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The RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY (Registered Charity No. 1042838) was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887). Its activities include the Annual General Meeting and Birthday Lecture, winter meetings, summer outings, special events, and the publication of a *Journal*, spring and autumn Newsletters and an Annual Report. Membership is open to all on payment of the current annual subscription (£7.00 – individual; £8.00 – couple).

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The *Journal* is the official organ of the Society and one copy is sent free to all members. Additional copies are available for £1.00 plus postage and may be obtained, along with other Society publications, from:

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The principal aim of The Richard Jefferies Society *Journal* is to present material by Jefferies that has not been published or reprinted, or that is difficult to obtain, together with articles about Jefferies (commissioned or submitted), items of research and discovery, synopses of talks and lectures, book reviews, Wiltshire material relating to Jefferies, and correspondence. MSS and correspondence for publication will be acknowledged but cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Submissions, preferably in electronic format, should be sent to the Secretary. Authors of printed articles will receive a complimentary copy of the *Journal*.

The Editorial Sub-committee comprises: Andrew Rossabi – Literary Editor; Phyllis Treitel and Peter Robins – proof-reading; Arthur Stafford – design; Norma Goodwin – sales; Jean Saunders – type-setting.

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RICHARD JEFFERIES' BIRTHPLACE at Coate is now a museum. It is open on certain Sundays in the summer, on the second Wednesday of the month throughout the year and otherwise by arrangement. For details about the Museum please apply to the Secretary.



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# The Power of the Farmers

*Richard Jefferies*

First published in the *Fortnightly Review* on 1 June 1874.

There can be very little doubt that whichever side ultimately gains the victory, the struggle between the farmer and the labourer will in many things result in evil. Without laying much stress on the oft-talked-of sympathy and good feeling between master and man, now broken up for ever, there still remained bonds which it is a mistake to have severed. The character of Englishmen is averse to much sympathy: it is a form of sentiment against which a straight-forward and independent man revolts. The ideas and feelings which in the town are refined and softened, in the country come out in their blunt abruptness; and there is perhaps no section of the population which sets so low a value upon sympathy as the agricultural. The very rudeness of the life, the strife with the weather, the battle with the soil, tends to produce a sturdy and somewhat surly manliness, which cannot understand the meanings conveyed under the fine phrases of mutual forbearance, and so on, which have been so largely used in this controversy. But there certainly was an appreciable amount of *esprit de corps*, extending throughout the ranks of farmer and labourer up to a recent period. There was a common dislike of the town, its ways and men – a *growling* kind of pride in the country, and masters and men growled in concert. They found fault with the same things; they grumbled together; they could always agree in abusing the weather; they talked freely and without distrust; and there was not that sharpness of definition between the two classes that exists in manufacturing districts. The farmer did not set himself up as superior to the labourer in a coarse and insulting manner. He conversed familiarly with his men; walked with them a mile upon the road, without feeling in the least degree that he was lowering his dignity as an employer, or showing condescension to them; asked after their wives and families, and how the potato-patch or allotment was looking; and generally showed an interest in their concerns. After the agitation first commenced, this species of intercourse was a long time in dying out. The indignation of the farmers was poured entirely upon the agents who were spreading disaffection. No one found any fault with the labourers themselves. If they thought they were really worth more per week than they were receiving, they had a right to ask for an increase of pay; but when, after an increase of pay was granted, as the farmers maintain, to a reasonable amount, and the agitation still continued, there arose a gradual coolness, and the two classes slowly arrayed themselves into opposing forces. It was now that the employers began to blame the employed, and to set themselves firmly against any further movement.

The lock-out in Suffolk was only what every one had seen must in the end take place, if the aspect of affairs continued unchanged. Throughout the country the agriculturists had come to a distinct although unexpressed determination that the matter could not go on without a firm resistance being offered. In the markets, at the market-ordinaries, wherever the agricultural world met, the tone that universally prevailed was that some decided step must be taken. When it was at last taken, and the news spread of the lock-out, the tone of conversation in these places of assembly grew at once firmer more defiant. The agriculturists are slow to combine, slower still to give utterance and shape to their resolves; but they possess a depth of feeling and a strength which is hardly acknowledged. The latent energy of resistance which exists among the agriculturists of the whole country is incalculably great. The Suffolk movement will be endorsed, if not followed in kind, in almost every county. The suppressed bitterness of two or three years of what they, rightly or wrongly, consider unjust treatment, will bear fruit in harsh and rigid measures which it would have been to the interest of all to avoid.

The farmers have an immense power in their hands – a power little understood and much underrated. It extends into the smallest affairs, especially, of course, in rural districts. Take the Boards of Guardians for instance: they are almost exclusively formed of farmers and landed gentry. We may regret the fact, but there is no doubt about it, that many such guardians will carry, perhaps have already carried, their resentment into the Board-room. In these days of open meetings and free newspapers, absolute tyranny is out of the question as much as absolute injustice, but there is still sufficient liberty of action to enable a man, and more particularly a body of men, to make their ruling ideas felt by those under them. Hitherto the agricultural poor certainly cannot complain of their treatment at the hands of the unions. They have been far more liberally dealt with than the poor inhabitants of towns. They have received, too, an amount of humanity over and above the strict administration of the poor-law. Allowance has been made, often rather illegally, for circumstances. Now as the local rates come chiefly from the land, the guardians must be more than men if they did not feel, under provocation, a degree of inclination to administer strict law, and nothing more nor less, to the applicants. This same system of reprisal has already been carried into effect in districts hundreds of miles remote from the Suffolk lock-out.

In most villages there are adherents of the Labourers' Union. Generally the first members are the disagreeable inhabitants – the two or three perpetual grumblers and ne'er-do-wells. They join the Union and become marked men. Perhaps they make themselves peculiarly obnoxious in parish matters, or did so at the late election. They very soon find that employment cannot be found in the parish, no one will give them a job; certain perquisites are cut off; harsh refusals to grant time-honoured privileges follow; finally they find it necessary to migrate, having first of all held themselves up as martyrs in a public cause. It may be said that all this is an argument in favour of the agitation, but then it must be remembered that the farmers did not begin the conflict: they made no opposition till

what they believed an unbearable pitch of overbearing insolence was reached.

So much for the power of the farmers in small things. The agitators argue that the farmers cannot possibly persist in the lock-out, because their work must be done or they will be ruined. Whether this particular lock-out continues or not, it is certain that this belief is a most mistaken one. The farmers are quite able to repeat or to continue the lock-out, as may suit them best. The reason is obvious: the landlords are at their back. If the tenant finds that he cannot cultivate his fields, and therefore cannot raise the money to pay his rent, the landlord seeing the condition of affairs, and feeling that his interest is identical, has only to remit the rent or part of it, and the struggle may go on indefinitely. The Union agitators are consequently quite in the wrong if they imagine they can coerce the agriculturists; provided that the latter are determined to fight. The funds of the Union are as nothing to the wealth at the back of the farmers; and in these days, the cause with the longest purse invariably wins. The twopence per week of the Unionist is of very little account when placed in the balance with the thousands of pounds accessible to the other side. Every hundred men locked out or on strike, while they in some measure embarrass the farmers, at the same time weaken the Union funds, and just at the very moment when the Union appears strongest, and can show an immense number of men doing nothing, it is really worst off, because of the incessant drain of money.

The labourers never for a moment dreamt that the farmers could do without them for so long as they have. They thought that a fortnight, or three weeks at least, would reduce their employers to their own terms. At the first glance there is indeed no trade or occupation in the country which seems to depend so much upon the labouring man as farming. The tenant of a large farm appears perfectly helpless without them. If the strikes or lock-outs had happened some years ago, the labourers would have doubtless been right in their calculations. But it is a notorious fact that while the art of agriculture has been carried to a length never imagined possible formerly, and while the produce has been doubled, the number of men employed has steadily decreased. Without going into statistics, though such aids to inquiry are forthcoming if necessary, it may be fairly reckoned that each farmer on an average employs less men by one-fifth, taking all the year round, than he did ten years since. If the harvest and busy season alone be considered, the decrease is far larger, and may amount to one-third. Machinery has of course a good deal to do with this. The hay is mown by machines, made by machines, elevated on the ricks by machines, and the fields cleaned with rakes drawn by horses. The arable farmer ploughs by machinery, sows by machinery, reaps and threshes by iron and steel instead of thews and sinews. In the aggregate the difference is something serious. The very price of labour has taught the tenant to do his utmost to reduce the expenditure in that direction. Farmers who used to employ six men to mow, now only put on a couple.

There is less too of the system of keeping men all the year in order to secure their services at a busy season. Something must be put down to the

growing scarcity of labourers themselves, which also tends to teach the tenants to get on with less help. Very few farmers now have sufficient labourers employed on their farms to get through the threshing. They have to borrow men from their neighbours.

The Labourers' Union, therefore, has not taken the farmers so much at a disadvantage as they at first supposed. There were a vast number of old men, past hard work but still capable of small services, who would have been glad of a job, but who found it impossible to get one. Now they come in and assist. Then, there are the regular men – the herd-men, carters, shepherds, with cottages and gardens. Many of these are too well paid to risk the loss of their wages. In this way the farmers may manage to get over the harvest without much loss. Another feature of the agriculture of late years has been the number of men and women who come out from the towns to work in the fields, particularly at harvest. In the neighbourhood of large towns, and especially where there are factories, they come out by hundreds. Many of them like a spell of work in the open air, and the women are glad of a chance of adding to their slender incomes. The immense numbers of women and girls who have absolutely nothing to do in great towns, eagerly grasp at a few weeks employment and fair pay in the harvest fields. In addition there are the loads upon loads of Irish whom the steamers bring over, with their brogue and their sickles, to reap the English corn. A stream of them pours into Bristol and other western ports about June. Harvesting, in fact, becomes every year more and more similar to the Kentish hop-picking season. Instead of being done by the regular residents on the spot, it is got through by what may be called casual labour. The farmers have a certain amount of resources in this floating population.

But then it may be said, with all these aids, still the produce cannot be so large as it would be if the labourers were at work, and there must be loss. For the first year it is doubtful if the loss would be appreciable; there would be some, but not much – not enough to lower the receipts of an individual farmer by a serious figure. But the next year, if the lock-out and strike and agitation should continue, would of course show some considerable decrease. And upon whom would this fall chiefly? If the landlord and the tenant are agreed, and the former remits his rent, or subscribes heavily, it is clear that the farmer will not suffer. The first to suffer will be the labourers. If the produce is smaller and prices rise, while wages, or rather Union pay, continues at the present 9s. per week, it is obvious that the labourer must partially starve. It matters very little whether the lock-out in Suffolk fails or succeeds. The same thing is nearly sure to occur again and again elsewhere, and each time over a wider area of country. Conceive for an instant, what is not at all beyond the regions of probability, the lock-out and strike extended to the greater part of England. The farmers say, 'We can wait; we are not dependent upon a certain weekly income of a few shillings!' What would be the consequence? The men must either starve or emigrate. That this is the fact is already practically acknowledged by the Union, which does all in its power to induce the labourers to go to America, or elsewhere abroad. It recognises its own incapacity to keep thousands of men in idleness for any length of time.

Again, the pressure of the population, and the demand for food, proves that anything like a general lock-out or strike would be attended with serious consequences; and these consequences must principally fall upon the lower classes, who have no resources, no banker's balance, to fall back upon. There is no trade or manufacture the proprietors of which can afford to wait so long as the agriculturist. Farming is naturally a waiting business. Its professors possess that greatest of all powers, the capability of patience. They have no need to hurry. The tone and feeling of the agricultural world at present is in such a condition that a few energetic men in a county could easily form an association for resisting the demands of the Union. The only organization which now exists in agricultural districts is the very weak and feeble one of the farmers' clubs or chambers, from which politics are excluded, and the discussion is confined to the narrow limits of cultivation and subjects associated with it. The very exclusion of politics acts as a sedative, and keeps these chambers in a lukewarm state. There is no enthusiasm, no life about them. But once let an organization be set on foot having for its object the suppression of Union agitation, and the farmers will throw themselves into it with energy and determination. They feel deeply on the matter. Rightly or wrongly, they believed that they have been insolently ill-treated, and held up as monsters of iniquity. This personal feeling would at once give such organizations a cohesive power never before experienced in a society of agriculturalists. They will not spare either money, time, or exertion to render their efforts successful. The farming world was probably never so united and unanimous before. It is even possible that the agitation may result in permanent good to them, since it will teach them the strength that lies in unity. Already in parts very distant from that where the lock-out occurred, the idea of sending money in aid of the movement has been mooted and warmly supported. Some think that it would be better to forward men to a locked-out district, who would be willing to work on the terms offered by the employer. The only objection to this is that it might result in a collision between the Union men and the imported labourers. The Union men would certainly have no right to complain. It has long been the policy of the Union to denude a district of men as much as possible in order to force up the rate of wages there. If it is fair to take men away, it is equally fair to the other side to bring bodies of labourers from a distance. As to a collision, the police must take charge of that; and it must be remembered that either party commencing a disturbance will at once place itself in the wrong in the eyes of the impartial observers. There can be very little doubt if the movement continues, and is extended to other counties, that the system of sending labourers from one part to another will be put into execution by the farmers. It will be far more efficacious than money. As to the possibility, that is beyond question. There are men enough to be found ready to work for reasonable wages in those districts to which the Union has not thoroughly extended itself, and such districts are well known.

