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Reporting; Editing & Authorship

Practical Hints for Beginners in Literature

Parts I and II of this little handbook which Jefferies published in desperation in 1873 were reprinted in the last issue of this Journal (1993). In part III, which has not previously been reprinted, he turns his attention to the subject of how to succeed as an author, displaying, as Dartnell put it, 'those mistaken ideas as to authorship and publication which were to cost him so dearly in after years.'

III AUTHORSHIP

The special knowledge of the district acquired by the reporter - its topography, &c. - will give him an insight into the sort of power required in a correspondent abroad, or at the seat of war, and will educate him in the method of obtaining the necessary information of a new district in the shortest possible time. He will be enabled to at once comprehend its principal features.

The special acquaintance he possesses of the peculiar trade, commerce, or manufacture of the place, will enable him to write articles upon that subject replete with interest: articles which will gladly be accepted by the paper on which he is employed. The fame of these articles will give him a certain connection and support among the influential manufacturers or commercialists; a thing in itself very pleasant and profitable and the most likely to induce a newspaper proprietor to put him in charge of a journal. As his special knowledge increases he can contribute articles upon wider aspects of the matter to the daily papers, or magazines devoted to that particular class; these will increase his fame, he may become considered a representative man, and as such, be appointed one of the editors of a similar periodical. He should especially watch for the earliest indication of a new journal appearing: these often afford opportunities. In this way all the knowledge he has been acquiring will contribute to his rise.

For the actual means of living he must be content to depend upon his technical knowledge as a reporter, compositor, proof-reader, or sub-editor. Intellect, though never so brilliant, imagination, though never so vivid, will not maintain him at first; nor often for long after. He must learn the trade of literature, and rely for the necessities of life upon that, while gradually finding the method of utilizing his talent. Had Chatterton learnt shorthand, and been satisfied to support himself by reporting till his poems were appreciated, how different his fate might have been.

The reporter, while going about the country studying as he goes its topography, antiquities, traditions, and general characteristics, will have ample opportunities of amassing materials for original sketches in the paper.

He may visit the churches in the neighbourhood, one by one, relating his impressions, with a short abstract of the sermon, and a graphic description of the place, its antiquities, and surrounding scenery. He can then write a local history, or, taking an old tradition or a noted spot for the centre-piece, weave a short story out of his imagination around it. Such works will be readily published by his paper. Gradually these labours will extend his reputation, and enable him to form a style, and to acquire the easy habit of expressing the conceptions of his imagination. After a while he can now write tales for a larger provincial paper, published in some central town, or county metropolis. But he will find it a long leap - a hard task, to enter the magazines. Special knowledge of a special subject then before the public; or a name, as an author is required. Young authors are usually recommended by their friends to write short pieces; these are really the most difficult. Every sentence in them requires to be carefully weighed: the highest literary excellence is necessary. The magazines have their regular staff of writers: so have the great newspapers. For instance with reviews - a book for review is sent to a man who has a special knowledge of its subject - a work on geography to a man who has made that science his study; a translation from the Greek, to a scholar who has spent his life working at that language. The ordinary writer has no chance of employment against them.

If the author attempts to rise on the ground of his special knowledge of a subject, and adheres to that, and makes himself superior in it, his success will be certain, and comparatively easy. For the public will always pay for *work*. Should he endeavour to succeed as a general author, or as a novelist, the chances are greatly against him. Still numbers do succeed.

To create a taste in the public requires a great genius, it is therefore wisest to study the existing taste, and so cast the story that it may suit the fashion of the day: for a fashion there is in novels as in everything else. Nothing more plainly demonstrates this than the fact that an author no sooner attains a celebrity in a work than ten other writers issue books which are weak dilutions of the same thing. This was particularly shown after the run achieved by Miss Braddon's "Lady Audley's Secret". For a season after the public was inundated with novels with a secret - secrets and mysteries of every conceivable kind. So again after Wilkie Collins' "Woman in White", there came out a host of women in various colours. And all of these seemed to be read. The great authors had created a taste which the lesser rushed to gratify to the utmost. Noted authors' works should be studied for their several excellences. Ouida for the exquisite painting of scenery and delineation of beauty in every form: Wilkie Collins for the

method of writing, of *telling a story*: and for the effect, special knowledge of a special subject will produce even in novel writing: Miss Braddon to catch the indescribable *tone* of the hour, the taste of the public. At this day that taste is leaving the natural, and fast drifting towards the artificial, and the ultra extraordinary both in sentiment and incident. For this the public has a strong plea. All the plain sentiments of love, all the ordinary plots, are familiar to the veriest schoolgirl now, in this period of cheap literature. Something fresh is wanted. After the weary routine of business, its excitement, without sentiment; after, even labouring in a good,

and high, and truly intellectual cause; after the railway rattle and dust of life, it is an inexpressible relief to many minds to peruse a novel which amuses them, with something original, startling, out of the common in its action, deed, and thought. We know so much now, we are so used up, we need something new. This then must be the tone of an author's works who wishes for success. The readers of the hour require something as new and extraordinary to their jaded, over-worked, over-crammed minds, as the exciting tale of Puss-in-Boots, or Jack and the Bean-Stalk, was in their childish days when tired of playing with the bricks, the go-cart, or the toys.

The fact of being on the staff, even of a newspaper, will be of advantage to a young author. Editors and publishers will at least look at the manuscript, which they will not always do for amateurs. He must be contented to get his works published no matter in what medium. If good they will gradually attract attention, no matter how lowly the publication. It has often been the fate of great authors to begin thus. Dickens was a reporter. Mrs. Stowe's celebrated "Uncle Tom's Cabin", which became almost as household a book as the Bible, was first published in an obscure American newspaper counting only a few hundreds in weekly circulation. Miss Braddon's novels at first appeared in a journal which is never so much as even alluded to by the fashionable critic.

All publishing firms have their speciality in books, and it is useless to send a novel to a religious publisher, or vice versa. These firms have each spent large sums of money in establishing a reputation - a name for a certain class of publications. In course of time they acquire a regular staff of writers, much in the same way as a magazine. Were many of these authors to send their works to another publisher he would reject them, but this one particular firm has a connection for which they are precisely suitable. The firm therefore gives the preference to its own staff, and it is difficult to persuade them to publish the works of authors outside their own peculiar circle. This is speaking generally, of course there are authors of cosmopolitan fame whose productions are a property in themselves, and who can command and select their publisher. The first thing therefore for a new author to do is to ascertain what publisher issues a class of works similar to his, in general style. This is easily done by looking

over the list of publications in the newspapers or in the Publisher's Circular. It may still happen that the selected house, while granting the excellence of the manuscript submitted to them, may decline its publication on the ground that they are overstocked, which frequently really means that they have invested as much capital in that direction as they care to. In that case there is nothing to be done but to make arrangements with them to publish wholly, or partly, at the author's expense, who thus becomes regarded as one of the staff of the firm. With the reputation acquired in this way, for the publisher's name guarantees a certain amount of circulation, each fresh manuscript becomes a property - worth cash. It is very difficult indeed, unless the author has a most extraordinary genius, to get a work published without having first printed and published at his own expense. He thus buys a name. As a rule it is preferable to at once resolve to incur a certain amount of expenditure than to spend years in a fruitless and disheartening attempt to dispose of manuscripts.

In no department of life is that well-known quotation from Shakespeare so flatly contradicted by fact as in literature -

What's in a name? - a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

In literature a name is everything. The public will read any commonplace clap-trap if only a well-known name be attached to it. Hence any amount of expenditure is justified with this object. It is better at once to realize the fact, however unpleasant it may be to the taste, and instead of trying to win the good-will of the public by laborious work, treat literature as a trade, which, like other trades, requires an immense amount of advertising.

Almost all the successful authors of the day have, or do, treat their art as a trade. Most of them have their magazine, which is nothing more nor less than a grand standing advertisement. They are thus their own printers and publishers - an immense saving. Dickens had "All the year round", Mrs. Wood has the "Argosy", Miss Braddon "Belgravia". If ever the *litterateur* should obtain sufficient fame to enable him to embark in a similar speculation he will find the technical knowledge he has been instructed to acquire of editing, materials, machining, &c, worth its weight in gold.

Chapters on Churches

By the Peripatetic Philosopher

Chapter I

It is only in the last few years that a series of articles that appeared in the North Wilts Herald between 24 November 1866 and 5 October 1867 has been identified as written by Jefferies. The evidence for this lies first in the passage in 'Authorship' (see previous item) where Jefferies suggests that the reporter 'may visit the churches in the neighbourhood, one by one, relating his impressions, with a short abstract of the sermon, and a graphic description of the place, its antiquities, and surrounding scenery' and the statement by P Anderson Graham in Nature in Books (1891) that 'Many people in North Wilts date their remembrance of Jefferies from a series of essays on Village Churches, for the writing of which he perambulated the district.' In a reminiscence in the Pall Mall Gazette (22 Sep 1891) Charles Jefferies said that 'for reporting the sermons for two years my aunt gave Richard a silver watch.' These are, therefore, the first descriptive pieces that Jefferies is known to have published and none has previously been reprinted. For Jefferies to assume the title of 'Peripatetic Philosopher' at the age of 18 may seem presumptuous, but is, in fact, extremely apt and an epitome of those elements that most frequently appeal in his writings. To render the original text more readable it is divided here into additional paragraphs.

