poacher's cottage. Some of the ache of *A Shropshire Lad*, some of the grand leisure of *Lavengro* and the imagination of *Wolf Solent* are in Jefferies. The primal idea of *After London* – an England after the cracking of Western civilization, with London in ruins, and men fighting amidst the brambles and forests returned – indicates a fine sense of true time as Nature ticks it off. And *Bevis*, that small boy Crusoe, the hobbledehoy Julius Caesar of the Great Pond and the Down, just too old to allow himself to be beaten and just too young to make impudent compliments to lasses stands out for me as a classic of a boy in Nature and Nature in a boy.



Donald Culross Peattie

# Our River and its Original Denizens

The following two letters to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* were published on 9 September 1884 and sent in response to an article by Jefferies that had appeared on 6 September titled 'Our River'. This article was re-published as part 1 of 'The Modern Thames' in *The Open Air* (1885).

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### OUR RIVER AND ITS ORIGINAL DENIZENS.

*To the* EDITOR *of the* PALL MALL GAZETTE.

Sir, —The article on 'Our River and its Denizens' by Mr. Jefferies in your issue of the 6th inst. will be read with much interest by 'sportsmen' frequenting our beautiful Thames, though it remains to be seen whether it will tend to bring about by those who have, or ought to have, the control a better state of things. I concur in all that Mr. Jefferies says respecting the conduct of those who use the river for pleasure or sport (so called) of various kinds, only that in this first notice he does not expose enough the delinquencies of the ill-conditioned, who delight in destroying everything that lives in the air, earth, or water by resorting to means the most unsportsmanlike, cruel, and unseemly. The feathery tribes that Mr. Jefferies speaks of, from a moorhen to a tomtit, that are scared, can take care of themselves by instant flight, when they hear in the distance the sweet voices of their destroyers. Not so, however, the unfortunate fish which are used as live bait in the capture of their own species, which are lured besides by twenty or thirty quarts of chopped-up worms thrown in mill-tails or weirs, the larger fish being caught by the sitters in a punt, which 'if you analyse,' as Mr. Jefferies says, 'you will not find it a noble sport.' Barbel, a worthless fish, is taken in this way, fishing with a lob-worm, and in this way and with a live bait the finest trout are taken and thus ingloriously captured, while in the same ignoble way the unfortunate pike succumbs in quiet waters by swallowing a live fish which has already been impaled, and which he receives into his stomach, after ten minutes being given by the 'sportsman' (?) to pouch the same, and is thus drawn ashore more dead than alive, and, if undersized, is forthwith cut open to disengage the hooks for future use. Such, for instance, is the style of fishing most practised on the Thames, when other modes could be adopted, particularly in trout and pike fishing,

requiring certainly more skill, greater exertion, but more sportsmanlike and minutely less cruel.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

AN OLD FISHERMAN.

*To the* EDITOR *of the* PALL MALL GAZETTE.

Sir, —Where did Mr. Jefferies hear that ‘the Rev. John Russell walked three thousand miles to see an otter’? A most astounding assertion, considering that he might see an otter any day within five miles of his own door. It is most likely that Jack Russell—may his memory be ever kept green under that familiar name!—said he would walk three thousand miles to see an otter, by way of emphatically expressing his love for wild animals. There is not a river in the county which had the honour of giving Jack Russell birth that has not in it at this present moment a fair number of otters, as no one would know better than Jack Russell himself. The otter was no stranger to him. Every one who has a vestige of good taste and feeling must cordially agree with Mr. Jefferies’s wish that the wild animals of this country should not be exterminated. The fox is indebted to the cruel sport of fox-hunting for any life at all, the martin-cat is nearly extinct, the polecat is following in his wake, the innocent badger is everywhere destroyed, so is the hedgehog, and the stoat and weasel are in great danger, giving place to the all-surviving rat, on whom they would naturally prey. The pretty little roebuck is gone, except where he is specially preserved, and the hare would soon follow if she were not preserved. The hawks and owls are ruthlessly killed by people sarcastically called keepers, who have only one idea, which is to kill everything except what they are pleased to call game. Mr. Jefferies would do a great service to his country if he would, besides wielding his powerful pen in defence of nature’s beauties, lend his aid in forming a society for the preservation of the fauna and flora. The flora, especially the ferns, require a protecting hand from the universal destroyer as much as the fauna. The Commons Preservation Society has done infinite good, for which the blessings of future generations will be showered upon it, though not well supported in point of numbers now. If Mr. Jefferies will undertake the formation of a kindred society for the preservation of wild animals and flowers, I believe he would be joined by many, and with his command of the English language he might even persuade the ornithologist that it is better not to shoot and stuff every rare bird that unluckily comes in his way.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

