

EDWARD AND HELEN THOMAS - Our Parents
A TALK GIVEN TO THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY ON APRIL 4th. 1977.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Richard Jefferies Society, I am going to open this talk with a piece from my father's childhood memories which seemed particularly fitting:

Swindon was a thousand times better. It was delicious to pass Wantage, Challow, Uffington, Shrivenham, to see the 75th, 76th mile marks by the railwayside, to slow down at last to the cry of 'Swindon' and see my grandmother, my uncle or my aunt waiting. My aunt was an attendant in the refreshment bar, and sometimes gave me a cake or sandwich to eat amid the smell of spirits, or took me to the private apartments, talking in a high bright voice and showing me round to various other neat women in black with high bright voices and nothing but smiles and laughs. My uncle was a fitter in the Great Western Railway works and knew everybody. He was tall, easy-going, and had a pipe in his mouth and very likely a dog at his heels. I was proud to be with him as he nodded to the one-legged signalman and the man with a white apron and a long hammer for tapping the wheels of all the carriages.

The look of the town pleased me altogether. I could think of no ill of houses built entirely of stone instead of brick, especially as they seemed to exist chiefly to serve as avenues by which I happily approached to my grandmother's. It was for me a blessed place. The stonework, the flowers in the gardens, the Wiltshire accent, the rain if it was raining, the sun if it was shining, the absence of school and schoolmaster and of most ordinary forms of compulsion - everything was paradisaical. No room ever was so cosy as my grandmother's kitchen. Its open range was always bright. There was a pair of bellows frequently in use. A brass turnspit hung from under the mantelpiece. The radiant steel trivet was excellent in itself but often bore a load of girdle cakes or buttered toast or more substantial things. An old brown earthenware teapot stood eternally upon the hob. Tea-caddies, brass candlesticks, clay pipes and vases full of spills, stood on the mantelpiece. On its walls hung coloured engravings entitled 'Spring' and 'Summer' and painted in England some time before the Fall, and photographs of me and Mr. Gladstone's Cabinets and Mr. Gladstone, of Belle Bitton, and of an uncle who had died long before I was born. There were chairs and there was an old mahogany table piano at one side. The smell of 'Westward Ho' tobacco hung about the room. My uncle got us chatting instantly. He seemed grown up, yet a boy, by the way he laughed, whistled and sang a bit of a gay tune. At supper, with our bread and cheese, or cold bacon, or hot faggots, or chitterlings, and pieties, he would now and then give us a little tumbler, or 'tot', of ale.

My grandmother being all important, omnipotent, omnipresent if not omniscient, she stood out less. She marketed, cooked, cleaned, did everything. She made pies with pastry a full inch thick, and many different undulant fruit tarts on plates. Above all, she made doughy cakes, of dough, allspice and many raisins, which were as much better than other cakes as Swindon was better than other towns, and always as much better than other so-called doughy cakes. She knew, too, where to get butter which taught me how divine a thing butter can be made. On the other hand, she was a Conservative and a churchwoman. Without her, these holidays would have been impossible, and she gave me countless pleasures....

She first took me to church. Clad in those uncomfortable clothes, I walked beside her, who looked more uncomfortable in her layers of black. I felt that everyone enjoyed being stiff, solemn, black, except myself. On entering the church

she bent forward to pray, dragging me down with her to blur ray sight for a similar period. I rose with an added awkwardness in gazing at the grim emotionless multitudes of hats, bonnets, and bare heads. It was an inexplicable conspiracy for an hour's self-torture. The service was a dreary discomfort in which the hymns were green isles. Then all was over, we crept with a shuffle, a pause, a shuffle, a pause, out to the tombstones and the astonishing fresh light. I was introduced to other women and discussed. I was always being told how like my mother I was and how tall for my age. My grandmother took me to several old Welshwomen, and they all said, 'He's a regular - '. They used to remark how well my father was doing, my grandfather who had long been dead having only been a fitter. To hide something from me, they spoke in Welsh. Sometimes I was more elaborately shown off. Behind a shop smelling of bacon, butter and acid sweets, I stood up before a stout woman smelling a little less strongly of the same, to recite 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. My reward was a penny or a screw of sweets. The only visit of this kind which I enjoyed was to a farmhouse a mile away, though I can only recall the walk, the various gates, the best parlour with a Bible in the window between the lace curtains, and the glass of warm milk. Between her and my uncle who kept the house going I saw much bickering. Spending most of his evenings out at club or public-house, he neglected the garden and I dare say other things. I dimly knew that he was usually courting a farmer's daughter somewhere a few miles out, not always the same one. Sometimes when I was walking with him the girl appeared and joined us and at twilight I returned alone.