Nature is the church of the philosopher; to him the dim vistas of the forest are as the gloom of a cathedral, the roll of the thunder as the organ's diapason, and every light in heaven a lamp of God. Perhaps it is from some such feeling as this that I, who claim the title Pythagoras is said to have first obtained, make it almost an invariable rule to walk abroad upon Sunday evenings. In the morning, with the sunbeams streaming through the church's casement, I listen with a holy calm, approaching delight to the sacred chant, but in the evening hitherto, disliking artificial illumination, I have wandered forth. It was thus that on Sunday evening last I walked down High-street, and out upon the public road, which I was informed runs towards Liddington. It was a beautiful evening. The moon, when not concealed, rather I should say dimmed by the passing of fleecy clouds - those barks of the sky, those heavenly messengers, cast a brilliant, a pleasant, though a cold and somewhat melancholy light upon the earth. My way lay between hawthorn hedges, and high trees, despoiled by the combined agency of frost and wind on their leaves, which lay - making the road appear in a very dark shadow - spread beneath their bare, gaunt, skeleton-like branches. On passing some white rails upon my right, so light was it, that although some distance, I could discern the dim outline of the downs, as it were sleeping in their time-defying majesty. Further, stood a stone, probably a milestone, which, white and ghastly in appearance, standing as it does in bold contrast with the

black hedge, has, no doubt, been often taken by benighted rustics for a visitor from the unknown world.

I now descended a long slope, and entering a small hamlet, overtook several couples walking briskly forward, whom I at first imagined were engaged in sweet and amorous discourse. Soon after I stood upon a bridge crossing a considerable stream. And observed with no little pleasure that play of the moon-beams which fell, chequered by the branches of willows, upon its surface. I resumed my walk, and ascending a slight hill, I passed before a cottage upon my left, from which issued the most unheard of sounds, and which I at first imagined proceeded from some ballad singers, learning their part against the coming of the next fair. Hearing, however, to my deep disgust – disgust at the way in which they were mentioned – the names of “Christ”. “Lord”. “Word”, & c., mixed up in the most inextricable, almost blasphemous manner, I instantly concluded that I had lighted upon a body of “ranters”, led by ignorant, uncultivated men, who, let it be observed have, and are, doing more to cast religion into ridicule than all the sceptical and satirical writers that have ever held a pen. I remember a celebrated infidel – who for his intellect I respected, for his good qualities almost loved, yet pitied for his opinions, observing that whenever he wished to become renewed with a hostility and contempt of Christianity he invariably spent an evening in a “ranting” chapel. It was like a draught of bitter ale to him. I listened but for a few moments, and utterly disgusted was about to retrace my steps, when I observed a short distance ahead, a stream of light apparently issuing from the higher stories of some building, falling upon the dark trees that lined the right side of the road. My curiosity was excited and I walked on. I soon found it was a place of worship – apparently dissenting, and paused in the gateway, when some persons coming forward, I was obliged to move to give them room, and was thus when the door was opened standing in full view of the assembled congregation, and to some extent compelled to enter.

I walked a few steps down the aisle, hesitating to take a seat lest I might intrude, until a gentleman pointed me a place which I immediately took. A moment after, an harmonium played by a prepossessing lady in black dress, announced that service had commenced, while a clergyman whom I had not before observed, came forward from a recess, and advanced to a kind of elevated reading desk. He wore a surplice, and what was my astonishment and pleasure to find both from this circumstance and the first few words of the liturgy, that I was among a Church of England congregation. I, as is my wont, gazed at him attentively, and noted his characteristic features in my mind. His countenance was strongly marked – if I might use that term, marked with the traces of thought and meditation. His forehead partly concealed by a profusion of black hair was well-formed, his glance, though he was evidently far advanced

in age, piercing, and well calculated to convey his meaning, his voice good, and although his reading was slow and somewhat accented yet his manner was eminently impressive.

Two or three countenances in the congregation attracted my attention, and especially that of an aged farmer – judging his profession from his looks, whom I instantly put down as a church-warden. His portly form was enclosed in a dark coat, his iron-grey hair fell negligently, partly concealing features which, now wrinkled, must have been once handsome, and he looked out through spectacles of a formidable size, as though feeling that his presence there sanctioned the proceedings. He was most attentive to the service, although I was afterwards informed he is deaf. I was much pleased with the singing – not that it was in a professional point of view even good, but it was heartfelt, and it was evident that there were few present who did not join in. It seemed to be led by a few gentlemen and ladies who sat near the harmonium. I also remarked, to my extreme satisfaction, the orderly behaviour of the labouring classes who occupied the back seats.

The prayers at length concluded, the preacher unfolding his M. S. announced his text as the 9th of Exodus and the 3rd verse – “The hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field.” The sermon was very appropriate, and was listened to with gratifying attention. Those words, he observed, although written 3,300 years ago, might seem as though only penned yesterday, so accurate was the description they contained of the condition of things but a short time previous. There was, however, one difference between the plague that fell upon Egypt and that which had been desolating our own land of its beeves; here it had touched but the horned cattle, there in old time had fallen upon all. There were two striking points to be illustrated in connection with the subject. The first was that the Lord had done it; the second that He sent disease in punishment of sin in order that he might be acknowledged and obeyed. No one could doubt, except an infidel, that God had sent this plague amongst us – it had not come of blind chance. Illustrating, this part of his subject by alluding to the warnings which Israel received, the preacher observed that the doctrine of punishment of sins was a principal article in the creed of the Jews. They thanked God in years of plentiful harvest, they went to him in their scarcity. They, themselves, acknowledged this truth in the prayer for the staying of the plague that they had hitherto offered, but which that day had been changed to a thanks-giving. There was no power in disease of itself to spread, or in death and the devil to do as they pleased; – it was God alone who permitted and controlled.

He now came to another part of his subject. Why God punishes? Egypt suffered from pride and hardness of heart. If they could find out their fault and

repent surely for His Son's sake, He would spare them. The Jews had been warned of old by their prophets but He did not now deal in the same manner. Therefore, they must not be rash in giving a cause to God's anger, and must guard against charging it to the faults of others. There were some sins in which all were in some measure implicated, what might be called national sins. There was one way in which, as a nation, they were likely to have offended – it was y forgetfulness of God, whilst enjoying his blessings. He had given them in former days victory abroad, and now peace at home, has blessed them in their produce; - they had been, as a nation, growing richer every year. They had credited their riches to themselves. Could they deny it? God was left out of the question, and yet in spite of all disease had come upon them. Did not this remind them that they depended upon God for everything? Drunkenness, Sabbath breaking, general impiety helped to fill up the measure of their iniquity as a people, and could not fail to call down God's anger: - not in cruel rage, but to remind them of what they were forgetting. They cried out that their cattle were stricken, but could they feel no anxiety for their immortal souls? They confessed themselves Christians, boasted of living in a Christian land, let them only live up to the gospel of Christ; and then each earthly visitation would teach its proper lesson, and work its proper work.

Such was the sermon. I make no comment, merely remarking that it was delivered with an earnestness of which I should like to see more in our churches – not that pulpit thumping, obstreperous bible bumping which some would seem to consider eloquence, but with a calm earnestness if such a term may be used.

I afterwards made enquiries concerning this place of worship, and the few facts which I have discovered may not be uninteresting. The great distance of the village – spelt Coate, pronounced kaaut, from any consecrated church had long been subject of comment, occasioning in wet weather especially great inconvenience. A gentleman at length threw open his home for divine service, which was performed by the curate of the parish, but this being found somewhat incommodious after some agitation a sufficient sum was raised, partly by subscription of the neighbouring farmers and others partly by the munificence of the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's who own considerable property near, and the building of the present edifice was entrusted to the late Mr. T. Wheeler, of Chiseldon, who has certainly carried out the plan of the architect. That plan has, however, in practice been found open to several objections. The windows at the side being low it has been found impossible to open them without subjecting the occupants of a whole pew to a serious draught; to open the door is to incommode a still greater number, and the only remedy would seem to be to enlarge the window over the door, make it to open, and construct a window high over the clergyman's head at the other extremity,

and thus ensure a continuous supply of pure air without danger to health, or inconvenience to any. It being cold, however, on the evening of my visit, the door and windows were kept shut, and I found no other inconvenience than that of want of light – the candelabra suspended from the roof being scarcely sufficient. That discomfort, I am told, will be shortly removed by the addition of lamps. To return. The building was opened on the 5th of September, 1865, there being four clergymen present, viz., Rev. E. Meyrick (Chiseldon), Rev. H. Munn (Liddington), Rev. W. Wells, and the Rev. J. Saulsbury. Service has been performed in rotation by the ministers, or their curates, of Liddington and Chiseldon. At present the arrangement is the Rev. H. Munn in the summer half, the Rev. R. Rolph of Chiseldon the winter half. It was feared that Mr. Rolph, on account of the distance and his advanced age, would scarcely be able to attend, but hitherto he has done so to the great satisfaction of the inhabitants of the district. It only remains to be mentioned that the lights, &c., are provided for by subscription, which by division falls evenly upon all the principal members, and is cheerfully borne by them.