There is such a thing possible, too, as importing Irish labour. A well-organized gang of men thoroughly conversant with their work and under proper leaders, could be sent into a disaffected district, and pass on from



farm to farm, doing the work as they go. This would answer better than sending a mob of men to spread themselves about and get work as they could. It would be preferable to forward them in companies, officered as it were, with a given extent of country to work over. This concentration of labour would finish the operation in half the time, and would enable the imported men to present a bold front to the labourers on strike, who would scarcely care to attack a strong gang.

But would such imported men work for less wages than the rest were out on strike for? The farmers would not stop at a few shillings a week extra to such men. They say that they do not object to the rise of wages; what they object to is the Union. Give up your Union card, and we will not refuse an extra shilling. It is, therefore, quite possible that a body of men from a distance may be found working in the midst of a strike or lock-out, for wages as high as those the locked-out men require, simply because they are non-Unionists.

The Union tactics are very bad. They follow a course which must, if persevered in, ultimately bring them to ruin. They deport as many men as possible from a district in which the farmers are obdurate. They employ every agency to induce the men to emigrate. Nothing is left undone to thin the agricultural population. There are two pleas for this course. The first is, that the greater the scarcity of labour, the higher price will it command. The second is one of necessity. They cannot keep so numerous a body on the Union funds; but they should reflect that the larger the number of men who emigrate, by so much do the twopences a week diminish, and that the force of any association consists in the numbers of its members. They should let the men on strike or locked-out go on the parish for relief. That would touch the farmers nearest. They all pay local rates, and many very heavily. A sudden increase of paupers would be a sore point indeed. It is true that the theory of the poor-law is that relief cannot be given to an able-bodied man; but in practice, if an able-bodied man presents himself at the workhouse, and shows that he is utterly destitute and without a penny, the guardians must offer him the house. As a rule they will not relieve him in the house, and his wife and children out, or *vice versa*. Imagine, then, the effect of some thousands of labourers, and their wives and families, applying at the workhouse for relief. The poor-rates must immediately rise to a heavy figure. The Union, however, does all in its power to lighten the rates by deporting the men who served to swell them. The Union agitators actually boast in the papers, that since the formation of the Union and the rise in wages, and flow of emigration, the expenditure at the workhouses has decreased one-third, and the poor-rates in equal proportion. Of course they have. The Union has taken away the cause of poor-rates – has deported it elsewhere; but this does not injure or embarrass the farmers – it actually relieves them. The tactics of the Union, therefore, are extremely ill-calculated, and their plans for coercing the agriculturists very badly laid. If the Union has succeeded in raising the wages of labourers, and in making England such a paradise for them, how is it that the men emigrate in shoals, and do not stay at home to enjoy the high wages and other advantages the Union has obtained for them?

Any one who will carefully consider the arguments adduced, will at once see that the power of the farmers is no imaginary theory; it is a real hard fact which cannot be got over. Every one must deeply regret that the exercise of such a power should ever be necessary; but it must also be admitted that the farmers have been slow to avail themselves of it. Granted that it was quite fair, quite open to the labourers to form an organization for their benefit as a class, then it must also be conceded that the farmers have an equal right to associate together to defend their interest. It must never be forgotten that the farmers did not begin. They did not form their association first, and by injudicious treatment, and insolent language, force the labourers into a union in their own defence. The labourers commenced the agitation, and the farmers did not retaliate for a long period of time. It is at least two years since the Union made itself notorious; it is only after two years that the farmers show any signs of combination and resistance. They did not refuse an increase of wages. They did not give way to their tempers, however much they may have been provoked. They remained quiet, waiting for the agitation to subside.

What substantial point is there that the most passionate unionist can say that farmers denied their men up to this spring? They have shown an amount of patience and forbearance which no other business men in the kingdom would have shown. Neither the colliery-owners, nor the iron-masters, nor the cotton-mill men – none of the great trades would have waited so long. The extreme agitators are to blame for forcing matters to such a crisis. They would be wise if they counselled moderation: but at what stage of the whole affair have they ever counselled that? Who began the affray? No one can say it was the farmers. The labourers at this period of the movement cannot complain if their own measures are returned upon them. The worst feature of the case is that the labourers seem completely in the hands of the agitators; to do as they are bid, and go as sheep to the slaughter. Ill-educated, ignorant, and prejudiced, they take every statement made to them by their so-called friends as literally true. They have no power of criticism – no penetration to distinguish the facts from the fictions. They take it all on trust: just as they start from Liverpool on the ocean-going steamers with the most dim and visionary ideas of the land they are about to visit. Whether it be honourable of educated and well-informed men such as certain leaders of the agitation are, to take advantage of their simplicity, the world can decide for itself.

What may occur in time is, of course not to be foreseen; but it must be admitted on all hands that, hitherto the conduct of the labourers has been wonderfully good. Whether congregated in immense numbers, listening to the inflammatory harangues of the Union orators, or slowly spelling out in solitude the broad hints of the Union paper of rick burning and 'beacon fires,' they have ever remained quiet, peaceable, and orderly. It is doubtful if any other section of the population under the same circumstances would so long have continued well behaved. They are a rude lot, primitive in their ideas, prejudiced in the extreme, blunt and coarse in their expressions: but they are not 'roughs.' That expressive word must be confined to the produce of the back streets of great cities. The agricultural labourer, rude

as he may be, is no 'rough.' There is nothing of the rowdy about him. He has not been induced to commit any excesses which present the faintest resemblance to a civil war.

The question remains, is there no hope of real good from arbitration? Arbitration certainly seems the natural outcome from such a state of things. The doubt is whether the Unionists, as represented by the agents, will ever cordially accept any decision which does not endorse all their demands. In that case, of course, the attempt must fail. Putting the agents aside, if that were possible, then without hesitation it may be affirmed that the labourers would soon come to terms of their own accord. If it were possible to get at the men apart from their organization, it may be asserted that arbitration would be successful. The farmers, as men of education, and many of them men of position, would not hold out in the face of public opinion provided that no ultra demands were made upon them. But, on the whole, there is little reliance to be put on arbitration. It may decide a lock-out here and a strike there, but it does not, and cannot, settle the question. There will still remain a feeling on both sides ready to break out. It may even be asked whether or no the best way, after all, is to let the affair come to an issue and decide itself. With that, however, the subject of the present article has little to do. The aim of the moment was to show that the farmers are possessed of immense, if unrecognised, power. In the face of such facts, which on consideration no one can doubt, it may reasonably enough be questioned whether those are the true friends of the labourer who urge him to persist in courses which embitter the two classes more and more. At the same time, conscious of this power, the farmers need not continue their measures, till they force a victory. They can afford to accept fair terms without loss of dignity or prestige.

# Richard Jefferies: His Mark

*Hugoe Matthews*

No deliberate forgeries of Richard Jefferies' handwriting are known but confusion can arise, first, because his signature changed over time; and second, because three of his books were first published anonymously (*The Gamekeeper at Home*, *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *The Amateur Poacher*) and his name has sometimes been written-in by owners or booksellers on the title-page or elsewhere when the authorship became known. The following samples, therefore, have been selected from genuine sources and arranged in date order to provide a basis for the comparison, dating, and authentication of doubtful items. Taken mostly from private collections, items are reproduced here in approximately two-thirds of the original size, and include some from close members of the family that have not previously been recorded.

## Signatures

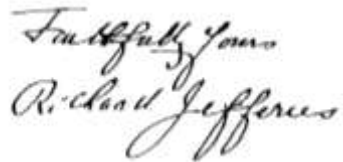
1. From an undated memo (with a deletion) headed 'Coate' and relating to a forthcoming election [?1868].



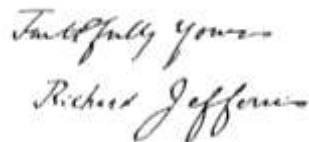
2. Edward Thomas, in *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work*, 1909 (p.45), mentions a copy of Percy's *Reliques* with the signature 'J.R. Jefferies, 1863' on the fly-leaf, and supplies a facsimile of the only known instance where Jefferies signed his full name, on 17 July 1872 (plate facing p.78); the original of this is a cut-out from an unknown document, pinned to a fragment of manuscript in the collection at the British Library (*Add. MS 58817*).



3. From a letter to W Tinsley, publisher, 12 January 1875.



4. From a letter to George Bentley, publisher, 14 July [1876]; the form of the 'R' has now changed to a simpler style, with a short left-handed tail on the vertical stroke, which was retained for the rest of his life.



5. From a letter to W Tinsley, publisher, 23 May [?1877]; the 'F' is written without a cross-stroke on the vertical.

6. The facsimile on the frontispiece portrait of *Field and Hedgerow*, 1890 *et seq*, which can be mistaken for an original though the book was not published until after Jefferies' death; the source and date are unknown but the 'F' is close to that in item 5, above.

7. From a letter to his parents, incomplete, no date, [from Surbiton, ?1880].

8. From a letter to William Sharp, writer, 12 June [1884]; the vertical on the 'F' now has a definite cross-stroke.

9. From letters to his father, 10 December [?1885/6] (left), and mother, 8 February [1886] (right).

10. From a letter to Sampson Low, publisher, concerning payment for *Amaryllis*, 21 November [1886]; in general the handwriting of the later years is smaller and less expansive than in the early years.

11. From a copy of *Red Deer*, first edition with uncanceled title leaf 1883; a good example of a signature that is clearly not by the author.

Inscriptions

To date (Jan 2009) all the books that Jefferies presented to his family and contacts have an individual inscription that takes various forms (as follows) but none is signed with his name, and the only titles for which no presentation copies are known are the two pamphlets ('Jack Brass', 'Suez-Cide!!'), *The Scarlet Shawl*, *Restless Human Hearts* and *The Dewy Morn*. The most regular recipient was his mother, who was given a copy of every book from *World's End* to *Amaryllis* (except for *The Dewy Morn*), and the next was his Aunt Ellen Harrild, with copies of 'Reporting; Editing & Authorship', 'A Memoir of the Goddards', *Bevis*, *After London* and *The Open Air*; four copies were given to John and Alice Brook whose identity and connection with

Jefferies are unknown, and two to his wife; none are to his father (but see items 20-23).

12. 'Reporting; Editing & Authorship', first edition 1873, the 'first copy' of his first book, to Ellen Harrild.

For my dear Aunt  
Ellen  
With her affectionate  
nephew's love

13. 'A Memoir of the Goddards', first edition 1873, to CA Wheeler, who was credited with abolishing the 'Black Hole' gaol in Swindon (*Jefferies' Land*, p. 78).

C A Wheeler Esq  
With the Author's  
Complts

14. *World's End*, first edition 1877, inscribed in volume one, to his sister, Sarah, and brother-in-law, Robert Billing, 6 July 1877.

M<sup>rs</sup> & M<sup>rs</sup> R. T. Billing  
With the Author's Complts.  
July 6<sup>th</sup> 1877.

15. *The Gamekeeper at Home*, illustrated edition 1880, to his mother, as 'E. Jefferies', 9 December 1879.

E. Jefferies  
With the Author's Best Love  
Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 1879.

16. *Nature Near London*, first edition 1883, to his wife, as 'Jessie', 6 April 1883.

Jessie Jefferies  
April 6<sup>th</sup> 1883

17. *Red Deer*, first edition 1884, to Comyns Carr, editor of the *English Illustrated Magazine*, 7 January 1884.

J. Comyns Carr Esq  
From the Author  
Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1884

18. *After London*, first edition 1885, to his Aunt Ellen, April 1885.

Ellen Hamlet  
April 1885

19. *Amaryllis at the Fair*, first edition 1887, to his sister Sarah, as 'Sally', 22 March 1887.

Sally,  
With love  
March 22<sup>nd</sup> 87

### Family members

James Luckett Jefferies (Richard Jefferies' father)

20. *Greene Ferne Farm*, first edition 1880, inscribed to Sarah, from Bath, 4 February 1880.

To My Daughter Sarah  
From her Father  
Jas. Luckett Jefferies

21. *Round About a Great Estate*, first edition 1880, presented to Sarah, as 'Mrs Billing', 6 October 1880.

M<sup>rs</sup> Billing  
with Father's Love  
J. L. Jefferies

22. His signature in White's *Natural History of Selborne*, with a Preface by Richard Jefferies, new edition 1887.

James L. Jefferies  
10 Sep 1887-

23. Inscription (proudly) in *Red Deer*, second edition 1892, dated August 1895, aged 78.

James Lockett Jefferies  
Father  
of the Author  
- Aug 1895

Elizabeth Jefferies (Richard Jefferies' mother)

24. From a note dated 10 September 1880 accompanying the *Holy Bible* in 4 vols., to be given to Charles Jefferies in remembrance of his Grandfather.