My mother was born in 1877: it is the centenary of her birth in July this year. There were five children born to Esther and James Ashcroft Noble, though they lost a son Philip as a baby in a diphtheria epidemic and their youngest child Lancelot was a great deal younger than the three daughters, Irene, Helen and Mary. Helen was the middle one and her sisters were brilliant academically - the eldest, Irene, wilful, passionate and domineering, the youngest sister Mary gentle and gay. Helen had very bad health as a child, diphtheria, typhoid and recurring attacks of croup and asthma, and this together with her short sight and intense shyness gave her an acute feeling of inferiority. Their mother, Esther Noble, daughter of a Liverpool whaler in the days of sail, was a brisk, house-proud little woman, keeping two maids and managing with pride and resourcefulness on the literary earnings of her husband, freelance critic and essayist, who was delicate and did all his writing at home, liking to be surrounded by his children. The family lived first at Liverpool, then for a short period in London, back to Southport and finally to London again. While in Southport the four children attended a very progressive school called Wintersdorf, to which Oscar Wilde came to lecture on 'The Home Beautiful'.

When the family finally moved back to London, they settled near Wandsworth Common and attended a fashionable Unitarian Chapel in south-west London where a family of six London born brothers and their parents, Philip and Mary Thomas, from Wales, also worshipped.

The eldest of the six Thomas brothers, Edward, was given an introduction to James Ashcroft Noble, as the boy had written some nature essays and it was thought that Mr. Noble might be able to give the shy and diffident boy some help and encouragement.

That was how Edward and Helen met. Edward's first book, published when he was 18, "The Woodland Life" is a series of intensely observed nature notes, showing a great influence of his beloved Richard Jefferies. The book was dedicated to James Ashcroft Noble, who died shortly before the book was published.

Edward had read Jefferies in every spare moment at home and at school, reading and eating penny buns under his desk lid. By a lucky chance his paternal Welsh

grandparents lived at Swindon, the grandfather was dead, and his uncle employed at the railway works. So he had a wonderful opportunity of studying the downs and woods, lakes and farms of which Jefferies had written. His uncle took him everywhere in the earlier years, before he met David Uzzell, and Edward loved and admired this lively young man.

Here is his description of a Wiltshire molecatcher, part of his first book, for Edward was not only a keen observer of nature, but also of human beings, particularly the salty characters he came across in the country, working on roads, in the fields or in blacksmith's or wheelwright's shops:

.... One tiny form, looming faintly as yet in the distance, darkens the grey slope. The molecatcher, nearing the end of his early round, descends to the valley now where his remotest traps are set. A grey-complexioned, silent man he is, with a curious lingering gait, every looking downward as he goes. On these wide open hills there is hardly a man without woodcraft enough to know the ways of his fellow-denizens of the waste, and, if need be, the way to set up a wire. The molecatcher is no exception, and long use compels him to watch the sward at his feet. Dark grizzled curls hang about his low, deeply-furrowed brow, while his neck, freckled and hard, is open to the wind. His back is bent father from constant stooping than from age, and there is power in him yet, as you may note when he climbs the hill.

Of all the molecatcher's odd attire - a thirdhand velveteen jacket, torn loose gaiters, and stained corduroys - his hat is the most curious. Made of soft felt, it was once white, but is now weathered to lichen-grey, and with darker streaks winding here and there; the broad brim curves downward and overhangs his forehead, shadowing all his face. Save when he looks up, half of his shaggy visage is hidden, and this concealment adds to the mystery that clings to a man of his decaying profession. By the bent brim of his hat, his curls of growing years, and by his dense eyebrows, his eyes are half hidden, as are the mole's by its protecting fur. Unperceived, the keen small eyes are ever fixed upon you; and the stranger shrinks on becoming conscious of their piercing glance through the shadow hanging about his face. Rarely, even in conversation, is the veil of mystery removed. It may be that he carries secrets which shall die with him; so, at least, his morose reserve suggests. Not without a natural dignity, in spite of his lowly occupation, he goes through his day of silent solitary toil, or holds short pithy snatches of talk with those who care to visit him.