In conclusion I can say with truth that I have seldom spent a more agreeable and edifying Sunday evening, and so pleased was I that returning by moonlight I determined to extend my visits around, and to make my impressions known through the medium of the press.

The Nude in London

This article, which appeared unsigned in World on 12 June 1878, is one of an irregular series that Jefferies contributed to this paper between 1876 and 1878, while living at Sydenham and Surbiton. Entries in his notebooks indicate that he periodically attended art exhibitions and there are specific references to the 1878 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and this article, in the notebook for May 1878. At the end of September 1883 he went to Paris and visited the Louvre, where he saw a sculpture of the female nude (the Aphrodite accroupie) that finally satisfied his desire for 'nudity with purity' but his essay on this statue was considered too 'improper' for Longmans Magazine and was not published until 1887 when it appeared in the Magazine of Art, just before his death.

'La Cigale' with rotund limb, in all the luscious profusion of her native charms, leaning against the wall; modern Phryne, with bared arms, round and firm, preparing for the triumphs of the evening, and brought into relief by a 'Penelope' gracefully sewing; 'Cleopatra' sailing down the Nile to sound of flute and plash of silver oars, her unconcealed charms the centre of admiring Roman eyes, - such engravings as these daily attract groups of passers-by at the windows in which they are displayed. Photographs of Moorish girls resting from the dance with timbril and loose dress, *odalisques*, and harem interiors - many of them clever reproductions of famous foreign pictures - make foot-passengers pause before shops whose other contents would never have interested them for a second. Thus the semi-nude acts as an advertisement, and the shrewd tradesman sees deeper into human nature than the *doctrinaires* who talk of elevating the taste of the nation. Some of these photographs and engravings are really artistic works; they ornament the shops of the West-end thoroughfares. In Soho and Leicester-square the pavements are often blocked by similar groups gazing at the coarse though vigorous cuts of comic Parisian papers. The jest of the letterpress is unintelligible to them, but the toilet of the *demi-monde* is too clearly delineated to need explanation. Coming Cityward, Holywell-street exhibits cartes which probably are beyond the censor's reach because from the work of some acknowledged artist, but which are nevertheless nakedness pure and simple. Busy Strand and Fleet-street have gaudy, flaunting, machine-painted women. Far away in the Mile-end-road itinerant vendors of photographs line the side of the street with their barrows, and you may see the navvy or the dock-labourer turning over in his thick fingers the picture of some flimsily-clad ballet girl, a penny each.

To a certain class of thought which is essentially vulgar itself, in this trait of London crowds, whether of the west or the east, nothing will be visible but innate evil. This is the style of thought which finds expression in sanctified

horror at anything approaching to nudity, as something inseparable from sensuality. Incapable of finer feeling or artistic appreciation, it invests others with the coarseness of which it is conscious itself. But all this yearning for the beauty of form as exhibited on the pavements of the west and the east is really the outcome of a deeper sense than 'fleshly' passion; though rudely expressed, it is akin to the pure delight which a sculptor finds in the chiselled marbles of the antique. It is an unjustifiable libel to say that it is 'leg' alone which draws the gallery and the promenade of theatres where the ballet is danced. A gentleman entering such a promenade chanced to stand side by side with a soldier - a private from the ranks - whose remarks to his companions he unwittingly overheard. When the *premiere danseuse* displayed her fantastic agility, twirling on one toe in attitudes the reverse of decent, this common soldier sneered and turned away, complaining that he did not want to see *that*. When the *danseuse* retired, and the rest of the ballet advanced to dance in chorus, dressed in fancy costumes, but perfectly decent, moving in graceful accord to the music, a mass of picturesque colour, then the soldier applauded, and his companions clapped their hands. That was what they wanted - beauty of motion and form, with light and colour and music; *not* indecency. So it is with the semi-nude pictures alluded to: the spectators do not want indelicacy, they want beauty of form; but it is the special product of our rigid prudery to suppress artistic delicacy, and present us with vulgarity. Surely a studied painting, the result of years of work, however nude, is to be preferred to the toilet of the demi-monde illustrated by rude woodcuts?

The fact is the true nude - the artistic and classical nude - is gone and lost to us in London. The popular taste finds nothing to educate it. Those Royal Academy exhibitors who have attempted it this year, for instance, have done nothing but prove the deterioration of the time. These nude figures are stiff and angular - as stiff and angular as the first attempts of early ecclesiastical painters six centuries ago; and just because they are thus wanting in refining grace, they are indelicate, and are rightly shunned by crowds that pass them daily. In the exhibitions of continental pictures there are specimens of better work; but even there an absence of purity of motive is apparent, which detracts from their value. Sensuous women in harems, fresh from the bath, with limbs developed to an inordinate fleshiness, tricked out with a background of bright colours for the relief of a dark sultry skin, are not near the true ideal. A Greek would carve a hundred nude women on a frieze and every one would be graceful, and not one indelicate. The idea of indelicacy does not occur to the mind in gazing at the exquisite contour of the ideal nude. Where, again, is the grandeur of the masculine torso, the roll of the mighty muscle, the grasp of the iron arm? Has it become quite extinct, lost behind terra-cotta imitations of frock-coats and trousers the colour of brown paper? The idea which has been mooted of

assembling copies of ancient sculpture in a central hall, for study and for the elevation of popular taste, is not without its merits. But it is not so much the dead past we want as the living present. You cannot instil the artistic feeling into the multitude from rows of plaster-casts representing a mode of life and thought utterly foreign to the crowd of the day. You must have the same nudity in the pictures and the sculptures of the day representing modes of life and action familiar to all, but with it of course combined the antique purity of motive. This is what should be learnt from the masterpieces of the past - nudity with purity. Then let our artists not copy, but give us something original, appealing to the hearts of modern men and women. A lack of study from the living model gives, too, a leanness, a lanky long-drawn narrowness of form to the draped figures of recent compositions. Thin weary women in dreary head-garments will never linger in the minds of those who look and wonder why these things should be. Neither portraits nor landscapes will hold the rapt attention of passers-by; nothing but the human form divine when evidently pure. Why does not some artist arise and give us noble studies from the nude beyond reproach? The whole world of London would be at his feet, as Antwerp was at the feet of its demi-god Rubens.

Mound Restorers

The fact that Jefferies contributed to the journal Land, which was started by Cassells in 1881, was unknown until Samuel Looker discovered a series of papers under the title 'Chronicles of the Hedges' which were written 'By the Author of The Gamekeeper at Home' and published between February and May 1881. In a later issue (6 Aug 1881) he found an article titled 'Hedge Miners', which carried the same by-line, in which Jefferies describes the processes of destruction and decay that are constantly at work within a hedgerow. What Looker did not notice, apparently, was an even later article (24 Dec 1881, also 'By the Author of The Gamekeeper at Home') in which Jefferies identifies the forces that lead to regeneration and renewal. Together these form an inseparable pair which illustrate Jefferies' keen awareness of the dynamic flux and balance within nature. 'Hedge Miners' was included in the book Chronicles of the Hedges, edited by Looker, but 'Mound Restorers' has not previously been reprinted.

Of all the trees in the mound there is scarce one that stands upright. This tree or that may appear perpendicular from one position, but on walking round to the other side it will be seen to lean. Sturdy oak, high-reaching elm, stout ash, not one of all the number stands upright: they all lean or curve. If it were not so, if the trees grew straight - exactly straight, like poles skilfully erected - how formal the country would seem! Looking up into them carefully, some dead branches will be found in all. In summer the foliage hides decaying boughs, but before the leaves appear they are easily discovered. Flourishing as the tree may be, there is always a dead branch in it; and by and by this must fall upon the bank. Storms drive the boughs against each other till they crack, and the crack causes slow decay. Very heavy gales strain the tree itself; those especially having such immense boughs called "limbs" by the woodmen are overburdened with their own weight, and splitting takes place. Rain sinks into the crevice, and after a time the "limb" dies, and the leaves upon it turn yellow. Some think that lightning strikes trees more often than is usually supposed, slight flashes falling in advance of the thundercloud, which is disarmed by these discharges, and passes over without the tremendous damage which would result if its concentrated force were to issue in one "bolt". If so, possibly branches may be thus killed without much outward show and it is not safe to stand under a tree within a considerable radius of a storm. Everyone must have noticed how the windows rattle and things generally vibrate during a thunder-clap. It is not altogether impossible that once now and then great and overburdened branches, already on the verge of falling, may be shaken down by such vibration. To look at a huge elm bough one would smile at

such an idea; but it is a fact that, big and strong as they are, the juncture with the trunk parts easily.

Many causes, besides natural decay, thus contribute to form the dead wood in the upper part of trees. Oak boughs linger for years: though they may appear about to fall every day, there they stay from year's end to year's end, gradually wasting away in the air. The closer trees are together the more dead wood. In plantations of larch the greater part of the lower branches are often dead; and where elms stand side by side they kill each other's boughs. Poplars are remarkable for dead branches; when they attain a certain age half their boughs no longer bear leaves. Ash twigs are apt to snap, and after a gale the grass is strewn with lesser boughs beneath ash trees. So that the quantity of wood which falls upon the mound in the course of twelve months is very much greater than would be imagined from a passing glance. Boughs after breaking off are often caught and suspended by others, or by ivy, and hang there till the next storm, or they drop on the hawthorn bushes and remain there for months. But still in time they do come down, and, slow as the process is, like other slow processes, the accumulation presently becomes important. Under the long grasses, and parsley, and creeping ivy and fern, if anyone will part the green growth they will find everywhere the grey or brown twigs and crooked branches which once flourished high above.

