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# Reporting; Editing & Authorship.

## Practical Hints for Beginners in Literature

*This was Jefferies' first book. It is a small, almost ephemeral item that was issued undated in 1873 at his own expense in a mood of desperation, after other attempts to get a book published had failed. It is now virtually unobtainable and very few people have ever read it. Parts I and II (Reporting, Editing) which give some insight into his early years with the North Wilts Herald and the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard are reprinted here for the first time. Part III(Authorship) will appear in the next issue. Textual alterations have been " limited to the correction of spelling or printing errors.*

### I REPORTING

A Reporter may write shorthand with such rapidity as to catch every single word uttered at a meeting, and yet not be able to give so correct a reproduction as another without skill in stenography, but whose local knowledge of the place and persons, and special acquaintance with the matter under discussion, renders him capable of grasping the full meaning of the affair. There are occasions when few words are spoken, and bare facts alone transpire without any apparent connection, when a verbatim et literatim report would be useless.

The first object of the reporter should therefore be to acquire an insight into the real state of things, to get behind the scenes, so as to thoroughly comprehend the outward show placed before the public. In a wider sense the district itself in which he is situated, should be studied with a similar view.

If it is a town the general plan of the streets should be ascertained, and committed to memory, with the names of the leading thoroughfares; position of the railway station; postal and telegraphic offices; churches; public rooms; parks; and places of resort. If in the country, the outlying villages; the roads; and general distribution of the population should be studied. Maps of all the counties and principal towns are sold at sixpence each. The means of transit must next be ascertained:- the railways, and branches: cabs, omnibuses: carrier's carts: where to hire: postal and telegraphic arrangements. The local time tables: hours of postal delivery: list of country telegraphic offices: should be suspended in his apartment. A thorough knowledge of the place will save much trouble, and impress a good opinion of his intelligence upon his employer. Local statistics, local antiquities, and history, should receive careful attention - every work upon this mastered, and every fact treasured up. Every locality has its speciality, its peculiar trade, commerce, or class of agriculture, which should be thoroughly enquired into, and every opportunity of acquiring information respecting it eagerly seized. All pursuits have their own special literature, offering a wide field for intellectual enterprize.

Returning to matters which will more immediately concern him, the newspaper he works for must be studied, and precise information obtained of its politics, moral tone, and office traditions: for the purpose of guiding the reporter in his selection of news, and as to the amount of prominence to be given to this or that person, or occurrence. The contemporary papers of the district should be regularly read, and their parallel reports compared with his own, with the view of avoiding faults in the future. Their advertisement, and local intelligence columns must be scanned for intimations of forthcoming events. Comparison of these conflicting journals will give a good idea of the general state of public opinion: and of the relative strength of parties. While passing along the streets, the reporter should look for the bills in the windows, and the posters on the walls: and as a standing rule be always on the *qui vive* for all that is going forward.

As from time to time he attends public meetings and various places to report, so he should quietly note the principal features and course of procedure: the persons from whom information can be obtained: and those important to his paper. Many meetings occur at regular intervals, and these mental notes will simplify the task, and reduce the labour of reporting them: and give a spirit and accuracy to his account gratifying to the editor.

The junior reporter is usually sent to the petty sessional or police courts. Here he should endeavour to be on friendly terms with the police (who are most courteous to representatives of the press). Without the correction of their official knowledge he would be frequently at fault. The names of the complainants and defendants, with the date of the offence, and place of its committal are entered by the Superintendent in a book called the charge-book, kept by him as a record: he will permit access to this if he is assured that no improper use will be made of it. The Magistrate's Clerk writes down the evidence of the witnesses and the proceedings of the Court in the Minute Book, which is usually open to the Press after the business is concluded. In cases of felony, and generally in all cases which it is understood must go before a superior court, the evidence is taken down upon sheets of foolscap, called "depositions". In many courts a large folio book is kept, called the Magistrates' Charge Book, the arrangement of which somewhat resembles the Superintendent's: it is laid before the Bench so that by reference to it they can at once understand the case coming before them. The reporter should introduce himself to the gentleman in charge of these documents, and obtain permission to inspect them when necessary. The best plan of reporting police cases is, first before the Court sits, to get a list of the cases from the Superintendent's or Magistrate's Charge Book. Write the heading of each of these cases upon a separate sheet of paper, so that, when it is heard, the Reporter can at once follow on with the evidence. Keep these slips of paper under the left wrist, and have a pile of copy paper on the right, with the note book open at the side. The copy paper should be held together by a string passed through the centre at the top, (not at the corner) of the page. When a case is called, select that slip from under the left hand which contains a short statement of the offence, number this 1, and place it on the copy-paper. If a lawyer is engaged for the prosecution he will now open the case with

a [succinct] outline of the circumstances, which, if it is an important affair, take down in shorthand in the note-book. He will then call the prosecutor; drop the note-book, take the copy-paper and write the evidence in longhand, which there will be plenty of time to do, because the Magistrate's Clerk has to take it down in the same way, and will not let him speak too fast. The same rule applies to the witnesses. The lawyer's speech can be written out afterwards -or during a pause in the business - and inserted in its proper place, by writing, where it should go in, the words "Insert A", placing the letter A on the right hand upper corner of the page to be inserted. If there is more than one to go in, number the additional folios, 10A, (10 being the number of the page in which the insertion is to be made,) 11A, 12A, 13A, 14A, &c. If it is not an important case, the reporter should listen attentively, and write a condensed outline account as it goes on. If it is a very important case the lawyer's question and answer should be taken in shorthand, as also the cross-examination and re-examination. In writing out such copy the abbreviations may be used of q., question; a., answer; x., examination; cross-x, cross-examination; re-ex., re-examination. The remarks or questions of the magistrates should always be carefully reported. They are men sometimes of mark, and always of social standing. A list can be obtained from the Magistrate's Clerk's office; keep this for reference, and to write the names correctly, many influential gentlemen are extremely particular about their names being properly spelt and the precise initials affixed. All through his experience the reporter will find that names are the most difficult to obtain, and most important; he should therefore pay particular attention to them, and endeavour to commit as many as possible to memory. These instructions will also do for many other occasions.

In the County-Court a different procedure is employed, and the law is more complicated, extending as it does into private contracts, trade relations, bankruptcy, and fraud. Very little documentary assistance can be obtained. A Charge Sheet is printed by some Courts, for the use of counsel, price 6d., and the lawyers employed, after the case is finished, will supply information through their clerks. In important cases ask for their briefs, which form excellent reports in themselves, being carefully prepared statements of the case. In affairs of less moment, the amount sued for, the names of the parties, and the judgment can be obtained at the office of the Registrar or High Bailiff.

As it is often necessary to send off reports the moment the case is concluded by rail, or telegraph, the reporter should [practise] the method recommended in police courts: and endeavour to write as much as possible in longhand. Have a large envelope with the address (if by train) ready written out.

The reporter should carefully note the method of procedure in these lower courts as it will form a very good preparation for practice in the higher courts. Without a knowledge of the forms of law the facts presented to the ear have no tangible connection or intelligible meaning, and as a general rule it may be laid down that no one can properly report anything unless he first understands it. Some considerable insight into the practice of the higher courts may be gained by carefully studying the law reports in the *Times*.

In the Coroner's court, the same course should be followed as in the police court.

At almost every kind of meeting which the reporter will have to attend there are sources of information (other than that of simply listening) which it will be important for him to understand, because they greatly reduce the labour, and at the same time enhance the accuracy and breadth of his report. There is almost always a Secretary from whom facts, figures, or official information can be obtained. There are usually printed or written reports and resolutions. These he should arrange with the Secretary to be allowed to copy, previous to the commencement of the meeting. But if there appears to be any hesitation, let him take notes. This will not prevent him copying afterwards, if the chance is afforded, and may often secure him from [ignominious] loss. The Secretary will often write the reporter a list of names of those present, while the speakers are delivering - names are the strength of reports. Ask the most intelligent person sitting near for names, and hand him a pencil and slip of paper to write them on. If the speaker's name cannot be at once discovered, number the speeches, and find out afterwards by the rotation. If it is a dinner, the landlord of the hotel will give every information. If there is no Secretary, when the meeting is over ask the Chairman for the printed reports and resolutions. They will very seldom be denied. Not unfrequently some of the speakers have their speeches written out before coming, and will furnish the M.S. All will gladly correct the M.S. transcription of the notes of their speech or the proof. The reporter should make it a point to learn who writes his speech, and who does not - who will furnish the M.S., and who will not - who is favourable to his journal and will hand over documents, and vice versa: special knowledge of this kind greatly reduces the labour of reporting. At shows get the catalogues, and forward them at once to the office by rail. At matches get the list of competitors or scores, copy these, and transmit at once. On occasions like these there is usually some special feature, which, lay hold of thoroughly, and give prominence to.