Meanwhile, Helen was doing nursery governess jobs - one of them looking after a small boy who, with his Russian father, M. Roman and his Austrian mother, lived in great style at the Hotel Metropole in London. M. Roman was often away from London and one of Helen's duties was to collect his letters from an empty office in Holborn, where piles of mail from all over the world lay on the dusty mat inside the deserted office. She and her sisters were great theatre goers and waited hours in the queue for the pit to see Sir Henry Irving, Forbes-Robertson and Beerbohm Tree. They and other serious-minded young women formed a little society and one of their excursions was a visit to William Morris, when he showed the girls his collection of exquisite illuminated manuscripts, and other treasures.

Edward was now at Oxford, Helen's father had died - she had helped her mother nurse him through his long last illness - and Helen and her mother being completely uncongenial to each other, Helen applied for living-in posts and occasionally visited Edward at Oxford.

Edward had quite determined on a career of writing, much to the despair of his father who had hoped he would qualify for a safe job in the Board of Trade and work his way upwards as he himself had done. Helen and Edward married while he was still an

undergraduate and after living in poor lodgings in a squalid neighbourhood of London, with their baby son, Merfyn, they moved to Kent.

With Edward's diffident nature, work in the way of reviewing was hard to come by, and soon there were two small children with the new baby Bronwen, Edward was a prodigious worker and Helen was a resourceful and careful house-keeper - her North Country upbringing had taught her how to make a nourishing meal from a few pennyworth of meat and bones and plenty of vegetables. Their struggles were hard and Helen had also to steel herself not to be thrown into despair by Edward's moods of hopelessness and what he called his 'writer's melancholy'. In 1902, the year of Bronwen's birth, his first books of essays, 'Horae Solitariae' was published and the next year his book on Oxford. In 1904 his second book of essays 'Hoseacre Papers' - Roseacre was the name of their cottage in Kent, - was published and the next year his book on Wales. By this time he had met W.H. Davies, the tramp poet, and had taken Davies under his wing and found a tiny cottage for him in Egg Pie Lane, Bearsted. In 1906 came 'The Heart of England'.

Then the family moved from Kent to Hampshire. Edward was now an established critic on *The Daily Chronicle*, *The Bookman* and other periodicals. Their last years in Kent had been spent in a farmhouse at a village called Weald, where Helen was in her element, baking her own bread in a brick oven, getting to know the cow's names, chatting to the carter in the stable with the farm horses at the end of the day, and joining in all the activities, with Merfyn a sturdy little boy and Bronwen a carefree little flower-gatherer, with corncoloured hair and great brown eyes which saw as keenly as her father's blue ones. I should like to read you a bit of Helen's remembrance of hop-picking when she was enjoying the varied life on this prosperous mixed farm.

The hop garden was on the southern border of the farm, beyond the great oaks of Blooming Meadow in which the house stood, and it was a pleasant walk just as far as the children could manage. Over the meadow by the hedge and through the gap by the pond and there you were.

I had watched from the early time of the year the cultivation of the hops involving a variety of skills: from the ploughing with horse between the 'hills' - the perennial hop plants of which nothing could be seen in winter but the slightly rounded mounds stretching away in symmetrical rows - to the delicate 'twiddling'¹ of the bines when the shoots appeared and had to be trained to the strings which had already been stretched criss-cross from pole to pole. It made an intricate design, seeming to envelop the garden in a glowing mist.

But it is the great festival of the year on our farm that I want to recall, for it had a pagan quality, age-old and primitive, which especially appealed to me. The stringy by this time late in August, were covered with the harsh hop nines and their golden pungent fruit hanging in bountiful garlands among the dark leaves. This was the time for the harvesting of the hops - more like flowers than fruit with petals overlapping. All under the green arches, canvas troughs slung on rough wooden frames were placed in rows some feet apart, but close enough for the pickers to chat and exchange jokes and gossip with each other.