Dry winds and sunshine crumble the bark just as they crumble earth. The surface and the edges of the plates or small squares of elm and oak bark during such winds or sunshine yield little particles to the fingers if touched. Contact with the atmosphere seems to cause a fine and gradual attrition. The surface exposed over an entire tree is very large. The boughs and trunk being more or less circular, have large superficieses, and consequently, put together, the atoms that the tree gives off in this way amount to a considerable quantity. The sheaths of buds in spring, the flowers, and with some the fruit, add to the deposit which the trees make upon the bank. For small as these things are separately, together they are large. The keys that fall from a sycamore if swept up would make a little heap: so too with those which rustle dry and withered for so long upon some ash trees. Acorns again: it does not take many to fill a gallon; those that drop in the field are collected, but numbers that fall on the mound are lost. To estimate the bulk of the autumn leaves is difficult; but when it is remembered that they almost fill the ditches, and cover acres of ground under trees, it will not be too much to say that hundredweights must lie and decay upon the mound. The dead branches and leaves of the larger trees alone thus together

materially help to build up the bank. Then there are all the bushes; from the hawthorns, for instance, the haws drop; not a quarter of them are eaten by birds, and the stones in them, all put together, would amount to an appreciable quantity.

Grasses shoot up, seed, and wither away, and are slowly absorbed into the mound. Plants in like manner return to the earth. There must together be heavy masses thus sunk again, as it were, in the mound. It does not take much grass to weigh fifty pounds; let any one gather up a few armfuls of the swathe after the mower, and this will soon be understood. Hay weighs less; but even hay is heavier than it looks. Ferns, too, decay; they disappear - the mound has garnered them. In the summer the tall hollow tubes of the cow-parsnip rise sometimes six feet high, topped with broad white circles of flower. In the winter they fall and decay. So, too, the bines of the bryony: the nettles are very woody and firm; a bundle might soon be made of dry nettle-stalks. Roots and fibres die away in the earth, each adds something to the general mass. If fungi spring up they decay again; "touchwood" comes down the hollow trees, and is sometimes several inches deep within them. The ivy leaves, also, though at a different time, fall, and their places are taken by fresh ones. The rushes on the slope are renewed every year. Some portion of all these things mixes with the atmosphere, but the major part is absorbed by the bank. The birds collect twigs, moss, feathers, and fibres, bringing the materials for their nests, such as hair, from afar: the horsehair they find adhering to or under the willow pollards by the brook, where horses are fond of standing in the shadow. Winter rain beats down these slender structures out of the bushes to the mound, where they gradually go to pieces. The mice collect acorns and other products which would otherwise, perhaps, be washed away; they feed on the edible part, but the hulls are left. Water-rats lay up stores of food which they do not always finish, being forced from their warehouses by floods, and the freezing of the water which enters.

The mound is therefore on the one hand bored away, excavated and disintegrated, and upon the other built up and renewed, a continual flux and expenditure of materials taking place, so that it would seem as if it must in time come to be entirely renewed. The original bank must be almost entirely gone, and replaced by fresh particles. The surface sinks usually in the centre from the falling in of the innumerable tunnels which were mentioned (in "Hedge Miners"), and the appearance is further increased by the occasional clearing out of the ditches, when the mud is thrown upon the bank and forms a kind of parapet each side. Though thus made to look less,

perhaps it is only apparent; the bulk probably remains about the same, especially if the timber standing in the mound, once but little and now so large, be taken into the calculation.

The Bevis Country

Mark Daniel

Reading Jefferies, it is difficult to avoid the feeling that he is writing of real people and places, and perhaps, events. Not only are features presented with strong pictorial sense, but subsequent reference to them and the same scenes in different books, make them unlikely inventions.

The various publishers of *Bevis*, recognising people's need to visualise the scenes, usually provided maps to help them. Well-intentioned efforts, these have always been wrong both in interpretation of the story and by comparison with the ground.

In 1946, at the instigation of one such publisher, a famous mountaineer, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, undertook an 'exploration' of the geography of *Bevis* having, apparently, taken objection to the David Garnett map in Duckworth's 1904 edition, which included a few obvious mistakes and omissions (Fig. 1). He pursued the task with extraordinary zeal. The odyssey, however, was one of study and imagination rather than expedition, and his delightful sketch-maps, done in the style of a bygone age, reveal not only the fascination which the book must have had upon him, but also how difficult it is to visualise a scene without proper maps and knowledge of the territory. Acting on behalf of Eyre & Spottiswoode, he enlisted the help of Mr J B Jones, a Swindon man and enthusiastic Jefferies reader and writer, who had been instrumental in establishing the Burderop Down Jefferies-Williams memorial.

Rather oddly, as it may seem to today's easy travellers, they did not meet on the site, but commenced a long correspondence based mainly on the reading of *Bevis*, exchanging varied and conflicting ideas about the locations of features and events. This material, now in a private collection, with its old-world courtesy and patient concern for the points raised by each correspondent, makes an interesting study. But at the end considerable confusion still remained, and the map in the 1948 Eyre & Spottiswoode edition of *Bevis* (Fig. 2), though described as 'specially prepared for this edition from local knowledge, by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young', was far more erroneous and confusing than David Garnett's. One wonders whether Winthrop-Young knew that this earlier map, with its subscription 'DG fecit', was the first publication of a boy of only 12!

This paper sets out to tackle the contradictions and confusions and, hopefully, without attracting the charge of presumption, help *Bevis* readers imagine the scene as Jefferies might have remembered it.

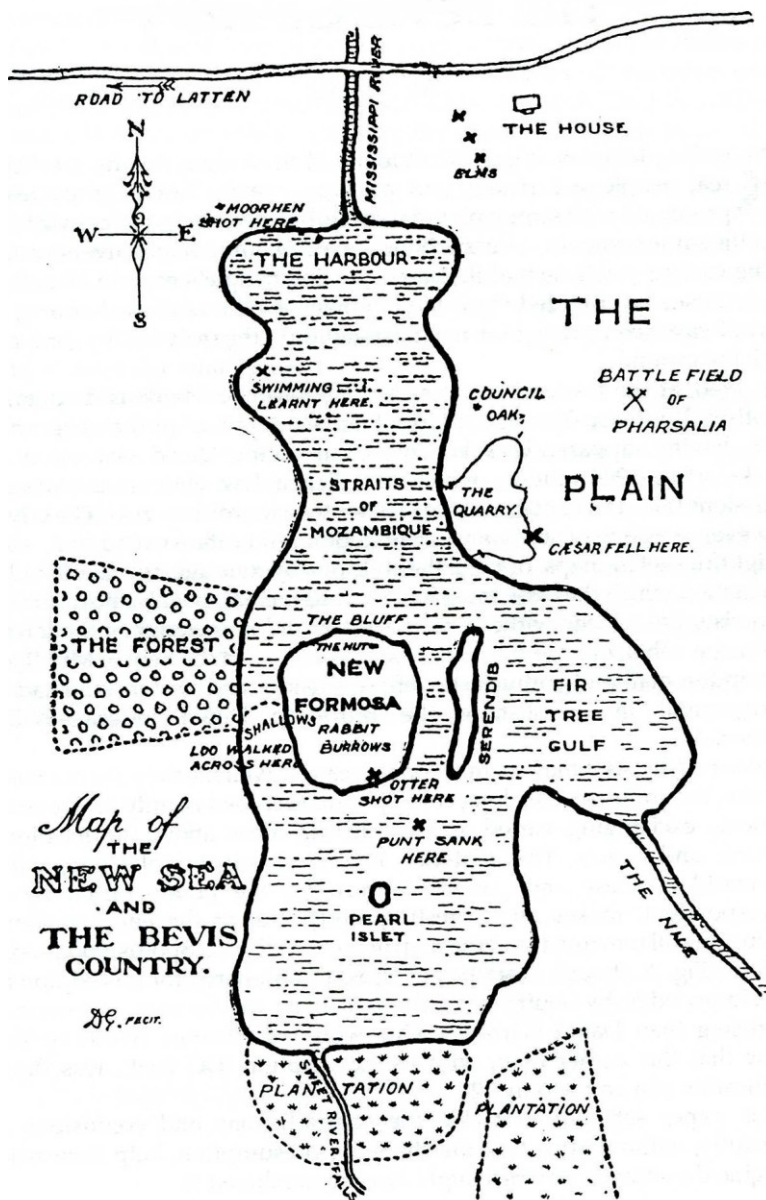
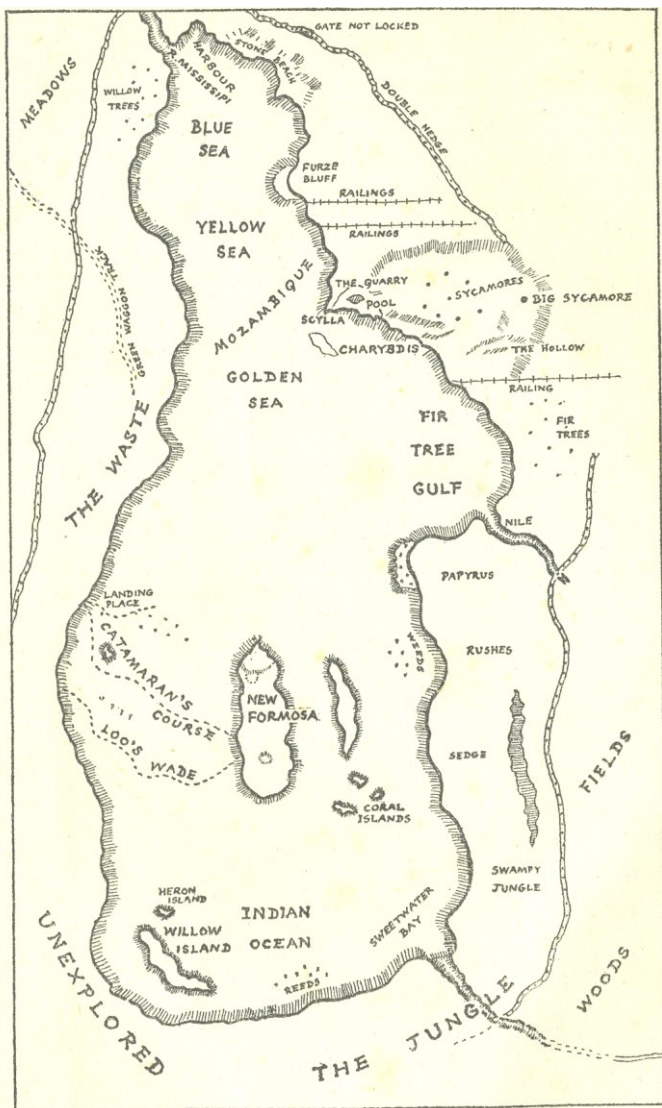


