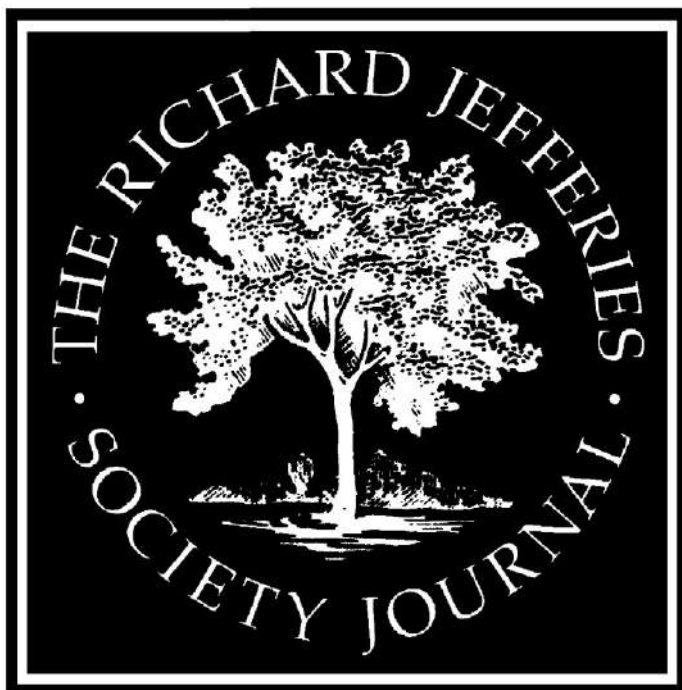




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The RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY (Registered Charity No. 1042838) was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887). Its activities include the Annual General Meeting and Birthday Lecture, winter meetings, summer outings, special events, and the publication of two *Journals*, spring and autumn Newsletters and an Annual Report. Membership is open to all on payment of the current annual subscription: £12.00 – individual; £14.00 – couple (UK rate).

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The principal aim of *The Richard Jefferies Society Journal* is to present material by Jefferies that has not been published or reprinted, or that is difficult to obtain, together with articles about Jefferies (commissioned or submitted), items of research and discovery, synopses of talks and lectures, book reviews, Wiltshire material relating to Jefferies, and correspondence.

Submissions, preferably in electronic format, should be sent to the Editor at the following address: RJSjournal@richardjefferiescreativity.co.uk or by post to the Hon. Secretary. MSS and correspondence for publication will be acknowledged but cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The Editorial team comprises: Rebecca Welshman and Simon Coleman; proof-reading by Peter Robins; type-setting by Jean Saunders.

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RICHARD JEFFERIES' BIRTHPLACE at Coate is a museum. It is open on Sundays from 2-5pm in the summer, on the second Wednesday of the month from 10am-4pm throughout the year and otherwise by arrangement. For details about the Museum please apply to the Secretary.



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Notes about a Tricycle

Samuel Looker's notes and transcript: 3 leaves, four pages entitled 'Reflections in Jefferies Holograph. Middle period?'

As I was starting out it came on to spot raining and being susceptible to moisture (not as a drinking but a rheumatic way) I had to go back and put on my coat. When my boy came to me with a pitiful story of an injury to his tricycle and might he take it to the blacksmiths and get it repaired? At the foot of the steps I met the postman with a letter that had to be answered and while I was scrawling it a friend arrived.

After we had been in this twelvemonth we found that it was too much exposed the wind came round the corner furiously: the upper rooms were uninhabitable from cold; basement cold; Just when I wanted money most in order to move, the oldest firm in the trade stopped payment, there were assets but it would require 12 months to realise. A tremendous jerk of the elephant. A capital appointment was offered to me but, as I could not move I could not take it.

Nothing runs like the express – that is the least part of the journey – the real travelling is in the starting and the end: eternal worries to start, all directions, and the one thing forgotten. At the end the cob, dirty, enters the wrong road, refuses to go further, bribery, got a man to show the way, find a box dropped off half a mile back, weary, rheumatic twinges and shaken.

It is likely that Jefferies wrote these notes while living at 'The Downs', Crowborough, East Sussex, sometime in 1886. The extent of Jefferies' suffering at this time has been well documented by Matthews and Treitel in *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies* (1994). Jefferies' illness – probably unmanaged tuberculosis of the spine – had worsened after the death of his youngest son in March 1885, while the family were living at Eltham. In a letter to C.P. Scott on 22 October 1886, Jefferies records that in the September of 1885 his 'spine seemed suddenly to snap ... as if one of the vertebrae had been taken away ... I had to take to the sofa again, and was confined to the house for over seven months, quite helpless. I could not undress myself.'¹ The reference in the notes to the 'foot of the steps', the encounter with the postman, and the proximity of the blacksmiths, would seem to be recollecting time spent at 14 Victoria Road, Eltham. As shown in the photograph,

¹ Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel, *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies* (Oxon: Petton Books, 1994), p. 198.

this three storey Victorian town house was an end of terrace, with steps leading down from the front door (and in Jefferies' time the pavement and road would likely have been lower). This house also matches the description of the exposed location – in the 1880s the house was fringed by open fields, and its 'upper rooms' and 'basement' would have been cold.



14 Victoria Road, Eltham

We know that the family moved to Eltham in June or July 1884, and that by June 1885 they had moved to Rotherfield. Matthews and Treitel state that the last definite date for Jefferies at Eltham is given by a letter of 7 April 1885. However, from these notes, it would seem that the Eltham period extended to 'twelvemonth'. Jefferies' 'boy', referred to in the notes, would have been Harold (known as 'Toby'), who in 1885 was aged ten.

Jefferies' allusions to 'rheumatic twinges', and shaken nerves, relate to the period of illness at Eltham, which in the 7 April letter to James Wilkie, he refers to as a 'long and severe illness', which crippled his handwriting. This period began in April 1885, when, due to ulceration of the intestines, he 'broke down utterly, and ... became ... helpless and weak.'²

The reference to the 'oldest firm in the trade' and the withholding of assets may relate to Jefferies' dealings with Cassell's in April 1885 and the publication of *After London*, although there is no other evidence to support this. Although the notes are short and disjointed, the phrase 'jerk of the elephant', which Jefferies uses in relation to financial worries and a missed work opportunity, is interesting. I can trace the

² *Ibid.*, p. 194.

phrase to only two publications in the public domain – dating from 1871 and 1975. In both instances, the phrase is used to describe the movement of an elephant when riding in a howdah (a seat to travel in which is affixed to an elephant's back). Imperial hunters would travel in these when out shooting what Jefferies terms in *Bevis* 'big game'.³ The jerking movement of the animal as it walked would often affect the shooter's aim and cause them to miss.⁴ It is of interest that Jefferies was thinking in these terms when his hunting and shooting days were far behind him. This turn of phrase, used at this time in his life, may suggest his continual and at times, desperate, desire – despite his worsening health – to travel abroad and to experience new wonders of the living world. It also refers to his focus and commitment to his career as a writer, which he felt was being misaligned by the contrivance of circumstances and ill health.

In August 1886, Jefferies wrote a melancholy letter to Longman (quoted by Besant), in which he refers to his care under the guidance of Professor Gamgee (who developed the 'Gamgee pad' for incontinence).⁵ Jefferies writes that Gamgee recommended that 'complete recovery would follow a few weeks' basking in South Africa, or failing that, southern Europe. There is plenty of energy in me still. I sometimes dream of using a rifle – a dream indeed, to a man who can with difficulty drag himself across a field.⁶ In the absence of other evidence, these references to shooting may associate the notes with August 1886.

Rebecca Welshman

³ See *Bevis*: 'They could not desert their island: it would have been so like running away too, and they had so often talked of Africa and shooting big game.' (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), p. 439.

⁴ See *My Forest*, vol. 11 (Forest Department: Karnataka, 1975), p. 168: 'The sudden jerk of the elephant threw Dr. Ramaswamy to the ground where he lay unconscious. The two trackers who were standing behind trees, came and lifted him up. It was very fortunate, he suffered no injury...'. Also, *Oriental Sporting Magazine*, vol. 1 (1873), p. 6: 'all guns used in the howdah should have stops — to set them is the work of a moment, and when it is recollected how small and confined a thing a howdah is, and how, by a sudden jerk of the elephant at the moment of loading, ...'.

⁵ Matthews and Treitel, p. 206.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Richard Jefferies' Father

This letter appeared in *Country Life* on 21 March 1908 and supplies the only known description of the father of Richard Jefferies (James Luckett Jefferies) at the end of his life.