Elizabeth Jefferies

25. Inscription in a copy of *Comfort*, by 'Jane Besemeres' (Janet Byrne), 1882.

E. Jefferies  
From her Sister Ellen  
COMFORT: 12 April  
1883  
A BOOK FOR THE COTTAGE.

Sarah Jefferies (later Mrs Billing, Richard Jefferies' younger sister)

26. From *The Gold Thread*, by Rev Norman MacLeod, 1861.

Sarah Jefferies  
From her Sister Ellen



27. From a half-title cancel in *Nature Near London*, third impression 1887.

S. C. Billing  
In Memory of the  
Dear Author from  
his only sister,  
Oct. 1887.

Charles Jefferies (RJ's youngest brother)

28. His signature in *The Story of My Heart*, first edition 1883.



Jessie Jefferies (née Baden, Richard Jefferies' wife)

29. From a letter to Walter Besant, September [1887].

Yours truly  
Jessie Jefferies

Phyllis Jefferies (later Mrs Hargrave, Richard Jefferies' daughter)

30. From a copy of Besant's *Eulogy* inscribed to Mrs Pocock, January 1907 (left), and a letter to EJ Rogers, 1948 (right).

Phyllis Jefferies

Phyllis Hargrave

Robert Thomas Billing (husband of Sarah)

31. His signature in *Hodge and His Masters*, first edition 1880.



Christine Billing (second daughter of Robert and Sarah)

32. Her signature in *Half-Hours of English History*, no date, (Richard Jefferies Museum).

C. E. Billing

# A Letter from Alfred Williams

*The following letter, not previously published, was written by Alfred Williams (1877-1930) to Jonathan Denwood, the Cumberland Poet and novelist. The volume of poems, referred to in the letter was 'Songs in Wiltshire'.*

Dryden Cottage  
Sth Marston  
3 June 09

Dear Mr Denwood

Many thanks for your very kind letter of the 1st and all the goodness of your favours indicated therein. It is extremely kind of you to take such an interest in myself. I would I felt more worthy of it. I shall hope therefore from your letter, to hear from Mr Rockall soon. The poems are gone to the printers. There will be about 170 pages of poems and the price of the vol. will be I expect 3/6 before pub. & 4/6 afterwards. Mr Kyles says the printer's bill would not be covered by 2/6 and he feels that it will be a cheap book at 5/- but I wrote asking 3/6 to 4/6. I am expecting a reply soon so that even I myself do not certainly know. As soon as I had finished the poem upon which I had been working I read 'The Story of my Heart'. I deferred reading it, or looking at it, as I want you to witness, until I had written my piece, because I felt I might be influenced by it. As it is, I am quite free from all that. My poem will be entitled 'Retrospection', I expect, if, at least, it is worthy of print, and will deal with my own former embarrassment and the emerging from it. Do you know that I had trod the same paths as R. Jefferies in some manner, and I was startled with the very identity of my thoughts with his in innumerable cases; only humble as I had never the language or force at my disposal to define them as he has done. Dipping into scientific matters converted me to Agnosticism. Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Herschel, Tindal, Collins etc. with a tincture of antiquity drew me into the deeps. For six or eight years I was a confirmed Agnostic. I put my all on science and must confess that I failed. I failed to be at peace, to satisfy myself, my heart, soul, if you will. I suffered the same agonies of spirit as those which tormented our friend Jefferies. I yearned after the higher soul-life and convinced myself by much and many logical and original reasonings that it would be possible to arrive at an almost perfect state, above the reach of circumstances and environment. I shut myself off from man, and was content to live in an atmosphere of glorious indefinability.

But I was never happy, never assured, never confident. I doubted everything, and most of all myself. I was sick of theories, and systems, and universes. How do they benefit man? The *heart* wants rest, peace,

assurance. The human heart refuses to believe that it is a non-entity. Crush it, burden it, overwhelm it, torture it, at your will. You cannot annihilate it. From the ashes arises a purified spirit, triumphant over matter, and seeming to prove, beyond dispute, its unconquerable quality, and, the hope of immortality; not a hazy, formless, meaningless existence, but diverse, real, profitable and substantial. Gradually, then, I have evolved from the state of a sceptic and have come to realise the tremendous power of Christianity, the remarkable and super-logical evidence of Christ, and his life, and the towering evidence of St Paul. Thanks to my love of the antique, my Roman and Greek reading, I have been able to view the New Testament not narrow-mindedly but in the light of a pagan and a modern. I have been able, I think, to debate, and digest, and carefully chew every proposition, and to compare, where any comparison was possible, the wisdom of the ancients, and moderns, with that which was 'folly to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews' and I am bound to confess after the deepest and most careful and many-sided approaches and reflections that all the galaxy of intellect and culture and art and poetry and knowledge fades into nothing by the side of the stupendous events which took place in Palestine. Our Homers our Virgils, our Horaces, our Shakespeares, our Miltons, our Popes, our Bacons our Swinburnes fade into smoke compared with the simple teaching of Christ and his Apostles. There is nothing in literature like it, not the words but the difference of tone and spirit, I mean. There is not a pronoun, or a particle or an adverb or verb by Christ but what is/was pregnant with the fullest meaning. His words were double-edged, and so chosen and expressed, with that quiet confidence in himself and his office, as to leave absolutely no doubt whatever as to his meaning or the authenticity of himself or his doctrine and mission. But he must be read closely and carefully, not hurried over. You must take time to ponder a moment on the marvellousness of it all, and little by little you will come to acknowledge that 'never man spoke as he spoke.'

Perhaps you will wonder what this has to do with the 'Story of my Heart', Mr Denwood, but I have here gone out of my way, as it were, to tell you what my own experience has been and also, in my view, though I say it with the greatest reverence for my friend and neighbour in letters, what was the greatest obstacle in the way of Jefferies in the correct appreciation of life and mankind. His deep craving after soul-life is, of itself, a conscious and powerful witness of the *divinum aliquid* within him and which arose from and finally rested in his affinity with God. The God of Jesus Christ.

Everybody will confess that Richard Jefferies was a most unhappy man. He had genius, imagination, power, sympathy, love, sight, a large heart, and a boundless soul with an impaired physique – he had every quality but happiness. He could not wear the bond. It was not that he *would not*, he could not. He was not blind and yet he could not see. All humanity must suffer. We must all bear the burden of mortality. To fight sorrow only augments it. It is well to make peace with power, for we cannot combat it for ever. Intellect is very desirable but it is not the most comforting of endowments. I feel very happy to think that I have found rest from all my

distresses. The world may discover what it pleases, I shall be deeply interested but not disconcerted.

Therefore I cannot read Jefferies without deep sorrow: sorrow for his sorrow, for his disappointments; his yearnings and his losings; believing, as I do, that had he realised earlier that greatest of all existences, that perfect perfection and perfect unity of purpose with infallible attainment of the same, he would have been both happier in himself and would have claimed a wider and more universal body of readers and admirers.

Perhaps you may not agree with me here. I do not pretend to be a critic. I should be sorry to appear in that light to you: it would savour of cant. But one must have sufficient manhood to discuss an opinion. You, I feel sure, will look upon this as merely from one friend to another, and as illustrating my own position. Life is a joy to me. I would rather write a jolly song, than philosophise. But the world seems to scorn a man if, as they say, he does not THINK. Happy is the man who can beguile thought and get out of this mad-headed, hare-brained, freak of an age of ours! I do not intend to contribute much to it if I know it.

Please remember me to Mr Dowling and to your wife and boys, and brother. It is perfectly lovely in Wilts now. I was lying on the Downs Whit Monday. It was superb.

Kindest regards to you, my old friend, and let us have a line at your earliest.

Faithfully yours,

Alf Williams

# Small Acorns

## An Appreciation of the Early Fiction of Richard Jefferies

Margaret Evans

To write a tale is to me as easy as to write a letter,<sup>1</sup> thus wrote Richard Jefferies to the publisher Tinsley, in early 1874 when he was negotiating the publication of *The Scarlet Shawl*. Jefferies was certainly prolific and his works varied. The range of his early fiction alone encompasses short stories, a one-volume novel and two three-volume novels.

The short stories were either originally published in *The North Wilts Herald* under the name of 'Geoffrey' or in national magazines. Those published in *The North Wilts Herald* were 'A Strange Story',<sup>2</sup> 'Henrique Beaumont',<sup>3</sup> 'Who Will Win or American Adventure'<sup>4</sup> (afterwards referred to as 'Who Will Win'), 'Masked'<sup>5</sup> and 'T.T.T.'<sup>6</sup>

Two of the short stories were published in national magazines, *i.e.* 'A Sin and a Shame'<sup>7</sup> and 'A Midnight Skate.'<sup>8</sup>

The novels comprise *The Scarlet Shawl*,<sup>9</sup> *Restless Human Hearts*,<sup>10</sup> and *World's End*.<sup>11</sup>

The short story, 'Snowed Up – A Mistletoe Story'<sup>12</sup> (afterwards referred to as 'Snowed Up') was, until recently, unpublished.

The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate that the early fiction of Richard Jefferies, although having shortcomings which have the effect of obscuring merits, has degrees and aspects of worthiness, and should not be wholly discounted. During the course of this article the strengths in these early works, and their main drawbacks which serve to marginalise them, will be discussed.

The short stories cover a wide variety of subject matter. Several love matches are thwarted but win through in the end; for example, those between Ellen Enkeman and Francis Egerton in 'T.T.T.' and Florence Greystone and Charles Martel in 'A Midnight Skate.' Conversely, a love interest can provide a vehicle for other purposes. This is exemplified in 'Who Will Win', where love provides the motive for an adventure story when Reginald Bourton, accompanied by Chateaubriand, set out to rescue the kidnapped Ellen Montgomery.

Over-ambition is the focus of 'A Sin and a Shame' where the lengths a young doctor is prepared to go to, in an attempt to satisfy his cravings for material success, lead to the death of his pregnant betrothed and his own downfall.

As a novel, *The Scarlet Shawl* has the capacity to concern itself with a range of characteristics endemic in the human condition. To this end the split in the relationship between the main protagonists of the story, Nora

and Percival, acts as a stimulus. Unaccompanied, the headstrong, tempestuous, Nora visits an aunt in St Leonards, where, following a show of indifference by Percival, she decides to play the field. She has several suitors, the boorish Herbert Spencer, the wicked old roué Gerard Wootton, the affable young Master George, and the upright, but dry, Sir Theodore Stanley. Nora's Aunt Milly and Rachel, another of Aunt Milly's house-guests, also add to the mixture of personal idiosyncrasies which permeate the book. Meanwhile Percival becomes involved with a Bohemian set in London and is besotted with Pauline, a woman with an aura of mystique. However, despite Nora and Percival's efforts to part, they come to realise that their personalities are most suited to each other, and, after overcoming several obstacles, eventually reunite and marry.

*Restless Human Hearts*, as its name implies, proves to be an emotional roller-coaster as the causes for a vast degree and variety of inner turmoils are examined and worked through. During the course of the novel, the reader is exposed to such scenarios as the manipulation of the young, naïve Heloise into marriage with the older, worldly Louis, so that she can act as a front for an illicit affair between him and her older, sexually tantalising, scheming married sister, Carlotta. There is murder, allusions of activities of an underworld, a suggestion of homosexuality, a feminist who has to work out a compromise to accommodate her relationship with the man she loves, jealousy leading to a dual and death, madness, a scandalous elopement and an abortive elopement.

*World's End* is concerned with the evolution of the midlands town of Stirringham and the claims to its ownership. It has originated through the activities of water-rats, and various species of rats are used as symbols for the ever-increasing examples of human corruption which expose themselves as the story progresses. Murder, plots for mass murder, greed, raw ambition, the sanctioned escape of a lunatic to commit murder, incarceration of sane people in a private lunatic asylum, the occult and selfishness all pervade the novel. There are a few foils to all this wickedness, and the hero effects the restoration of the rightful heiress to the property, who also happens to be his beloved.

'A Strange Story' is a supernatural story about a premonition of death.

'Snowed Up' is written in diary form and chronicles the deteriorating situation which takes place in a household in London, and several areas of the city, during a period of freak weather.

In the execution of this wide-range of subject matter Jefferies employs a number of narrative techniques. In 'Snowed Up' for the most part he adopts that of the first person narrator, taking on the role of the chronicler. He only uses his own voice to make a few comments at the end. In 'A Strange Story', he employs both first and second person narrators. The second person narrator is Gerald Fitzhugh, who relates the story to his friend, Roderick, who only makes a few interjections near the beginning and at end of the tale.

Mostly, however, Jefferies uses the omnipresent third person narrator, although he can interrupt with his own voice. The most frequent authorial

interjections are found in the novels. These can be quite lengthy tracts where he can use acknowledged authorities to add gravity to his own work. At first they can appear irrelevant as they interrupt the flow of the story, but, as one reads on, one realises that he is using an acknowledged source of wisdom to lend weight and support to the validity of the actions of his characters, or as a way of persuading the reader to his point of view. However, I have experimented with omitting these sections when reading the story, and they could be left out with no detriment to it. Jefferies can also digress, commenting on various facets of Victorian society. These interjections could be essays in their own right. They might be seen as padding for a work to reach its required length for publication.

Structurally, analysis of several of the short stories has shown that they are well constructed, having defined exposition, development, dénouement and resolution of conflict. Jefferies therefore shows a firm grasp of the fundamental building blocks necessary for writing fiction.

A drawback is that he can rely on coincidence to the extent that a story becomes so overtly contrived that it loses credibility and integrity. This is particularly the case in 'A Midnight Skate.'