Fig. 1. Frontispiece to 1904 Duckworth edition of *Bevis*



A map of the New Sea and the Bevis Country, specially prepared for this edition from local knowledge by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and drawn by Marcia Winthrop-Young.

Fig 2. Tailpiece of 1948 Eyre and Spottiswode edition of *Bevis*

THE CORRESPONDENCE

Jones was introduced to Winthrop-Young via a letter from Samuel Looker, who described him as 'One who knows more about Jefferies' topography than anyone in England'. The surviving correspondence dates from March to May 1947 and consists mainly of Jones' answers to Winthrop-Young's letters, and many pen-and-ink sketch-maps from the latter. Space precludes a full précis, but the following quoted extracts cover much of the substance:

Coate Water level has recently been reduced to protect the dam. The south end is now a foul swamp. There isn't a double hazel hedge all round the water. There is no hedge at all on the east side. I cannot find any confusion of east and west in *Bevis* Ch. 7.1 went to the beech tree with exposed roots (end of Ch. 7) and the lake was not visible from there, but was from a point an arrow's flight from it. Jefferies was constitutionally incapable of accurate topographical description. He wrote *Bevis* at Surbiton and did not keep in touch with his native scenery. He did not intend his writings to be topographically accurate, and west was east if he so chose. I don't think there is anything in *Bevis* to show which way the Mississippi ran. Jefferies exaggerated the size and affluence of Coate Farm. Mark was modelled on Harry Jefferies, and his living elsewhere with the Jolly Old Moke was fiction, on a par with equipping Coate Water with double hedges. The swirling evolutions of the Pharsalia battle are puzzling, so Charlie's tree can be placed where you like. Forget the inconsistencies. One big sycamore is still standing.

Jones also sent a few sketch-maps to Winthrop-Young including one based on Ordnance Survey showing Farmhouse, Pharsalia, sycamores, hazel hedge (starting near sycamores), rivulet in wood, large beech with exposed roots (shown not at top of wood but 200 yards farther on beside the Hodson road), and the Cottage in the Combe.

WINTHROP-YOUNG'S MARGINAL NOTES

As well as the collection of letters and maps, the material includes Winthrop-Young's Duckworth 1904 *Bevis*, which bears copious marginal notes, some written on pasted-in slips of paper when space ran out. Most are expressions of puzzlement or frustration at what he sees as Jefferies' inconsistency or confusion in matters of geography. For example in Ch. 16 against the initial rout of Caesar's men he writes, 'Not possible, the sycamores lay in the exact opposite direction!' And another note a page later, against'... they reached the first sycamore not ten yards in front of Pompey', 'He forgets the hedge and mound to be crossed only at the gap.' A much longer note is attached in Ch. 7 saying that Jefferies had become confused and that to make any sense of the boys' journey by the lake and through the wood, 'west' should be read as 'east' throughout.

Winthrop-Young seems to have been rather frustrated at his inability to make head or tail of many of Bevis' movements but, as discussed later, the fault was probably not entirely. Jefferies'.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE BEVIS COUNTRY

This section was written after visits in 1993 to Coate, Day House Farm and Burderop Wood, when hedges, paths, ground configuration and other features were compared with an 1884 6-inch Ordnance Survey map of the area, and the books *Bevis*, *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *The Old House at Coate*, etc. The following paragraphs, and the sketch-maps Figs. 3 and 4, represent the author's interpretation of places and events, deduced from the sources mentioned, from maps in the Richard Jefferies Museum, and forty years acquaintance with Jefferies' countryside. Text references supporting the interpretation are listed in the Appendix.

1. *Bevis' home environs*

Fig. 3 shows the area covered in the earlier chapters of *Bevis* and *Wood Magic*, an 'e' after a number indicating that the feature still existed in 1993. In the memory of people living today, the lands were still much as Jefferies described them, though the hedge separating the two Brook Fields was removed before the 1884 Ordnance Survey. It appears on an 1877 map in the Coate Farm Deeds. The straightening of the brook was a fairly recent development, the original convolutions still showing on the 1960 O S map.

While text references establish the positions of the various features shown in Fig. 3, and Jefferies' involvement with them, with reasonable certainty, the siting of the unlocked gate the boys 'dash open' when running down to the paved portion of the beach near the north east corner, can only be guessed (Bra's Ch. 4). It was probably a wicket gate in a fence protecting the sluice where the overflow water ran out. Again, the hatch where Jefferies spent happy hours is not positively located, but it probably lay just above the confluence of the outflows, where a footbridge existed in the 1884 survey. A fixed weir, or a hatch which could be raised and lowered, would have been needed here to reduce the speed of flow before it reached the main channel, and avoid excessive erosion. Another outlet passing under the dam would have had a relatively sluggish flow, emerging as it did from a long brick-built culvert running along the lake bottom from the north east corner of Fir Tree Gulf, and containing the original Cole Brook. (*The Coate Reservoir System*,) J B Jones, 1944. Swindon Press Ltd.)

2. *Bevis' and Mark's journey*

This expedition takes the boys along the east side of Coate Water to its southern end, through Burderop Wood to Hodson Bottom, and thence beside a stream to Chiseldon and home via the Marlborough Road (A 345). It is an isolated adventure, having no bearing upon anything else in the story, and was probably embarked on by Jefferies to revisit and enjoy in memory cherished scenes of his youth. The loss of bearings, which deflected the pair from their original intention to walk round the lake, was clearly a device to recall the wonderful view of the New Sea from the top of the wood, with pigeons diving into the green canopy like sea-birds. And, over the hill, a favourite haunt, the Keeper's Cottage. A recent walk along this route showed the upper part to be still unspoilt mixed woodland, and the deep coombe almost as described. It can be identified in the 6-inch O S map as a kink in the 500-foot contour. Forty years back the coombe sides were even steeper and harder to scramble up. Great tree-trunks, felled many years ago, could well include trees that Jefferies knew but, without the regular coppicing of his day, the view of the lake has gone. Likewise the areas of ash poles on the lower slopes. Bevis' transit from the marsh beside the water, over the daunting hedge to the woods would have meant, in fact, crossing a country lane and some 60 yards of meadow. These were presumably written out, both to allow the boys to get lost and because they detracted from the scene. The sweetwater spring in the wood where Bevis drank may well have existed in Jefferies' day. Jones reported a miserable trickle in 1947, but the writer found no trace. Certainly many springs do exist in this region, where chalk overlies less permeable soil, but the M4 motorway may have obliterated many more.

3. *Various features near Coate Water*

Figure 4 shows several of the more important features, with numbering continued from those in Fig. 3. As before, these are repeated in the Appendix with supporting references, and while a few might be conjectural, many can be located with a fair degree of certainty.

4. *The Swimming Place (35e)*

This deserves special mention. It is so enthusiastically described with the greensward where the boys enjoy the sun and air on their naked bodies, and the exhilarating run to the elms, that it surely had a special place in Jefferies' memory. The spot can be located by the reference '...in one corner of Fir Tree Gulf ...', and elsewhere that the railings were 70 yards from the rocky point (Ch. 9 and 13). Two possible positions for the rocky point appear on the map, but the

more northerly can be ruled out because that would put the site right in front of the quarry where there was only a narrow strip of land.