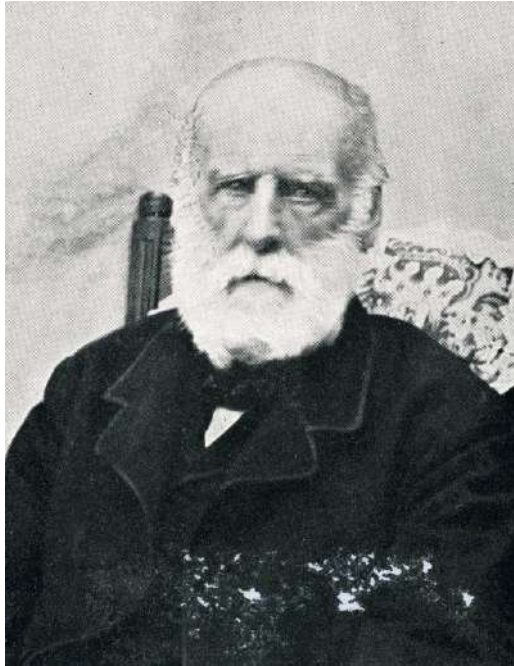
Sir
It was in the autumn of 1885 that I first remember seeing the father of Richard Jefferies, and it was not till some time after our becoming acquainted that we knew him to be the father of the author, well known in the literary world for his essay on Nature. He had worked for some time in the garden of our house near Bath, and must then have been nearing seventy. He passed away at the age of eighty in 1896. His fine intellectual face, broad forehead and refined, handsome features could not fail to interest, and his keen love of Nature proved him to be no unworthy father of so gifted and talented a son. How well I remember the poor old man's grief at the death of his son Richard in August, 1887, and his pride and pleasure as many words of praise appeared in newspapers and magazines, and the talent, for long unappreciated, seemed at last to be receiving its merited need of favour.

Jefferies would often speak of how, when in his prosperous days he worked on his little farm near Swindon, he tried to interest his son Richard from boyhood in everything connected with Nature, noting the song of birds, their haunts and habits, and all the varied beauties of forest, field and woodland, with the flowers peculiar to each locality.

After the death of his son, the old man gradually became more feeble and with great reluctance had to give up the work and active life he loved so well. Jefferies and his wife lived for some years in apartments in Bath, but he often came to see us, and seldom left without a nosegay from the garden. He would ask for the buds of flowers such as iris or poppy, that he and his old wife might watch them expand. His wife was stricken with paralysis for more than a year before she died, and it was touching to learn with what love and tenderness the old husband waited upon her. He outlived her about a year and a half. He constantly wandered up to the beautiful cemetery at Locksbrook. 'It is good for us to come here,' he said. In a letter received from him, dated November 24th, 1896, just a month before he passed to his rest on Christmas Eve, he says: 'There is now a marble headstone to the memory of the mother of Richard Jefferies — placed there last week; I saw it yesterday. I thought our lot would have been, like that of the rude forefathers of the hamlet, nothing but a

mouldering heap beneath the yew tree shade.' We said goodbye to him on a beautiful August day, 1896, in Locksbrook cemetery as we stood beside the grave of 'one' whose kindness to him he had never forgotten. We felt, indeed, it was 'farewell' as we turned to look for the last time on the fine old face.

Isabella Warde



James Lockett Jefferies

Owners of Jefferies' Farm

Frances J. Gay

Reprinted from the *Swindon Review: a local miscellany of the arts*,
Number 7, 1955, pp63-67 by permission of the Libraries, Museum, Arts
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*'Jefferies Farm Situate at Coate in the Parish of Chisledon
in the County of Wiltshire'*

So runs the description in the legal documents of 'THE BIRTHPLACE OF RICHARD JEFFERIES' bought by Swindon in 1926 for £2,100. The house is listed in the Ministry of Works Schedule of Historic and Other Buildings. At the time of writing [1955] it is unoccupied. Swindon's purchase, however, was only about one third of the property of 36 acres bought in 1800 from a Thomas Herring for £1,100 by Richard Jefferies, baker of Swindon and a man of substance, great-grandfather of Richard Jefferies the writer. The name of Herring is closely connected with the early history of Swindon and the villages round, and boys and girls of the Stratton Schools still benefit from a Charity founded in 1725 by the Will of a John Herring. The Coate estate was in the hands of the Herring family for several generations and it would seem that the farmhouse, originally a rambling thatched cottage, was built not later than the early 18th Century. Thomas Herring had mortgaged the property with a yeoman farmer of Badbury, Young Choules, connections of whose family bearing the name, live now in Swindon. One of these possesses a narrow, leather-bound pocket ready-reckoner for measuring timber, stone and glass, inscribed in faded old-time writing:

YOUNG CHOULS
his book April 20 of 1768.

This would appear to be the Young Choules of the mortgage, and if so, 'yesterday becomes today', for the hand that thumbed its yellowed pages nearly two hundred years ago was the same that took from Jefferies' great-grandfather £723-13s. and signed the document discharging the mortgage on the Freehold Estate at Coate, part of which now belongs to the people of Swindon. When the purchase was completed by the payment to Thomas Herring of the balance, £376-7s., the estate became the property of Richard Jefferies, Baker of Swindon, 'for his quiet enjoyment.' (Unexpectedly refreshing words,

these, to find in a legal document!)

This Richard Jefferies died in 1825 leaving all his property to his three children Fanny, James and John. The first two died unmarried and intestate. John, grandfather of the writer, who lived at the bakery in The Square, Old Swindon, took out letters of administration and, since there was a restrictive clause in the Will, became sole heir. His father did not believe in banks and he found hoards of golden spade guineas hidden in the house, some of which he used to enlarge the thatched cottage at Coate. Other alterations and refinements were later added by his eldest and only surviving son, James Luckett Jefferies, father of the writer; at a still later date much of the thatch was removed. James Luckett and his father did not get on well together, but when the son married in 1844 the young people were settled by the father in the farmhouse, though it does not appear that the property was actually given to James Luckett outright. In *Amaryllis at the Fair*, which is generally considered to give in many respects a fair picture of the Jefferies' home-life at the farm the heroine, Amaryllis, prays for her father:

Do make my grandfather kinder to him and not so harsh for the rent, let him give the place to my father now. Please let him have this place for his very own, for I do so fear lest those who set my grandfather against him should have a Will made so that my father should not have this house and land as he ought to do as the son. He has made it so beautiful with trees, and brought the fresh spring water up to the house and done so many clever things, and his heart is here, and it is home to him, and no other place could be like it.

This idea is given substance by the fact that in the Will of John Jefferies the Estate at Coate was left to his son subject to a charge upon and out of the property, of legacies totalling £1,300 with interest in addition, to his two sisters. The Will was proved on 12th July 1868; the next day the son paid the money to his sisters and the following day took up a mortgage on the property for £1,500. Thus did James Luckett Jefferies take the first step to financial ruin. In Jefferies' books and in reminiscences of the family there is evidence that James Luckett Jefferies delighted in the house and surroundings but that his interests lay more in beautifying the place than in working it for profit. One of his nieces wrote:

Anyone who ever lived or even visited at the old home would know how every individual inch of the ground, every sapling tree, every flowering shrub or nest hiding hedgerow was loved and treasured by its owner.

And again in *Amaryllis at the Fair* the son said of his father:

The neighbourhood round about could never understand Iden, never

could see why he had gone to such great trouble to render the homestead beautiful with trees, why he had replanted the orchard with pleasant eating apples in the place of the old cider apples, hard and sour. 'Why wouldn't thaay a' done for he as well as for we?' All the acts of Iden seemed to the neighbourhood to be the acts of a 'voor'. When he cut a hedge for instance, Iden used to have the great bushes that bore unusually fine May bloom saved from the billhook that they might flower in the spring. So, too, with the crab-apple for the sake of the white blossom, so, too, with the hazel—for the nuts. But what caused the most 'wonderment' was the planting of the horse chestnuts in the corner of the meadow. Whatever did he want with horse chestnuts? No other horse chestnuts grew about there. You couldn't eat horse chestnuts when they dropped in the autumn.'

This place, then, so beloved by James Luckett Jefferies was mortgaged in 1868 for £1,500. By 1871 he had paid the interest but nothing off the principal and had taken up another £100. Two years later the mortgage was called in and he was faced with a claim for £1,660-14s. which included outstanding interest. A Swindon solicitor, J. E. Goddard Bradford, paid this and lent him a further £339-6s., making the mortgage £2,000. In 1875 Bradford lent him a further £500 and a year later another £40 so that by 1877 the mortgage had grown to £2,540 with £150 arrears of interest which Bradford agreed to add to the principal, loaning the unfortunate man at the same time another £60, making a total mortgage of £2,750. In *Amaryllis at the Fair*, Jefferies described a dreadful occasion when a bailiff was in the house and his father (Farmer Iden) dressed in his best, trudged into town to borrow from his solicitor to pay the debt. Just so did the mortgage grow snow-ball fashion. Finally, worried with household bills and crippled by the mortgage, James Luckett Jefferies gave up the struggle, Bradford foreclosed, the place was put up for sale by public auction and the family left the district. In a pencilled note found among Jefferies' effects after his death, there is a poignant comment on this period: 'The melancholy chord of the work, work, work all life, yet the mortgage.' A tattered document still exists containing the plan and conditions of sale of the property to be held ON FRIDAY the FIRST day of JUNE 1877. A footnote to the statement is of interest today: 'The Dwelling-House, with a slight outlay, might be converted into a genteel Family Residence.' Apparently no sale was effected and the place remained untenanted until September of the next year when it was bought by Messrs. John & Charles Thynne and Charles St. Clare Bedford on behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster who already owned part of the adjoining land. They paid £4,306, out of which Bradford claimed £2,810. Richard Jefferies, then living near

London, must have visited the place at this time, for another pencilled note reads: 'The old house deserted. Wall scribblings. The swallows building inside the broken window, attaching their nests to the ceiling.'¹ James Luckett Jefferies took a job as a gardener in Bath, working, it is pleasant to reflect amongst trees and flowers till his death at eighty in 1896.