Jefferies will eventually realise that his forte lies in descriptive writing and the quality of this can be found in the many types of description which appear in these early works. For example: in characterisation, man's relationship with nature, reflecting a persons moods and feelings, building up mental images, and personification.

In 'T.T.T.' Ellen Enkeman is described in chapter one in ethereal terms. She has 'an almost unearthly beauty,' her complexion is 'so pale,' and the contrast between her marble forehead and the 'dark raven masses of hair (is) brilliant.' The paleness of her complexion and the marble-like quality of her forehead also give her a statuesque quality, which reinforces the notion of unearthliness. Ellen's feelings are conveyed through her blue eyes which are 'deep and sorrowful.' This mournfulness will be caused by the tension between her sense of duty and obedience to her uncaring mother, and her love of Francis. In contrast, in chapter two, Francis is described in more down-to-earth terms. He has blue eyes, the same colour as Ellen's, which could suggest unity, a firm chin, suggesting resoluteness and his 'full but far from sensual' lips represent a solid character. In contrast to Ellen, Jefferies description of Francis does not wholly focus on Francis's head. We are told that his dress 'though careful was anything but a dandy's.' This reinforces the fact that Francis is serious-minded. His respectability is underpinned by our being told that 'Francis Egerton was a gentleman.' The most sophisticated descriptions of the characters, however, and which are worthy of his later writing, are reserved for Esther and her daughter. They are described, in chapter one, in terms of their likeness to their surroundings: 'The two persons at the gate had an appearance in accordance with their habitation.' Esther had '... a thousand wrinkles [which] might give her a claim to an antediluvian age, just as every ring in the trunk of a tree is said [to] betoken a year' and 'a pair of eyes, as small and piercing as a slowworm's ... her back formed an angle of forty with the perpendicular, about such a slant as the roof of her cottage.' Her daughter

is 'brown as a berry' and she runs into the cottage 'like a leaf whirled by the wind ...' Note that it is the observer who has made the comparisons. Esther and her daughter are completely unaware of them.

In other works the characters can be aware of their relationship with nature. In 'A Strange Story' the natural surroundings have a soporific effect on Fitzhugh:

a luxurious scent from the flowers in the garden, while ... anon a powerful but sickly odour from the laurels and other exotic evergreens literally oppressed (him) with perfume (which) combined with the noon-tide heat, brought on a faintness, which ... completely (overcame him) and he sank into semi-consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

In *The Scarlet Shawl* the surroundings also have a hypnotic effect on Percival, during which he is transported back to primeval times in which he reflects on the natural behaviour of man before it became overlaid with modern-day social conditioning.<sup>14</sup>

An example of the landscape as imagery is to be found in chapter two of 'T.T.T.' when Francis is despairing over Ellen Enkeman's plight. The bleakness Francis feels is demonstrated by the descent of evening, and the increasing hardness of the outlines of the frost-bound downs, which are 'streaked with snow as if chained with frosted silver,' and the showers of rime shaken from the trees by the motions of the rooks when they return to roost. The coldness of the frost equates with his being 'dead to all but despair' and the downs are imprisoned by the layers of frost, snow and showers of rime in the same way as Francis is entombed by layers of depression. The fast-approaching night has been given a female gender and personified as a raven spreading her wings over the earth. This could refer to Francis's concern that a woman was the cause of his despair. The reference to a raven reinforces the blackness of the mood. An evocative description is given of the environs of the Enkeman family home as the list of individual components, along with their attributes, build up in the mind's eye a mental picture of the view and atmosphere.<sup>15</sup>

In these early works Jefferies can be seen to be influenced by, and experiment with, different categories of literature, for example, sensationalist, Gothic and poetry.

Sensationalist works are characterised by melodrama which is created by extreme behaviour and situations. As we have seen from the outlines of some of his works, this could be a trend in, or even a reason for, his early writing.

Jefferies drew on several of the strands of the Gothic. In 'T.T.T.' it plays a 'guest,' although significant, appearance when the ghost of Mrs Enkeman's husband appears to her at Ellen's bedside. Ellen is thought to have died and her husband reproaches her for neglecting their daughter's welfare. As a method of condemnation it helped to bring Mrs Enkeman back to her senses.<sup>16</sup>

The Gothic element in 'A Strange Story' is about the appearance of two male apparitions who appear in the presence of the wife of the local Squire in the village churchyard. She discovers that the men are actually alive and



believes that their supernatural appearance augurs their death. Subsequent events will prove her to have been right.

The Gothic element in *World's End* is a study of the darker side of the supernatural. A Genius supplants the ghost of the beloved of Agnes, Lady Lechester. She is fascinated by the spirit, who bodes evil, and begins to study the occult. During this time Agnes meets the reputedly enormously wealthy Marese Baskette, who asks her to marry him. Her dilemma is whether she chooses between an earthly kingdom or the empyrean. Does she settle for the latter and yield to her death or has she accidentally fallen into 'The Pot' where she used to rendezvous with the Genius?

'A Midnight Skate' contains the most elements of the Gothic, with architectural setting, artefacts and the allusion to the supernatural.

An example of the influence of poetry on Jefferies' work, can be found in 'Who Will Win,' which shares some similarities with Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*.<sup>17</sup>

Let us now look at some literary techniques employed by Jefferies and situations in which he uses them. One of them is satire, a technique which is used to make a serious point in a humorous way in order to make it palatable. Some of the methods used to achieve this are exaggeration, ridicule, and caricature. Jefferies is often accused as being humourless but I would beg to differ.

In 'Snowed Up' exaggeration is used predominantly to demonstrate how quickly social conditions could deteriorate in London should there be a period of extreme snow fall. Although the effects of the scenario may have been embellished by the diarist it was certain that, as Jefferies points out, 'if a fall of snow four feet deep occurred in London, and remained on the ground – being supplied by fresh falls – for only one week, the great city of London depending as it does upon stores brought in by rail (daily), would find itself in a very awkward position.'<sup>18</sup>

Exaggeration is also evidenced in Edie's belief that the splendid set of furs her father has bought her must have cost £300.00.<sup>19</sup> This amount equates to something in the region of £19,500.00 today, which makes Edie's estimate seem somewhat excessive. Even so the furs could have been expensive on a more realistic scale, and are, no doubt, a bribe to make the marriage to either of the middle-aged suitors more palatable.

The series of events are unfolded by the scatter-brained, pretty young Edie Audeley. The family is in dire straits financially and a way to reverse their fortunes is for Edie's elderly father to marry her off to a rich suitor. Duly her father has recruited two well-disposed candidates. These come from opposing class backgrounds; one from the Establishment, the other a self-made business man. Both are an anathema to, and made objects of ridicule by, Edie. She considers them ugly and old, this reaction is stimulated by the fact that she is already in love with Phillip, a young, handsome, but poor, Lieutenant. Due to the weather the two suitors, Lord Bilberton and Alderman Thrigg, are stranded in the Audeley household.

Edie ridicules Lord Bilberton, referring to him as being 'wizened, little'<sup>20</sup> and having an 'ancient body.'<sup>21</sup> Alderman Thrigg is derided for being stout, 'bigger than Falstaff was'<sup>22</sup> and is scorned for having made his fortune from,

and making his living by, selling green peas and onions. Edie's own lack of control over the situation, and being at the whim of others, is likened to a ball-game analogy as she feels like a shuttlecock or a tennis ball with all these gentlemen tossing her about one to another. Eventually Phillip arrives and is, as far as possible, able to take control of the deteriorating situation. This gains him the esteem of Alderman Thrigg which makes him decide to give up his suit for Edie in favour of the young couple. To this end he persuades Edie's father to agree to a marriage between Phillip and Edie with the agreement that he will make financial provision for them.

An example of Jefferies' use of caricature is to be found in *The Scarlet Shawl* when the lengths Gerard Wootton will go to for the sake of his vanity are exposed.

Gerard slowly and carefully took off his wig: He was really fifty-five, and wore a luxuriant one. He felt safer if he took his front teeth out at night; he had heard of their being swallowed by accident. He generally painted his moustache and whiskers overnight; the composition made them look blue for the time – in the morning, they were magnificently black. Those wrinkles under the eyelids had to be refilled, and the complexion touched up a little. Fellows wondered why Wootton never would have a valet. He was obliged to perform these duties before the glass; and a hideous scarecrow he looked now his conceit and his false beauty were taken out of him. (p.60)

The conceit of this 'wicked old *roué*' (p.22) is to result in Nora employing Theodore Stanley's caricaturing skills by having him draw 'Old Wootton' (p.54), as she irreverently called him, without a wig (he must wear one as his hair is never disarranged), and false teeth (they were so white that they considered that he must wear false ones). With the added touches of the nose and chin almost touching, the result looked so unlike but 'irresistibly like' him (p.77).

Irony is another technique which Jefferies used to good effect. In *The Scarlet Shawl* it is the piece of derision exemplified by the caricature that is to eventually work in Nora's favour. By chance, 'Old Wootton' happens to find it, is enraged, and decides to have his revenge by writing to notify Percival of Nora's forthcoming marriage to Theodore (p.151). The finding of the caricature therefore plays the pivotal role in the outcome of the story.

In 'Snowed Up' irony is used to demonstrate that, although the suitors have status and money, it is of no consequence in the situation they find themselves in. Alderman Thrigg can fall back on the practical skills he used to enrich himself to try to make the best of the situation, although not always successfully, but feels demeaned by having to do so. It is, however, having these skills, and being prepared to use them, that gain him the respect of Edie.

It is often commented that Jefferies characters are representational of a type and not fleshed out into rounded individuals. One of the stereotypes is the pure woman as an 'object of worship'; for example, Ellen Meremont in 'Henrique Beaumont' and Ellen Montgomery in 'Who Will Win'. Another stereotype is 'the damsel in distress'; for example, Florence in 'A Midnight

Skate', and Ayleen in 'Who Will Win'. Often the role of 'object of worship' and 'damsel in distress' are combined; for example, Ellen Montgomery in 'Who Will Win', and Ellen Enkeman in 'T.T.T.' Other stereotypes include the villain; for example, Dr Kinkelman in 'Masked', Mrs Austin and her son Roland in 'Henrique Beaumont', and Louis in *Restless Human Hearts*; the adventurer scholar, for example, Phillip Lookahed in 'Henrique Beaumont', Chateaubriand in 'Who Will Win' and Neville Brandon in *Restless Human Hearts*; and the *femme fatale*, for example, Pauline in *The Scarlet Shawl*, Carlotta in *Restless Human Hearts* and Lucia Marese Baskette in *World's End*.

It is noticeable that when Jefferies' characters contain reflections of himself, part of himself, or draw on people he knew, the characters are better delineated. As Andrew Rossabi points out in his Introduction to *Restless Human Hearts*,<sup>23</sup> Heloise's intense sensitivity to natural beauty is all too obviously Jefferies, as is Neville's nature mysticism, while Pierce LeStrange, Heloise's father, is based on an idealised version of his father. The same characters in essence can also be seen to run through his novels, Percival Gifford in *Scarlet Shawl* becomes Neville Brandon in *Restless Human Hearts* who becomes Aymer Malet in *World's End*; and Pierce LeStrange becomes James Waldron and Heloise becomes Violet Waldron in *World's End*.

Although I have championed the idea that there is some merit in the early fiction of Jefferies, and that it should be awarded some recognition, the general opinion appears to be that it should be ignored and only the later work, on which his reputation lay, be acknowledged. A proponent of this idea is Walter Besant, ironically in his *Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*. The main reasons why Besant considered that Jefferies could never have been a novelist are as follows:

1. Jefferies 'knew nothing of society, nothing of men and women, except the people of a small country town' (p.150). In the early novels he 'was describing a society of which he knew absolutely nothing' (p.157) and this ignorance undermined their credibility. Jefferies 'was drawing on his imagination' (p.157).
2. 'He wholly lacked the dramatic faculty. He could draw splendid landscapes, but he could not connect them together by the thread of human interest. Nature in his books is always first, humanity second. Two figures are in the foreground, but one hardly cares to look at them in contemplating the wonderful picture which surrounds them' (pp.150-151).
3. 'He did not understand ... stage management. When he had got a lot of puppets in his hands, he could not make them act' (p.151).
4. 'He was too self-contained to be a novelist; he could never get rid of his own personality. When he succeeds in making his reader realise a character, it is when that character is either himself ... or a part of himself ...' (p.151).

5. 'The story in his earlier attempts is always imitative, awkward, and conventional, it is never natural and never spontaneous. In his later books he lays aside all but the mere pretence of a story' (p.151).
6. 'As (Jefferies) never took any interest in his own characters ... so none of his readers can be expected to feel any interest ... In any kind of art ... if you wish your readers to weep, you must first be constrained to weep yourself' (p.152).

Given such an extensive range of shortcomings it is not surprising that these early novels were subjected to, as Besant informs us, 'the most contemptuous notices in the reviews' (p.106). But were they really as damning as Besant and others imply? In order to find out I have read the majority of them and discovered that, although the criticism was largely negative there were some positive comments as well as constructive advice. To give an idea of the aspects criticised, and those that were thought worthy, some examples follow.