The picking on our farm was done by village women and children: the garden was not large enough for the need of 'east-enders' who emigrated in their thousands to other parts of Kent from Lambeth and Whitechapel to spend six weeks on the Kent clay to replenish their marvellous vitality. For us the only men to give zest to the bawdy jokes which the atmosphere of this harvest evoked, even in the most chapel-minded women, were the tally-men, perhaps six to this small affair. These men had much to do. It was their job to cut with the razor-edged sickle-shaped knife at the end of a long pole the bines from the strings and drape these *f*armfuls of hop-laden tendrils over the bar of

wood raised above the trough so that the pickers could loosen the tangle and rob its fruit, dropping each hop separately - never in bundles - into the bin.

I was there with my maid, Daisy Tucker, and my two children: Bronwen, only a baby carried by one of us, and Merfyn, a sturdy boy of four. When the ceremony began (hop picking had its strict etiquette and procedure) each trough had already been garlanded by its share of vines and beside each waited the women and their families. Until the tally-man blew his horn not a hop might be picked, and in those faraway days law and order entered into every department of life. Especially, I think, was this so in those activities closely related to the earth. Even in the wild prodigality of nature there is a rhythm and order with which the countryman is instinct. So though the heady smell of the hops and the freedom from indoor chores evoked in the women an element of licentiousness all went as merrily as a marriage bell during those golden revels. The horn having sounded we fell to our picking and this would be done by experienced women, who from babyhood had been trained in this skill, with delicate neatness and swiftness. The hops that fell into the trough had to be clean of any leaf and each other. It took me a long time to learn how to do this. The hop fruit is a cone of petals, and the skilled picker will manage to detach each from its bunch whole and compact without, as I often did, scattering the fruit in a flurry of petals into the bin. Children sat on little stools or piles of coats with a box or bucket between their chubby knees and their mothers would throw them bunches of hops to pick and when their buckets were full they would proudly add the contents to the now mounting mass in the bin.

The tally-man would come round and cry "Pick up your 'ops' Pick up your 'ops'" Especially with inexperienced pickers and children some hops were dropped on the ground, and each had to be retrieved, for there must be no waste and no untidiness in this harvest. With him the women would bandy words, and always there was a hilarious and pretended enmity between them and this master of ceremonies, and though Daisy would laugh uproariously at some of the bawdiness, it was so new to me I did not understand it at all, but I knew by the quality of the laughter and the look in the eyes of the jokers that the ribaldry was of the dark earth of which I, townbred and innocent, knew nothing.

At noon the horn would sound and we must finish picking the bine we had in hand, for to begin a new one was forbidden. Now the tally-man came with his bushel basket to measure the hops each picker had in her bin, and with a lovely gesture the women plunged their bare arms deep into their cargo and with a sort of flutter of the hands and fingers raised the heavy load to let the air and space into their picking, so that the precious fruit would go lightly into the tally-man's measure and pile up to the bushel mark more quickly. With what keen eyes they watched his measure, for pay was by the bushel. I think the pay for my pick entered in the tally-man's book was sixpence.

Now with our appetites whetted by hop-impregnated air we sat around our bins for lunch. This consisted of the traditional bottles of cold tea and great slabs of baked bread-pudding full of fruit and brown sugar, sticky and extremely satisfying. We sat on the hard clay enjoying the food and laughing and talking. The children got restive when they had eaten their fill and played hide-and-seek in the still untouched bowers, and the suckled babies were put back in their prams. The women's rough and golden-stained hands were for a moment idle. Looking away down the avenue of green leaves I could glimpse brightly coloured groups of women and children in attitudes of repose and presently a silence would fall under that fruit-laden darkness of leaves and the children would curl up by their mothers and sleep, and the women, unused to idleness, would nod. The tally-men lay flat out on their backs with heads resting on their upraised hands, and there would be no sound but the murmur of insects and distant lowing of cattle.

Such a scene, such a quality of living enriched *my* spirit for ever and ever.

But the horn blew and each got to her task and the troughs were filled and measured again and again until the sun lowered behind the hill and we picked our last hop at the command of the horn.