5. *The Battle of Pharsalia*

Of all the uncertainties wrangled over by Winthrop-Young and Jones, the conduct and geography of the Battle were the most frustrating, and it may be worth studying these with some care, and trying to recognise the clues. While there can be little doubt that the actual event was fictional, it seems equally clear that the battlefield with its hollows and hedges, gates and gaps, was real.

Perhaps some of those involved were based on real people. Certainly people with very similar descriptions appear in different books. The named individuals seem to be middle-class boys. Ted, for instance, for all his brute strength, knew about the power struggles of ancient Rome, with Pompey in defeat. Jefferies could hardly have included *cottage* children, except for situations of extreme subservience, like Loo with the bellows or playing slave.

Figure 4 shows the disposition of the two camps, which can be confidently placed. The present-day view across the great field from Caesar's towards the other camp away to the south east, cannot be so very different to that in Jefferies' mind when he wrote of the smoke from Caesar's camp blowing towards Pompey's. We know that the wind must have been from the north west. It hit Caesar's party when they left the shelter of the copse on the dam at the top of Coate Water, and the waves were rolling in the same direction as they moved off along the lakeside. Reaching the Council Oak, Caesar turned east up the slope beside the nearby hedge, and made camp at a high spot near a gap (ref. 28e) which still exists.

Pompey's camp was on the east side of the nut-tree hedge near an existing gateway (ref. 41e). Caesar's party set straight out for Pompey's camp, reaching the hollow way not far from a small ash tree (ref. 40) which Charlie climbed. The hollow way is still apparent as a shallow depression alongside a modern fence. A broad depression in the land surrounds the spot, giving ground visibility of about 50 yards only towards the north.

Scipio's party ran down the hollow way, through the gate (ref. 39) and thence south east along the existing nut hedge, to 'dart round the corner' and seize Ted's camp. Pompey's party, by this time, was making its way north west along the fence on the east side of Day House Lane, near the copse where Charlie up the tree spotted them. They entered the field near the farm, and made a dash across the field towards Caesar's camp. This course was taken, we are told, as a short cut, but the 1884 map shows the hedge from the camp to the farm to be almost straight, so Jefferies must, on this occasion, have bent the hedge a bit to make the tactics more interesting.

The two groups met and fought somewhere in the centre east part of the field, before Caesar retreated to the sycamores (ref. 33e), and here Jefferies' geographical licence was again used slightly to make the pursuit pass within half a stone's throw of Charlie's tree; 150 yards would fit the actual situation better. But looking at the land, and the map, it *cannot* be said the battle description is confusing or inconsistent.

The rest of the battle and its aftermath can be visualised without much difficulty, with the search for Bevis going on around the stoneheaps and nettles in the quarry, and along the shore to the hollow oak and back, and among the firs.

DISCUSSION

A few inconsistencies in the correspondence deserve mention. Winthrop-Young was worried about the 'double mound', or hedge, the boys had to get over in escaping from the swamp (Ch. 6), but Jones had told him that there was no hedge at all on the east side, nor ever had been. Some misunderstanding perhaps, because before the advent of cheap fencing wire, some kind of hedge must have existed to keep the animals from the morass, and the 1884 O S map seems to show one. He was certainly wrong in stating that nowhere in *Bevis* was the direction of the brook mentioned. (In Ch. 1 Bevis had hoped to float down to the Peninsula.)

Despite Jones' initial defence of Jefferies' logic, he seems to have backed down before Winthrop-Young's frustration. Having first denied any confusion of east and west, in *Bevis* Ch. 7 for instance, he later writes that east could be west if Jefferies so chose. And the fairly accurate sketch-map in one letter to Winthrop-Young, which might have helped to explain the Battle and make him understand, was not followed up. Jones seems to have capitulated and said, in effect, 'It's fiction, don't worry, put things where you like.'

But Jefferies was not confused. The Battle stands up well to the local geography, as already seen, and so does the Journey. The boys wandering in the wood became disoriented and walk in a semi-circle. Mark, who had last seen the lake on his right in the swamp, was facing north. Bevis, with the compass, faced south. 'It was that side', said Mark, holding out his right hand. So, still looking for the lake, they go east, reach the coombe rising south and thence over the hill to the Witch's Cottage. No confusion here. But just which cottage was it? Many people believe it was the Gamekeeper's Cottage on the west side of Hodson Lane which Jefferies took as the original. Mr Jones' sketch, however, puts it on the east side, and here there is a cottage at the foot of the slope where the boys might have seen it. "'Look", said Mark, pointing to a chimney just under them ...' That could hardly have been said of the Gamekeeper's Cottage

which stands in a large area of almost level ground. Mr Jones was probably right.

The position of the great beech with exposed roots (Ch. 7), which Jones' sketch indicated well south of the wood, is puzzling. Perhaps the existence here of just such a tree led him to believe it was the same one, though it is nowhere near the head of the small coombe where Bevis stood and saw the New Sea far below him. But inconsistencies like this are minor compared with the tragic lack of understanding between two staunch Jefferies supporters, who failed to put on record the Bevis country where his footprints had barely faded. Much has changed, but some relics remain to identify his countryside with some certainty - and very much pleasure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the kindness and encouragement of Sir Henry Galley and Mr and Mrs John Horton, in allowing him unrestricted access to their lands.

APPENDIX

References in Jefferies' texts to features numbered in Figs. 3 and 4. An 'e' after a number indicates that the feature still existed in 1993.

Abbreviations:

WLSC - *Wild Life in a Southern County*

OHC - *The Old House at Coate*

1e Farmhouse & dairy. Many references exist e.g. *Bevis* Ch. 1,15,22,35. *Wood Magic* Ch 1,2. WLSC Ch 8,9,10. OHC Ch 1. *Round About a Great Estate* Ch 2. & Dairy. WLSC Ch 8. The wagtail close to the door of the dwelling house ... frequenting the courtyard in front of the dairy.'

2e Cart-house. *Bevis* Ch 1. '... through the garden, past the carthouse ...' OHC Ch 2. '... shadows of the carthouse across the roadway ...' (i.e. the roadway running south through the farm).

3e Stable. OHC Ch 1. '... the narrow steep ridge of the slated stable.'

4e Workshop. *Bevis* Ch 1. 'He sat down on the stool (dragged out from the workshop)...

WLSC Ch 10. 'A large shed built against the side of the adjacent stable is used as a carpenter's workshop.'

5 Waggon-house. *Bevis* Ch.1 '.....so he took out his pocket-knife and stole into the waggon-house.....'

The position of the wagon-house is confirmed in an old photograph held by the author.

- 6 Cattle sheds. WLSC Ch 10. 'Beyond the stables are the cattle sheds and cow yards.'
- 7 Summer house. WLSC Ch 9. 'Near the ha-ha ... is a summer house with conical thatched roof. Position confirmed in a drawing by H E Tidmarsh c!890.
- 8e Russet apple tree. OHC Ch 10. 'The wall of the ha-ha below the russet apple ...'
- 9e The rickyard. WLSC Ch 10. The farmhouse at Wick has the gardens and orchard ... upon one side, and on the other are the carthouses, sheds, and rickyards.'
- 10 Iron wicket gate. *Wood Magic* Ch 1. The gate in the iron railings.' WLSC Ch 11. 'A wicket-gate affords a private entrance ... into the home-field.
- 11e Ha-ha. *Bevis* Ch 2. 'From the garden ha-ha... Polly the dairymaid watched him ...' (Bevis was in the brook.) See also 7,8e,12e,13e,15e.
- 12e Square drain. *Wood Magic* Ch 3. There he saw a dry drain and hopped into it.'
- WLSC Ch 9. 'In the ha-ha wall... is the square mouth of a large drain.'
- 13e Ancient hedge. WLSC Ch 9. 'Near the ha-ha ... where the great meadow hedge comes up to the orchard ...'
- Ibid. This hedge is about 200 yards long.'
- 14e Home Field. See 10 and 27.
- 15e Brook Field. OHC Ch 4. '... the wall of a ha-ha sank to the Brook Field, the meadow by the brook ...'
- 16 Little Field. *Wood Magic* Ch 3. '... he was forbidden to enter the Little Field ... afraid he should climb over the high padlocked gate... for the Longpond was on the other side.'
- 17e Gate. *Bevis* Ch 1. 'With the cord ... he dragged the raft... through the gate into the field.'
- 18 Gate. *Bevis* Ch 1. '... he was about 30 yards from where he had started, not halfway to the gateway ...'
- 19 Gate. *Bevis* Ch 4. 'Pan raced before them up the footpath. The gate that led to the Longpond was locked ...'
- 20 Gate. *Wood Magic* Ch 3. (see 16).
- 21 Gate. *Wood Magic* Ch 3. (see 16).