In picking up paragraphs of accidents and similar occurrences, the reporter should at first, as he journeys to the spot, write down the questions he wishes answered, which will prevent his overlooking anything in the hurry of the moment. For instance, if it is a fire: When was it first discovered? By whom? What was the cause? What fire-engines came? Amount of loss? If insured? Any lives lost? In forming these questions endeavour to construct a mental sequence of ideas, which, when they are answered, will make a good paragraph, conveying a clear and intelligent account. In a short time the habit of looking at everything in its sequence of occurrence will be formed, and the written questions will no longer be necessary. The practice of this method will enable him to write a good report in the fewest possible words. Power of condensation is of the utmost importance on daily papers, and in sending telegrams.

For materials: it matters nothing what is used provided the notes are legible. Messrs. Letts advertize a pen which will contain ink enough in the handle to

write for a week with. If so, it is well worth the money. For a heavy meeting the note book with stiff back, of ruled paper, 8 inches by 4, containing about 100 folios, is best. Write it through one way, on one side of the paper, then reverse it, and write back again. [Practise] writing on the knee, for a table cannot always be had, and when

obtained is often too high for use. Write sometimes holding the note-book in the hand only; this will be useful practice before an election, when open-air speeches are made, and the reporter has to make notes as he can, with his arms jammed tight to his side in a crowd. Above all things study legibility in writing shorthand: attention to it will save immense trouble. For rapid transcription the copy-paper should be cut of the same size, and the sheets loose, so as to be easily slipped on one side when written on. Get into the habit of always writing words in the same style - this increases the speed, as there is no hesitation about the form; and make a rule never to lift the pen unless absolutely necessary. Run the words on one from the other with a thin stroke instead of a space between. Gradually accustom yourself to write so correctly that the M.S. will not require reading through before it is sent to the compositors. This is a great saving of time and a recommendation for a situation on a daily paper.

A good personal manner greatly conduces to the success of the reporter. He should be pleasant and genial, but not loud: enquiring without being inquisitive: bold but not presumptuous: and above all respectful. The reporter should be able to talk on all subjects with all men. He should dress well, it obtains him immediate attention: but should be careful to avoid anything 'horsey' or fast. The more gentlemanly his appearance and tone, the better he will be received.

## II EDITING

Carefully study the method of condensing a long account into a short graphic description, displaying all the points without unnecessary details. It is good practice to take a newspaper and re-write the reports in the fewest possible words, till the mind becomes habituated to seizing the spirit of a thing. In actual work, however, upon a paper the part to be omitted and the features to be retained must be regulated by the tastes of the subscribers. On the other hand study the method of amplifying a report, which is often necessary when great interest is felt and yet there are but a few things to describe. This is done by inserting every detail - the most trivial circumstance under such conditions assumes an importance - drawing in matters related to the occurrence more or less distantly; giving sentiments and opinions as well as facts; colouring the whole with descriptive or imaginative writing, and perhaps a few lines of poetry, or a quotation from Shakespeare.

The special knowledge which the reporter has been instructed to obtain of the topography, history, antiquities, manufactures, commerce, or agriculture of the place will gradually recommend him to his employer and make him more and more useful, till verbatim reporting becomes a rare occurrence to him, and he is almost exclusively kept at work upon such far less laborious subjects. This special knowledge is a great step towards the post of sub-editor, especially if combined with the technical power to condense or amplify as required. When an account comes in of some matter with which the reporter is known to [possess] a special acquaintance, the manuscript will be handed over to him to correct, if it is to be published in extenso, to condense if too

long, to amplify if too brief. This is true sub-editing. His special knowledge of the district, its peculiar wants and interests, will next enable him to be entrusted with the care of cutting, from the daily and other papers, those paragraphs suited to the readers of his journal. Sometimes he will have to piece together the reports in various papers of the same affair, cutting from each paper the part not contained in the other, and connecting them together with a few words of interlineation. This is called "paste and scissors" work, though now usually done with a sharp penknife and gum. The pieces of newspaper are gummed on a broad sheet of copypaper, with spaces between for the connecting links to be supplied by the sub-editor, and a margin for corrections of the text of the print. Previous to this, however, the reporter will be required to read proofs, at first reading the M.S., and afterwards to correct them. To do this successfully, a thorough knowledge of "case" is necessary, therefore the reporter should make a rule of filling up his time, when nothing is going forward, by learning to compose, or set up type in the office. He should learn not as one who only aims to obtain his daily bread, but with an observant eye, noting the method of setting up advertisements, leaders, reports, &c., in various founts of type; the numberless styles of printing bills, posters, pamphlets, and books: the smallest minutiae of the office should be familiar to him. This knowledge will at once enable him to add to his income; and another day, when he is himself an employer, will be invaluable. He should serve at the press, and understand the working of the machinery. He should learn the cash value of these materials; when and how they are cheapest purchased. He should learn the cost of paper, of composition, of "machining;" balance against it on the other side the receipts for advertisements, and for sale of papers: in a word, study the economy of the whole concern as an example for his own future guidance. Such knowledge will be of the greatest value in obtaining a higher situation.

A thorough acquaintance with "case" will enable his eye in a moment to notice typographical errors in the proof, which would otherwise be passed over. Sometimes compositors will purposely alter a letter, giving a word an obscene meaning - were this to pass into circulation it might do a paper incalculable harm.

There is a policy in advertisements as well as in the higher game of politics. It is not uncommon for editors to cause meetings to be particularly well reported with the object of getting the bill, and other job-printing which necessarily accompanies such assemblies. The course taken by the editor is often ruled by the consideration of advertisements. They are the profit of a paper. It is useful to know what other papers charge. The advertisement is paid for according to its length, or according to its position on the first page, or column, or over the leader, or the manner in which it is set. For a number of insertions an allowance is made. Advertisements not sent to the office are not unfrequently copied from other papers and the account for them sent in,

in the forlorn hope that the advertiser, convinced of the wide circulation thus afforded, will pay for them. This was commonly done with the advertisements of certain railway companies, till the managers grew suspicious that their advertisements appeared in worthless papers, and became more strict. Some advertisements are kept standing in type (though never paid for) ready to fill up space, if an accident should

upset any type at the last moment. These are called "dummies". Papers struggling into existence print a lot of "dummies" with the object of appearing well patronized, and thus leading the public to believe that they are good advertising mediums. Such papers are selected by quacks, and patent medicine doctors for their disgusting announcements which are refused by respectable, that is, flourishing journals. On the great daily papers there is a regular staff of clerks to attend to the advertisements, and make out the accounts. Part of their duty is, the moment they see an advertisement in a rival paper, to write at once to the address given, and offer to insert it at the lowest possible price. Auctioneers are the most valuable supporters of papers from the regular flow of their advertisements. Lawyers are next important and estate agents. The stamped circulation dodge is another plan for attracting the advertising public, who of course patronize the paper which they believe circulates most largely. Some proprietors have ten or even fifteen papers published at various central towns over a wide area. These papers are the same in substance but varied with local news. Each paper has a certain amount of stamped circulation, but instead of stating its real amount, the stamped circulation of the whole ten is added to swell up a great figure. Stamped circulation, supposed by the public to be genuine because taken from government returns, is a great sell. In the first place it is no index whatever of the unstamped circulation. Editors sometimes purchase enough stamps to last for three or four years, so as to make it appear on the Government return as if that was their annual circulation. As the returns do not come out in the current year, this delay gives an opportunity of further shifting by making two years into one.

Newspapers must be registered. To ascertain the place where a newspaper is published look at the foot of the last column, on the last page, where the address of the office is always given. For printing a paper or bill without the printer's name appended there is a large pecuniary penalty. Copies of the paper are usually exchanged with similar publications in the surrounding district. Many of the London periodicals are regularly supplied to well-established provincial papers on the understanding that some notice of, or extract from them is published. The sub-editor of a provincial paper usually gets the appointment of correspondent for the London daily identical in political tone. He furnishes condensed accounts of the most important transactions, and telegraphs the state of the markets, &c. The Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Huddersfield, &c., papers employ a similar staff scattered over their respective districts. The telegrams on foreign and home affairs are supplied by a company called the Press Association, at a certain fixed rate, in proportion to the number of telegrams required. The provincial weekly papers generally only receive telegrams direct from the Company on publishing days, so as to go to press with the latest intelligence. In telegraphing to a newspaper 60 words can be sent for 1s. The London Letter of provincial papers is stereotyped, and the stereos, sent to fifty different papers in various parts of the country. Some editors cut the letter up into paragraphs, and use them for short leaders. This correspondence is usually done by a man long resident in London, with the *entré* of the clubs, &c. Abroad the correspondents owe much to the



conversation at the daily *table d'hôte* of the great hotels: to the cafes: and a back-stairs acquaintance with the various embassies and consulates.

It is necessary to have some knowledge of the law of libel so as to avoid its ruining fangs. A fair report has been held not to be a libel, but it is useless to place reliance on that decision because it is so difficult to define a fair report. Reports of criminal courts, if simply reproductions of what was said in those courts, without comment, are privileged by special enactment, and are not libellous. Libel has been defined to be anything written, or printed, which may tend to prejudice, or lower a man in the estimation of his fellows. This is very wide. As a matter of fact, the law as it stands is capable of being twisted in almost any direction to gratify private malice, or party rancour. United action is desirable to obtain fair treatment. The most extreme caution should be exercised in publishing letters to the editors, or articles which reflect personally upon anyone: these are the most fruitful sources of libel cases. In libel, if a verdict is obtained, a writ issues after eight days which enables the plaintiff to seize the goods of the defendant, unless the amount is paid. Newspapers are not permitted to comment on cases undergoing or pending trial, lest any one should be prejudiced or biassed. The *Times* refused to take any notice of the Claimant to the Tichborne Estates whilst he was stumping the country previous to his trial for perjury.