The rest of the tale is soon told. The day after the purchase Messrs. Thynne and Bedford sold the portion of the property which Swindon now holds to Jonathan and William Gosling brothers of South Marston and Coate for £1,600. The latter died in 1881 and Jonathan took over the place. He let it to a farmer, Thomas Large, who lived there thirteen years. John Maskelyne, Auctioneer, is said to have lived in the house during this period also, and later Jonathan Gosling himself, who is remembered as having bred greyhounds there for which he went often to Swindon to buy beef steak. In 1903 the house was let at a rent of £60 a year to Edward Ferris, Auctioneer, who occupied it till the death of Gosling, when it was sold to Job Lawrence in 1915 for £1,250. Older generations of Swindonians will remember the Lawrence family who managed Coate Reservoir and its boats, when the charge to go in was one penny and there were no buses. Then family parties walked over the fields to enjoy the delights of Coate, never wanting more than they found in those simple days. On the death of Job Lawrence in 1922, Mr. Percy George Herring, now of Upper Stratton Farm, bought the place for £2,000 and lived in it four years. Then yielding to the repeated persuasions of Reuben George, former Mayor of the Borough and a Jefferies enthusiast, he sold it to Swindon Corporation who, he understood, wished by its use to honour the memory of the writer. Mr. Herring speaks with affection of the house, saying it made a beautiful home, and remembers with pleasure entertaining people who came because of its associations, one of whom, an American woman, painted a picture of the house with his daughter looking over the garden wall like Amaryllis did on Fair-day. Other visitors spent much time in the attics made famous as the refuge of the writer in his youth. Happily these are still much as they were in Jefferies' day.

'A house needs to be loved', said the Marquis of Lansdowne performing the opening ceremony of Swindon's mansion at Lydiard Park in May of this year. The Jefferies' House was much loved in the past. May it be so in the future!

¹ It is believed now that this does not relate to Jefferies' birthplace but to an old house at the nearby village of Bishopstone.

Imagining Archaeology: Nature and Landscape in the Work of Richard Jefferies

Part Two

Rebecca Welshman

Presented as the Richard Jefferies Society Birthday Lecture
3 November 2012, Liddington Village Hall

When *The Story of My Heart* was published in 1883 Jefferies was making a good living from his writing, and no longer pursued archaeology as a subject in itself. Yet although he reminds his readers that his interest in archaeology was by then ‘an interest long since extinct’,¹ he continues to employ archaeological imagery and terminology to aid his expression. In the ‘Genesis’ of *The Story of My Heart*, he writes that ‘unhewn fragments will be thrown together; the past, the present and the future will be co-mingled: there will be little shape and no order.’² The phrase ‘unhewn fragments’ is unusual, and appears in only a few nineteenth century publications to describe the construction of rough stone walls. These include an anthropological account of ancient Egypt published in 1837,³ and a poem by William Mason titled ‘The English Garden’ in *The Works of the English Poets* by Samuel Johnson (1810).⁴ Jefferies was an admirer of Walter Scott – one of the first authors to use archaeological landscapes as settings in his works. The opening pages of *Ivanhoe*, for example, set in twelfth century England, introduce the Saxon slave, Girth, standing within a ‘circle of rough unhewn stones’. That Jefferies associates the idea of the autobiography with the construction of a defensive barrier, or wall, points again towards the significance of the Roman walls at Cirencester and Pevensey where he records attempting to write. At both locations, the Roman walls are particularly well

¹ *The Story of My Heart*, p. 118.

² ‘Genesis’, p. 169.

³ See Sir John Gardner Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1837), p. 229.

⁴ ‘Then let taste select/ the unhewn fragments, that may give its front/ A rocky rudeness’. Cited in Samuel Johnson, *The Works of the English Poets: from Chaucer to Couper* vol. 18 (London: J. Johnson, 1810) p. 391. Further indication that Jefferies’ expression was influenced by his reading of Romantic literature can be surmised from his inclusion or reference to certain figures, including Prometheus, Sesostris, and Diogenes Laertius, all of who feature in Lord Byron’s poem ‘The Age of Bronze’ (1823), a political piece with strong allusions to history and classicism.

preserved and have been noted for their size and defensive purpose. In the final version of *The Story of My Heart* Jefferies alters the phrase 'unhewn fragments' to 'rude stones', and explains in more detail the effect of the Roman setting on his conceptual development. Having been to Pevensey and explored the site, the grand entrance on the southern side is the only place that has the thin red bricks that Jefferies mentions:

It happened just afterwards that I went to Pevensey, and immediately the ancient wall swept my mind back seventeen hundred years to the eagle, the pilum, and the short sword. The grey stones, the thin red bricks laid by those whose eyes had seen Caesar's Rome, lifted me out of the grasp of houselife, of modern civilization, of those minutiae which occupy the moment. The grey stone made me feel as if I had existed from then till now, so strongly did I enter into and see my own life as if reflected. My own existence was focussed back on me; I saw its joy, its unhappiness, its birth, its death, its possibilities among the infinite, above all its yearning Question. Why? Seeing it thus clearly, and lifted out of the moment by the force of seventeen centuries, I recognised the full mystery and the depth of things in the roots of the dry grass on the wall, in the green sea flowing near. Is there anything I can do?⁵

In the text Jefferies dates this visit to Pevensey as 1880, and the location is noted by Miller and Matthews to be 'symbolic' in a similar way to London and the Wiltshire Downs.⁶ In his notes for *The Story of My Heart* Jefferies writes that he had burned all previous attempts 'in anger or despair'⁷, but in 1880, after visiting Pevensey Castle, he made notes which he kept and from which developed the finished manuscript. In the book he describes his thoughts and feelings upon entering the site and being surrounded by the Roman wall:

The mystery and the possibilities are not in the roots of the grass, nor is the depth of things in the sea; they are in my existence, in my soul. The marvel of existence, almost the terror of it, was flung on me with crushing force by the sea, the sun shining, the distant hills. With all their ponderous weight they made me feel myself: all the time, all the centuries made me feel myself this moment a hundred-fold. I determined that I would endeavour to write what I had so long thought of, and the same evening put down one sentence. There the sentence remained two years. I tried to carry it on; I hesitated because I could not express it: nor can I

⁵ *The Story of My Heart*, pp. 26–7.

⁶ George Miller and Hugoe Matthews, *Richard Jefferies: A Bibliographical Study* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), p. 337.

⁷ 'The Genesis', p. 169.

now, though in desperation I am throwing these rude stones of thought together, rude as those of the ancient wall.⁸

When Jefferies was conceiving the book in the 1870s, the architect James Ferguson had just published *Rude Stone Monuments* (1872), which quickly became a popular book on megalithic culture. Ferguson calls for megalithic structures to be recognised as belonging to a ‘style of architecture ... like Gothic, Grecian, Egyptian, Buddhist, or any other,’⁹ and highlights their cultural and anthropological significance.¹⁰ The concept of prehistoric, or ‘rude stone’ monuments being ‘thrown up’ or ‘thrown’ together was frequently used in archaeological reports to describe the process of their construction. For Jefferies, the idea of Roman engineers throwing together the stones of the castle for the purpose of the time, not necessarily with foresight into its longevity, was akin to the process of authorship, wherein the construction of an entirely new literary form was an unpredictable, but necessary, reaction to personal and cultural circumstances.



Pevensey Castle, taken by Rebecca Welshman, November 2011

Pevensey is a historically significant site, being the landing place of William the Conqueror before he began the Norman invasion of 1066.

⁸ *The Story of My Heart*, pp. 26–7. On a visit to Pevensey Castle I identified the specific part of the Roman wall which Jefferies refers to. Only the pillared entrance on the Western side bears the ‘thin red bricks’ which he describes. This section of the wall, more than anywhere on the site, is the thickest, tallest, and most impressive.

⁹ James Ferguson, *Rude Stone Monuments in all Countries: their age and uses* (London: John Murray, 1872), p. x.

¹⁰ The phrase ‘rude stones’, which Jefferies borrows, appears in Ferguson’s book 13 times, and features in the periodical press in journals and magazines in the 1870s.

In his account of visiting Pevensey in 1891, the author and antiquary Augustus Jessop refers to the site's national and cultural importance by writing that 'it is the duty of every Englishman to make a pilgrimage to Pevensey'.¹¹ According to Jessop, the site formed part of a much larger Roman footprint that had once changed the face of the entire south coastline:

From end to end of that Sussex coast we find the deep impress of Roman feet, the dent of Roman hands. The very ocean shrank back before them. Nowhere in Britain has the coastline undergone such change as here. Once it seems that the tides guard the city then called Regnum — a city which doubtless had been growing for ages with its great earthworks, its port crowded with ships, its temple or temples, such as they were, its warriors, its merchants, its courtiers, its statesmen, its party of home rulers and its other party of liberal-conservatives, just as men live now.¹²

Nineteenth-century accounts favoured Pevensey over other Roman sites in Britain for its size and location, and identified it as the site which gave rise to contemporary Britain. An anonymous article titled 'Eastbourne' in *London Society* (1882) – which Jefferies refers to in his notebooks¹³ — describes the area as 'the neighbourhood of castles', with Herstmonceaux also being within easy reach.¹⁴ Pevensey is described as 'a solid page in stone of English history',¹⁵ and a visiting place favoured by artists, men of letters, reviewers, and novelists.¹⁶ The literary associations with Pevensey go back through history, but notably appear in the work of James Thomson, whose sensitive depictions of nature are recognised to have been an influence on Romanticism. Thomson's poem 'Liberty' describes the attack on the Saxon stronghold by the Normans as the mixing of different nations into 'one exalted stream'.¹⁷

By degrees the Saxon empire sank,
Then set entire in Hastings' bloody field.
Compendious war! (on Britain's glory bent,
So fate ordained) in that decisive day,
The haughty Norman seized at once an isle,

¹¹ Augustus Jessop, 'Random Roaming', *The Nineteenth century and after: a monthly review*, Jan. 1894, p. 132.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹³ This reference was omitted by Samuel Looker in his published transcriptions of Jefferies' notebooks, but it occurs in the originals.