September 8.

DEVONIENSIS.

# Lasting

*Tom Saunders*

First published in *Roof Whirl Away: Stories* by Tom Saunders (Faringdon: Reuben Books, 2008), pp.33-36. This short story offers an imaginary glimpse of a possible last journey to Coate by Jefferies with names changed in true Jefferies' tradition.

They had lunched well at a hotel after getting off the train – even George had managed more than his usual few mouthfuls. Despite this they were hot and thirsty after their pony and trap journey from the station to the farm. While George and his brother Angus and their friend Daniel waited by the mere in one of George's favourite spots, Lizbeth went up to the house to fetch something to drink.

The maid brought a jug of milk and four wide cups on a tray. Lizbeth thanked her and put some pennies in her palm. The redness of the girl's skin next to the white of Lizbeth's glove made both of them look away in embarrassment.

'It's cool from the pantry,' said the girl.

'Just what is required,' Lizbeth told her. 'My husband's family used to live on this farm and your master has graciously given permission for my husband and his brother to revisit their old haunts. The family name is Nesbitt. Do you remember them?'

'My mother worked for the Nesbitts. Old man Nesbitt was an honest enough man. Did his share and was glad to do his duty and reward those that did the same. The sons didn't take to farm work. The life is a hard one, it's true.'

Even though the maid's words were spoken without mischievousness, or, it had to be said, any great interest, Lizbeth felt a reproach in them. 'My husband has written many books about this place and the people who live in the village.'

'That's a grand thing, I'm sure,' said the girl with a nod. 'I shall tell my mother of that. She has some fine memories of her own.'

The three men were laughing when Lizbeth returned. George, bright-eyed and animated, sat between Angus and Daniel like a small boy, the travelling shawl up around his ears.

Angus and Daniel made room for Lizbeth next to George on the bench. She placed the tray beside her, took off her gloves and filled the cups with an exaggerated social correctness that made them all smile. George only drank a

little. When Lizbeth put the cup to his lips, he took a long, slow sip and closed his eyes.

Angus finished his milk in a single gulp and turned to George. 'Are you glad you came, now, brother,' he said. Lizbeth was fond of Angus, but his simple practicality sometimes seemed to her to be a kind of blindness, a failure to see beneath the surface of things.

George opened his eyes and shook his head as Lizbeth made to raise the cup to his mouth once more. He smiled. 'Sitting in such good company on this blue and beneficent day, I am glad, Angus,' he said. 'Very glad. But I still feel what I felt before we came. What this place meant to me as a boy has vanished from here. It did so the day I left. These great trees did not shade me back then. The grass under our feet and the water beyond in the mere are not mine. I carry all I have ever owned with me.'

'But your memories are good ones,' said Daniel. 'I know I take pleasure in remembering what we did as lads. Even if you did cast me as the loyal populace and yourself as the strict autocrat.'

George laughed and they all joined him. 'You must forgive me for that, Dan. I took my duties as the young master of this domain seriously.'