The method of obtaining information for a local paper is the appointment of agents at a low salary in the outlying villages to forward accounts of occurrences, some of whom also distribute the paper. The village schoolmaster, the parish clerk or post-office master, and in larger places, a lawyer's clerk, or some one in a similar situation usually supplies them. A shorthand reporter is stationed in the central town of important districts, and others remain at the office of the paper. These are ready at any moment to pass to places where anything of importance is [occurring]. The sub-editor keeps a Blackwood's Diary, and enters the meetings to be attended in future against the date, so that at a glance he can see the work to be done in any day or week. The news of the town in which the office is situated is acquired from the general talk, from the hotel parlour, and reading-room, and from people dropping in at the office, (often in too great numbers) eager to spread the news. The slightest hint is at once followed up, a reporter sent to the spot, and a suitable account obtained. Arrangements are made with the public officials so that if the coroner is summoned or the fire-engine despatched, it is immediately known at the office. The Quarter Sessions, and Assize Courts, are usually attended by a reporter who works by commission from all the papers in the county, and makes county affairs his special study. His copy is commonly written on tissue paper, so as to write three or four copies at once. This is called 'manifold' or 'flimsy'. The same process is often adopted by other reporters when they wish to send accounts to several papers at once. The apparatus can be bought at any stationer's shop. The great London daily papers, [notably] the *Times*, will not take 'flimsy'; reports sent to them must be written on ordinary paper. Articles in a local paper are upon matters affecting the interest of the district. The advertisement column must be kept open till the last moment, for it is a singular characteristic of advertisers that they usually send their copy about an hour before

going to press. Almost all papers require a tale now - the public taste demands some amusement as well as information - and there must be a corner set apart for poetry and jokes. The editor should never argue. He will have twenty people, of twenty different minds, to see him on a market-day, all bursting with their own ideas. Physical exhaustion would be the result of an attempt to convince them, besides every one would be offended. His object is to acquire information, he has merely to listen, and to put forward no view, except to help the speaker to a better comprehension of his own ideas.

A metropolitan paper is a re-production on a larger scale of a provincial one. On the larger journal there is a more extended application of the system of sub-division of labour. One sub-editor attends to the M.S. reports, another to the letters to the editor, a third to the articles and leaders, *the* editor par-excellence superintends all, and gives a tone to the paper. There is a city or money market editor; a large staff to attend to the advertisements; proof readers; and a small army of reporters with their chief, and particular duties. In addition there are review writers, theatrical critics, tale-writers, &c., &c. There is a large staff with their chief to pass the paper through the press, and also a publishing department, with agents innumerable.

A great paper is like a Jesuit Society - it has spies everywhere. Leading articles in such papers are not the opinions of a single man, but the expression of opinions gathered from a wide circle of influential persons, hence their effect in shaping public views. The principal rule in editing a paper is to insist upon every line being readable. The public want no solid cleverness, no prosy compilations, however good in their object, they require amusement. Men will read an "Extraordinary Discovery in California" who would contemptuously pass over long speeches and dull leaders. With the vast flow of news that now comes in there is a constantly increasing impatience of long accounts - a constant tendency to condense everything.

From the earliest period of his connection with the press the reporter should make it a point to collect books of reference: as a reporter, works on topography, local history, statistics relating to his immediate district: as a sub-editor, books of more general reference, as Smith's Classical Dictionaries, Biographies, Gazetteers, Army and Clergy Lists, &c. These will be of the utmost use. The large daily papers possess libraries, formed of such books as these, which are perfect storehouses of information. If any reference to, or abstract from, any particular book should be required, there are men (see the Athenaeum advertising columns) who spend their whole time doing such work in the British Museum, Mr. Simms is a well known Museum Reader.

A knowledge of modern languages, especially French, German, and Italian, will be found most useful, particularly to a reporter who has views of becoming a foreign correspondent.

In every position it is essential to preserve copies of every single work of the *litterateur* which has been published. Copies of reports should be pasted in a Report Scrap Book. Copies of articles, letters, leaders, reviews, &c., should be placed in a second. Antiquarian notes, sketches, tales, essays, purely literary efforts should be kept in a third. These are the very best testimonials on applying for a higher situation.

If it is felt that a report of a meeting or speech has been successful, the reporter should at once address the speakers, and ask for a testimonial to the excellence of his work. It will be usually readily given if deserved; and, if from a public man - an M.P. or noted character, will be very useful. If only for his own interests the reporter should be careful to leave his situation in a just manner, with due notice, and every consideration for the convenience of his employer, for the recommendation of an editor carries great weight, and some of the veterans of the press have a wonderfully wide connection which they can put in motion to his advantage. The Athenaeum is the usual press-situation advertising medium. Messrs. Mitchell, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, annually publish a Newspaper Directory, price 2s., which gives information of every periodical in the United Kingdom. Some of the papers published in great provincial cities pay their [employees] as highly as the metropolitan press: the only advantage over them possessed by a London appointment is the prestige.

# English Socialists

*Transcribed from an unpublished MS by Jefferies in the British Library,  
reference Add. Mss 58817*

The following is from a correspondent.

Many people have been led to conclude that there is no socialism in this country because it is tolerably certain that no secret society exists whose aims are equivalent to those of the Communists in France. There are branches, and even headquarters of more than one society known to be situate in London but these are distinctly foreign in their general object.

The International for instance is so shadowy that it may be said to be non-existent so far as we are concerned. It is probable that the funds of several Continental associations are lodged in, and it is also probable that many societies are directed from that capital. But there is no society yet discovered whose aim is purely to subvert English Institutions. Very reasonably at first sight it has therefore been concluded that we run no risk from socialism at all. Putting Irish malcontents out of the question any official would assure us that there is no such thing as Socialism, Anarchism, or Nihilism amongst us.

But this optimism is based solely upon the absence of an organisation, and is obviously untrustworthy when we come to consider what these subversive doctrines are. For they are of such a nature as to practically prevent organization. Even the foreign societies are constantly tumbling to pieces because of this inherent quality. Socialism or Nihilism can never perfect its machinery - the joints always come loose. The arrangements will not work, an official accuses another, treason is talked of, and very shortly the whole of the so-called society falls to pieces, and the secrets are exposed to public view. This constantly takes place; yet notwithstanding these failures to cohere socialism is a most dangerous force on the Continent. Why then should there be no danger here because we are not menaced by any organization? Rather say it is the absence of organization which gives these things their terror.

The fact is there is a great deal of socialism, nihilism, or whatever you like to call it in this country. Principally, if one leading idea of the anarchist is to upset, to destroy, to smash everything to bits. He applies this view in two ways: first in the overthrow of material things, such as public buildings, secondly to the cancelling of all engagements into which men have entered with each other. That they may carry on their respective callings men have practically made solemn engagements which are otherwise called law with each other. To tear up all this and scatter the fragments to the winds is the idea of the anarchist. What is to happen when he succeeds he neither asks himself nor cares.

No very evident demonstrations of the first kind have been made lately but it is not so long ago that the greatest alarm was raised in the north of England by the burning of the mills in open daylight. This subsided, still while it lasted it was anarchism in its most tangible form. Of anarchism in its second and less tangible shape we have had

plenty. The upsetting and overthrow of the general laws of the country is the avowed aim of powerful and recognised parties, parties numbering in their ranks men of the highest social standing.

# The Future of Farming

*This fourth letter by Jefferies to the Times (15 October 1873) was unknown until 1986 when it was found in the course of a routine examination of the Times Index and has not previously been reprinted. It was this letter, and not those of 1872, that led to the extended article with the same title that appeared in Eraser's Magazine in December 1873 - Jefferies' first contribution to a national magazine.*

Sir,

Sixty years ago the farmers were the ruling class. The towns then had not acquired their present preponderance, and the electors in the country districts, whether for county or borough, were entirely in the landed interest. Perhaps nothing so contributed to their loss of power as the practical introduction of steam and the consequent enormous development of trade. But after half a century indications are not wanting of the inevitable compensation which sooner or later follows human changes. The development of trade and manufacture caused a corresponding increase of population, until at the present moment the demand for bread so largely exceeds the home supply that the imports of foreign corn are enormous in bulk. At first this reduced the political and commercial *status* of the farmer still lower; his produce was driven out of the market by vast consignments from abroad. But with the demand for corn came a still larger - a disproportionately larger - demand for meat. Corn could be imported, meat could not (at least not in appreciable quantities or quality), and the immediate result, as soon as this was felt, was a rise in the prosperity and importance of the farmer. His attention was at once turned to the production of meat. The cattle, it is true, were not actually fed on the corn which should be human food, but in effect they were, since the vegetables and products upon which they were fattened were either manufactured from or took up the room of such food, thus still further reducing the real - though not, perhaps, the apparent - supply of English corn. Gradually, in fact, England is becoming a meat-producing country as opposed to cereal crops, and the land is turned into vast fattening stalls for the city markets.