¹⁴ 'Eastbourne', *London Society*, Vol.42 (1882), p. 148.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁷ See James Thomson, 'Liberty' (1734), in Samuel Johnson, *The works of the English poets, from Chaucer to Cowper: including the series edited with prefaces, biographical and critical* (London: J. Johnson, 1810), 18, p. 488.

For which, through many a century, in vain,
The Roman, Saxon, Dane, had toiled and bled:
Of Gothic nations this the final burst;
And, mixed the genius of these people all,
Their virtues mixed in one exalted stream,
Here the rich tide of English blood grew full.

The Normans effectively renamed Eastbourne, introducing their own word 'borne', meaning 'boundary', which was more easily pronounceable than 'bourne'. Nineteenth century historians identified this as contributing to the powerful sense of crossing points and exchange associated with Eastbourne and Pevensey. The mixing of 'blood' and nationality gave the site an unusual prominence in archaeology, as practitioners sought to excavate evidence of the struggles which took place there. When Jefferies visited Pevensey in 1880, the most recent excavations had been undertaken by Roach Smith and Mark Anthony Lower in 1852. They concluded that the Roman castrum, which enclosed 12 acres, was the best surviving example of Roman building in England.

The defensive purpose of the great walls of Roman Britain, which drew the attention of historians, artists, writers and others in the nineteenth century, appeared to have held a similar fascination for Jefferies. The wall at Pevensey was not just defensive, but clearly marked a territory from the time when Anderida (the Roman name for Pevensey) had once been a town. Throughout history, Pevensey was the site of struggle and capture. Knowledge of the long sieges, starving inhabitants for weeks at a time, caught the imagination of poets and authors, including the poet James Thomson whose poem 'Liberty' (1734) refers to the pursuit of freedom at Pevensey.¹⁸ For Jefferies, who borrowed from the Romantic tradition of celebrating heroes and their conquering prowess, the historical fight for freedom translated into a fight for liberty in expression; a personal fight to free the mind from the oppression of engrained social, political and spiritual structures and discover new territory. Jefferies' fascination with the beginning of England during this time might be connected to his naming his first son, born in 1875, 'Harold', which may have been after Harold Godwinson, the last Anglo-Saxon King of England who defended the country against William the Conqueror in 1066 at the Battle of Hastings. Moreover, the name of the hero of *After London*, Felix, was also the name of the Roman Pontiff who was ruling at the

¹⁸ See Thomson's 'Liberty', which refers to the pursuit of freedom at Pevensey in the lines, 'The fort of freedom! / Slow till then, alone, / had work'd that general liberty, that nature breathes, and which, / By me to bondage was corrupted Rome' (p. 488).

time of the fall of Anderida, and Felix's surname – Aquila – matches the name of the Norman family of de Aquila that occupied Pevensey.¹⁹

As I discuss in my PhD thesis, the setting of this 'exceptional' lost city which fell under unusually 'savage' and violent circumstances likely contributed to Jefferies' conception of the fall of Britain's capital city in *After London*. At various points during the period 1879–1882, during the conception and writing of *The Story of My Heart*, Jefferies visited a number of sites along the coast between Brighton and Eastbourne. These included Devil's Dyke, the site of an Iron Age fort and tumulus; Ditchling Beacon, also home to an Iron age fort and numerous other archaeological features including tumuli and dew ponds; Wilmington Hill, site of a further Iron Age fort; and Beachy Head, the highest chalk sea cliff in Britain and an ancient burial site. I suggest that spending time on these hilltop sites encouraged Jefferies' deep engagement with nature and the wider cosmos, which eventually resulted in the first drafts of the book between 1880 and 1882. Notes and drawings in his notebooks made during a five-week family holiday to Hove in 1879, imply that he visited Brighton Museum, known then for its extensive pottery collections. The museum was an obvious place to begin a tour of the history and prehistory of Sussex. Jefferies' notes for Sept–Oct 1879 constitute many observations about the weather, location, and nature notes. They also include drawings of jugs, and notes on bowls, mugs, and cups.

From Jefferies' notebooks it would seem that he then visited Devil's Dyke, before travelling eastwards to see other downland sites, including Pevensey Castle. During the time he spent in Sussex, Jefferies speculated on the area's history. The event of visiting Brighton Museum particularly seems to have precipitated meditative reflections on past human activity in the Weald area:

No written history has preserved the daily life of the men who ploughed the Weald behind the hills there, or tended the sheep on the Downs, before our beautiful land was crossed with iron roads; while news, even from the field of Waterloo, had to travel slowly. And, after all, written history is but words, and words are not tangible.

But in this collection of old English jugs, and mugs, and bowls, and cups, and so forth, exhibited in the Museum, there is the real presentment of old rural England. Feeble pottery has ever borne the impress of man more vividly than marble. From these they quenched

¹⁹ The origins of the Italo-Norman family name can be traced to L'Aigle, which translates into Italian as Aquila, with both names meaning 'eagle', and the family's long affiliation with Pevensey Castle meant it became known as the Castle of the Eagle Honour. Jefferies' specific reference to the 'eagle' in his description of Pevensey in *The Story of My Heart* thus implies he was drawing from his own knowledge of its Norman history.

their thirst, over these they laughed and joked, and gossiped, and sang old hunting songs till the rafters rang, and the dogs under the table got up and barked. Cannot you see them?²⁰

'Feeble pottery has ever borne the impress of man more vividly than marble' suggests an implicit reference to prehistoric pottery which preceded the 'marble' creations of ancient Greece.²¹ The idea that 'words are not tangible' anticipates the problems with expression that Jefferies would experience a year later when drafting *The Story of My Heart*. This is one of the earliest references to Jefferies' frustration and disappointment with written history; the suggestion that as an expression of consciousness it does little to develop or open the channels of the mind.

Miller and Matthews note that the essays in *Nature Near London* 'are some of the first to use the emotional/spiritual vocabulary of *The Story*, especially those describing visits to South Coast places which somehow at last precipitated the book.'²² 'To Brighton' was one of these essays, and Jefferies' comment, 'there is always hope in the hills', suggests that preparation for the book was needing something extra; something to precipitate the process of writing it down. I suggest that the prehistoric landscapes which Jefferies visited during this time on the South Coast helped to forge an important link between his contemporary thought and his experiences of Liddington Hill in the 1860s, which he used as a starting point for *The Story of My Heart*. 'To Brighton' describes a trip to the hill fort on Ditchling Beacon, the third highest hill on the South Downs. At the time of writing Jefferies was living in Surbiton and no longer visited Liddington Hill in Wiltshire. His keen anticipation of seeing the Downs from the train is inferred by 'fitful glances at the newspaper or the novel', and his admission that 'now I can read no longer, for I know, without any marks or tangible evidence, that the hills are drawing near'. As this visit predated his notes made for *The Story of My Heart* at Pevensey Castle by a year, it suggests that the South Downs provided an essential ingredient that would contribute to the making of *The Story of My Heart*.

Both descriptions of the hill fort sites have a similar structure and language. At Ditchling 'a sunken fosse and earthwork have slipped together', and at Liddington 'there was a spot where the outer bank had partially slipped, leaving a gap'. A strong similarity occurs in both descriptions of Jefferies walking up the hill and its psychological

²⁰ 'To Brighton', *Nature Near London* (Teddington: Echo Library, 2009), p. 111.

²¹ Jefferies was particularly interested in Greek sculpture and visited the British Museum and the Louvre in Paris.

²² Miller and Matthews, p. 336.

effect. The Ditchling account reads: 'Now every step exposes the climber to the force of the unchecked wind. ... the heart grows lighter as the height increases', and the *The Story of My Heart* passage reads: 'Moving up the sweet short turf, at every step my heart seemed to obtain a wider horizon of feeling.' In both accounts the richness and purity of the air or wind are invigorating, and enliven the climber. The phrase 'new vigour', which occurs in the Ditchling account, later features in *The Story of My Heart* as 'fresh vigour of soul'.²³ 'Vast plain' in the first passage becomes 'broad plain' in the latter, and both accounts use the words 'sward' and 'summit'. 'To Brighton' also features 'wheat', 'harebells', and the phrase 'brown autumn', all of which occur in Jefferies' description of the tumulus in *The Story of My Heart*.²⁴ 'Unchecked wind' in 'To Brighton' becomes 'unchecked' thought in *The Story of My Heart*,²⁵ and both accounts feature a shepherd. These correlations suggest that the Sussex landscape – a chalk grassland expanse – provided Jefferies with an area similar to his native Wiltshire landscape, with the added benefit of being close to the sea.²⁶

When Jefferies returned to the Sussex coast the following year (1880) for the visit that was to finally give proper shape to *The Story of My Heart*, he visited Wilmington Hill, not only known for its Iron Age hill fort, but for the giant chalk figure carved on the hillside called 'The Long Man of Wilmington'. This site was described by George Clinch in the *English Illustrated Magazine* as 'one of the most interesting monuments of hoary antiquity to be found throughout the kingdom',²⁷ Although since the nineteenth century the ancient origin of the figure has been disputed, the presence of the prehistoric human past at the site, as indicated by surrounding tumuli, is irrefutable. Clinch believed the site of the Long Man to have once been 'the centre of profound veneration and worship',²⁸ and that the 'cult' responsible for the figure, and its counterpart, the Cerne Abbas Giant near Dorchester, 'had no relation to Christianity, but was closely akin to that religion which taught the worship of natural objects and material

²³ *The Story of My Heart*, p. 59.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 31.