The tally-men now turned to their last job of moving the long rows of bins into unravished aisles. Each woman noted her new position for tomorrow, and straggling home with children whimpering with tiredness, she faced the evening's work, cross with the heat, but happy and satisfied having earned perhaps ten shillings. After a fortnight's picking each received her money upon which she depended for the children's winter boots and perhaps a new jacket for her man and for those necessary things the ordinary wages could not stretch to.

"Good night, Mrs. Turner". — "Good night Mrs. Killick". "It looks set for fine".

After *The Heart of England*, there is a gap of three years while Edward was preparing for the biography of Richard Jefferies, which he enjoyed doing so much - walking over the Downs and swimming in Coate Water, reading, searching out Jefferies' newspaper articles, staying for weeks on end at Broome Manor farm, where Helen sometimes joined him. The book was published in 1909, another edition in 1911 and the last, now long out of print, in 1958. Though the book was written with all his knowledge and admiration of the subject, Edward felt it was inadequate. In a recent review P.J. Kavanagh wrote in the *Guardian* "His Richard Jefferies is so wonderful it is a source of despair that a brilliant account of one great writer by another should have become forgotten. Leavis calls it a classic of critical biography". Roland Gant, editor of *Edward Thomas on the Countryside* recently published by Faber & Faber, is working hard to get the biography of Richard Jefferies into print again. (A new edition will be published by Faber & Faber in 1978).

Prose works then followed hard on each other's heels, biographies, essays, introductions for Dent's EVERYMAN series. One of the biographies was that of George Borrow, which he worked on in Wales, and here I should like to read you the letter Helen wrote to him when he had almost finished the book and was about to return home for Christmas. This letter evokes Helen's brave gaiety and eagerness of heart. When I heard it for the first time at the Dedication of the engraved window at Eastbury, it brought her vividly into that little church, astonished as she would have been and Edward too, to know what had brought so many people there on that wet October evening.

To Edward

Wick Green

Friday - ca. 16.xii.1911

Dearest One,

Only a few lines hoping this finds you as it leaves me at present, very well thank you!

There is no news except that there are only four days to your homecoming. And that when you get this there'll only be three, unless you count Tuesday itself as 31 days. It will seem a month of wet Sundays from getting up time till starting off to meet you time. The children and I may meet you, that is if I can find time. I daresay I'll stroll down to the station, but if I am not there, I daresay I shall have gone to the McTaggarts to tea, so in case I am otherwise engaged I've told Maud to make tea for you, though if you like to wait supper till 7.30 or 8 I'll be sure to be home then. The McTaggarts are so very nice, and have asked me to go, and as nothing is happening on Tuesday after all the gaieties of the term I thought it would be a good opportunity.

I cannot answer your two last loving lovely letters, it's no good trying. I did not get too wet and cold in the hailstorm, but I'm very grateful all the same for the warmth and

cheeryness of the sun after it. You see it's intoxicating me somehow. I'll be as mad as ten hatters by Tuesday if this sort of thing goes on.

I'll air your clothes for you, and get out the sweater and the old mac. (There's some wedding cake for you which I did not send on.) I've put the notebooks in your letter chest, and locked it. I paid the bills and have got the receipts. Baring wants £8 all at a fell swoop, but it was a glorious debauch of bill paying and receipts reaping.

The children go to Bedales with the school to see 'The Midsummer Night's Dream'. They won't be out till 9 o'clock and of course I shall be there to meet them. I'll keep the books hidden.

I'm so glad old Borrow is done and that we are a yard or so further than you thought from the workhouse. I'm not sorry you have left Llaugharne. Those singing, running, pale girls with creamery voices who pass the windows of hardworking, handsome young married men 50 times a day, don't do it for nothing I'll be bound. Oh no. You're better at home with your old woman, who once ran and who once passed your window as often as she could, and sang too when she'd a mind to, but who was never pale nor creamery (not that I think much of either quality in young girls), but who kissed you before you kissed her (was it yesterday?) Cream or no cream girls are pretty much the same all the world over, and I'd not give a snap of the finger for one of them passing your windows while you are bending over your Borrow (forsooth). Sit there with one eye perhaps on your book, but the other wanton eye looking for cream and roses and what not while the huzzies pass before you that you may the more rove after them. Even so the hailstones may have got into my heart, but if they did the warmth and foolishness they found there soon changed them into magic wine 'which maketh glad the heart of man'. Well, don't expect me at Petersfield will you. Oh, but do expect Myfanwy who I daresay will go by herself on her own two legs.