Later, George, Angus and Daniel took the farmer's rowboat out on to the mere. Lizbeth pronounced herself a dry land wife and sat watching them from the shore. George sat in the rear of the craft with the shawl around his shoulders and over his chin and his hat down, little more than his nose showing. The other two had taken off their coats and hats in order to row more comfortably. Daniel's thick red hair stuck up like a rooster's comb as he struggled to keep stroke with Angus's confident sculling. Every so often, George's hat brim tipped back as he laughed at something the other two had said. They appeared to be arguing in a comradely fashion, possibly over which of them was more equal to his task.

George loved travelling on the train. Locomotives were large beasts to him. He admired the fierce smoky breath that puffed from their chimneys and the way their powerful arms drove their wheels along the track. Lizbeth had not seen him so engaged in many weeks. He often slept now on their daily trips to the beach, his fiery enthusiasm for the natural world, the sea, the birds, the wind on his face, the cloud pictures in the sky, ashed over and cold. But the train and the notion of moving at speed to some other stranger place had revived something of the man she was beginning to miss. 'Can you imagine,' he told them without looking away from the countryside unreeling past the carriage window, 'a man could see the whole world in a solitary lifetime at such a pace. One day there will be railways that run to the very limits of the earth.'

On their return from the farm, they took the road through the village. It

was a chance for George to tell Lizbeth stories about the characters he had known in his youth. Each cottage in turn prompted a new tale and Angus and Daniel added their own elaborations. The mood of the party was soft and joyous.

George turned to Daniel as they came to the church. 'The scene of your coming big day, eh, Dan. Is this old heathen still invited?'

Daniel hesitated momentarily and Lizbeth gave him a look, eyes narrowed slightly. 'But of course, how could it be otherwise?'

George laughed. 'Quite easily, it seems. But if this winded horse has the earth under his feet rather than on his nose, he will happily see you wed.'

Angus was upset at the shift in the conversation. 'Such talk. There's no point in thinking things of that sort. We live and trust in God. There is nothing else.'

George put his hand on his brother's. 'I'm sorry, Angus. Take no notice of me. Trust away.'

'But there you go once more,' said Angus, his voice kindly but intense. 'You make light of my belief and belief is all we have.'

George sighed. 'Yes, you are right. No reason for us to argue yet again. Answers will come in one way or another. But I believe, too, you know. I have not convinced you and it seems I never will, but you must allow me that. God is not absent from my world. God is the world. I have stared God in the face my whole life and felt the glory of it. It is here with us now. It is all around us. You only have to look. You only have to look.'

George slept on the train journey home. Lizbeth tucked the shawl tighter around him and wiped his mouth with her handkerchief. His eyelids flickered, but he did not wake. Lizbeth turned to her book and tried to read. After a page or two she grew sleepy herself and, resting her head on her husband's shoulder, she gave into the rocking of the carriage.

## Minnie Charles Remembers

In a two-page article titled 'Return to Richard Jefferies' Sussex' by Eric Joyce, that was published in *Sussex Life* in September 1967, an old lady's memory of the Jefferies' family was included.

Miss Minnie Charles, who was born in Mulberry Cottage, Goring in 1881, remembers seeing the tall, bearded Richard Jefferies as he wandered around the village streets and nearby country lanes. She would have been just a few months younger than Phyllis Jefferies. Minnie recollects the Jefferies family moving to 'Sea View' and recalls 'how handsome and dignified we all thought Mr. Jefferies to be. He would go about deep in thought but he never failed to have a kindly word for us children.' She said that 'Mrs. Jefferies was a most beautiful lady with a keen sense of humour and an abounding interest in everything we children learned at school.'

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The following two images and descriptions are taken from the Worthing Cavalcade 1946 edition of *Richard Jefferies: A Tribute* by various writers and edited by Samuel Looker.