So closely does the actual supply of meat correspond with the demand that a very slight derangement of ordinary conditions is sufficient to cause an appreciable disturbance, and even a permanent increase in prices. Such a derangement was the visitation of various contagious diseases. The numerical loss from these inflictions was comparatively small, where arrayed against the tale of the vast flocks in the kingdom, yet it exercised a very decided effect, and prices took a rise which has never since been lowered. Without taking an alarmist view of the question, it has become sufficiently clear to all that, if the population should continue to increase in its present ratio, the margin between an inadequate supply and the chances of a partial famine would be very small indeed. The consciousness of this state of things has been already making itself felt in attempts to increase the production of meat. Obviously, to do this requires an increase in the number of cattle kept. To a Londoner, who has seen the crowded dairies of Islington or Bayswater, this may appear easy enough. If a hundred cows can be kept in a building which occupies no more space than an ordinary garden,

surely the farmers, with their hundreds and thousands of acres, can support a proportionable number. The number they now keep is ridiculously small in comparison. But these dairies are chiefly fed from the refuse of distilleries, and the result is milk, indeed -London milk - but the beast becomes skin and bone. There is no meat here, unless, indeed, the cattle are fed on artificial food; but, first, how is sufficient artificial food to be obtained to feed these contemplated additional millions of stock; and, secondly, how is it to be paid for? Where is the artificial food to be derived from? It must be grown somewhere, but if it is grown in exceptional quantities it must be by the use of exceptional and expensive manures. Where are these manures to be got from in such incalculable quantities? Another attempt has been made - by increasing not the number, but the meat-bearing power of stock - to so modify their shape and so increase their assimilating powers that one animal might carry the meat of three. This has been attempted, and with considerable success, both with sheep and cattle; but the result is practically the same. These beasts require more artificial food, and hence more artificial manure. They cost more to produce. The problem, therefore, simply increases in difficulty, it is not solved. In meditating over it the agriculturist places the blame partly upon certain antiquated restrictions as to his dealings with the land under his occupation. He is restricted to a particular rotation of crops, which was reasonable enough in the olden time, when the *debris* of one crop made the manure of the next, but utterly untenable in these days of artificial manure. But the principal difficulty is the fact that he may lay out a large amount of capital, sink it, and receive no return for unexhausted improvements. This grievance implies that if he could only employ a larger amount of capital he could greatly increase the produce. To some extent this is undoubtedly true, but only to some extent. In the first place, there are already many individual cases in which compensation is guaranteed, and what is the result? These favoured persons do probably produce slightly in excess of their competitors, but it is only by an extension of the same conditions. They employ no more powerful manure; they invent no more efficient artificial food; and until this is done, enabling a vastly larger number of cattle to be kept, no appreciable alteration will ensue. The same question occurs: Supposing compensation for unexhausted improvements was the rule, and supposing unlimited capital was ready to invest, where then would the artificial food and the artificial manure in such enormous quantities be obtainable? The present sources would simply materially raise their price; not that such a movement should be opposed, but it is a delusion to think that by that means alone any serious alteration is possible. Since, however, England is to be a meat-growing country it is clear the Colonies must be retained in close connexion with the Mother Country as sources of corn supply. It may yet come to pass that those vast uninhabited regions may produce some vegetable in quantities sufficient to feed the stock of the future, or some mineral manure with power to treble the number and amount of our home crops of cattle-food. The real question is this, - Where are the necessary supplies of artificial manure and artificial food to be obtained? The questions of lease or yearly tenancy, of local taxation, compensation, &c., are all mere minor matter, before the great national demand for meat. It is obvious that if they can

become the agents for the production of sufficient meat, a great future lies before the English farmers. They will occupy their old position as the most powerful class in the country. Coal and iron, all must yield to meat; and the denser the population the more secondary will become these hitherto all-powerful materials. But, on the other hand, with increased prosperity and increased political weight, there will come corresponding responsibilities; and the force of public opinion is now so great that any abuse of these advantages will be certain to bring retributive ruin. Should the population still increase, and no further addition be made to our present means of providing meat, the concentration of interest upon the farmer, as the very middleman between food and famine, will become almost painfully intense.

Faithfully yours,  
Coate Farm, Swindon  
RICHARD JEFFERIES



# Jefferies' Reading

WJ Keith

How learned was Jefferies? The question is worth asking, for it affects our overall conception of the man. Unfortunately, however, there is no simple answer. He is clearly not one of the Victorian 'sages'; he never enjoyed a privileged intellectual background, nor did he attend either public school or university, and so lacked, for better or worse, a formal classical education. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that he acquired none but the rudiments of learning. It is true that his schooling was unexceptional, even intermittent, though the point can be exaggerated. But it is also true that his education was, in the most important respect, successful, for he learnt the vital fact that schooling is merely an introduction to the lifelong process of self-improvement. We know that he had the opportunity to continue his education on his own. Jefferies claimed that his father was 'a great reader with a considerable library of the best authors,' and even if this is judged to be an excessive idealization the future writer could certainly use the larger collection in his grandfather's house in Swindon. According to Edward Thomas, he was also lent books by his aunt Mrs Harrild, and by the editor of the *Swindon Advertiser*. From references in his public writings and his even more revealing private letters and notebooks, we can deduce that he read widely, sometimes even obscurely, and need have found himself at no great disadvantage among his more fortunately placed contemporaries. Thus in 'Nature and Books' (*Field and Hedgerow*), one of our most helpful sources for a study of his reading, he can write: 'I found, when the idea of the hundred best books came out, that between seventy and eighty of them had been my companions almost from boyhood'.

As far as his knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics is concerned, we have Jefferies' own testimony. This occurs in a late letter written to George Bentley the publisher. Jefferies digresses into biography as follows:

I learned Latin and Greek in the usual manner and was rather fond of Latin, but it was my father and not the schoolmaster who introduced me to Homer - without him I should never have appreciated the *Odyssey*. He it was too who interested me as a boy in the Roman encampments about our home and so started a passion for antiquity, especially Roman and Greek - the result of which has been the saturation of my mind with Greek thought.<sup>2</sup>

However accurate this may or may not be, his enthusiasm for things Greek can be traced back at least as far as 1868, in which year he wrote to Mrs Harrild: 'Everything beautiful is Greek; the greatest poet was a Greek - Homer. The most beautiful statues - those at Rome in the Vatican - were sculptured by Greeks. The Greek cast of countenance is the most beautiful; when perfect, it is almost divine.'<sup>3</sup>

Other clues can be gained from the novels; since large sections of them are plainly autobiographical, we can confidently use them when they fit in with the facts we already know. They can suggest to us the way in which Jefferies had come to

approach the Greek writers - a conscious desire to explore the classic works of ancient wisdom. There is, for example, the following passage concerning Aymer Malet, the hero of *World's End*:

... he bought many of Bohn's fine series - the finest and most useful, perhaps, ever issued - he read Plato and Aristotle, Livy, Xenophon - the poets, the philosophers, the dramatists of ancient Rome and Greece; and although it was not in their original tongue, the vivid imagination of the man carried him back to their day...<sup>4</sup>

This testimony is borne out later, but we have in any case a special reason for trusting the autobiographical nature of Aymer's education. A few pages later, he makes Aymer carry around in his pocket, a 'tiny edition of Shakespeare's Poems and Sonnets' which, as we know from another context, was Jefferies' own habit.<sup>5</sup>

But for the most detailed and forthright passage that we possess concerning Jefferies' reading in the Greek classics, we must return to 'Nature and Books':

I do not know what set me on these books, but I began them when about eighteen. The first of all was Diogenes Laertius's 'Lives of the Philosophers'. ... An imperfect book, say the critics. I do not know about that; his short paragraphs and chapters in their imperfect state convey more freshness to the mind than the thick, laboured volumes in which modern scholarship professes to describe ancient philosophy. I prefer the imperfect original records.... Next came Plato (it took me a long time to read Plato, and I have had to unlearn much of him) and Xenophon. Socrates' dialectic method taught me how to write, or rather how to put ideas in sequence. Sophocles, too; and last, that wonderful encyclopaedia of curious things, Athenaeus.