For yesterday at the Bedfords she walked from Molly Bedford to me with a delicious little chuckle of delight and pride, and then again a step or two.

Not a single line or word more till Tuesday. I'm so excited about my tea party at the McTaggarts. It will be jolly won't it? Give my love to Mother, and tell Julian I'm sorry he can't come and kiss your father for me, because I must let out somehow and that seems to me quite a good way. Good luck in town, and the best of luck at home, and a sensible wife, not the scatter brain creature I half expect you've got. Anyway such as she is she's yours,

Helen.

The War came and much of the reviewing work ceased and he accepted any commissions for books that came along - when he first met Robert Frost he was working hard on a biography of The Duke of Marlborough. That Frost touched off the spark that led to the extraordinary output of poetry from December 1914 to February 1917 is certain. But other things helped - not having so much reviewing work to do, Edward had more time to write what he wanted, not being so pressed to get reviews into the periodicals' offices at once. And still more when he became a soldier, did he have regular time off and regular allowance for his family, and the poems flowed, written in pubs, in camp, in the train on the way home on leave. Most of his poems recalled particular scenes end moments, sharply remembered, from living in the country, mostly the Hampshire country seen on his walks radiating from Steep. If I may I shall read a few of his lesser-known poems - by lesser known I mean those seldom included in anthologies. 'Addlestrop', 'Words', 'If I should ever by chance grow rich', 'Old Man' 'The Trumpet' and 'Lights Out' are all beautiful - 'Old Man' particularly evoked, Helen used to say, the man himself more than any other: these we meet again and again - for I am sure that most anthologists look in other anthologies for their choice and so many are neglected. I am going to begin with 'The New House'. This is on the face of it about the house that was

built for the family, and where incidentally I was born - on the lip of the hill called the Shoulder of Mutton, above Steep and close by a steep wooded coombe, called in Hampshire a hanger. I have chosen this to read first as Laurence Whistler has designed two small lancet windows for Steep church which he is going to engrave for the centenary celebrations there next year. One of the windows will suggest Edward Thomas the walker, among dark yews and bright hawthorn blossom in full blow. The other window design has been suggested by the poem 'The New House' and treated in an allegorical manner, with open doors showing different scenes, as though the poem were prophetic:

The New House

Now first, as I shut the door,
I was alone
In the new house; and the wind
Began to moan.

Old at once was the house,
And I was old;
My ears were teased with the dread
Of what was foretold,

Nights of storm, days of mist, without end;
Sad days when the sun
Shone in vain: old griefs and griefs
Not yet begun.

All was foretold me; naught
Could I foresee;
But I learned how the wind would sound
After these things should be.

The next poem I am reading because it was a particular favourite of Mother's, and after visiting the gamekeeper's cottage in Hodson, I felt it could have been the house in the woods, 'under storm's wing'

Interval

Gone the wild day:
A wilder night
Coming makes way
For brief twilight.

Where the firm soaked road
Mounts and is lost
In the high beechwood
It shines almost.

The beeches keep
A stormy rest,
Breathing deep
Of wind from the west.

The wood is black,

With a misty steam.
Above, the cloud pack
Breaks for one gleam.

But the woodman's cot
By the ivied trees
Awakens not
To light or breeze.

It smokes aloft
Unwavering:
It hunches soft
Under storm's wing.

It has no care
For gleam or gloom:
It stays there
While I shall roam,

Die, and forget
The hill of trees,
The gleam, the wet,
This roaring peace.

And now two short poems which to me have a special quality of romance and vivid colour. I have noticed many times how 'whiteness' - of flowers, shells, clouds, - comes into the poems far more than colour. In his 1917 diary in France he notes "Enemy plane like pale moth beautiful among shrapnel bursts".

Cock-Crow

Out of the wood of thoughts that grows by night
To be cut down by the sharp axe of light, -
Out of the night, two cocks together crow,
Cleaving the darkness with a silver blow:
And bright before my eyes twin trumpeters stand,
Heralds of splendour, one at either hand,
Each facing each as in a coat of arms:
The milkers lace their boots up at the farms.