*The Scarlet Shawl* was considered by the reviewer in the *Graphic* to be 'in places ... slightly – perhaps more than slightly – vulgar, and ... the "fastness" of the heroine is made unpleasantly conspicuous', although he does concede that these characteristics diminish as the story progresses. Overall it was thought that the 'tale (was) not too long, and by no means dull, or without some power in character drawing.'<sup>24</sup> Other positive remarks were found in reviews in the *Westminster Review*,<sup>25</sup> which considered that it showed a power for describing characteristics and had some very happy touches, and the *Athenæum*,<sup>26</sup> which liked the rather rhapsodical style.

*Restless Human Hearts* was brutally attacked due to its implausibility, immorality and Jefferies' hypocrisy.<sup>27</sup> One reviewer<sup>28</sup> did try to defend him by doubting whether Jefferies had deliberately set out to write an immoral story but had failed.

The only positive remark about this novel was found in the *Graphic*,<sup>29</sup> where the reviewer regarded the scene in which Carlotta found herself shut up alone in a railway carriage in an express train going at fifty miles an hour with a loose *cobra di cappello*, 'as 'original, and drawn with considerable power.'

*World's End* was also denigrated. It was cited as, for example, being 'pretentious,' 'dull,' the story 'false and unnatural' and so unwieldy that it was very much doubted if even Jefferies himself had mastered his own plot and, if so, whether his readers would.<sup>30</sup> It was crammed with too many crimes and criminals,<sup>31</sup> the concentration on the entanglements of the plot led to the detriment of the development of his characters, who do little more than represent attributes and tendencies towards good or evil.<sup>32</sup> It showed Jefferies' ignorance and want of culture and his knowledge of social conduct to be flawed.<sup>33</sup> The work was uncomfortably sensational and the machinations of John Marese Baskette and Theodore excessively inhuman.<sup>34</sup>

Remarkably, perhaps, amidst all the rant there were some encouraging comments. The reviewer in the *Graphic* considered that, despite its drawbacks, *World's End* showed Jefferies to have the 'makings' of a good novelist as, from the onset, he succeeded in seizing the reader's attention, and his story, with all its faults, was never dull or trivial. He concluded that

Jefferies had strength, although, on the evidence of this work it was judged to be a 'strength without wisdom'. He offered advice on how Jefferies could make improvements in his novel writing and was confident that, with these addressed, Jefferies could 'be entitled to an honourable place in that school of novelists of which Mr Wilkie Collins (was) the admitted chief.' Wilkie Collins was one of the best known, best loved, and, for a time, the best paid of Victorian fiction writers.

The *Saturday Review* observed that the novel contained enough crimes and criminals to serve three novels, and advised Jefferies that, if he continued to write, he should husband his material in the manner of Miss Braddon, (1837-1915), who was one of the most popular, and prolific novelists, of her day, and the virtual founder of a new school of 'sensational' fiction.

The *Spectator* considered *World's End* to be an astonishing story which, although it transcended all limits of probability, was cleverly told, so as to have 'something of the art which (gave) the air of probability to the improbable.' It was also considered to have other merits, and the overall opinion was that, although the conception of *World's End* was not admired, it was considered that Jefferies had the potential of planning, and executing, a really good novel.

So, even on the evidence of a work with many shortcomings, two of the reviewers could see the potential for Jefferies becoming a novelist, and one who could rank with those of the best writers of the period in that category of literature. This belies the opinion of Besant, and others who held views to the contrary.

Jefferies was disappointed that his early novels were unsuccessful and did request advice from G Bentley as to why he did not succeed.<sup>35</sup> Whether the request was responded to is not known, but Jefferies did change tack in his novel writing. Besant notes that in his later books Jefferies laid aside all but the mere pretence of a story. 'The individual pictures which he presents are delightful and wonderful – they are like his short essays and articles – they may be read with enormous pleasure – but the story ... there is no story. There is only the promise of a story not worked out – left, not half untold, but hardly begun, ...' (p.151). '... They are not novels at all, though he chooses to call them novels; they are a series of pictures, some of beauty and finish incomparable, strung together by some sort of thread of human interest which nobody cares to follow' (p.162). Jefferies finally finds his path.

To conclude, I hope that during this wide-ranging discussion I have been able to redress the balance in respect of the general perception of Jefferies' early work. If this is totally disregarded, a lop-sided view of his work will result, and this is not academically sound. Yes, it did have shortcomings, but Jefferies, as well as other writers, did not come to writing fully fledged. He had to learn by experience. If we ignore his early work we do not discover where he started, on what foundations his later work developed, what twists and turns he may have had to make, and the length of time it took him before arriving at the position he did in his maturity. These are a

measure of how far he had to travel and what the journey entailed in order to achieve the mastery of his later years. Remember, he was not from a literary family, he received little encouragement at home, and was derided by some of his acquaintances. He did have support, for example from his Aunt Ellen, but he had to find his own way in the writing business. Despite the setbacks he experienced, he stuck to his aspirations, and eventually achieved success. Surely his tenacity has to be admired.

*This article is a shortened version of the talk given by Margaret Evans to the Richard Jefferies Society at its Study Day on Saturday, 26 July 2008.*

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2. Richard Jefferies (published under the name of 'Geoffrey'), 'A Strange Story', *The North Wilts Herald*, 30 June 1866, vol. 6, no 263, p.6.
3. Richard Jefferies (published under the name of 'Geoffrey'), 'Henrique Beaumont', *The North Wilts Herald*, Swindon, in 3 instalments.  
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4. Richard Jefferies (published under the name of 'Geoffrey'), 'Who Will Win or American Adventure', *The North Wilts Herald*, Swindon, in 6 instalments.  
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Chapter II, 1 September 1866, vol 6, no 272, p.6.  
Chapter III, 8 September 1866, vol 6, no 273, p.6.  
Chapter IV, 15 September 1866, vol 6, no 274, p.6.  
Chapter V, 22 September 1866, vol 6, no 275, p.6.  
Chapter VI, 29 September 1866, vol 6, no 276, p.6.
5. Richard Jefferies (published under the name of 'Geoffrey'), 'Masked', *The North Wilts Herald*, Swindon, in 3 instalments.  
Chapter I, 13 October 1866, vol 6, no 278, p.6.  
Chapter II, 20 October 1866, vol 6, no 279, p.6.  
Chapter III, 27 October 1866, vol 6, no 280, p.6.
6. Richard Jefferies (published under the name of 'Geoffrey'), 'T.T.T.', *The North Wilts Herald*, Swindon. Chapters I, II and III, 2 February 1867, vol 6, no 294, p.2. Subsequently published in *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, Number 1 Spring 1992, pp. 5–11.
7. Richard Jefferies, 'A Sin and a Shame', *The New Monthly Magazine* (London: E W Allen, November 1875). This was Jefferies' first piece of fiction to feature in a countrywide periodical.
8. Richard Jefferies, 'A Midnight Skate', *London Society* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, December 1876). Subsequently published in *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, Number 4, Spring 1995, pp. 10–16.
9. Richard Jefferies, *The Scarlet Shawl* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874).
10. Richard Jefferies, *Restless Human Hearts*, 3 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875).
11. Richard Jefferies, *World's End*, 3 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1877).
12. Richard Jefferies, 'Snowed Up – A Mistletoe Story' is held in manuscript form in the Hugh Walpole Library, King's School, Canterbury. It remained in manuscript

- form until published in *Literary Theories: A Case Study in Critical Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp.19–29.
13. Richard Jefferies, 'A Strange Story', p.6.
  14. Richard Jefferies, *The Scarlet Shawl* (Longcot: Petton Books, 2009), p.10.
  15. Richard Jefferies, 'T.T.T.', Ch.II.
  16. Richard Jefferies, 'T.T.T.', Ch.III.
  17. Margaret Evans, 'The Treatment of Women in the Early Fiction of Richard Jefferies.' Talk given to The Richard Jefferies Society, 10 May 2004.
  18. Richard Jefferies, *Literary Theories: A Case Study in Critical Performance*, p.29.
  19. *ibid*, p.19.
  20. *ibid*, p.20.
  21. *ibid*, p.22.
  22. *ibid*, p.22.
  23. Andrew Rossabi, Introduction to Jefferies' *Restless Human Hearts* (Longcot: Petton Books, 2008).
  24. Review of Jefferies' *The Scarlet Shawl*, *Graphic*, 29 August 1874, p.211.
  25. Review of Jefferies' *The Scarlet Shawl*, *Westminster Review*, 1 October 1874, p.581.
  26. Review of Jefferies' *The Scarlet Shawl*, *Athenæum*, No 2440, 1 August 1874, pp.141–142.
  27. Reviews of Jefferies' *Restless Human Hearts*, *Academy*, 10 April 1875, Jan-June Vol VII, p.370; *Athenæum* No 2473, 20 March, 1875, p.385; *Graphic*, 3 April 1875, p.323; *Spectator*, 28 August 1875, p.1098.
  28. Review of *Restless Human Hearts*, *The Spectator*, 28 August, 1875, p.1098.
  29. Review of *Restless Human Hearts*, *Graphic*, 3 April 1875, p.323.
  30. Review of *World's End*, *Saturday Review*, 11 August 1877, p.182.
  31. Review of *World's End*, *Saturday Review*, 11 August, 1877, p.183.
  32. Review of *World's End*, *Graphic*, 25 August 1877, p.182.
  33. Review of *World's End*, *Athenæum*, No 2600, 25 August 1877 p.233.
  34. Review of *World's End*, *Academy*, 24 November 1877, p.488.
  35. Letter to G Bentley dated 25 May 1876; passage quoted in *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies – A chronological study*, Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel (Oxford: Petton Books, 1994), p.75.

# Jefferies Discoveries

Rebecca Welshman

**M**uch undiscovered work by Richard Jefferies has already come to light so I was pleased to find during my research some new periodical items, some of which are in magazines and newspapers not previously associated with Jefferies. In addition, I have listed some unsigned items as possible Jefferies attributions with explanation to say why. This remains work in progress, which I hope to incorporate into my PhD.

## **The Examiner**

Jefferies, Richard, 'Patchwork Agriculture.' *Examiner* [London: 1808, 3522] (1875: July 31<sup>st</sup>) p.855 – signed 'Richard Jefferies'.

The *Examiner* was a well-established national paper that discussed subjects such as war, the status of women, law, and education from a predominantly radical point of view. Jefferies' work was regularly reviewed in the paper, sometimes quite favourably. 'Patchwork Agriculture' is the only signed item by him in the paper. It is a short article about the changing nature of agriculture, in which Jefferies describes the history of farming as 'a history of compromises between the desire of improvement upon the one hand and the restraining influence of immediate profits and ineradicable traditions upon the other.' The consequence, says Jefferies, 'is the present patchwork appearance of the face of the country.' The majority of Jefferies' early work is traditionally associated with papers such as the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Graphic*, and the *Live Stock Journal*. This connection with the *Examiner* so early in his career indicates that Jefferies was perhaps publishing more widely on political subjects.

'Hodge and his Master.' *Examiner* [London: 1808, 3372] (1872: Sept.14<sup>th</sup>) p.902 – unsigned.

This article is about the Reform of the Franchise – a subject that concerned Jefferies from the start. The piece cites the opinions of other authorities on the subject and compares the conditions of labourers to be no better than slavery. The author strongly recommends that Hodge should have the vote and the franchise be extended to all counties. The title is indicative but not conclusive – it would mean a gap of seven years before the serialisation of 'Hodge's Masters' in *The Standard*, and eight years before the publication of the serial in book form, titled *Hodge and his Masters*. However, this is not impossible as we already know that Jefferies sometimes worked on ideas for years before their eventual publication (see for example, the notebook entries relating to *Amaryllis at the Fair*). The timing of 'Hodge and his Master' is coincident with Jefferies' letters to the *Times* on agriculture and labourers which he wrote two months later, and it contains the phrase 'average specimen' of the gentry which matches Jefferies' 'average specimen' of the Wiltshire labourer in the second *Times*



letter. We know relatively little about the early part of his career, but if this piece is by Jefferies then it would pre-date 'The Future of Farming', published in December 1873 in *Fraser's Magazine*, which Matthews and Treitel (1994) note to be Jefferies' first article in a national magazine.

I have checked the *Examiner* for other possible contributions by Jefferies and I am currently comparing a list of unsigned items with his work.

### ***Fraser's Magazine***

'The Agricultural Strike,' (1872, June), p.651 – unsigned.

An article about the rebellious movements of the agricultural labourers, this possible attribution would pre-date Jefferies' regular contributions to *Fraser's* from Dec 1873-1878. It contains the phrase 'the power of the farmers', which was to be the title of his first contribution to the *Fortnightly Review* (see *RJS Journal*, 2010, pp.4-11) two years later in June 1874. All of Jefferies' known contributions to *Fraser's Magazine* between 1873-8 are signed. However, he didn't begin to sign his work, at least with his full name, until after the publication of *The Times* letters, and it is possible that he was contributing earlier anonymous articles to the magazines in which his signed items later appear. The article mentions Disraeli, with whom Jefferies had briefly corresponded, as well as the agricultural reports which Jefferies mentions in his article 'The Power of the Farmers' (1874). There are notable similarities between the article and Jefferies' second letter to *The Times* on the Wiltshire Labourer in November 1872. The author of 'The Agricultural Strike' remarks:

How is it possible that men should possess either strength of limb, vigour of mind, or independence of character, who receive no better nourishment than falls to the lot of the majority of the labourers in this what Mr. Disraeli rightly calls the great agricultural district of England?