This photo [of 'Sea View', Goring] was taken soon after he died here, and is of the garden front, facing south. From the dining room (the lower room on

the left), there was a clear view over the fields right to the sea, and of course, even a better one from the upper rooms. Apart from his little walks in the vicinity, he spent his time in this beautiful country garden dictating his last essays to his devoted wife, but when the weather was inclement they continued such in the dining room. Then came the day when he was no longer able to leave the upper room upon the left, and for a time rested upon a couch near the window during the day-time. He was no longer able to dictate, his life's work was finished, and in that same room, in the early hours of Sunday 14th August, 1887, the great prose-poet passed away.



This photograph of the draw-well in the garden of 'Sea-View' was taken in 1897, ten years after Jefferies' death. Jefferies' friend, J.W. North, wrote:

A genuine old-fashioned draw-well. ... Between the well and the arbour was a heap of rough, loose stones, overgrown by various creeping flowers. This was the home of a common snake, discovered by Harold, (*Jefferies' son*), and poor Jefferies stood, supported by us, a yard or so away and peered into every little cranny and under every leaf with eyes well used to such a search until some tiny gleam, some minute cold glint of light, betrayed the snake. Weakness and pain seemed forgotten for the moment—alas! only for the moment.

Critique

Edward Thomas, Prose Writings, A Selected Edition: Volume III: Biographies of Richard Jefferies and George Borrow, edited by Jem Poster, (Oxford: OUP, 1 Aug 2018), 608 pp., ISBN: 978-0199588114. £125.

Edward Thomas's biographies of *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* (1909) and *George Borrow, the Man and His Books* (1912) have been published in a new annotated hardback book that forms part of a six-volume series devoted to Thomas's prose.

Professor Jem Poster provides a detailed introduction to the Jefferies biography and discusses correspondences in the lives of the two writers, Jefferies' influence on Thomas's writings, Thomas's doubts on the quality of the biography, and the worthy reputation it has acquired since it was first published. Poster explains how he has dealt with the editing and has added footnotes to the text of the two biographies. There is a Chronology for Edward Thomas's life, a bibliography and index.

The following critique by Andrew Rossabi only examines Jem Poster's introduction to the Jefferies biography.

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The introduction is an excellent piece of work: judicious and well written. Poster has done his research and gone to the right sources: he cites Thomas's letters to Gordon Bottomley; the long fragment of autobiography published as *The Childhood of Edward Thomas*; William James and R.M. Bucke; W.J. Keith's critical study of Jefferies and Edna Longley's edition of Thomas's poetry. He notes the curious parallels between Jefferies' life and Thomas's. I particularly liked the phrase describing *The Story of My Heart*, which Poster calls 'the tracing of the temporal in the timeless' (p.xviii), though he rather spoils the effect by repeating it.

If I have a criticism it is that the overall effect of Poster's introduction is to diminish Jefferies by comparison with Thomas. At first the strain is muted: in 'February Afternoon' Thomas shows 'a stylistic voice which was arguably beyond Jefferies' (p.xx). With 'Old Man' Poster is more explicit: it is 'a meditation on time no less profound than the meditations of Jefferies, and altogether more subtle in its expression' (p.xxi). Now no one would deny that Thomas was the subtler, more refined and sophisticated writer. But whether he was better is moot. Jefferies has many virtues wanting in Thomas. His voice was simpler, more direct and natural. And Thomas, while alive to

his faults, extols Jefferies far more than one would guess from Poster. Even the conjunction of Jefferies with Borrow in one volume suggests that the two writers are a par and does Jefferies little good, though Poster stresses at the outset that Jefferies was much the more important to Thomas and gives them corresponding space.

What impresses is how, for all the strength of Jefferies' influence, Thomas preserved his own voice and sensibility.

There are places where I take issue with Poster. On p.xviii, apart from the word 'eternity' I could find no echo of Jefferies in the passage quoted from *The South Country*.