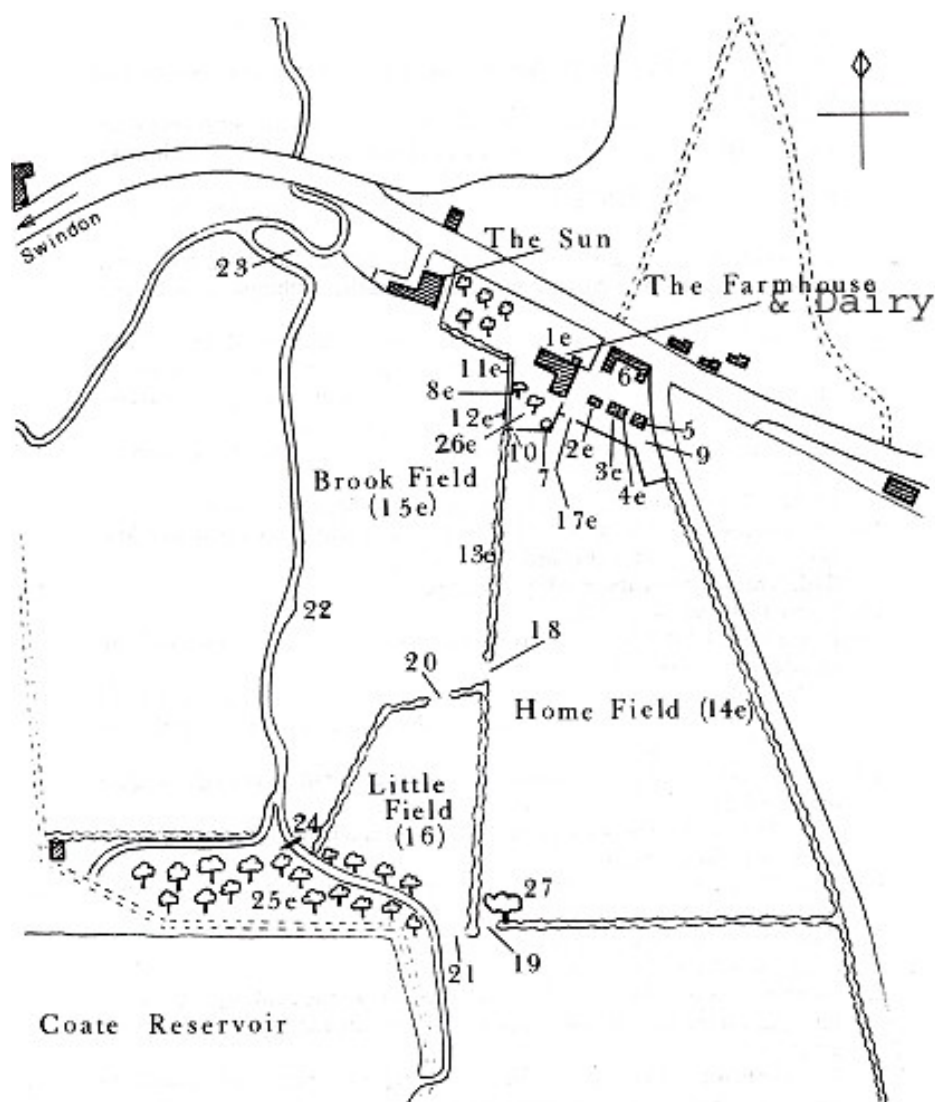


Fig 3

Bevis' Home Lands

Scale 0 100 yards 200

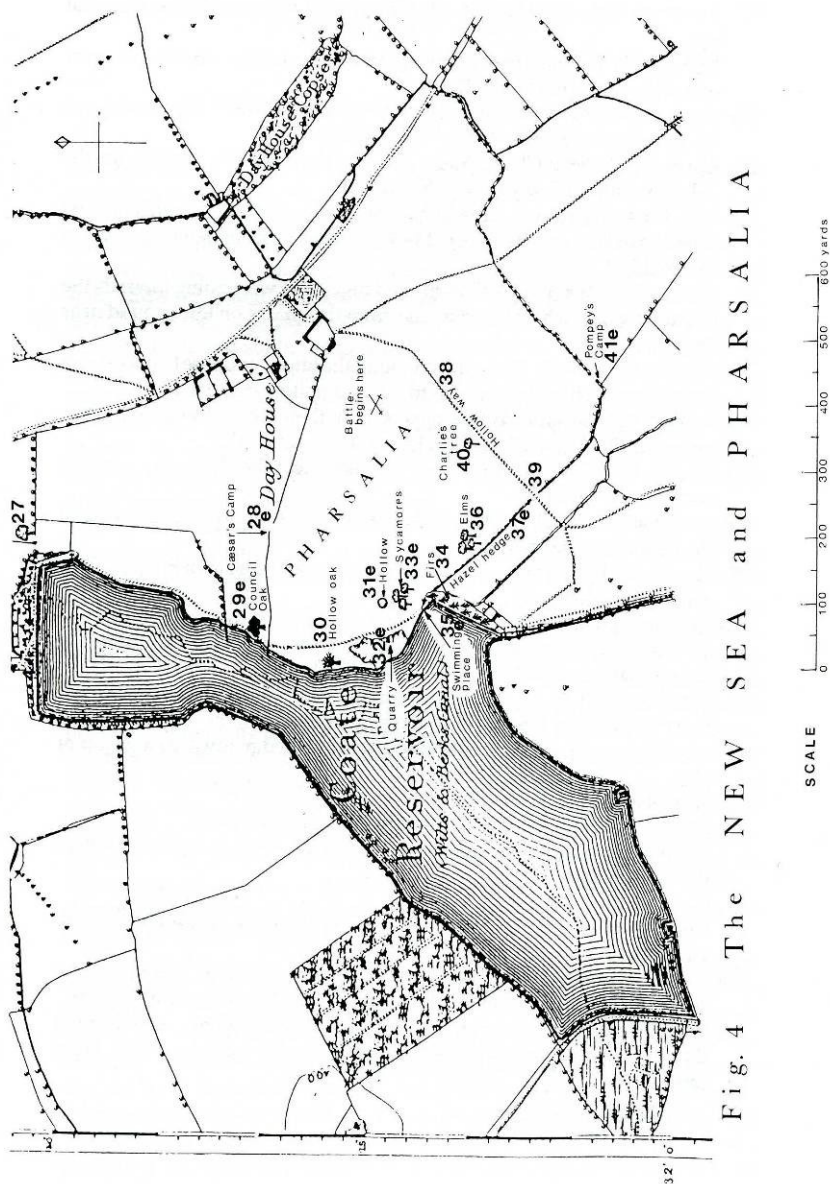


Fig. 4 The New Sea and PHARSALIA

- 22 Drinking Place. *Bevis* Ch 2. 'Bevis led the way to the drinking - place ...'
 Ibid. '... racing down the meadow [to the drinking-place] from the gateway.'
- 23 The Peninsula. *Bevis* Ch 1. The brook made a sharp turn round the withy-bed enclosing ... the "Peninsula".'
- 24 The Hatch. *Bevis* Ch 3. (From the drinking-place) '... following the windings of the stream, they soon came to the hatch.'
- 25e The Mound. *Bevis* Ch 2. '... dig up a few lumps of clay out of the mound.'
- 26e The Mulberry Tree. *OHC* Ch 2. '... the old, old chair where I used to sit... by the southern window, watching for the first star over the mulberry tree.'
- 27 The Great Oak. *Bevis* Ch 2. '... the Bailiff with his back against the great oak...'
 Ibid. Ch 52. 'On their way home they paused a moment under the great oak at the top of the Home Field ...'
- 28e Gap by Caesar's Camp. *Bevis* Ch 15. '... he led the army ... up the slope of the meadow where the solitary oak stood ...'
- 29e Council Oak. *Bevis* Ch 14. 'Some stood by the edge of the water, for the oak was within a few yards of the New Sea.'
- Ibid. Ch 4. '... [he] was already halfway to the next rails when someone called "Bevis!", and there was Mark coming out from behind an oak in the field.'
- 30 Hollow oak. *Bevis* Ch 17. 'Crassus and his cohort were going towards the old hollow oak, which stood not far from the quarry on low ground near the shore...'
- 31e Hollow. *Bevis* Ch 10. 'They played round the huge sycamore trunks above the quarry ... They raced across to a round hollow in the field ...'
- Ibid. Ch 12. Thus the savages gloated over their prey ... "Where shall we make the fire?" said Mark. "... I know, in the hollow."
- 32e Quarry. *Bevis* Ch 9. 'He took them to a place near the old quarry ... in one corner of Fir Tree Gulf.'
- 33e Sycamores. *Bevis* Ch 9. 'He ... looked up at the sycamore trees growing in the field above the quarry.'
- 34 Firs. *Bevis* Ch 5. 'In the cool recesses of the firs at the head of Fir Tree Gulf, a dove was cooing ...'
- 35e Swimming place. *Bevis* Ch 13. 'If they would practise along the shore in their depth till they could swim from the rocky point [by the quarry] to the rails, about seventy yards ...' Also see 32e.
- 36 Elms. *Bevis* Ch 10. '... they had a run in the sunshine, which dried them much better than towels. The field sloped gently to the right, and their usual run was on the slope beside a nut-tree hedge towards a group of elms.'
- 37e Hazel hedge. See 36 and 38.

38 Hollow way. *Bevis* Ch 15.'... they came to the waggon-track... it had worn a gully or hollow way leading down to the right to the hazel hedge where there was a gate.'

39 Gate. See 38.

40 Charlie's tree. *Bevis* Ch 15. They came to the edge of the hollow way where there were ... two small ash trees.'

41e Gate by Pompey's camp. *Bevis* Ch 15. They immediately saw the smoke of his camp-fire rising on the other side of the Plain, close to a gateway.' Ibid. 'Scipio, take your men ... go down to the gate there ... slip through the gate and go up inside the hedge, dart round the corner and seize Ted's camp.'