In his second letter to *The Times* Jefferies states:

[the labourer's] food may, perhaps, have something to do with the deadened slowness which seems to pervade everything he does – there seems a lack of vitality about him.

The *Fraser's* article makes reference to the sorts of food eaten by labourers, including potatoes, dipped bread and meat, and 'tea-kettle broth' – which are similar to the descriptions of food, including the 'pot-liquor' that Jefferies refers to, in *The Times* letter.

*The Times* letters had great scope for being developed into larger, more ambitious pieces of work. Miller and Matthews (1994, p.61) note that Jefferies wrote to the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine* in October 1873 asking if an article on the subjects of his *Times* letters would be welcomed. The offer was declined, but accepted by *Fraser's*, which published the article under the title of 'The Future of Farming' in their December issue. There is every reason to believe that Jefferies developed and exploited the success of these letters in the form of articles for national magazines after their publication in 1872-3. Equally, Jefferies could also have explored the ideas in *The Times* letters prior to their dates of publication in the form of other articles.

## **The Graphic**

Jefferies' first signed item in this paper was 'The Midsummer Hum', which appeared in 1876, and was predated by three unsigned items during 1875. In light of Jefferies' experience as a journalist and the professionalism of *The Times* letters in 1872-3 it is quite likely that he was contributing regularly to papers and magazines during the period 1869-1875. He states in a letter to a publisher in June 1871 that 'I have been for over five years constantly connected with and writing for the Press – writing for papers, Pall Mall etc' (Matthews and Treitel, 1994, p.46). Without notebook entries for this period or corroborative evidence from other signed papers it is difficult to ascribe work to Jefferies when so many other authors were writing about similar subjects, in similar styles, at the same time. There are however two articles which, to me, stand out as possible attributions.

### 'The Music of the Leaves.' *Graphic*, Sat. August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1874.

This is a short article that considers the movement and sounds of leaves in summer and how, when lying beneath the trees and listening to their 'music', it is possible to imagine back and recall distant thoughts and memories. The article is consistent in style, subject and sentiment with Jefferies' other contributions to the *Graphic* in 1875, including 'Marlborough Forest', 'Gaudy as a Garden' and 'In a Pine-Wood.' The format – in which the author lies down upon the grass to gaze up into the sky to think – is typical of Jefferies, and was a format that he used throughout his work in order to facilitate discussion of the relationship between thought and the natural world. The article bears similarities to the intense perception of nature in *The Story of My Heart*, and some of Jefferies' later articles. The author of the *Graphic* article considers how to extract a single thought from the multitudes which pass through the mind and adequately express it on paper – a thought that came to characterise Jefferies' later work. The author in the *Graphic* writes:

Is it possible to put down upon paper, is any one equal to the task of producing in type, the myriad fancies that occur to one, the thousands of sweet songs that are sung for your especial delectation as you fling yourself down on the greensward and gaze upwards, and start on a dreamy excursion amid the rustling leaves of some superb old elm?

### 'Rook Shooting,' *Graphic*, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1872.

This is a short article that considers the pros and cons of shooting young rooks in spring. The author states that 'the rook ought to be as sacred an animal among Englishmen as the ibis with the Egyptians, or the crow with the Hindoos' and quotes from Virgil, Gray, and Washington Irving. Jefferies frequently quoted Virgil in his work and also made reference to ancient Egyptian and Hindoo practices (see, for example, the second line of 'The Future of Country Society', published in 1877 (in *Landscape and Labour* p.71), in which Jefferies refers to 'the castes of ancient Egypt and India' which 'maintain their hereditary positions.' The setting and subject of the 'Rook Shooting' bear similarities to the settings in *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *The Amateur Poacher*, published in 1878 and 1879 respectively. 'Rook

Shooting' refers to the elm as the rook's favourite tree and states that 'a rookery is almost as frequent an appendage to a country church as a gentleman's seat.' In *The Amateur Poacher* Jefferies describes parkland surrounding the Southlands Estate as: 'just rising above the slope of the leaze, the distant tops of elms, crowded with rooks' nests (not then occupied), showed the site of the residence of an old gentleman.' In 'Rook Shooting' the parkland setting is described as 'a wide, open, spreading park, with the turf rising and falling all over it in level green knolls, each crowned by its clusters of dark, rich, green elms.' In *The Gamekeeper at Home* Jefferies describes a park where 'the sward rises and rolls along in undulations like the slow heave of an ocean wave. Besides the elms there is a noble avenue of limes, and great oaks scattered here and there.' The reference to the undulating parkland in the *Gamekeeper* and the 'rising and falling' of parkland in 'Rook Shooting' seems too close to be coincidence.

In *The Amateur Poacher*, in the chapter titled 'Churchyard Pheasants', Jefferies describes the situation of the church and the presence of birds in the churchyard:

The old church slumbered in the midst of the meadows, the hedges, and woods, day after day, year after year. You could sit on the low churchyard wall in early summer under the shade of the elms in the hedge, whose bushes and briars came right over, and listen to the whistling of the blackbirds or the varied note of the thrush; you might see the whitethroat rise and sing just over the hedge, or look upwards and see the swallows and swifts wheeling, wheeling, wheeling in the sky. No one would pass to disturb your meditations ... as you sat on the wall.

The descriptions of the shady churchyard and the 'wheeling' of the birds are very similar to the following passage from 'Rook Shooting' in which the author writes:

At this moment we can picture to ourselves an old grey church in a meadow, with a brook running at the back of it, and a ring of stately elms shrouding it with a canopy of greenness. You approach it along a narrow gravel path, between rows of the same stately sentinels, and cross a little bridge over a branch of the brook into the grassy and shady churchyard: overhead the rooks are wheeling and cawing in solemn response to the good old evening hymn.

Further similarities between 'Rook Shooting' and Jefferies first major published works in 1878/9 include references to the value of birds' eggs as commodities. In 'Rook Shooting' the author states that rooks' eggs 'are so like the plovers' as often to be sold for them, green, namely, with dull black spots, the colour of an ash-bud. The difference between the two is in the shape, the plover's egg showing the slightest possible indentation at the narrow end, as if someone had pinched the shell when it was soft with a thumb and forefinger.' In *The Gamekeeper at Home* Jefferies discusses the value of different birds' eggs and states that 'plovers' eggs, again, are an article of commerce in the spring.'

During my research I also came across this short article (reproduced on the next page) in the *Graphic* (Saturday, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1894) in which the author cites Jefferies as being the author of the paper's regular column titled "Rural Notes."

#### RICHARD JEFFRIES AS PARISH COUNCILLOR

In October, 1875, this gifted writer of "Rural Notes" contributed an article to the *New Quarterly Magazine*. In this he elaborated, through thirty-one pages, "Village Organisation" such as the Parish Councils, nearly twenty years after, may well take as a text book. Describing vestries, Boards of Guardians, Court Leets, &c., Jeffries gives his ideas of the action necessary to make a village happy, and restore to the country the bold peasantry that made England strong and merry. He suggests how the villager should be made to feel an interest in the welfare, prosperity, and progress of his own parish, and he sketches out in a masterly way and in a very detailed manner the various needful changes which are now likely to be attempted. Richard Jeffries was a prophet, and his schemes of parish government form a complete code.

"Rural Notes" was a regular feature of this weekly paper that addressed subjects such as the prospects of farming, the weather, and the signs of the seasons. This is the only evidence I have found so far that Jefferies might have been the author of this column as "Rural Notes" was unsigned. Another explanation might be that the author of the article – writing seven years after Jefferies passed away – is simply recalling Jefferies as an author of rural subjects, and that "Rural Notes" is a generic term. This would not, however, explain the parenthesis around the term or its capitalisation.

#### **Cornhill Magazine**

Jefferies made frequent references to the *Cornhill* in his notebooks. One particular entry for May 1876 – 'try Cornhill again?' – implies that he had already approached the editor before that date, but the outcome of this contact remains ambiguous. There are several articles in the *Cornhill* at this time which would fit with Jefferies' interests and the subjects of his other work. This one in particular I thought was worthy of more detailed comparison with his work.

'Agricultural Labourers,' *Cornhill Magazine*, 29:174 (1874:June) p.686 – unsigned.

This is a lengthy article that discusses how labourers have been represented and begins by quoting from George Eliot and Keats. The author criticizes representations of labourers as being 'described in drawing-rooms and sketched in albums' without insight into the real condition of agriculture. Jefferies was particularly concerned to represent agricultural life as it really was and not only imagined to be. The article makes familiar reference to Joseph Arch – a name associated with Jefferies' work on similar subjects (see W.J. Keith's *Canon*, p.10), and contains the phrase 'the life of the fields' which was to be the title of Jefferies' collection of essays published in 1884.

There are further similarities between the content and structure of 'Agricultural Labourers' and Jefferies' letter titled 'The Wiltshire Labourer' to *The Times* in December 1872. Jefferies' letter remarks on the poor quality of the bacon that the labourer can buy at the 'small second-class shops' (Besant, 371), while the *Cornhill* article mentions the labourer's debt at the

village shop along with the high prices and the low quality of the food. Both articles make reference to the cooking smells that characterise village streets. Jefferies' letter states that 'on ordinary days [the labourer] dines at the fashionable hour of six or seven in the evening – that is, about that time his cottage scents the road with a powerful odour of boiled cabbage, of which he eats an immense quantity.' The *Cornhill* article states that 'the bacon, when cooking, sends its fragrance far down the village street.' Both pieces go on to discuss labourers' wages, beer in the fields, the state of cottages and keeping pigs, the (un)attractiveness of agricultural women, the labour of women and children in the field, and the charity shown to labourers by locals such as the rector and curate. Jefferies' *Times* letter states that the labourers 'are too ungrateful for the many great benefits which are bountifully supplied them – the brandy, the soup, and fresh meat readily extended without stint from the farmer's home in sickness to the cottage are too quickly forgotten.' The author of the *Cornhill* article writes:

Those who have lived in the country and among the poor, though they have seldom admitted to themselves how hard and joyless was the lot of the tiller of the soil, have yet had a consciousness of the fact, and have endeavoured to mitigate it in many kindly ways. ... Nothing has more tended to subdue the stiff dogmatic zeal of many a country rector and curate than that some troublesome rantor has fallen sick ... and nothing has so helped to free many a girl's mind from the artificialness and "petty dust" of society than the visit of comfort to some hard worked village drudge, and the humane sympathy brought out at the bedside of a sick child.

Arguably, the presence of these themes in both articles is potentially unremarkable as these were themes pertinent to the discussion of agricultural life, however, the specific order in which they are presented suggests that the *Cornhill* article might have been based on and adapted from *The Times* letter.

Further suggestion that this piece could be by Jefferies occurs in the author's remark that another article is needed in order to go into the condition of labourers in greater depth. The author writes that 'it is obviously impossible in a paper of this extent to attempt to particularise, to define modifications, and to state the special position of different classes of farm labourers, e.g. of shepherds and carters.' Jefferies' article 'The Labourer's Daily Life', published six months later in December 1874, could have been such a follow-up article as it goes into great detail about labourers' lifestyles, quality of life and beliefs. In 'The Labourer's Daily Life' Jefferies explicitly discusses different types of labourers, including milkers and carters.

The last similarity between the 'The Labourer's Daily Life' and 'Agricultural Labourers' worth mentioning occurs three quarters the way through in each article, where the author remarks on the harsh reality of agricultural life as being in stark opposition to the picturesque scenes painted by those who have only limited experience of the country. The author of the article in the *Cornhill* writes:

To those who think it is such pleasant and picturesque employment, that the labourer's life is an idyll, only needing to be translated into words, we would

recommend that they should go, not only on some fine summer's evening when the heat of the day is declining "with Thestylis to bind the sheaves," but with Roger on a foggy November morning, to spread rotten muck over the heavy clay land; not only to "hear the milk sing in the pail, with buzzings of the honied hours," but to milk those same cows at four o'clock in winter, when the frost is on the grass and a keen north wind blowing across the pastures.

In 'The Labourer's Daily Life' Jefferies enriches a similarly themed sentiment and idea with more explicit and vivid language:

To rise at five of a summer's morning, and see the azure of the sky and the glorious sun, may be, perhaps, no great hardship, although there are few persons who could long remain poetical on bread and cheese. But to rise at five on a dark winter's morning is a very different affair. To put on coarse nailed boots, weighing fully seven pounds, gaiters up above the knee, a short greatcoat of some heavy material, and to step out into the driving rain and trudge wearily over field after field of wet grass, with the furrows full of water; then to sit on a three-legged stool, with mud and manure half-way up the ankles and milk cows with one's head leaning against their damp, smoking hides for two hours, with the rain coming steadily drip, drip, drip – this is a very different affair.

### **Society**

'The Study of Beauty,' signed 'Richard Jefferies' (March 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> 1884).

'The Modern Thames,' signed 'Richard Jefferies' (July 12<sup>th</sup>-August 5<sup>th</sup> 1884).