Elsewhere, he claims to have read pieces of Diogenes Laertius 'every day for two years'.<sup>6</sup>

His early reading, however, was by no means confined to the classics. In science, for instance, the names of both Darwin and Lyell occur in the 1870s, but his knowledge of the former was for some years confused (he mixes Darwinian and Lamarckian evolutionary theory in *Restless Human Hearts*),<sup>7</sup> so little importance can be attached to brief references. His early interest in botany seems to have ranged from the imaginative Culpeper to the more scientific Linnaeus, and his historical reading, used to compile such writings as his local histories of Malmesbury and Cirencester and Swindon as well as his *Memoir of the Goddards*, included Asser, Aubrey, Clarendon, and Robert of Gloucester - a decidedly motley collection. Moreover, we get an interesting, and to some extent unexpected glimpse of his theological reading in a reminiscence by his brother Charles, who claimed that 'when he went to London he took advantage of the public libraries, and read assiduously religious controversial books'.<sup>8</sup>

During his youth he had been a keen reader of romantic fiction. In his early writings especially, there are numerous references to Scott, and six of his novels are mentioned in *Jefferies' Land* alone. In *Reporting; Editing and Authorship*, he mentions Mrs Braddon's works, and there is evidence that he was a great reader of Fenimore

Cooper.<sup>9</sup> The first extant notebook, dated 1876, begins with a note about Charles Reade (who is described as a 'great author' in an uncollected essay, 'Farmers' Stores in London') and also refers to Thackeray and Ouida.<sup>10</sup>

In his later years, however, he is known to have read less, and is certainly far less prone to quote in his maturer writings. As far as his own library is concerned, Walter Besant wrote: 'He had not a large library, because the works which he most wished to procure were generally beyond his means'.<sup>11</sup> This was probably true, and as his collection of books declined in the years of poverty immediately before his death, and was later mainly dispersed, it is not easy to discover what he owned. We can, however, gain some information from the reminiscences of his son, Harold Jefferies, who wrote:

He took a great delight in the classics, and had a set of Bohn's translations of Aristotle, Plato, Aurelius, etc., and I remember later on when he enjoyed Ruskin's works and those of many contemporary philosophers and Nature writers, notably Gilbert White. ... And old John Burroughs, the great American writer and nature lover....

Father had some fine editions on British grasses and British butterflies, illustrated with four-colour process plates; also several of Sir John Lubbock's books on ants, bees and wasps, etc....

There were scores of other books in his library, but I cannot remember any more except a very fine edition of *The Arabian Nights* which he gave me when I was about six or seven. There was also a copy of *Don Quixote* -another fascinating volume. His set of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in seven volumes, was a bit too steep for me, but I enjoyed every moment of Froissart's Chronicles.<sup>12</sup>

Edward Thomas also casts some light on the subject:

Of books belonging to him I have seen The Assemblies of Al Hafiri' (translated by Chenery), 'Bhagavad Gita' (translated by J. Cockburn Thomson), Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads' (1871); translations of the 'Iliad,' the Greek Minor Poets and the Anthology, and Persius; and Percy's 'Reliques'.<sup>13</sup>

But our main source of information remains the quotations and knowledgeable references to be found in his published books, notebooks, and letters. From these it is reasonable to deduce his favourite writings. The works he mentions most are, naturally, Shakespeare and the Bible, but other writers frequently cited or praised include Dryden, Addison, Burns, Byron, Tennyson, Swinburne, Longfellow, Hugo, and especially Goethe, whose *Faust*, in Filmore's translation, he seems to have known almost by heart.

In some ways his particular dislikes are even more interesting for they reveal his limitations as a reader and critic. Many of the famous are listed in his notebooks under the heading 'Literary Dustbin'. Dante is one of these: 'Literary Dustbin. Dante. About the dullest book ever written. Mere mean revenge. Like Disraeli writing a volume describing Gladstone up to his chin in boiling brimstone hell'.<sup>14</sup> So is Jane Austen and Trollope; so too is Dickens, who 'made whole books of coarse repellent characters,

and is to me unreadable.<sup>15</sup> Here a rather cranky independent judgement blends awkwardly with other conventional, characteristically 'Victorian' sentiments. Jefferies reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of an autodidact.

A conspicuous problem in a study of this kind is that, because of the haphazard nature of Jefferies' reading, we cannot afford to assume that he knew any author, however well-known, if we lack absolute proof. It is extraordinary, for instance, that he quotes on at least one occasion from the poetry of Leigh Hunt, in a draft-version of *The Story of My Heart*, yet one searches in vain for references to Wordsworth. It seems unthinkable that he did not know Wordsworth's poetry, yet it is difficult to believe that Jefferies, had he known it, would have failed to mention one whose work provides so many comparisons with his own. Again, the use of the phrase 'the human form divine' in *World's End*<sup>16</sup> is the only faint clue we possess that he might have known Blake's work. Nor can we be sure that he had read Hardy's novels, though the majority of them were published before Jefferies' death. We know, from the autobiography Hardy dictated to his second wife, that the two men met on one occasion, in the company of Matthew Arnold and Henry James, and both contributed to *Longman's Magazine* at the same time, writing complementary essays on the condition of the agricultural labourer. Yet there is no mention of the man or his works in the whole of Jefferies.

We encounter the same problem when we come to consider his knowledge of certain American writers. We might naturally expect that he knew Thoreau, but there is no mention of him. One of the early reviews of *The Story of My Heart* compares the book with *Walden*,<sup>17</sup> so by this means the American might have been brought to Jefferies' attention, but we have no proof. On the other hand, but for the memory of Harold Jefferies we should have no proof that Jefferies knew the writings of Burroughs. The case of Whitman is even more complex. Some of the resemblances between them are striking, and it is tempting to presume direct influence. Thomas was certain that Whitman's writings had affected *The Story of My Heart*, and Robert P. Eckert tells us that Thomas made a long search through articles and magazines in an attempt to prove the point.<sup>18</sup> His findings, unfortunately, are ambiguous. At one point in his biography, Thomas claims that *Leaves of Grass* delighted Jefferies and that he sent a copy to his father (this, it is implied, was before *The Story of My Heart* was written). Later, however, Thomas records that William Sharp sent him a copy of *Specimen Days* in 1887 and that Jefferies wrote to Ernest Rhys asking why Sharp did not send *Leaves of Grass* as well.<sup>19</sup> There seems to be a confusion here, and I was told by Samuel J. Looker that he knew of no evidence for the first statement, which he doubted. As there is no mention of Whitman in Jefferies' writings outside the Rhys letter, we cannot say for certain that he knew him prior to 1883.

There is one doubtful matter, however, that can be cleared up. This concerns Jefferies' knowledge of Gilbert White, to whose *Natural History of Selborne* he contributed an introduction in 1887. Owing to a misunderstanding of one admittedly rather ambiguous sentence in this introduction, Thomas asserted that Jefferies came upon the book 'only towards the end of his life'.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Jefferies was discussing the

Naturalist's Calendar within White's book, which consisted of a set of records concerning such matters as the first appearance of the migrant birds or the first blooming of wild flowers; he commented: 'I did not come across Mr. White's book till late in the day, when it was, in fact, too late, else this Calendar would have been of the utmost advantage to me.'<sup>21</sup> Jefferies means that he did not encounter the book while he was still a boy, that by the time he became familiar with it he had already learnt to construct a similar calendar for himself. It does not imply that he had only just met with the book at the time of writing, and indeed there is a definite reference to White in the essay 'Small Birds', which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1878.<sup>22</sup> Thus Jefferies knew *The Natural History of Selborne* at least eight years before writing the introduction, and perhaps for some years before that.

Our general conclusion, then, must be guarded. We should not assume that he was brought up in an uncultured atmosphere; on the other hand, it is safe to say that the paternal influence in his education, whatever its extent, would have been enthusiastic rather than scholarly. His formal schooling was adequate but undistinguished, and his later reading had both the advantages and the limitations of a self-regulated scheme. In many respects, this education fitted him admirably for his later career. The general freshness of his writings on the countryside owes something to his ignorance of the more traditional attitudes towards natural history and landscape; with a more orthodox education he might well have acquired the 'superior', moralizing tone of earlier naturalist-writers like Edward Jesse. At the same time, a stronger intellectual and cultural background might have saved him from at least some of the excesses and prejudices that mar *The Story of My Heart*, and the lapses of taste that occur sporadically throughout his writings. At the last resort, however, we must acknowledge the fact that he derived most of his education not from the printed page but from the natural world around him. Jefferies himself was continually stressing this point. As he writes in 'Walks in the Wheatfields' (*Field and Hedgerow*), with a sweeping generalization that sums up both his vitality and his philistinism: 'A barnyard chanticleer and his family afford more matter than the best book ever written.'

*This essay originally appeared in 1961 as an appendix to Professor Keith's doctoral thesis, but was not included in his book Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study.*

#### NOTES

- 1 *Field and Farm*, ed. Samuel J. Looker (London: Phoenix House, 1957) p. 41.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Quoted in Edward Thomas, *Richard Jefferies, His Life and Work* (London: Hutchinson, 1909) p. 64.
- 4 *World's End* (3 vols. London: Tinsley, 1877) II, 11.
- 5 *Ibid.*, II, 20. Cf. 'My Old Village' (*Field and Hedgerow*).
- 6 Fragment quoted by Samuel J. Looker in his introduction to *Beauty is Immortal* (Worthing: Aldridge Brothers, 1948) p. 12.
- 7 *Restless Human Hearts* (3 vols. London: Tinsley, 1875) I, 309.