²⁵ Jefferies would visit a spot by some elm trees, from where he could see Liddington: 'I went every morning, and was satisfied if I could get two or three minutes to think unchecked.'

²⁶ Jefferies' passion for the sea is evident in works such as 'The Breeze on Beachy Head', 'To Brighton', and in his choice to live in the seaside towns of Brighton and Goring.

²⁷ George Clinch, 'Wilmington and the Long Man', *English Illustrated Magazine*, September 1896, p. 510.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

forms'.²⁹ Being visible from the carriages on the train journey to Polegate, which is *en route* to Eastbourne and the coast, it is likely that the figure would have been a familiar sight to Jefferies.

A further notebook entry for this time reads 'Peven[sey]: Orion: still a larger and wider thought and hope.' This refers to the constellation Orion, possibly the most visible and well known of all the constellations. Professor John North, in *Stonehenge: Neolithic Man and the Cosmos*, argues for the Wilmington hill monument's ancient origin and suggests that around 3480BC the figure was carved into the hillside to recognise Orion's movement across the ridge above, and as such may be a symbol of Neolithic astral religion.³⁰ Contemporary accounts of the visibility of the constellations agree that Orion can be seen in temperate zones during the autumn and winter months, which would fit with the chronology of Jefferies' visit to Wilmington in November 1880. That the constellation could be seen directly overhead at the site would also tally with a notebook entry for the 17 November about the clear night sky. Jefferies had extensive knowledge of the constellations. He alludes to the history of 'Orion' the 'hunter', in 'Field Sports in Art' published in 1885. The article discusses the earliest prehistoric art as being intrinsically related to the constellations, and describes Orion as the most powerful and obvious of all. Sagittarius, 'the Archer' became the hero Felix, in *After London* (1885). Orion also features in the children's novel *Bevis* (1882) which Jefferies was writing at the time of his visit to Sussex in 1880. For Bevis, who is based upon Jefferies and his own childhood experiences, the sight of Orion instils a sense of strength and purpose:

He stood upright, his frame enlarged; his instep lifted him as he walked, as if he too could swing the vast club and chase the lion from his lair. The sparkle of Orion's stars brought to him a remnant of the immense vigour of the young world, the frosty air braced his sinews, and power came into his arms.³¹

However, the role of the constellations, viewed from archaeologically-significant hill-top sites, had a more deeply formative role to play in the production of *The Story of My Heart*. In his explanation of the genesis of the book Jefferies recalls discovering 'a deep hollow on the side of a great hill, a green concave opening to the sea, where [he] could rest and think in perfect quiet.'³² He describes spending 'day

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ John David North, *Stonehenge: Neolithic Man and the Cosmos* (New York: Free Press, 1996), p. 216.

³¹ Richard Jefferies, *Bevis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 289.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

after day, for hours at a time' in the spot in 'a condition of intense prayer.' In this secluded bowl-like valley opening out to the sea at a considerable height above the cliff edge, he 'began to consider how [he] could put a part of that prayer into form, giving it an object' and whether the project as a whole could do 'good' for the wider world.³³ He records that it was here, beneath the bright Lyra constellation, where he divided his vision into three potentially achievable areas:

One evening, when the bright white star in Lyra was shining almost at the zenith over me, and the deep concave was the more profound in the dusk, I formulated it into three divisions. First, I desired that I might do or find something to exalt the soul, something to enable it to live its own life, a more powerful existence now. Secondly, I desired to be able to do something for the flesh, to make a discovery or perfect a method by which the fleshly body might enjoy more pleasure, longer life, and suffer less pain. Thirdly, to contract a more flexible engine with which to carry into execution the design of the will. I called this the Lyra prayer, to distinguish it from the far deeper emotion in which the soul was alone concerned.³⁴



The 'deep concave' with furze bushes behind



View from the edge of the hollow, looking out to the horizon

³³ A manuscript draft in the British Library, dated 1882, is titled 'BH – New thought, beauty', and it is possible that BH stood for Beachy Head. Looker's draft of *The Story of My Heart* reads 'ten years afterwards I went up the great hill at Eastbourne and thought the Lyra prayer'. Although Looker has added this line of text to the manuscript — it doesn't appear in the original — I can confirm that Looker's identification of Beachy Head as the site of the Lyra prayer is correct. After visiting Beachy Head I have identified the exact spot to be a hollow on the side of the headland, facing Eastbourne. The description Jefferies gives of the valley in the text matches exactly: 'Behind me were furze bushes dried by the heat; immediately in front dropped the steep descent of the bowl-like hollow which received and brought up to me the faint sound of the summer waves. Yonder lay the immense plain of sea, the palest green under the continued sunshine, as though the heat had evaporated the colour from it; there was no distinct horizon'. *The Story of My Heart*, p. 22.

³⁴ *The Story of My Heart*, pp. 22–3.

The secluded setting of this hollow on Beachy Head afforded space for Jefferies to conceive of the form of the book and clarify its objectives. From his notebooks and drafts it is not yet possible to establish an exact date for this visit. However, in the *The Story of My Heart* he writes that it was ‘just afterwards’ when he went to Pevensey and was awed by the Roman wall. As he dates this visit to 1880 in the text, this would seem to date the Beachy Head experience to the same year.³⁵ The division of his prayer into three forms marked a development from his earlier coastal experience in 1876, when he made a trip to Worthing — a ‘pilgrimage back to the truth and the reality’ — where he first identified his vision of the earth and cosmos as ‘Sun Life’.³⁶

The Beachy Head experience probably formed the basis of the article ‘The Breeze on Beachy Head’, which appeared in the *Standard* in September 1881, and became part of *Nature Near London*.³⁷ The time Jefferies spent at Eastbourne was crucial, not only for the conceptual formation of *The Story of My Heart*, but for the way in which he decided to tell his story. The differences between the three main settings — London, Wiltshire, and the coast — caused difficulty for him. Drafts for the book show that he jumped from one location to the next and from one time period to another, as if he was uncertain about how to structure the narrative. The first section of the ‘draft’ which Looker includes in the 1948 edition, and the draft titled ‘the genesis’ in *Field and Farm*, both contain the place names Liddington and Eastbourne, which by the time of the final version had been removed. I suggest that the time Jefferies spent on Beachy Head was to shape the final content of his meditations by the tumulus in Wiltshire. ‘The Breeze on Beachy Head’ (1881) has a distinctly different flavour to previous articles and resonates with a new strength of voice and resolution to achieve. The immense presence of the cliff expands the thinking process and encourages Jefferies in his belief in wider thought and hope: ‘the soul has been living, as it were, in a nutshell, all unaware of its own power, and now suddenly finds freedom in the sun and sky’.³⁸ He records standing by the sea with his back to the cliff, and becoming aware of a new developing perspective:

The little rules and little experiences, all the petty ways of narrow life, are shut off behind the ponderous and impassable cliff; as if we had dwelt in

³⁵ ‘At last, in 1880, in the old castle of Pevensey, under happy circumstances once more I resolved, and actually did write down a few notes.’ *The Story of My Heart*, p. 145.

³⁶ ‘Draft’ *The Story of My Heart*, p. 169.

³⁷ *The Forward Life*, p. 147.

³⁸ ‘The Breeze on Beachy Head’, *Nature Near London*, p. 233.

the dim light of a cave, but coming out at last to look at the sun, a great stone had fallen and closed the entrance, so that there was no return to the shadow. The impassable precipice shuts off our former selves of yesterday, forcing us to look out over the sea only, or up to the deeper heaven.³⁹

Within view of Pevensey Castle, Jefferies imagines that he is standing in a timeless bowl of sea and sky, so that ‘a Roman suddenly rounding the white-edge of chalk, borne on wind and oar from the Isle of Wight towards the gray castle at Pevensey (already old in olden days), would not seem strange’.⁴⁰ The sea is described as being ‘raised like a green mound’, which echoes the ‘green mound’ of ‘primeval cultivation’⁴¹ that Jefferies observes on the Wiltshire Downs in *Wild Life in a Southern County* (1878). The ‘green mound’ of the sea is full of latent potential, as if, writes Jefferies, ‘it could burst in and occupy the space up to the foot of the cliff in a moment [...] there is an infinite possibility about the sea ... something in it not quite grasped or understood — something still to be discovered — a mystery’.⁴²

The description of the tumulus in ‘The Breeze on Beachy Head’ describes feelings which anticipate *The Story of My Heart*:

On returning homewards towards Eastbourne stay awhile by the tumulus on the slope. There are others hidden among the furze; butterflies flutter over them, and the bees hum round by day; by night the nighthawk passes, coming up from the fields and even skirting the sheds and houses below. The rains beat on them, and the storm drives the dead leaves over their low green domes; the waves boom on the shore far down.