Originally known as the *Mail Budget*, the weekly paper *Society* formed in March 1880. It began as a penny paper and by December went up to 3 pence by which time literary articles began to appear in it. In Dec. 1882 it was described as 'a journal of facts, fiction and fashion.' Both of these articles by Jefferies are known because they were collected as part of *The Open Air*, published in 1884 ('the study of beauty' originally under the title of 'Beauty in the Country'). It is not clear why *Society* was not included in the list of papers at the beginning of *The Open Air*, as all the original sources of publication for the other articles were. 'The Study of Beauty' was in four separately titled parts in two consecutive issues.

'The Modern Thames' appeared in *Society* in July 1884, before the publication of 'Our River and its Denizens' (a section of 'The Modern Thames' with a different title) in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in September. It was published in four weekly parts from July 12<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> August, which partially correspond with the chapters of the version in *The Open Air*. The first instalment on July 12<sup>th</sup> begins 'I looked forward to living by the river with delight' which is the beginning of part II in the *OA* version. The second instalment begins 'By-and-by an immense black hulk came drifting round the bend' ending with 'in Wolsey's Palace' as in part II in *OA*. The third part is on July 26<sup>th</sup>, beginning with 'In time I did discover a skiff...' as per the beginning of part III in *OA*, and ends with 'I unloosed the boathook, and drifted down with the stream, anxious to get away from the horrible weir.' Part four continues with 'these accidents, which are entirely preventable...' and ends with 'lower down than Henley' as per the ending in *OA*.

Also in the journal are several contributions by F.B. Doveton, who is known to have corresponded with Jefferies. Doveton published a poem in

*Society* on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1884 called 'The Beauty' that he says was inspired by Jefferies' articles in the paper.

### ***Pall Mall Gazette***

It is well known that Jefferies wrote extensively for this paper, edited by his colleague and friend, Frederick Greenwood. There are already a number of unsigned attributions from the *PMG* on country subjects, which bear strong similarities to Jefferies' work and which have been recognised as likely attributions. To W.J. Keith's *Canon* I would like to add the following for consideration:

#### 'The Downs,' *PMG*, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1869 – unsigned.

This piece is similar in style to Jefferies' work. The subject – the Sussex Downs – would be a likely subject for him to write about at this time as we know he travelled through Sussex on his way to Hastings in September 1870 (Matthews and Treitel, 1994, p.41), and also travelled during his time with the *Wiltshire and Gloucester Standard*. Written in August the article begins by citing Gilbert White, whose work Jefferies was familiar with. It goes on to note the 'rolling succession of mammoth barrows' which were likely to have been constructed by navigators in 'primeval days', suggesting that the author had some understanding of archaeology, which is compatible with Jefferies' interest in archaeology as a hobby during the period 1869-1873. The author speaks of 'casting off the dead-weight ... like Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress."' Jefferies had read *The Pilgrim's Progress* – in his 1877 essay 'Unequal Agriculture' Jefferies refers to gateways in winter as a 'Slough of Despond' – and there are entries in the notebooks relating to a work of his titled 'The New Pilgrim's Progress'. There is attention to the thought process involved in walking – how 'the air comes breathing round you with a strange rush of old associations of kindred pleasures' and 'your thoughts grow busy enough, ranging about as free and uncertain as the breezes'. The grass is referred to as 'the sward' which was characteristic of Jefferies, and the article makes reference to places that Jefferies is known to have visited, including the 'waterways of the Channel' and the 'bastioned enclosure of Pevensey Keep.' This evidence alone does not establish Jefferies' authorship of the piece but it does stand out against other contributions to the paper at this time in its generous and explorative tone of mood and feeling that is reminiscent of Jefferies' later work. It refers, for example, to the experience of walking amongst the hills as 'bring[ing] you visibly so near to immortality.'

The date of this piece would correspond with what Jefferies wrote about his connection with the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In a letter to Ellen in February 1871 he writes of having had connection with the *PMG* for years (Matthews and Treitel, 1994, p.44), and Thomas reports that in a letter to Aunt Ellen in 1871 Jefferies wrote that he had been offered a correspondentship for the paper.

#### 'Rook Shooting,' *PMG*, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1878 – unsigned.

There are similarities between this piece and the aforementioned piece on rook shooting in the *Graphic*. The author refers to the rook as a 'reverend bird' that is attracted to certain localities. There are similarities

between both the rook shooting pieces and chapters 14 and 15 of *Wild Life in a Southern County*. In chapter 14 Jefferies writes of rooks that ‘elms are their favourite trees for building in. Oak and ash are also used, but where there are sufficient elms they seem generally preferred,’ (p.255). The author of the piece in the *Graphic* writes that the rook prefers the elm over the oak, referring to the rookery as a ‘leafy citadel’, while the piece in the *PMG* states that ‘the favourite home of the rook is in the tall and stately elms.’ These references echo the ‘stately avenue of elm’ in *The Gamekeeper at Home* and the ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘streets’ of the rookery in *Wild Life in a Southern County* which are generally built in ‘rows or avenues’ of elm. In *The Gamekeeper at Home* there is another similar reference to elms in parkland in which Jefferies describes ‘the pale winter sunshine ... upon the bare branches of an avenue of elms – such as so often ornament parks –.’ The author of the *PMG* ‘rook shooting’ states that ‘the elm, too, is a frequent ornament of country churchyards.’ Jefferies could have written this piece but whether or not he did does not really add to or detract anything from the scholarship of his work. There are, however, notebook entries which would appear to support his authorship. A notebook entry for 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1878, folio 31, says: ‘Rook rising over copse against rough wind tries to double round it – swims beaten – back – tacks – traverses – does it at an angle.’ And, same page, ‘Moorhens and rooks – tracks through mowing grass.’ This is followed in folio 34, on the same date, by: ‘rooks – rook shooting – lady shooting for the fun of it.’ However, these entries could equally have been for the chapters on rooks in *Wild Life in a Southern County*, published in 1879.

‘Iron-Bound December,’ *PMG*, Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>, 1879 – unsigned.

This article was part of a yearlong series of papers in the *Pall Mall Gazette* by Jefferies, which included ‘The Fields in May’, ‘Midsummer, 1879’, ‘August Out-of-Doors’, ‘Early Autumn’, ‘A Leafy November’, ‘Spring Notes’, and ‘Summer Notes’. As established by John Pearson and W.J. Keith the notebook parallels for this series break off in the middle of ‘Leafy November’ and begin again halfway through ‘Spring Notes’. Even without notebook entries Jefferies’ authorship of this piece is almost certain. An account of a wintry walk by the Thames (which fits with Jefferies’ living in Surbiton at the time of authorship) the article is identical in sentiment and style to Jefferies’ other contributions to the *PMG* at this time. The mention of a hungry robin following him along the road anticipates a similar scene in Jefferies’ later essay, ‘Hours of Spring’ in which a starving thrush appeals to him beneath the parlour window. In the former, Jefferies writes: ‘Returning along the road, a robin came out from the hedge and alighted on the ground not three yards in front of me. As I came near he flew ahead, alighting every two or three yards. This he repeated for fully a furlong. What he meant was fully expressed: “I am hungry; feed me.”’ In ‘Hours of Spring’, Jefferies writes: ‘[the thrush] came across to the door to see if a stray berry still remained on a creeper. He saw me at the window, and he came to the window – right to it – and stopped and looked full at me some minutes, within touch almost, saying as plainly as could be said, “I am starving – help me.”’



'How will Hodge vote in the West?' *PMG*, Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1883 – unsigned.

This article, written by 'a naturalist in the West Country', discusses how labourers would be unlikely to utilise the vote if the franchise were to be extended. The author makes specific references to West Country labourers and mentions Joseph Arch. However, the style is not typical of Jefferies and seems almost flippant in places, making liberal and not wholly respectful references to 'Hodge'. A reader of the *PMG* at the time seemed to think that this piece was by Jefferies as he wrote in to the Editor two weeks later on Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> 1884 in support of Devon labourers, stating that 'Mr. Jefferies not long ago wrote some nonsense about Hodge and his vote in Wiltshire.' The complainant continued that he disliked the 'ink-slinging at the head of a man to whom [he is] greatly indebted in [his] little moorland out-of-the-way farm.' It is quite possible that the reader wrongly assumed that the Hodge piece was by Jefferies, perhaps because the term 'Hodge' had become associated with Jefferies after the publication of *Hodge and his Masters* three years previously, and perhaps because Jefferies was known as a naturalist from the West of England. It is worth considering, though, that Jefferies was living in Brighton in 1883, not the West Country.

However, the main reason I include this piece is that there appear to be notebook entries in support of Jefferies' authorship. Two weeks after the article appeared in the *PMG*, in Fol.56, dated 13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1884, there is a list of titles of articles, some of which have initials of magazines next to them, including the *PMG*. No.1 reads 'Vote – movement' and is underlined. The underlining perhaps suggests that the 'Vote' paper had already been written, which would correspond with the publication in the *PMG* two weeks before.

### ***Daily News***

In Jefferies' notebooks the first references to the *Daily News* occur in May 1876 when he appears to have tried to place articles with the paper. This was clearly a paper that Jefferies wished to be associated with – his Aunt Ellen tried to secure him a job with the paper as early as 1868 (see Matthews and Treitel, 1994, p.32). It was also a paper that reviewed his work favourably, and wrote warmly of him when he passed away in 1887.

Again, that there are many subjects which Jefferies wrote about, especially early in his career, makes it difficult to distinguish unsigned articles which might be his. I have analysed three possible contributions (all unsigned) from the *Daily News* which I think could be by Jefferies:

'Natural History of the Partridge,' *Daily News*, Thursday Sep. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1878.

The article begins by stating that items in the periodical press have focussed more on the shooting of partridge and less on the 'habits and manners of this brave little bird.' The timing would fit with 'The Persecution of St. Partridge' which Jefferies contributed to the *Live Stock Journal* in 1877, and 'Partridges in 1880' (*St James' Gazette*). The author notes that the 'partridge pairs about the third week in February.' An entry in Jefferies' notebook for Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1879 reads 'partridges have paired, so too rooks.' This can only indicate that Jefferies was making a note of the pairing of birds in early spring and may or not relate to the *Daily News* item five

months earlier. More convincing however is the author's recording of the partridge's call, which is reminiscent in sentiment and style of the ways in which Jefferies records the calls of birds in his work. The author states that 'the call of the partridge may be written thus: "Cheveck, Cheveck". When angry its cry is "Tuck, tuck".' The author also refers to the partridge as 'he' – which is characteristic of Jefferies. The title 'the Natural History of...' is not generally used in Jefferies' other published works, but there is a suggested title in his notebook of Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1884 for a paper on 'The Natural History of Men and Women'.

'Fog in the Country,' *Daily News*, Tues., Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>, 1882.

Set in countryside that is close to the sea this piece describes two people becoming lost in fog. It is written in vivid prose with an eye for detail that is reminiscent of Jefferies. At the time of its publication the Jefferies were about to move to Brighton from Surbiton. The author compares the fog with London fog, describing how 'the passage walls are pearly with dots of moisture, each separate and distinct like a tear.' 'In the little villages,' says the author, 'the thatched roofs drip ceaselessly, and the gold and green lichens that flourish in the eaves and close to the chimney appear like spongy cups full of the ever-present and all-prevailing moisture'. This is reminiscent of the dripping roof Jefferies mentions in 'The Labourer's Daily Life' (*Fraser's*, 1874) in which he states that 'the thatch of the cottage is saturated; the plants and grasses that almost always grow on it, and the moss, are vividly, rankly green; till all dripping, soaked, overgrown with weeds, the wretched place looks not unlike a dunghill.'

The author of the *Daily News* item refers to seeing a 'single specimen of the roisterous crow, distinguishable from his fellows by his gray back.' Jefferies used the term 'specimen' quite liberally in his work – for either human, plant or animal, referring, for example, to a 'specimen of fungus' in *Hodge and his Masters* and to 'specimens of rare birds' in *The Gamekeeper at Home*. Detailed comparison of 'Fog in the Country' with a scene in *Hodge and his Masters*, where Jefferies depicts ploughmen at work in the morning fog, reveals close textual similarities. In *Hodge*, Jefferies writes:

Still later, in November, the morning mist lingers over gorse and heath, and on the upper surfaces of the long dank grass blades, bowed by their own weight, are white beads of dew. Wherever the eye seeks an object to dwell on there the cloud-like mist seems to thicken as though to hide it. The bushes and thickets are swathed in the vapour; yonder in the hollow it clusters about the oaks and hangs upon the hedge looming in the distance ... the stillness is utter ... a creaking and metallic rattle, as of chains, comes across the arable field – a steady gaze reveals the dim outline of a team of horses slowly dragging the plough, their shapes indistinctly seen against the hedge. A bent figure follows, and by-and-by another distinct creak and rattle, and yet a third in another direction, show that there are more teams at work, plodding to and fro.

In 'Fog in the Country' the author writes:

In places, notably among the fir-trees and the many little dips in the heath, the mist hangs low, and we can note the tops of the trees standing above the fog, like dark islands among it, while the stems are entirely hidden in the atmosphere ... In the fields to the right we hear the sounds of the mournfully

creaking plough as it turns up the soil ready for sowing; we catch the tramp of the man guiding the plough as separate from the tramp of the horses; and every 'whoa' or clink of the chain is brought us distinctly – magnified, it seems to us, as the figures of the man and plough are magnified, by the fog, through which he looms like a giant, as we go back a little, we watch him plod wearily to and fro.