- 8 See 'Did Richard Jefferies Die a Christian? Reminiscences by People Who Knew Him', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 September 1891.
- 9 See Thomas, p. 41.
- 10 *The Nature Diaries and Notebooks of Richard Jefferies*, ed. Samuel J. Looker (London: Grey Walls Press, 1948) p. 23.
- 11 Walter Besant, *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1888) p. 172.
- 12 Harold Jefferies, 'Memories of Richard Jefferies', in Samuel J. Looker, ed., *Concerning Richard Jefferies* (Worthing: Aldridge Brothers, 1944) p. 20.
- 13 Thomas, p. 178.
- 14 *Notebooks*, p. 204.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 198, 206.
- 16 *World's End*, I, 99.
- 17 See James Purves, untitled review of *The Story of My Heart*, *Academy*, 3 November 1883, 294.
- 18 Robert P. Eckert, *Edward Thomas: A Biography and a Bibliography* (London: Dent, 1937) p. 106.
- 19 See Thomas, pp. 189, 313.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- 21 Introduction to *The Natural History of Selborne* (London: Walter Scott, 1887) p. xii.
- 22 See *Chronicles of the Hedges*, ed. Samuel J. Looker (London: Phoenix House, 1948) p. 58. This reference reveals a detailed knowledge of White's book.

# A Tribute to Bill Keith

*Text delivered prior to the Birthday Lecture at the Annual General Meeting of the Society, 3 November 1992, by Andrew Rossabi.*

Before moving on to the subject of my lecture I should like to say a few words in tribute to my immediate predecessor, Bill Keith, who had the distinction of being the Society's longest-serving President for 17 years between 1974 and 1991. During his term of office he made such a quietly revolutionary and comprehensive contribution to Jefferies studies that it is impossible for me to do justice to his achievement in the time available.

Readers of *Richard Jefferies, A Critical Study* (published in 1965) were aware of something new. Here was the first full-length appraisal of the author by a professional academic - academic in the sense of serious, scholarly, and disciplined, but not stuffy or dryasdust. Bill's aim in writing the book was to make Jefferies more academically respectable than he had been, by showing that his writings constituted more of a recognisable *oeuvre* than previously thought and that he was much more than 'just another country writer'. In this objective he succeeded admirably.

There was another reason for the neglect of Jefferies by academics. In his introduction to the World's Classics edition of *The Gamekeeper at Home* (1948) David Ascoli had observed that Jefferies had suffered more than most controversial writers at the hands of his admirers. The excessive claims and adulatory tone of some of his more zealous disciples had done more to deter than to convince academics to give Jefferies a try. What was needed at this time was a sober, restrained, scholarly study and this Bill provided. His book contained easily the best and most detailed criticism of Jefferies since Edward Thomas's classic *Life and Work*. It was particularly good on the historical background, the changes that had taken place in farming between the enclosures and the early years of the great depression when Jefferies began to write. Equally admirable was the treatment of Jefferies' views on the Labour Question. Bill showed that the conventional right-to-left reading, which saw Jefferies' inherited conservatism giving way to an increasing radicalism in his later years, was too simplistic; that Jefferies' attitude towards landowner, tenant farmer and labourer were a good deal more complex and subtle than usually supposed, and reflected the complexity of the rural situation itself. There were illuminating discussions of the individual books and essays, among which those of *The Amateur Poacher*, *The Story of My Heart*, *Amaryllis at the Fair*, and the later essays were especially stimulating. The book was written in a beautifully clear, elegant English; the author was formidably well-read not just in Jefferies but in rural literature generally; and he had the gift for the apt but not always obvious or familiar quotation. The book's production matched the excellence of its contents, and not the least of its merits was the exhaustive bibliography, a godsend to all Jefferies scholars and researchers, for it included a complete list, totalling about 450 titles, of all Jefferies' articles and essays

with the place and date of their first publication in newspapers or magazine, and location in collected volumes. I have found it indispensable.

The *Critical Study* was a relatively young man's book: it arose out of Bill's thesis on *The Story of My Heart* for his MA degree. *The Rural Tradition*, published nine years later in 1974, was a more mature and ambitious work. Subtitled 'A Study of the Non-fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside', it did what no one book had done before: provided a comprehensive survey of the literature of the English countryside through individual studies of eleven of the most important and influential rural writers from Izaak Walton through Gilbert White, William Cobbett, Mary Mitford, George Borrow, Richard Jefferies, George Sturt ('George Bourne'), W H Hudson, Edward Thomas, and Henry Williamson, to H J Massingham. Bill saw these writers as forming part of a rural tradition in which Jefferies held a central and pivotal place, a Janus figure looking back to the world of the early 19th century and forward to what he called the 'troubled individualism' of such writers as Sturt, Thomas and Williamson. Indeed Bill called Jefferies' work the watershed of the whole rural tradition.

For its immense but lightly-carried scholarship and sympathetic treatment of a spectrum of writers of such diverse temperament and sensibility, I would call *The Rural Tradition* Bill's masterpiece. Beside the chapter on Jefferies those on Walton, Borrow, Hudson and Massingham are strongly recommended. This is scholarship at its best. The authority and conviction with which Bill discusses these writers and relates them to each other, and the wide range of quotation (I especially liked E M Forster's 'Borrow, Thoreau and sorrow'), encourage the reader to explore the other writers in the rural canon and curb any tendency to focus too narrowly upon Jefferies who is placed in the broader context of a hitherto only vaguely understood tradition of English writers on the countryside. The book is immensely readable and the author infects the reader with his own quietly stated but very real enthusiasm.

Turning to Bill's more specific work for the Society, I would first single out the series of notes on Jefferies' books which he has compiled over the years and placed at the disposal of members. The notes perform a variety of functions. They identify the source of quotations in Jefferies' texts, explain the meaning of dialect words, identify topographical references, and elucidate things like the meaning of the old woman's reply to Bevis in Chapter VIII of that book. When Bevis asks her where he and Mark are, she replies, 'This be Calais,' which Bill explains is a play on words, the old woman meaning 'Galley's', the local landowning family of Burderop. The short introductions furnish succinct but invaluable information on the genesis and publishing history of each volume.

These notes were part of a general campaign by Bill to nudge the Society into being a bit more scholarly, to foster more serious local research, and to expand the work of the Society in the direction of more disciplined, larger concerns. Though separated from us by the Atlantic he has always kept very closely in touch with the affairs of the Society through his correspondence with Cyril, writing reviews for the newsletter and giving the occasional talk during his visits to England. He has always been unstinting with help and advice over matters of research. I think something of the essential



flavour of the man, whom many of us had the pleasure of meeting for the first time when he and Hiroko came over from Canada for the 1987 centenary celebrations, comes out in the fact that he has always insisted on being addressed as plain Bill, not Professor Keith.

His letters display an affable down-to-earth quality that is very much in the tradition of the rural authors about whom he has written so expertly. He has set the Society new standards to aim at and pointed the way forward for Jefferies studies in the future. Enthusiasm without knowledge will no longer be enough. England's loss has been Canada's gain, and we have been privileged to have had such a rare combination of scholarship, sensitivity and intelligence as our President for the past 17 years. When he felt the expanding activities of the Society called for a more active President, Bill unselfishly bowed out with dignity and grace. He will be sorely missed - but not entirely, for as an honorary Life Member he will play an invaluable role as a sort of genial elder statesman in the Society.

### Books and Pamphlets by Professor W J Keith

*Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study.* Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1965; London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

*Charles G D Roberts.* Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969.

*The Rural Tradition: A Study of the Non-Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside.*

Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1974; [with variant subtitle] Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1975.

*The Poetry of Nature: Rural Perspectives in Poetry from Wordsworth to the Present.* Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1980.

*Epic Fiction: The Art of Rudy Wiebe.* Edmonton: U of Alberta Press, 1981.

*Canadian Literature in English.* London: Longman, 1985.

*Worshipper of Earth: A Centenary Tribute in Verse to Richard Jefferies.* Flitwick, Bedfordshire: Hub Editions, 1987.

*Regions of the Imagination: The Development of British Rural Fiction.* Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1988.

*Introducing Margaret Atwood's "The Edible Woman".* Toronto: ECW Press, 1989. Rpt. (paperback) Toronto: General Publishing, 1990.

*A Sense of Style: Studies in the Art of Fiction in English-Speaking Canada.* Toronto: ECW Press, 1989.

*Frederick Philip Grove and His Works.* Toronto: ECW Press, 1991.

*An Independent Stance: Essays on English-Canadian Criticism and Fiction.* Erin, Ontario: Porcupine's Quill, 1991.

*Echoes in Silence.* Fredericton, New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 1992. [Poems]

*Literary Images of Ontario.* Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1992.

# The Other Side: Visions of America

Phyllis Treitel

For someone who had never been to America, Richard Jefferies mentions the country and the people quite frequently. So from what he wrote, it is possible to discover what he felt about the United States, how close he came, twice, to going there himself and since he did not go, how important the ideal image of it was to him.

In 1864 as is well known, Jefferies and his cousin James Cox, after a failed attempt to walk to Moscow, bought cheap passages to New York. At Liverpool they found, having spent all their money, that their tickets did not cover their food on ship and returned to Swindon in disgrace. Presumably Jefferies' father could not be too severe; he himself had spent two years in New York State as a young man, and from numerous asides in *Bevis*, *The Amateur Poacher*, and other works it is clear that his exploits were well known to his family and regarded with some pride.