Poster could have produced a sharper parallel between Jefferies' prose and Thomas's poetry. The hare coursing episode in *The Amateur Poacher*, a favourite book of the schoolboy Thomas, has: 'It is a beautiful sight to see the hounds bound over the sward; the sinewy back bends like a bow, but a bow that, instead of an arrow, shoots itself...' In 'Haymaking' Thomas has: '... shrill shrieked in his fierce glee/ The swift with wings and tail as sharp and narrow/ As if the bow had flown off with the arrow.'

Numerous passages in Thomas's book show the poet in embryo. Indeed, the writing of the *Jefferies*, besides the writer's deep influence, was a major factor in turning Thomas into a poet. His book is packed with poetic imagery, nearly all drawn from nature or the countryside. Liddington Hill was where: '[Jefferies'] brain was furrowed and sown with the thoughts that ripened in *The Story of My Heart*.' *Round About a Great Estate* 'is as easy to read as a hedge of hazel and oak and thorn and maple and dogwood and brier is to be walked along.' Felise in *The Dewy Morn* 'is a beautiful lover, born not out of the bitter sea, but out of the streaming dew that makes the grass sweeter than honeycomb.'

Again, though he praises Thomas's book Poster doesn't make clear just how extraordinarily good it is. It is by far the best of all his critical works and one of his best prose books, period. Poster says nothing about Thomas's laconic wit, the acuity of his criticism, and the aptness of the quotations, some lengthy, so that the book makes a first-rate anthology, indeed the best introduction there is to Jefferies. Again there is little or no detailed discussion of what Thomas says about Jefferies' North Wilts country, early writings, first country books, London, novels, illness, even poetry (Jefferies 'gives away all he has for the form of verse'), and so on.

However, the gripes are relatively minor and only what you'd expect from a Jefferies enthusiast. Overall my response was positive. Finally, rather than argue over who was the better writer, Jefferies or Thomas, let's be grateful we have both. The one grew out of the other.

Andrew Rossabi

# Book Review

*A Peculiarly English Genius: Or, A Wiltshire Taoist. A Biography of Richard Jefferies, Volume 1 — The Early Years (1848-1867)* by Andrew Rossabi. (Norfolk: Petton Books, November 2017), 799pp., ISBN: 978-0-9563751-8-6. £40.

Andrew Rossabi has created a phenomenal biography that cannot be matched for its thoroughness and profound engagement with its subject. One feels that no stone has been left unturned. The work is arranged into twenty three chapters. Much of the first third is taken up by incredibly detailed family histories, and histories of the buildings and places in the Swindon area associated with Jefferies. In addition to the Jefferies family, Rossabi pays attention to the Gydes and Estcourts – traditionally neglected branches of Jefferies’ family, and also traces the origins of Edward Thomas’ family connections with Swindon. We then move on to the Harrilds and Jefferies’ time in Sydenham, which Rossabi notes was to give Jefferies ‘a taste of another world, more refined and urban, and less rudely rustic’ (p.429). After chapters on Jefferies’ schooling and *Bevis*, we are introduced to other characters known to Jefferies, including the gamekeeper, Benny Haylock, and the mouchers and poachers.

You can become engrossed in this book, not least because it so skilfully reconstructs the world that Jefferies was born into and grew up in. The work is testament to the depth of Rossabi’s knowledge and engagement with Jefferies. Throughout, he seamlessly interweaves historical facts with well-reasoned analyses of Jefferies’ works, which help to shed new light on the author’s early years. Rossabi never assumes that fiction is fact, and he is careful in this regard to present material from the fiction, and other works, which is often supported by other evidence, which works very well.