How many times has the morning star shone yonder in the East? All the mystery of the sun and of the stars centres around these lowly mounds.⁴³

The experience of the Beachy Head tumulus was integral to the development and expression of the fifteen page account in *The Story of My Heart* of the tumulus in Wiltshire. Both settings were huge landmarks with prehistoric human pasts, and both were formative to the book as a whole. Both accounts feature the concept of the tumulus being ‘raised’, passing birds, butterflies, humming bees, and the concept of the day and night passing round in endless circles. Although ostensibly affording two very different settings of coast and inland hillside, they were closely linked in Jefferies’ mind and

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Wild Life in a Southern County*, p. 36.

⁴² ‘The Breeze on Beachy Head’, p. 232.

⁴³ *Nature Near London*, p. 240.

experience through their archaeological dimension. This task of combining the Beachy Head experience, which was dominated by the open expanse of sea and sky, with his experiences at Liddington during the 1860s, posed difficulty for Jefferies, and he had to work to reconcile them. In the drafts of the book the two experiences still appear to be distinct, but in the final text the presence of the sea is incorporated into his experience beside the Wiltshire tumulus.⁴⁴

Wiltshire again plays an imaginative role in *After London*, published in 1885. The story follows the adventures of Felix Aquila — modelled upon Jefferies — in a post-apocalyptic southern landscape where social structures have collapsed. London is at the centre of an ecological disaster — a submerged, poisonous ruin, covered by an acrid swamp — and the flooded Thames valley has created a great lake that extends into the southwest. The *Athenaeum* recognised the book's 'prehistoric nature', and declared it to be 'a romance of the future [...] wrought out in a fashion that shows Mr. Jefferies at his best in some ways, and at his worst in others.'⁴⁵ The book's title, and its bold suggestion of a future without London as a capital city, prompted a reviewer in the *Spectator* to reflect upon the loss of past societies and consider the collapse of British civilisation:

It is far easier to attempt to realise the changes of the past than to imagine those of the future, yet these are none the less sure. However remote it may be, the time must come when England will lose her place in the van of progress and civilisation, when her population will dwindle and her cities decay. The fate that has befallen other realms will overtake her. "Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, where are they?" and some day England's name must stand in the same category.⁴⁶

Felix lives in Wiltshire, on the remaining uplands, and the prehistoric chalk White Horse at Uffington is one of the area's fictional landmarks. The lake across which he sails is divided into two by 'the straits of White Horse, where vessels are often weather-bound,' and where ships are forced to slow down and are sometimes pulled along by ropes from the banks. When Felix sets sail on the great lake on an 'unknown voyage' he passes the White Horse, which is the last 'bold headland' before the open sea. Jefferies writes that 'ash and nut-tree and hawthorn had concealed the ancient graven figure of the horse

⁴⁴ A full account of how these two settings are merged together is given in my PhD thesis.

⁴⁵ Anonymous, 'After London; or Wild England', *Athenaeum*, 11 April 1885, p. 463.

⁴⁶ 'After London', *Spectator*, 4 July 1885, p. 882.

upon its side, but the tradition was not forgotten, and the site retained its name.' The White Horse is a symbolic crossing point – what Jefferies terms 'the key of the world' — where north and south meet. When planning his voyage Felix uses the hill as a vantage point to assess the best route for his sea voyage.

Jefferies' identification of the spot as a crossing point for the northern armies, to invade the south, implies the place's potential to facilitate conflict and change; a characteristic that befits the historical importance of White Horse hill as a site of battle. The White Horse was the subject of an article published in the *Child's Companion* (1878) which described the monument as:

a white horse, a *very* white horse, and an old horse, a *very* old horse. We cannot be quite sure *how* old it is, but it must be, we believe, nearly a thousand years since its birth. ... in a wide and fertile valley — a valley dotted with haycocks, and green with the fresh springing corn; the shadow of a range of soft seedling downs falls across it, and on the steep hillside yonder, sharp and clear, stands out the figure of a giant horse. It is not standing still as if its work was done; but galloping at full speed, as if hurrying in the race or rushing to the battle.⁴⁷

The article identifies the hill as the site of King Alfred's battle against the Danes, who are described as 'rude and savage' and armed with 'battle-axes and bows and arrows'. The White Horse was then ordered to be carved at the request of Alfred to mark his victory. Jefferies writes that although years of social and political unrest have caused the site to become overgrown, the tradition of scouring the horse 'was not forgotten'.⁴⁸ Invested with courage by its long association with previous battles on the site, the horse is internalised by Felix as a symbol of the human endurance and bravery experienced through centuries by the prehistoric peoples who created it.⁴⁹ As such the

⁴⁷ M.K.M. 'The Horse on the Hill', *Child's Companion*, 1 March 1878, p. 40.

⁴⁸ Jefferies discusses the history and origins of the White Horse in 'History of Swindon', *Jefferies' Land*, ed. by Grace Toplis (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1896), pp. 126–130. He refers to having read *The Scouring of the White Horse*, written by Thomas Hughes in 1859.

⁴⁹ An earlier affiliation between prehistoric sites and the symbol of the galloping horse occurs in *Wild Life in a Southern County* where Jefferies describes the Ridgeway as a 'broad green track'. This term featured in written accounts of race meetings. In 1865 *Bell's Magazine*: 'just as a clearance of the course had been effected ... attention was directed in an opposite direction by the buzz of admiration which on all sides greeted the unmistakable fitness of Gladiateur, as, accompanied by his trainer and followed by Le Mandarin, he was led down the broad green track to the saddling enclosure.' *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 3 June 1865, p. 4. In the 1880s: 'the broad green track down which the horses are to come' ('The Derby Day', *Standard*, 6 June 1889, p. 3), and the 1890s: 'when the eye wearies of the broad green track, with its clamorous

horse is manifested in Felix at a critical moment when he gathers the courage to fight for his life in a tribal battle that takes place upon a tumulus. Jefferies writes:

Now the rage of battle burned in Felix; his eyes gleamed, his lips were open, his nostrils wide like a horse running a race. ... Felix ran at full speed; swift of foot, he left the heavy spearmen behind. Alone he approached the horsemen; all the Aquila courage was up within him. He kept the higher ground as he ran, and stopped suddenly on a little knoll or tumulus. His arrow flew, a gipsy fell. Again, and a third. Their anger gave them fresh courage; to be repulsed by one only! Twenty of them started to charge and run him down. The keen arrows flew faster than their horses' feet ... His adventures in the marshes of the buried city, his canoe, his archery, were talked of the livelong night.⁵⁰

The higher ground of the archaeological landscape — what Jefferies terms a 'knoll, or tumulus' — is used to give Felix strategic advantage. His courage, summoned at the critical moment from the animal world — and symbolised by the internalised symbol of the White Horse — gives him focus and clarity, and allows him to use his bow and arrow to his full ability.

Although set in a non-specific time period or place, the book is characterized by historical and archaeological allusions to the Norman era that it recreates. These include, for example the hierarchical social structures, the fortified dwelling-places of stone and wood, to minute details, such as the description of the great banquet held at Thyma Castle where the guests drink from 'flagons of maple wood' and 'earthenware cup[s]'. Jefferies' reference to 'the thin wine of Gloucester,' which is 'costly ... and shipped across the Lake' recalls William of Malmesbury — leading historian of the 12th Century — who recorded the main vineyards of the Norman era as having been in the Vale of Gloucester.

However, it was perhaps the Norman history and archaeology of the Isle of Wight that finally gave shape to the autobiographical quest, which had taken so many earlier forms. For the last section of this paper I am going to discuss several points of similarity between the Isle of Wight and the landscape of *After London*, which may imply that Jefferies used the island as a setting. In *After London* the landscape is characterized by steep sloping downs grazed by wild goats and deer, and rugged cliffs reminiscent of the stretch of coast around Ventnor, in the south of the island. The close proximity, in the book, of open

and multi-coloured crowd, it has only to turn to that great belt of trees which rise like a primeval forest against the horizon.' ('The Ascot Races', *Standard*, 15 June 1898, p. 8).

⁵⁰ The phrase 'livelong night' is used by Homer in *The Iliad*.

down land, beech forest, and wooded valleys, fringed at the extremity by white chalk cliffs, recalls the landscape of the Isle of Wight, described thus in 1872:

All readers surely know the white chalk, the special feature and the special pride of the south of England. All know its softly-rounded downs, its vast beech woods, its short and sweet turf, its snowy cliffs, which have given – so some say – to the whole island the name of Albion – the white land.⁵¹

Now, as in the nineteenth century, wild goats graze the slopes of Bonchurch Down at Ventnor to control the growth of scrub. In the 1870s, when Ventnor was known as a resort for consumptives due to its temperate climate, goats were regularly shipped over from the mainland. They were kept at Ventnor, on the southern, wilder side of the island, for their milk, which was believed to be a remedy for tuberculosis. A news column from the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* in 1869 observed that: ‘As goats’ milk is esteemed very nourishing by medical men, especially to those who have a consumptive tendency, it finds a ready sale in Ventnor and Bonchurch at the rather high price of 8d. per quart.’⁵² Jefferies’ references to deer grazing in open parkland in *After London* would fit with the history of the island which has been grazed by deer since the eighteenth century.⁵³

In 1874 Jefferies probably visited the Isle of Wight and stayed at Ventnor; a trip that Matthews and Treitel suggest may have been a honeymoon after his marriage in June.⁵⁴ Jefferies’ notebook entry concerning the visit reads: ‘the intense love and beauty of nature – every grain of sand – I can see the grains at Ventnor now ... and the fragments of pebbles joy in each. But not in this the answer to the soul. A double feeling.’⁵⁵ A visit to the Isle of Wight — known for its wealth and diversity of archaeological sites — would fit with the chronology of his interests at this time. The vantage-points of Carisbrooke and Appuldurcombe Park would have afforded a unique perspective of the south of England and the course of the Solent, upon which the ‘Sweet Water Sea’ of *After London* may have been modelled. Geology has established that the Solent is a strait created by the

⁵¹ ‘Cosham’, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 12 October 1872, np.