Soon after this episode in Jefferies' life he began work on the *North Wilts Herald*, and one of his first published works was a serialised story 'Who Will Win? or American Adventure'.<sup>1</sup> It is the highly improbable story of a young Englishman who sails to what sounds like Savannah, Georgia, and joins up with the army of the South. The actual scrapes which this young man gets into must have come straight out of Jefferies' head, including what may be the most incredible cliff-hanger episode ever to be foisted on a reader. The broad details of the parts dealing with campaigning could have been learned from newspapers, but the dialogue has quite a genuine ring to it and this was probably derived from his father, James Luckett Jefferies. The strongest hint of parental inspiration occurs near the beginning, however, where we read that: 'his [that is the hero's] uncle had been a fine specimen of the rover in his youth; had traversed the American continent, rifle in hand, and yet retained enough of the vital heat to return home and live to the ripe age of 83 - long enough with his tales of daring to implant a wild wish to visit the new world in his nephew's breast.'<sup>2</sup> Another work probably written at about this time but never published is 'Ben Tubbs Adventures'.<sup>3</sup> Ben too is carried off to the United States and undergoes a series of vicissitudes before he is rescued and restored to his family. If we are to judge by these two tales, Jefferies regarded the USA as a land of adventure and romance.

For those wishing, or needing, to emigrate it was, of course, another thing. Jefferies knew this very well, as he shows in several essays, such as chapter XVIII of *Hodge and His Masters*, for example, or 'Field Words and Ways' and 'Just Before Winter' in *Field and Hedgerow*. America was a place where poor people with skills could afford to go, were free to enter, and could expect to prosper. Even Martial Barnard in *The Dewy Morn* toys with the idea of going: 'I think I shall get out of it. I am very much inclined to sell off and go to the Jefferies saw America as a place for emigration but distinct from, say, Australia in its attitude to change and progress - an attitude which he clearly admired. In *Hodge*, he contrasted that attitude with the efforts of the local men: The most striking characteristic of their tutor [Mr X the gambler] is his Yankee-

like fertility of resource and bold innovations - the very antipodes of the old-style of "clod-compeller".<sup>5</sup> Into the mouth of Thardover in 'King of Acres' he put the words 'Wonder if a gang of American labourers could make anything out of our farms? There they work from sunrise to sunset. Suppose import a gang and try. Did anyone ever see such a helpless set as that yonder?'<sup>6</sup>

Chief of all emigrants for Jefferies must have been his own brother Henry who had stayed on at Coate until the farm was sold and then left for Texas, probably in late 1878 since the Texas census for 1900 shows that Harry Jeffries [sic] arrived in 1879. Jefferies' own notebook for 1880, number IX, now in the British Library, has an entry opposite folio 18 which reads: 'Cameron, Tex. 13 Bathwick St.' and a later one referring to Brenham, Washington County. These two towns are in Texas, not far from each other and not all that far from Richmond, where Harry Jefferies married in 1884. Most readers of Jefferies' books think that 'Orion' in *The Amateur Poacher* was modelled on Harry. If we assume that Harry Jefferies was already in Texas in 1879, then the reference to 'Orion' in the first chapter of *The Amateur Poacher*, printed first in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for 1 March 1879 is significant: The last I heard of him he had just ridden through a prairie fire and says the people out there think nothing of it'. More significant still are the words that follow, words omitted from the book version, namely: 'which I must go and see for myself as soon as these confessions are finished.' They finished, as far as the *Pall Mall* was concerned, in July 1879.

Did he really mean to go? There is some support for the idea. James Lockett Jefferies, widowed and in retirement in Bath, received letters in 1896 from Dr Theodore Rake. James Lockett replied, and in his letter of 21 November wrote: 'I had been in America - New York State on the Hudson for near two years when I was about sixteen ...'<sup>7</sup> In July 1879 James Lockett had paid a visit to Richard and Jessie at their home in Surbiton. Referring to this visit, and to his own visit to the United States he went on: '... and as he [Richard] intended making tour there then he took down all I could tell him and I very soon after had a letter from him and a Book of Walt Whitman's and the pages marked where I had described I have that letter and book still and the last he wrote me a very short time before he was gone.' From this it looks as though Harry had gone to Texas and written home enthusiastically to his family; the fever had infected Richard and for a while he seriously considered going out there, getting as much information as he could from his father.

As we know, he did not go, but it is of some importance that, at the age of 30, he still wanted to go to America and equally of importance that he decided not to go. If we look at the two statements: 'I must go and see for myself' and 'he intended making tour there' we are forced to think that emigration was not under consideration, rather a visit of two or three months, perhaps a working visit, leading to material for articles. Why did he not go? There could have been many reasons, but he would have had to leave behind a wife and

four-year-old son; he was doing well; and with *Greene Ferne Farm*, *Hodge*, and *Round About a Great Estate* all being worked on at the time when he might have gone, he had all the work he could handle. By the time he wrote chapter I of *Round*

*About a Great Estate*, the decision not to go must have been made, for he says: 'T sometimes seem to hear the sounds of axes that have been ringing in the forests of America for a hundred years and envy the joy of the lumbermen as the tall pines topple to the fall...' America has now become a permanent part of his imagined world.

In an early essay, 'Marlborough Forest', Jefferies wrote: 'The heart has a yearning for the unknown'.<sup>8</sup> For some reason he never looked to Europe, or Siberia, to satisfy his yearning though he might well have, since there were forests without end, and his trip at the age of 16 had certainly not been frustrated by want of territory. Europe may have failed to qualify, having been walked over by so many others, in other words being too much 'known'. Or Jefferies may have shared the feelings of the folk he describes in 'Country Literature': 'The Continent does not exist to them; but the United States is a sort of second home ...'<sup>9</sup> In addition to this, the vast, open, quiet, innocent spaces of America had a fundamental attraction for him to which he refers again and again, as in 'Downs' (*The Open Air*) where he declares 'A yard or two outside the railway in America the primeval forest or prairie often remains untouched' or in 'The Backwoods of London' where, in order to convey the sense of quiet in the place he is describing he says: 'it is still, as in the vast backwoods of the Far West.'<sup>10</sup> Geographically accurate or not, it is his mental picture that is important because it was an image that attracted and delighted him, both the sight and the sound.

From here it is a short step to the land of illusion, 'the beyond', the portrayal of which he was afraid would finally elude him. Long after the possibility of going there had vanished for ever, America remained for Jefferies an important concept, an Eden of boundless extent and permanent virtue, because he never had to face its drawbacks. Much of Jefferies' writing dealt with reality, but he was also a part-time Utopian, and in his fiction he could make experiments on paper, avoiding what was painful, simplifying the scene by clearing away restrictions and obstacles. Robert Louis Stevenson, his contemporary, but a more open man, expressed the same idea in 1884: '... the artist writes with more gusto and effect of those things which he has only wished to do, than of those which he has done. Desire is a wonderful telescope, and Pisgah the best observatory.'<sup>11</sup> For Jefferies there were several attempts to portray this lost domain' or land of longing.

In one of his last essays, the matchless 'My Old Village', he departs in one place from what is, superficially, a factual account and relates the story of the lost oasis. It is the story of men who stray into an oasis and enjoy happy times there, leaving loaded with treasure. In old age they try to return and are frustrated. Jefferies, in the essay, has been describing the joys and sorrows of his youth, and the futility of trying to recapture it; the fable illustrates his position. One's youth is inaccessible temporally, America is inaccessible spatially. One may look; one may not try to go, for to go will bring disappointment. A similar fable is recounted in *Bevis*, the story of the traveller to Tibet, who is shown the bronze door and allowed to glimpse the wonders beyond; 'his mind and soul had gone through' but the bronze door shuts and he cannot get through.<sup>12</sup> These are brief attempts by Jefferies to portray his idealised land.

A longer passage, and one which seems to parallel most closely Jefferies' vision of what America must be like is the episode with the shepherds in *After London*. The combination of cliffs, shore, open pasture, lake, and forest in chapter XXV, while supposedly like the geography of Coate Water, is also very like the terrain of the latter part of the story 'Who Will Win?' of 1866. It is an unlikely combination of physical features. It is unlikely in other ways: the simple, generous, pastoral people are hard to believe in. The gypsies who make raids remind us of American Indians, but it is not clear what they really want. Felix, the hero, commends himself to the shepherds by being polite to their women and by possessing skills which the men admire. Yet we find it hard to believe that they would want to make an unknown man their leader; we also find it hard to believe that Felix would be happy there. Jefferies himself, who refused to give up feather beds and white bread,<sup>13</sup> would have scorned such a life. Yet here is an ideal society to which he is clearly attached; it is not one he would have wished to live in.