Chapters XIX and XX offer a concentrated study of Jefferies’ early mysticism, which is contextualised by other mystics, transcendentalists, and poets. Rossabi writes that Jefferies ‘describes his inner life, his soul life as he calls it, in terms of cliff, cave, shadow, stone, shell, sun, sea, sky. The visible world becomes a symbol of the invisible source of the creation, eternal and unchanging’ (p.615). Rossabi traces some interesting connections with the works of John Keble, a founder of the Oxford Movement and author of *The Christian Year* (1827). Coleridge, Arnold, Keats, and Wordsworth are all discussed. He observes ‘how in moments of emotion Jefferies’ writing takes on an evangelical tinge: it is not afraid of repetition, indeed welcomes it as an aid to emphasis’ (p.667). Chapter XXI considers Jefferies’ time as a reporter on the *North Wilts Herald*, and relays the interesting chain of events which

led to his employment with the paper. It is good to see Jefferies given credit for his role as a natural history journalist: 'he was, for better or worse, the unwitting progenitor of the country-notes and nature-diary columns in the modern broadsheets' (p.697). Rossabi unearths an interesting meeting of the Swindon Association in February 1867, where John Jefferies, the author's grandfather, was present, along with Sir Daniel Gooch. The young grandson reported the meeting in the *North Wilts Herald*, at which he also gave a speech (pp.698-699). The last two chapters concern Jefferies' histories of Malmesbury and Swindon, which 'helped develop his mature prose style, and contributed to its suppleness, grace, drive, and limpidity' (p.780).

Overall, one feels that the volume would have benefited from some more judicious editing. The digressive style, which is more apparent in the first half, allows the biographer to weave a rich tapestry of facts, analysis, and reflections and offers a relaxed and thoughtful atmosphere to emerge from the book while reading it. One drawback of this style, however, is that at times, following digressions, we are returned to the former thread, which gives rise to the repetition of the phrases 'as said' and 'to return to'. At other times information is repeated. This happens for example, on p.505 where description of the setting of the Gamekeeper's Cottage is repeated from a few pages before, and on p.572 concerning anonymity and Jefferies' silence as an author. We are reminded more than once of the town-bred Elizabeth Gyde being unsuited to country life, of the traits of pride and attitude in the male line of Jefferies' family, and of the situation of the old Richard Jefferies' box tomb beside the Goddard tomb. At times where we might expect a more contemporary voice, we find the language of Thomas and Jefferies creeping into the narrative. For example, on p.107 Rossabi refers to the 'fat leazy pasture' of the upper Thames valley, which clearly originates from Thomas, whom he quotes a few pages later concerning Jefferies' countryside and the 'reticence of its fat leazy pastures' (p.115). On p.147 'hard by' is a phrase often used by Jefferies and other authors of his time. The narrative occasionally becomes bogged down with detail and loses its buoyancy. For example, it was particularly pleasing to read about the history of the printer's motto *Alere Flammam*, and to see the photograph of the plaque above Red Lion Court, but perhaps we could have done without the long description of the court buildings, and others, that follows (pp.146-148). Yet these fairly minor points are mostly contained to the first half of the book and do not substantially detract from the overall quality and essence of the work.

Importantly, Rossabi brings Jefferies home to us in a vivid and heartfelt way. In one of the fields at Coate 'the boy Jefferies once saw a yellowhammer singing in the sun from a bough of an ash tree, and never forgot it' (p.131). It is the 'subtle essence breathed whenever we step out of doors...that Jefferies

miraculously captures and translates onto the printed page' (p.448). Throughout are interesting quotations from people who knew Jefferies. For example, on p.449 we are given a quote from Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who noted the necessity to Jefferies of being out of doors: 'The very life in him drooped as soon as he passed within four walls. He would tell you that to be shut in was to feel at once a certain degradation or sinking of his whole mind and spirit.'

The book would do well as a resource in university libraries, and one of its greatest values is the bringing together of many years' research, which will contribute to securing Jefferies' place in future scholarship and introduce him to new readers. The volume might also reach more people if it was made available online in electronic form.

*Rebecca Welshman*

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Note from the editors

This volume may be purchased by sending a cheque made payable to the Richard Jefferies Society for £40 (includes postage to UK customers only) to the Hon. Sec. (p.2 for details). It can also be purchased online at <http://richardjefferiessociety.co.uk/fiction.html>.

An electronic version of Volume I will be made available in due course.