Swedes

They have taken the gable from the roof of clay
On the long swede pile. They have let in the sun
To the white and gold and purple of curled fronds
Unsunned. It is a sight more tender-gorgeous
At the wood-corner where
Winter moans and drips
Than when, in the Valley of the Tombs of Kings,
A boy crawls down into a Pharoah's tomb
And, first of Christian men, beholds the mummy,
God and monkey, chariot and throne and vase,
Blue pottery, alabaster and gold.

But dreamless long-dead Amen-hotep lies.
This is a dream of Winter, sweet as Spring.

After his death, killed by the vacuum of an unexploded shell, so that his body was quite unscathed, Helen stumbled bravely over the next ten years, suffering a severe delayed shock, and her books were written at the suggestion of a friend who said it might help her to write down all her happy memories of her years with Edward. But there is no happiness without suffering and so she wrote their story and one or two chapters were published in a periodical called *The Adelphi* and she was urged to find a publisher for the whole book. From then on - for the books were widely praised and read - she put all her energies into getting Edward's work better known - remember he had never seen one of his poems in print under his own name, only a few under his pen-name Edward Eastaway. Broadcasts were made of his poems, chapters of her books broadcast. She gave talks to literary societies, Cecil Day-Lewis gave an address on Edward and his work to the Royal Society of Literature, biographies and critical studies were published. Helen lived to hear and to read the tributes paid to Edward on the 50th anniversary of his death, and, in deep peace and contentment and fulfilment left us to join him.

I will finish by reading another of Mother's many favourites, 'The Glory'

The glory of the beauty of the morning, -
The cuckoo crying over the untouched dew;
The blackbird that has found it, and the dove
That tempts me on to something/ sweeter than love;
White clouds ranged even and fair as new-mown hay;
The heat, the stir, the sublime vacancy
Of sky and meadow and forest and my own heart:-
The glory invites me, yet it leaves me scorning
All I can ever do, all I can be,
Beside the lovely of motion, shape, and hue,
The happiness I fancy fit to dwell
In beauty's presence. Shall I now this day
Begin to seek as far as heaven, as hell,
Wisdom or strength to match this beauty, start
And tread the pale dust pitted with small dark drops,
In hope to find whatever it is I seek,
Harkening to short-lived happy-seeming things .
That we know naught of, in the hazel copse?
Or must I be content with discontent
As larks and swallows are perhaps with wings?
And shall I ask at the day's end once more
What beauty is, and what I can have meant
By happiness? And shall I let all go,
Glad, weary, or both? Or shall I perhaps know
That I was happy oft and oft before,
Awhile forgetting how I am fast pent,
How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to.
Is Time? I cannot bite the day to the core.

As a postscript, my very last reading will be from Swindon, as the first was -David Uzzell's letter to Helen on reading of Edward's death in action:

Swindon, Wilts.

May 5th, 1917.

I heard of dear Edwin's death I saw it in the sketch so I went to Ruben George one of the society that he belonged to he made inquiries for me and found it was rite it was a blow to me and my famley we all liked him we was cut up as bad as if it had been one of our hown boys Mr. George and some of his friends put it in the Swindon Advirtisor it is very nice if you would like it I will send it to you if you get this letter let me know if you would like it. the sorrow of it made us very sorry Bill my eldest son said he could not work it upset him so. I havent got over it yet and Mrs. Uzzell she is sorrey becaus he was so kind to me. did he ever tell of one of our rambls When we went to a house out in the country to have a cup of tea and the fowl came in to the room and went in the cubord and laid an egg in the cuberd and Edwin had it for his tea laid wile you wait. how is the Dear children taking it give my love to them and tell them to be good to mother and help her as much as they can and God will Bless them all I should like to hear from you and the son if you will let me know anything about him was he bured out in franee bless him I told him in my last leter if we did not meet on herth I hope to meet him in heaven now you cher up there is a good womer according to nature I shall be the first t go I am going to try hard to go how is your son geting on he must thnk that his Father died for his King and Country to help to save we Old People an Wimen and Children. he was a hero but some body had to be heros for us. now I must conclude with Love and respect to you all from David Uzzell God Bless you all rite soon pleas.