The traveller in *Bevis*, we are told, 'got tired of it always coming to the other side. He did so hate the other side, and he used to dawdle through the forests and lose his way ... this was such a little world he hated it...' And this fabled land, this place with no other side, was troubling Jefferies long before he wrote *Bevis*, or *After London*, and once again it appears in a work of fiction. In *Restless Human Hearts*, a book he wrote shortly after his marriage, he said:

the very best thing for us all would be the discovery of a new continent; not one like America, where one can get across it and find the sea the other side, but an illimitable continent - a forest, a plain, mountains, rivers, lakes without end - stretching away for ever; a continent into which men might wander day by day, for ever and for ever, beginning in youth and going on till death came, straight away as the crow flies, and never reach the other side; a continent which hundreds of generations of men might take up each other's tracks - as the one dropped the other taking up the journey - and never *arrive*, but always be travelling onwards, onwards, onwards. Then we should have a resource - somewhere to hide ourselves; *now* the world is so small.<sup>14</sup>

These words strike the same chord as that heard in John Steinbeck's story *The Red Pony*, where the leader of the people who have westered as far as the Pacific tells of 'a line of old men along the shore hating the ocean because it stopped them.' Their ability to realize paradise proves unequal to their dream of attaining it.

Jefferies' traveller did not go through the bronze door; the men who lost their oasis never found it again. Jefferies continued to dream of an endless land with no settling of accounts; his mind and his soul went through but he himself never went there. America came nearest to being Jefferies' ideal land; it remained ideal so long as he did not go.

## NOTES

- 1 Reprinted in *The Early Fiction of Richard Jefferies* (Arthur Young, 1896) edited by Grace Toplis.
- 2 Ibid p. 93.
- 3 BL Add Mss 58826.
- 4 *The Dewy Morn*, chap. XXXVIII.
- 5 *Hodge and His Masters*, chap. V.
- 6 *The Hills and the Vale* (Duckworth, 1909) p. 81.
- 7 BL Add Mss 58822.
- 8 *The Hills and the Vale*, p. 12.
- 9 *The Life of the Fields*.
- 10 *Chronicles of the Hedges* (Phoenix House, 1948) p. 113.
- 11 'A Humble Remonstrance' in *Memories and Portraits* (Chatto and Windus, 1887).
- 12 *Bevis*, chap. XXXIX.
- 13 'Village Miners', *The Life of the Fields*.
- 14 *Restless Human Hearts* (Tinsley Bros, 1875) II, p. 293-4.

# Book Reviews

RICHARD JEFFERIES - A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL STUDY, George Miller and Hugoe Matthews. *Scalar Press, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot GU113HR. 1993. £75.*

When Hugoe Matthews spoke to the assembled audience on August 1st 1987 at the Richard Jefferies Centenary weekend, he gave some glimpses of the bibliographical discoveries that he and George Miller had made in the course of their respective but collaborative researches. Five years later we have the book that students and collectors of Jefferies' works have been waiting for. It will also be immensely useful to booksellers, dealers and libraries, for it is far more than a simple bibliography. Previous bibliographical work on Jefferies has been limited. Besant, Dartnell, Thomas, Looker, Keith and most recently Pearson all published checklists of Jefferies' works, but their lists have often been inaccurate and have tended to develop by a process of accretion. Pearson, for example, in 1979, listed accurately many previously unidentified and unattributed items, but continued to perpetuate the error of giving the date of publication of Jefferies' first letter to the *Times* as November 12th 1872. In fact it was published on November 14th, and was written on November 12th. It is typical of the care and scholarship of Miller and Matthews' work that they have taken nothing as read, and have checked original material whenever it exists.

The basic bibliography runs to 776 pages, with a further 27 pages of introductory material and a 10 page index. It is structured in a helpful way in five sections. Section A lists Jefferies' contributions to periodicals. The first known printings of all such publications are given, whether published during his lifetime or posthumously. Periodicals are listed alphabetically by title and the titles of Jefferies' contributions are listed chronologically for each periodical.

The second, and major, section (B) deals with original books and pamphlets by Jefferies, and those in which his writings first appeared in this form. It runs chronologically from *Reporting; Editing and Authorship* (1873) to *Return to Jefferies' Land* (1985). Full bibliographical details are given for publications up to 1900, and shorter accounts for those between 1900 and 1987. An introduction is given for each title, concerned with the background to its publication, correspondence, contracts and notebook references. For each book or pamphlet a detailed description of all distinct publishing units is given. This includes editions, impressions and reissues plus variants within these categories in some cases. I have tested this section on the two most confusing editions of Jefferies items in my own collection, namely the many variants of Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* with Jefferies' introduction and the variants of the Nelson third edition of *Wild Life in a Southern County*. In both cases it was possible to identify the appropriate

printing or binding with ease. This section of the book is by far the largest, running to almost 600 pages, and I would have found it helpful if each page had been headed

with the title of the work under consideration. This would make it easier to locate a particular work by flicking through.

Section C includes a list in chronological order of anthologies of Jefferies' works and separate editions of pieces previously collected in book form. The fourth section (D) breaks completely new ground by listing for the first time all known manuscripts and letters by Jefferies. The main archive consists of the collection made by Looker, now housed in the British Library, but material in 13 other institutions is also listed, as well as original letters and manuscripts in private collections. The final section (E) is a chronological listing of books, pamphlets and articles about Jefferies. This is of necessity selective and subjective, but in my opinion the authors have struck the right balance.

The book is well printed and bound and is a pleasure to handle. The most interesting illustration is the frontispiece: a previously unpublished portrait of Jefferies by Elliot and Fry. In Section B, the title page of each book is reproduced in the appropriate place and there is also extra illustrative material. Twelve further plates are included, some of considerable interest, such as the one of a letter from Jefferies to Tinsley. Several book covers are also illustrated, however, and I found these disappointing. The lack of contrast and greyness of the illustrations does a disservice to the attractive nature of the originals. 'Amaryllis' and 'Waylen' suffer particularly in this respect. Amaryllis is immediately redeemed, however, in the dust-jacket - a delightful reproduction of the cover of the 1904 Duckworth impression (M & M B24.6). The work as a whole appears to have been proof-read thoroughly - no easy task considering the vast quantity of material. A few typographical errors have crept in, most of which are of no significance.

The book is a staggering work of research and scholarship. It is comprehensive in its bibliographical detail, but it is also a book to sit down and read - or just dip into. The introductory section to *Amaryllis* runs to 16 pages, and is a fascinating background account of the genesis of the book and its publication. Before I started to read the book for the purposes of this review, I assumed that it would be of interest only to scholars and book-collectors or dealers. I have now completely revised that opinion. This book is of interest to everyone who likes the writing of Richard Jefferies. At £75 it is expensive in real terms - though cheaper than copies of First Editions of many of Jefferies' books - but it is extraordinarily good value in terms of the quality and quantity of its contents. Though fascinating, scholarly and thorough, it is not daunting. It answers questions but poses others. Because of this, it seems certain that it will provide a stimulus for future generations of Jefferies students who will then build on the excellent work undertaken by 'M & M'.

*John Price*



HODGE AND HIS MASTERS, Richard Jefferies. *Alan Button Publishing Ltd.*  
*Phoenix Mill, Far Thrupp, Stroud GL5 2BU. 1992. £12.99.*

A welcome feature of this new hard-back edition of a much-consulted and admired book, is the addition of many early photographs of characters and scenes in Wiltshire and adjoining counties. The reproduction in black and white of the gilt vignettes that appeared on the covers of the two-volume first edition (1880) record the 'old' and the 'new' forms of cultivation at that time.

In her Introduction, Angela Richardson, a long-standing student of Jefferies, offers not only an educated commentary on the book, but a sketch of the author's life, work, and physical sufferings, not without some statements that could bear correction.

Ms Richardson wisely reminds us in these days of economic depression that Jefferies was writing at a time of rapid agricultural change, when farmers had to meet the challenge of cheap imports, the founding of workers unions, the demands of improved wages, the drift of workers into the towns. Where the methodical and enterprising farmer adopting scientific methods and the use of the new machinery might survive, many others 'went downhill'.

Hodge is not one person, but farm labourer, fogger, shepherd, carter, ploughman, harvester, together with their women-folk, in the cottage and the fields; the young girls often seeking service in large farm-houses or with town families. Hodge's life was hard, and the workhouse often the tragic end.

The masters are drawn from landowner, squire, farmer, steward, solicitor, bank manager, County Court Judge, the parson and his wife, the local gentry. It is not a novel, but each of the chapters is a story of rural activity portrayed on one wide canvas.

*Hodge and His Masters* is at once a feast of enjoyable reading and a source-book for the social historian, often quoted in theses and studies. The Farmers' Parliament in 'Woolbury', the local show at Fleeceborough, the varying fortunes of the farmers, the uneasy reception of the Cottage Charter, the exquisite portrait of Mademoiselle the Governess, are all presented with Jefferies' sharp reporter's instinct for a good story and his uncanny memory. He was reluctant to use real names, but surely Swindon and Cirencester are among the places disguised. This all makes for intriguing reading. Jefferies' writing is lively and generous in observation and information. Whilst he may voice sympathies and objections, I think we may admit the claim in his Preface that 'the sketches are written in a fair and impartial spirit'.

*Cyril Wright*