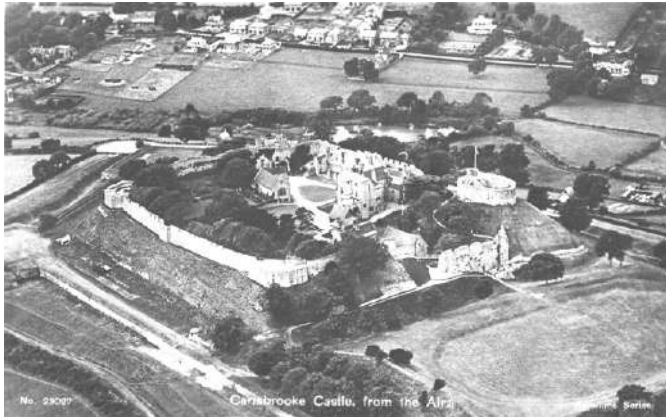
⁵² ‘Isle of Wight’, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 10 July 1869, p. 7.

⁵³ See Anon., *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 3 June 1848, p. 4: ‘The park is beautifully interspersed with fine old trees, principally ashes, oaks, and horse chestnuts; it is pasteurised by a herd of goats and deer, which add much to its romantic grandeur.’

⁵⁴ *The Forward Life*, p. 65.

⁵⁵ Cited in Matthews and Treitel, p. 65.

erosive action of the sea through a narrow gap. During the Roman era it was possible to wade across to the island at low tide. The Solent narrows between the headland of Hurst Castle and the cliff top crowned by Fort Albert, so that the two points almost connect – thus the geography is reminiscent of the narrowing straits of White Horse in *After London*, where ‘north and south’ almost meet. Moreover, the formation of the Solent, when standing on ground level, appears more like a river, and seems disconnected from the English Channel. There is no doubt that the ‘inland lake’ of *After London* is partly derived from Coate Reservoir and Jefferies’ home landscape; as John Fowles writes in his introduction to *After London*, the book sprang from ‘that unassuageable inner landscape, or lost domain, of the early years at Coate Farm near Swindon’.⁵⁶ However, the perspective over the south of England from the Isle of Wight may well have broadened Jefferies’ vision of his homeland and encouraged the more ambitious version of his autobiographical *The Rise of Maximin*.



Evidence for the role of the Isle of Wight in the formation of *After London* can be seen in similarities between Thyma Castle — the home of Felix’s sweetheart, Aurora — and Carisbrooke Castle, one of the finest and dramatic castle ruins in England.⁵⁷ The castle’s position at the centre of the island and part of the capital town made it one of the most well known tourist attractions, and Jefferies probably would have

⁵⁶ John Fowles, ‘Introduction’, in Richard Jefferies, *After London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), vii–xx (p. xiv).

⁵⁷ John Keats, staying in Canterbury House with a view of the castle, wrote to his friend Reynolds in 1817: ‘I don’t think I shall ever see [ruins] to surpass Carisbrooke Castle. ... The Keep ... is one bower of ivy; a colony of jackdaws have been there for many years.’ *The Life and Letters of John Keats* (London: Edward Moxon, 1867), p. 31.

visited it with his wife during their trip in 1874. However, a specific reference to Carisbrooke Castle in Jefferies' 'History of Swindon' (1869) suggests that he may have visited the island earlier. The reference to Carisbrooke occurs in relation to Upper Upham in Wiltshire. Jefferies writes that: 'It is remarkable that at the present day all the water used for drinking purposes here is brought from the village of Snap⁵⁸, at some very considerable distance, where there is a deep well, with a wheel made to revolve by a pony,' and provides a footnote - *Cf* the well at Carisbrooke Castle'.⁵⁹ The absence of a reference for this footnote, and the use of 'Cf', meaning 'see', suggests that he might be alluding to his own knowledge of the Castle, rather than having taken the information from a secondary source. Donkeys were used at the castle to rotate the water wheel and can still be seen there today.

Carisbrooke constitutes a mediaeval fortress on the site of a late Norman fortified stronghold, with Roman and Saxon associations, and is unique for its encapsulation of centuries of human history into one place. In this respect the site embodies Jefferies' ambition in *After London* to represent a broad spectrum of human history, from primitive to mediaeval society. Carisbrooke was twinned with Pevensey Castle as both were part of the same Saxon Shore defence system. As noted by the archaeologist Hodder Westropp, who lived on the Isle of Wight, Pevensey was a good example of this combination of different eras, but Carisbrooke was better.⁶⁰ Jefferies describes Thyma as enclosed by a 'high' wall, without 'towers or bastions', which recalls the layout of Carisbrooke before the later addition of its towered gateway in the 15th century. Fenimore Cooper noted in a visit in 1837 that the castle was situated on its own hill within the vale containing the town of Newport and the village of Carisbrooke.⁶¹ Both Cooper and Jefferies mention the presence of extensive ivy, and a one or two-roomed dwelling. Jefferies' choice of setting – thatched houses on the bank of a stream, the castle on a hill above, and tiered gardens – match the terraced gardens of Carisbrooke which lead to Carisbrooke village. Lukely stream runs through the village, and in the nineteenth century the village dwellings were thatched. The close proximity of Thyma Castle to a river and a beech forest fits with the setting of Carisbrooke, where the river Medina, one of the major rivers on the island, runs through Carisbrooke village. Further suggestion that Thyma was modelled on Carisbrooke can be found in Felix's strolling

⁵⁸ In the text Jefferies refers to 'Shap'.

⁵⁹ *Jefferies' Land*, p. 97.

⁶⁰ *Early and Imperial Rome*, p. 2.

⁶¹ J. Fenimore Cooper, *Recollections of Europe* (J. Smith: Paris, 1837), no page.

‘to and fro on the bowling green’ which Jefferies specifically refers to as being ‘at the rear of the castle’. The bowling green at Carisbrooke is a large green expanse situated to the rear of the castle, and was created for Charles I when he was imprisoned there.

Jefferies also appears to have borrowed from the castle’s history in his depiction of the Baroness. The owner of Carisbrooke in the 13th century was Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Devon, who inherited large estates and became one of the richest, and largest, landowners in England. Isabella is known to have been the first person to use glass in the windows at Carisbrooke, and during the thirty years she lived there made many improvements to the castle. In *After London* Jefferies specifically refers to ‘a large window’ at Thyma, which the Baroness was particularly fond of:

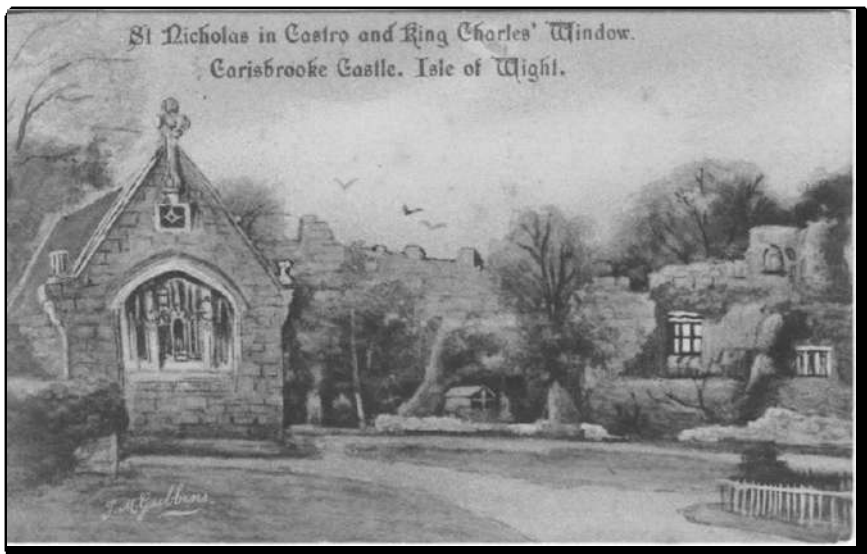
The second apartment retained its ancient form, and was used as the dining-room on ordinary days. It was lighted by a large window, now thrown wide open that the sweet spring air might enter, which window was the pride of the Baroness, for it contained more true glass than any window in the palace of the Prince. The glass made now is not transparent, but merely translucent; it indeed admits light after a fashion, but it is thick and cannot be seen through. These panes were almost all (the central casement wholly) of ancient glass, preserved with the greatest care through the long years past.⁶²

The picture below shows a similar window at Carisbrooke named ‘Countess Isabella’s Window’, which, unlike most windows in the castle, was glazed.



⁶² *After London*, p. 63.