Both pieces use the images of trees and bushes being shrouded in mist followed by the sounds of the plough, and the sight of the ploughman plodding 'to and fro'. Both pieces use the word 'loom' or 'looming', both qualify shapes and forms as being 'distinct' and 'indistinct' – the Jefferies' piece describing the thickets 'swathed in vapour' and the *Daily News* author referring to the trunks of trees being 'entirely hidden', and both pieces refer to the 'rattle' or 'clink' of the plough's chain. There is further similarity between this piece, where the farmer is instructing the animals to stop with the instruction 'whoa', and Jefferies' article 'Patchwork Agriculture' in which Jefferies describes oxen pulling the plough, writing that 'it is surprising how quickly these slow-witted animals catch the prolonged "woa-a" which orders them to stop.' Further comparison can be made between the notebook entry for 1876 for a piece on the Derby Day at Epsom, in which Jefferies refers to the mist which hangs around London like a – 'great pall ... the smoke which unites every day', and the opening line of 'Fog in the Country' which describes the fog as a 'grey pall.' Most of the notebook entries for the time at which the *Daily News* item was published are concerned with the weather and some contain references to mist and fog:

17<sup>th</sup> January 1882: 'mist thicker, dry'

18<sup>th</sup>: 'mist – thick: colder really cold: still: white fog and tree-rain'

19<sup>th</sup>: 'mist but less'

Although these are not conclusive they do show that Jefferies was writing from home and was making observations and thinking about the weather. It is thus possible that he could have written an article about the fog for the *Daily News* at this time to be published the following week. The reference to 'Tree-rain' would correspond with the image in the article of pooling moisture falling from the ends of branches of which the author writes that 'under every tree that overhangs the road is a large pool of water fallen from the dripping boughs ... even the new-born snowdrop and sharp crocus leaf that is just breaking through the dark-brown earth has its own particular bead of wet.'

### ***Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine***

'Old Squires and New,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1879:Dec.).

Jefferies' letters show that he was trying to place articles with *Blackwood's* from as early as 1873, if not before. The magazine helped to popularise Wordsworth and is known to have influenced several nineteenth century writers, including Charles Dickens, the Bronte sisters, and Margaret Oliphant, as well as first publishing Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The comparison of old and new styles of farming, and changing lifestyles for gentry and farmers, were the subjects of several of Jefferies' articles, including 'The Spirit of Modern Agriculture' (1876); 'The Future of Farming'

(1873); 'Unequal Agriculture' (1877); 'The Gentleman Farmer' (1877), and 'Patchwork Agriculture' (1875), and also featured in chapters of *Hodge and his Masters* and in 'The Labourer's Daily Life'. 'Old Squires and New' (16.pp.) is a factual piece with poetic language woven into it – something that Jefferies was particularly adept at doing. The article addresses changing ways of life for landowners over generations, and discusses the economic difficulties of landowners in the context of the agricultural revolution. In a paragraph that describes the self-sufficiency of old-style squires, the author writes:

The beef, mutton, and poultry came from the farm; the game from the covers and fields; the fish from the ponds and streams. He brewed his barrels of ale by the score, and baked his own batches of ponderous household loaves.

In 'The Spirit of Modern Agriculture' Jefferies writes of the self-containment of the old-style farmer:

His farm was a world in itself, his one object to make that world self-supporting without extraneous aid – above all without expending hard cash. The bread he ate was made from the wheat grown in his own fields ... The hogs in the sty supplied bacon, beef fed on the farm was salted down, the dairy yielded cheese, the orchard cider, beer was brewed upon the premises.

The author of 'Old Squires and New' refers to the traditional affinity between labourers and landowners, writing that labourers had a 'kindly feeling for the occupants of the great house, who did them many a good turn in sickness or trouble' – an observation Jefferies had already made in 'The Wiltshire Labourer'. The article also refers to gambling, which features in 'The Labourer's Daily Life', and 'The Gambling Farmer' (1878). Jefferies' notebook for this period includes notes on agricultural subjects, some of which were incorporated into *Hodge and his Masters*. For example, Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> 1879 reads 'social fabric – farming, waiting for dead men's shoes', a line which was part of a serialised chapter in *The Standard* in Jan. 1880, and which occurs in Ch. XVIII of *Hodge* as 'When the young farmer wearies of waiting for dead men's shoes – in no other way can he hope to occupy an English farm'. Further notebook entries relating to the idea of old-style farming include: 30<sup>th</sup> July 1879 – 'old farmer used to like the smell of the manure good and wholesome but now awful cake', and 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 79 – 'go round with keepers not hunt, old squire. Old farmer? Labourer. Child.' In 'My Old Village' Jefferies writes, 'there is not one left of the old farmers, not a single one.' Manuscript pages at the British Library show that Jefferies was planning a publication titled 'The Squire at Home' with chapters to include 'Last of the Squires' and 'Man of the Land', which doesn't appear to have been published.

Further support in favour of Jefferies' authorship of this piece includes the appearance of certain phrases which are associated with Jefferies' other work. These include: 'the open air', which was used regularly in Jefferies' work, and was the title of the 1885 collection of essays; 'the beauty of the fields' – a phrase that occurs mostly in poetry in the periodical press, and which was to be the title of Jefferies' essay 'The Beauty of the Fields' (Dec. 1881) in the *Magazine of Art*; and a discussion of 'the old country society'

which echoes the concerns of Jefferies' 1877 article 'The Future of Country Society'. The article also includes 'the dewy morn', which again is a phrase that mostly appears in poetry and in sporting columns (as the name of a famous greyhound<sup>1</sup>), rather than in literary articles. Jefferies published the novel *The Dewy Morn* in 1884, but offered it to Tinsley's much earlier in 1877 as 'The Dewy Morn: A Summer Story'. The author of 'Old Squires and New' writes:

When the citizen passes a night in the country he will be awakened in the freshness of the dewy morn by the shrill whistle of the steam-engine in place of the clarion of the early village cock; and your soul will be gladdened as you take your walks abroad by the whir and hum of 'machinery in motion'.

The invigorating 'whir and hum' of the steam-engine echoes the 'soothing ... hum of the flywheels' of the steam-ploughing engines in 'The Gentleman Farmer' and the 'low hum' of the steam threshing-machine in *The Dewy Morn*, which has an 'inarticulately human' quality. The author of 'Old Squires and New' refers to 'rows of trim new cottages [that] will supplant the gems of ivy-grown antiquity', which recalls the 'ancient rambling, red-tiled, and ivy-hidden house' in 'The Gentleman-Farmer'.

### **Once a Week**

There are no signed items by Jefferies in this paper but it contains extracts from the series of articles in *The Standard*, which were to form *Hodge and his Masters*. Some of these were printed in *Once a Week* under different titles. They include: 'In Early Spring' (April 1<sup>st</sup> 1879), first published as 'Early in March' in *The Standard* (March 1879); 'About the Hedges', which appeared first in *Once a Week* (Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1878) before it was published under the same title in *The Standard* (Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> 1878); 'The Octopus of the Hamlet' (Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1878) – a substantial extract from 'Hodge at his Work' (part V), which appeared in *The Standard* in Dec 1878; and 'Roughing it in the Country' (Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1878), an excerpt taken from *The Standard* (date unknown but part of ch. XXII of *Hodge and his Masters*). The series of articles which were to later form *Hodge and his Masters* begin in *The Standard* on Sept 24<sup>th</sup> 1878. The dates of some of the above precede this, indicating that there are other earlier unidentified contributions by Jefferies to *The Standard*, and that parts of *Hodge and his Masters* were serialised in *Once a Week* prior to their appearance in *The Standard*.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Dewy Morn' was a greyhound who raced to fame during the early days of hare-coursing in the 1860s when she won the prestigious Ardrossan St Leger. 'Sporting Intelligence' in the *Glasgow Herald* (Feb. 14, 1872) mentions a hare-coursing event starring a pup called 'The Collier' – from a litter of Dewy Morn and sired by a dog named 'Liddington'. Dewy Morn's owner, John Dunlop, lived in Ayrshire, Scotland.

# Book Review

*The West Country: A Cultural History* by John Payne (Oxford: Signal Books, 2009); £12. ISBN 978-1-904955-61-0.

This well-researched and perceptive account of the cultural history of the southwest of England draws together some key contemporary debates and concerns about the way in which landscapes are used, appreciated, and preserved. John Payne, researcher and writer on lifelong learning and social issues in England and Spain, was born in Bath, educated in Bath and London, and now lives in Frome, Somerset. Payne's long residence in the southwest comes to light through his preoccupation with the loss of rural traditions and the tension between old and new ways of managing land. Overall the book achieves an effective blend of historical fact and literary insight into the condition of southwest life and landscapes over time. Topics covered include the origins and history of folk music, hunting, craft fairs, cottage industries, farming, mystery, folklore, art, and transport.

The account is divided into eleven chapters constituting the cultural history of six counties, excluding Gloucestershire. These include Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall. Payne begins with 'Walking into Wiltshire' in which he considers the prehistory and modern history of the Vale of Pewsey, Old Sarum, the Wylve Valley, and Salisbury. His comparison of ancient and modern landscapes effectively evokes the feeling of permanence that one feels when walking amidst the venerable and ancient Wiltshire landmarks.

The author recognises the rich diversity of the West Country – from the rugged seascapes of Cornwall to the placid rolling hills of Devon and Somerset, stretching into the Wiltshire plains and along the ancient Ridgeway into Dorset. He does not just paint a pretty picture of the countryside, but seeks to represent the variations in weather, atmosphere and mood. For example, he recounts his fortieth birthday spent on Golden Cap in the rain and fog, stating that 'experiences in a landscape can be less than sublime or pastoral.'

Payne's portrayal of the southwest counties highlights traditions and characteristics that identify them one from another and connect them. Each county has two chapters. The section on Jefferies is well written and Payne gives a sensitive and open-minded account of Jefferies' life and work, making special mention of Jean Saunders' assistance and the Richard Jefferies Museum. Payne writes of 'the modest little farmhouse in Coate ... where Jefferies was born and raised' – not strictly true as Jefferies grew up with his Aunt Ellen in Sydenham, spending only school holidays at Coate from around the age of 4 to 9 years. However the Jefferies Society gets a mention, as does the imposition of the new development that threatens the sanctity of Coate. Payne's depiction of Liddington Hill in relation to *The Story of My Heart* is complimentary of Jefferies and carefully explains

Jefferies' complex relationship with the natural world. His description nicely places the author in the contemporary and relevant context of 'modern' ecological narratives, stating that Jefferies saw 'human beings [as] part of the whole cosmos, equally important, equally unimportant, as everything else in the universe', and that "prayer" for Jefferies is a process of immersing the self in this cosmic arena of which nature is merely the most immediate aspect.' The chapters on Wiltshire include sections on Alfred Williams, the etcher Robin Tanner and his wife, the author, Heather Tanner, and Edward Thomas. Throughout the chapters Payne makes distinct comparisons between old and new ways of living. There is a 'hollowing out of life on the Wiltshire Downs,' he says, due to the fact that so many properties are either holiday lets or are owned by people who travel to work in cities. Of the Avon villages he says, 'life has lost a certain texture, a certain denseness. There is less poverty, but less sociability too.'

The section 'Hardy's Wessex', part of the chapter titled 'Traditional Dorset' mentions Jefferies' time in London in relation to Hardy's own similar experience. Payne writes that 'Hardy's own personal world stretched beyond Dorset. It encompassed London, as did that of Richard Jefferies – Jefferies in arguably romantic Sydenham, Hardy in less-than-romantic Tooting,' (p.54). The discussion of Thomas Hardy and rural tradition in Dorset includes references to The Tolpuddle Martyrs, and the music of rural Dorset. The following chapters are titled 'Somerset: Romance and Reality'; 'Somerset: Highlands and Islands'; 'Bath and Bristol'; 'South Devon'; 'North Devon'; 'Cornwall', and 'Writing Cornwall.' In each Payne explores the origins, loss and futures of different types of architecture, including ecclesiastical, stately homes, and cottages. The narrative incorporates a remarkable amount of information, including written historical sources and authentic accounts of personal experiences of the southwest from people who the author has taken the time to interview. This aspect of the book distinguishes it from historical accounts which rely too heavily on secondary research. In the chapter on South Devon Payne writes about Dartington School, a privately owned estate set up in the 1920s that aimed towards agricultural regeneration and modernisation. The school offered progressive education with a strong emphasis on arts and culture until the 1960s – Payne describes the place as 'a kind of utopia in a decidedly sub-utopian world' and quotes an interview with an ex-pupil.

Overall the book is comprehensive and contains a lot of information covering a long time period. It is a feat that Payne manages to achieve all this in 250 pages; an affordable paperback that will easily fit into a bag or even a (largish) pocket. The book will appeal to a wide audience – walkers, authors, painters, historians, scholars – and is a valuable resource for those interested in how the West Country has changed over time.

*Rebecca Welshman*

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