Book Reviews

THE MARLBOROUGH DOWNS, Kenneth Watts.

Ex Libris Press, 1993.192pp. £7.95.

Ken Watts' book treats an area closely associated with Richard Jefferies. The majestic range of chalk hills whose northern scarp rises a few miles south of Coate (when did they get the name of Marlborough Downs by the way?) were a favourite resort of Jefferies as a young man. He walked over them 'in pursuit of sport, of health, of society, of solitude, of joy, of the dearest objects of his soul' (Edward Thomas). Here he could be alone with the wind and his thoughts as the ridgeway took him past 'hill after hill, plain after plain' in perfect silence and solitude (no snarling motorcycles, no Hercules transport aircraft, no tractors, no distant thunder from the M4 in those days). The North Wiltshire downs inspired some of his finest writing: the opening chapters of *Wild Life in a Southern County*, the hare-coursing episode in *The Amateur Poacher*, the 'Evening', 'Night' and 'Dawn' chapters in *Greene Ferne Farm*, the soliloquy of the wind at the end of *Wood Magic*, the pilgrimage to the hill-fort at the beginning of *The Story of My Heart*.

By the time he came to write these books Jefferies had left Wiltshire and his evocation of his native hills was imaginative recreation rather than direct representation. Either he does not identify the places he is describing or he gives them fictitious names, like 'Sarsen' village in *The Amateur Poacher*. He covers his tracks. He does not tell us that the hill to which he used to resort 'in the glow of youth' when his heart 'was parched for want of the rain of deep feeling' was Liddington. In this careful anonymity he was right, I believe. It adds nothing to our appreciation to know the precise locations - if that were possible, for in many cases Jefferies' pictures seem to have been composites. Jefferies was creating, not describing, and as Thomas observed in *A Literary Pilgrim in England* it is not necessary to visit Coate Water or Liddington Castle or Hodson Bottom to understand his books. But of course one does, out of curiosity or as an act of homage. The lover of Jefferies inevitably becomes a lover of the Marlborough Downs because these hills contain the essence of his vision, form its objective correlative, so to speak. Not the least of Jefferies' charms is that he takes one out into such lovely countryside, some of the loveliest in southern England.

The visitor can have no better guide than Ken Watts. A Wiltshireman born in Devizes who now lives in Trowbridge, Watts is a retired architect with time to indulge his passion for walking and researching the local history of his county.

He has previously written books on Snap and on droving in Wiltshire. He knows the Marlborough Downs through and through. For many years he worked as a Ridgeway warden and leads walks for the Countryside Commission. He recommends the downs be experienced in all weathers and seasons. He is familiar with the work of the many poets, writers, artists and musicians who have responded to the beauty of these hills. Besides Jefferies he quotes Edward Thomas (whose chapter on Jefferies' country he calls one of the best introductions to the Marlborough Downs), Alfred Williams, W H Hudson, Charles Sorley, H J Massingham, H W Timperley, and Geoffrey Grigson. He provides concise accounts of the geology and the history of human settlement, the natural history and agriculture of the region, with a particularly good chapter on the story of four upland villages - Rockley (where Frances Gay taught for many years) and the now deserted sites of Shaw, Snap, and Upper Upham, subject of one of Jefferies' early chapters in the *North Wilts Herald*. He writes plainly, has the good teacher's ability to get his knowledge across in interesting fashion, and is sensitive to the *stimmung* with which the region is charged, its elusive dream-like atmosphere. I liked his description of 'the evocative dull clank of sheep bells, which are seamed and consequently do not ring', which recalled the passage in *Round About a Great Estate* where Hilary identifies his neighbour's sheep by the unique tang of their bells.

Watts is a mine of information on a multitude of topics: dew ponds, pillow mounds, terracettes, strip lynchets, beech clumps, white horses, shepherds' huts, sarsen stones, droveways, deer parks, Wiltshire Horn sheep, place-names. He will direct you to the little-known *polissoir* on Overton Down, a sarsen used by Neolithic man to sharpen and polish his tools. He has much curious knowledge: I did not know of the connection of the Knights Templar with the Rockley area (hence Temple Bottom and Temple Farm) or that the spy Anthony Blunt had his ashes scattered on Martinsell Hill or that Joe Louis was stationed at Ogbourne Camp during the war. Nice to think of the Brown Bomber padding along Smeathe's Ridge on an early morning training run to the sound of the larks.

Watts takes the story up to the present with discussion of crop circles, illegal hare-coursing and threats to the downs from agribusiness and property developers. He has illustrated the text with clearly-drawn maps and diagrams and a number of black-and-white photographs which, if they lack the dramatic intensity of Fay Godwin's, are more than merely serviceable. An appendix lists seven walks with OS map references. Although I spotted some literals, Roger Jones is to be congratulated on the production of this compact and attractive volume, the second in his admirable West Country Landscape series.

Andrew Rossabi

LIFE OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU, Henry S Salt.

Edited and Introduction by George Hendrik, Willene Hendrick and Fritz Oehlschlaeger. University of Illinois Press and Centaur Press. 1993. Hardback with portraits, index and bibliography. £19.95.

Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), once looked upon as a disciple of Emerson, is now rated as one of the giants of the American pantheon. Thoreau was a literary master of his subjects, despite his wayward and contradictory nature. Walter Harding, a pre-eminent Thoreau scholar, in his biography *The Days of Henry Thoreau*, presents this son of Concord as not only a man of his time, but of all times. Indeed it is agreed by advocates calling for a greater environmental responsibility, social reformers, and those who seek a more simple life, that this New England student of human nature was something more than a stoic eccentric.

Thoreau's influence has been extensive and is acknowledged by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Aldo Leopold, among others. *Walden*, Thoreau's best-known book, came fifth in a recent international questionnaire asking individuals and environmental interest-groups to list the 40 books which had awakened their concern in conservation (*The Environmental Bookshelf*, Hall Macmillan, 1993).

A friend of the Emersons, Hawthorne, the Alcotts and other illustrious contemporaries, as well as the local children in his native Massachusetts, Thoreau was as much at home with the sacred scriptures of Persia and India as with those of Jewish origin. His critique of materialism is still essential reading and the value of his message increases, while his transcendental spiritual notions have influenced the writings of generations of individuals.

At the same time, he was strong enough to carry his opinions into real life, refusing to pay the poll-tax, and objecting to slave-holding, killing and eating animals, and to the power of central government. He was no dealer in second-hand maxims, as can be clearly seen in his most famous essay 'Civil Disobedience'.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Henry Salt (1851-1939), whose name will be familiar to readers of Jefferies as the author of the short but excellent *Richard Jefferies. A Study* (1894), should have published a lucid and distinguished biography of Thoreau. Salt, a humane and ethical socialist, addressed himself to the problems troubling his own times. He wrote over forty books and was founder and editor of two journals: *Humanitarian* and *Humane Review*. Though ignored by many, he was highly esteemed by Bernard Shaw who wrote: 'My pastime has been writing sermons preaching what Salt practised.' Having been

introduced to *Walden* while he was a master at Eton (he was given a copy by his friend Edward Carpenter) Salt became an enthusiastic Thoreauvian, and gave strong support both here and in the United States to the efforts to advance Thoreau's literary reputation. These efforts included the setting up of Walden Clubs by the newly-formed Labour Party in the 1880s, and articles and meetings to celebrate the centenary of Thoreau's birth.

Henry Salt's contribution to Thoreau's fame and scholarship rests not only with his treatment of this distinctive poet-naturalist, but also with his life-long abiding faith in the principles of universal kinship, and his democratic sentiment. He worked to awaken the conscience of the community, not to seek power for himself. His friendship with people such as Swinburne, Keir Hardie, Prince Kropotkin, Thomas Hardy, William Morris and Henry Hyndman is a testament of the respect in which he was held by his contemporaries. Yet *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, 1990, makes no reference to Salt and the 1984 edition only gives two sub-references, one under Thoreau and the other under BV (James Thomson). Shelley and Richard Jefferies do not appear at all. In fact Salt is better known among literati in the United States than in his own country.

Salt's book on Thoreau was first published in 1890; the second version appeared in 1896. It is his third version of this perceptive and penetrating study that Professor George Hendrick and his fellow editors have now made available, thanks to the Trustees of the University of Illinois. In their introduction the editors, with admiration and affection, give the reader an account of Salt's long and full life. Reference is made to his early life, his marriage, his support of the Social Democratic Federation and for the many social causes of his day. Salt gave his full support to many socialist poets and writers, including Richard Jefferies, who had 'the same impatience of tradition and conventionality, the same passionate love of woods and fields and streams', as Thoreau and Salt himself. No Englishman in the late nineteenth century did more to advance so many ethical causes or social justice. Salt's obituaries recognised many of his unique qualities. He was, in the words of the *Daily Telegraph*, 'one of the great characters of his time'.

This book, published by the University of Illinois, may redress the balance and give Henry Salt who, like Thoreau, never bowed to conventionality, or allowed his free spirit to be driven into subjection, the recognition he has so long deserved.

John Pontin