Aurora's request to have the ruined chapel at Thyma rebuilt may be recalling the commissioning of the original chapel at Carisbrooke by Countess Isabella in the 13th century. Jefferies describes the chapel as situated 'beside the castle, long since fallen to decay', which corresponds with the location of the chapel of St. Nicholas at Carisbrooke next to the castle's main gate. Indeed the chapel's full name 'St. Nicholas in Castro' simply means the chapel within the castle walls. Historian William Page recorded that the chapel building of 1734 was partly dismantled in 1856 to create a 'pseudo ruin',⁶³ which is what Jefferies would have seen during his visit in 1874, or before. Built on the same site as the Norman chapel of 1070, the building remained in this ruinous condition until it was rebuilt and repaired in 1904, seventeen years after Jefferies' death.⁶⁴



St Nicholas in Castro — a postcard of the chapel at Carisbrooke Castle sent in 1905 to Miss Wilkinson, Balham. Source: Isle of Wight Family History Society.

⁶³ William Page, 'Parishes: Carisbrooke', *A History of the County of Hampshire: Volume 5* (1912), pp. 221–235.

⁶⁴ It is worth noting that Jefferies' aunt's house in Sydenham was named Shanklin Villa. As Andrew Rossabi has pointed out (private correspondence), Victorians often named their houses after favourite places – as Jefferies did with Savernake on Lorna Road, Hove. If so, then Jefferies may well have visited the Isle of Wight as a child with his aunt and uncle during the 1850s or 60s. It is also possible that Jefferies named his last rented house in Goring, where he died in 1887, after Seaview on the north eastern coast of the Isle of Wight.

More than simply an expression of his interest in historical and archaeological landmarks, Jefferies found in archaeology an imaginative space – potential for the mind to explore new depths of the soul. In *The Scarlet Shawl* (1874), in a digression about the ‘buried’ nature of the ‘inner heart’ of man, Jefferies uses the images of accumulated dust and the ‘buried city’ to symbolise the potential for humans to reconnect with their inner selves:

Deep, deep down under the apparent man...there is a buried city, a city of the inner heart, lost and forgotten these many days. There, on the walls of the chambers of that city are pictures, fresh as they were painted by the alchemy of light in the long, long years gone by ... Yet deep as it lies hidden, heavy, and dull, and impenetrable as the crust may be, there shall come a time when the light of the sun, seen through a little crevice, shall pour in its brilliance upon them, and shall exhibit these chambers of imagery to the man walking in daytime. He shall awake, and shall walk through these chambers he builded in the olden times; and the pictures upon the walls shall pierce his soul.⁶⁵

The image of the buried city was an implicit reference to Troy, the infamous city buried by sand, excavated by Schliemann in 1870.⁶⁶ Unearthed from beneath the sands in Turkey, the extent of Troy and its treasures were revealed to the public in 1873, the year Jefferies was writing *The Scarlet Shawl*. Jefferies uses the image of temporarily lost treasures to suggest an imminent dawn of new life for the soul. The ‘fresh’ pictures, which appear as vibrant as the day they were painted, suggest that the potential for enlightenment – what Jefferies termed in 1875 ‘a beautiful springtime yet in store for the soul’⁶⁷ — lies dormant within all of us, just beneath the surface.

⁶⁵ Richard Jefferies, *The Scarlet Shawl* (Oxon: Petton Books, 2009), p. 127.

⁶⁶ The story of Troy, the ‘lost city’, is recounted in Homer’s *Iliad*, but it was not until the nineteenth century that efforts to trace it began.

⁶⁷ ‘Village Churches’, *Graphic*, 4 December 1875, *The Hills and the Vale*, ed. by Edward Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 42.

Richard Jefferies, *The Rise of Maximin*.

Introduction by Rebecca Welshman.

Faringdon: Petton Books, 2012. 198pp. £20

Until now, *The Rise of Maximin* has been one of Jefferies' least known and least accessible writings. Its title, mentioned in one of Jefferies' letters to Tinsley in 1874, has been known for some time, and was recorded by Edward Thomas over a century ago, but its location remained elusive. When I was writing my thesis on Jefferies at the beginning of the 1960s, I searched for it in vain, but John Pearson tracked it down in the 1970s (closely followed, independently, by Hugoe Matthews when embarking on his bibliographical researches). It was, in fact, serialized in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1876-7, at about the same time as the publication of *World's End*. Pearson included it in his thesis, but that was never published, and it has had to wait until now to gain even limited accessibility – limited because the print-run of this edition consists of only sixty copies.

Maximin, then, is early Jefferies. Its full title (the Victorians liked long titles) is *The Rise of Maximin Emperor of the Occident Compiled by Lucius, Keeper of the Imperial Archives of Iscapolis. Translated and Edited by Richard Jefferies*. When the book opens, Maximin is a highly intelligent young man growing up in a land unidentified in time or space. He observes by chance a pitched battle between rival tribes and, appalled by the evident incompetence of their commanders, is spurred on to military ambition. Suspected of rebellious tendencies by the authorities who attempt to arrest him, he gathers a small group of loyal followers and sets out on conquest. The whole novel is made up of continual victories against overwhelming odds, "hair-breadth scapes in the imminent deadly breach" in Othello's words, and he ultimately ends up as 'Emperor of the Occident'. But all the while his thoughts centre upon his beloved, Genevre, and he returns home in triumph to claim her.

An unlikely plot, to say the least, but if much of this sounds faintly familiar it is because, in later life, Jefferies virtually rewrites it in much subtler (and less military) form in *After London*. Just as Felix Aquila in that novel acts out Jefferies' hopes of intellectual and literary triumph, so Maximin represents his dreams of physical power and glory. Coate Farm is recognizably Sycamore Farm, while Coate Water, expanded in *After London* into a vast inland lake, becomes here 'a freshwater sea'. As a work of art *Maximin* is, frankly, hard to take seriously, since its chronicles of heroic achievements resemble the now obsolete adventure stories of pre-Harry-Potter days. But if we are interested in

how a seemingly indifferent young writer can develop, in little more than a decade, into an author of considerable importance – or even, to make the point more pretentiously, if we want to learn more about the nature of literary creation – *Maximin* has much to interest us.

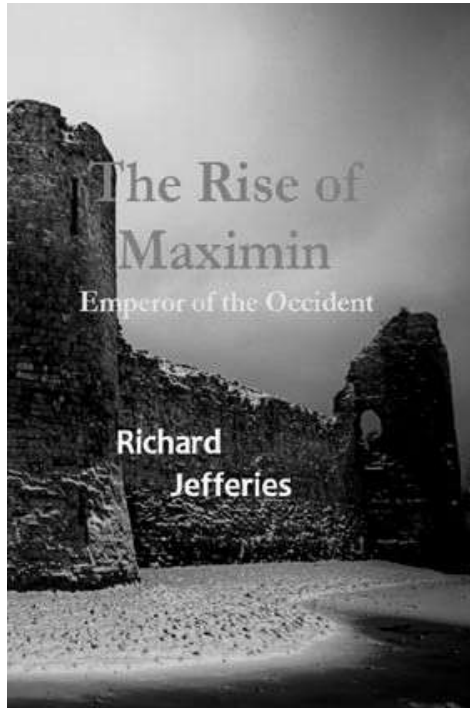
One additional point deserves, however, to be added here. Written, as I have said, about the same time as *World's End*, *Maximin* shares with that novel a modest degree of experiment. While *World's End* was set in a presumed future, *Maximin* takes place in the past (or apparently so, as the narrative includes references to matchlocks, swords, spears, and bows and arrows). At the same time, it is offered as a recently edited translation from an ancient manuscript by an author with the Roman-sounding name of Lucius, and Rebecca Welshman points out in her introduction that the name of Maximin, as well as some of his deeds, derives from the third-century Roman Emperor Maximinus II. Neither of these devices is structurally original. For instance, Edgar Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* had appeared in 1871, and the presentation of an imagined land which comments satirically on aspects of the author's own society provides the structure of such writings as *Utopia*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and, in Jefferies' time, Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). However, Jefferies is shown as becoming increasingly unsatisfied with the conventional realism to which most novels of his time conformed. His later works of fiction profit indirectly from the alternative structural methods that he attempts here.

So much for Jefferies' content. The book is attractively presented, with an engaging cover and an extensive scholarly introduction by Welshman (like Pearson when he tracked it down, a doctoral candidate at the University of Exeter). Nowadays, alas, we can no longer assume that 'academic' criticism will be either usefully informative or clearly expressed in well-written prose, but Welshman provides both with seeming ease. She not only draws upon a remarkably comprehensive knowledge of Jefferies' work, but also quotes from obscure sources in contemporary Victorian books, articles, and newspapers to set *Maximin* in context and illuminate many of its references. This is an introduction that serves general readers and literary specialists alike.

Having said that, I should also acknowledge that, while any reader of this journal can benefit from reading *Maximin*, it is *essential* reading only for those eager to read everything Jefferies wrote, including what must be regarded as immature work. I therefore return to the thoroughly understandable but none the less disturbing fact that only sixty copies are at present available. Yet any respectable university in Great Britain and North America that takes literature in English

seriously ought to possess it, since Jefferies is now established as a sufficiently important writer for the whole range of his work to be represented in such collections. One hopes, then, that demand will encourage more copies to be produced in a second impression; at the very least, 'print-on demand' services should result in the wider distribution that *The Rise of Maximin* so clearly deserves.

W. J. Keith



Available to purchase from the Richard Jefferies Society.

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