“THE RISE OP MAXIMIN”

A talk given to The Richard Jefferies Society in the Wyvern Arts Centre, Swindon, on Monday April 14th 1980, by JOHN PEARSON, Editor of *Landscape and Labour*, collection of essays by Richard Jefferies. Moonraker Press. 1979.

I’m here tonight to speak about *The Rise of Maximin*; this novel is probably the most significant, certainly the longest single piece of Richard Jefferies’ writing discovered since his death. What I aim to do this evening is to pose and answer three questions: first, what were Jefferies’ motives for writing this extraordinary novel - why, that is, did he feel the need to create a new continent and a hero whose exploits are so much outside his own experiences? Secondly, and related to this question, what were the main influences operating upon Richard Jefferies the novelist in the writing of *The Rise of Maximin*? This will in the main be concerned with literary as opposed to external influences. And, lastly, what happened to the novel? These questions only scratch the surface of the work, for it covers such myriad ideas that it would take much longer than we have this evening to examine them thoroughly. Before I tackle these questions however, I think it would be as well if I gave a brief *resumé* of the novel and its equally brief history, since *The Rise of Maximin* is not generally available, and most o you v/ill not have had the opportunity to have read it.

The first hint that we have of the existence of this new novel is contained in a letter from Jefferies to the publisher Willian Tinsley of Tinsley Brothers, on the 9th October 1974, and in this letter, in which the author writes of his new novel, *Restless Human Hearts*, he also adds t information that he has written, “a book of adventure on a novel plan . . It describes the rise to power of an intelligent man in a half-civilized country, and is called The Rise of Maximin.” Jefferies also mentions the of the novel in one of his notebook entries in 1887 which states, “If I had been as strong as Maximin, I would still have felt and wished to express Sun Life.” Edward Thomas, in his excellent biography on Jefferies mentions *The Rise of Maximin*, but he states that “it was never published, and nothing is known of it.”

And that’s it - we hear nothing else at all about the novel And that’s it - we hear nothing else at all about the novel *The Rise of Maximin* until one day in 1975 when one of the Members of the Richard Jefferies Society, Dr. Hugoe Matthews, was sorting through some volumes of a periodical called the *New Monthly Magazine* in Birmingham Public Library, and there it was - *The Rise of Maximin, Emperor of the Orient, Compiled by Lucius, Keeper of the Imperial Archives at Iscapolis, Translated and Edited by Richard Jefferies*. Now I’ll come back to this somewhat imposing title later, but the main point was that a substantial new novel had been added to the Jefferies’ canon, and, despite its many faults, it is well worth examining closely. The magazine for which it was written, the *New Monthly Magazine*, was a waning star in the periodicals constellation - in fact it ceased publication seven years after *The Rise of Maximin* appeared - but it had at one time boasted a reasonable circulation and authors of the calibre of Bulwer Lytton, Harrison Ainsworth and Mrs Ellen Wood, so in its earlier days it had been a magazine of some standing. Its editor at the time *The Rise of Maximin* appeared was

W.F. Ainsworth, the cousin of the famous novelist, and himself an explorer and geologist of some note.
But why, you might ask, wasn't the serial - because that's what it was, one episode a month was published for seven months - why wasn't it discovered before now? The main reason appears to be that it was never published as a book as Jefferies hoped it would be, and indeed as *Greene Ferne Farm*, one of his later serialized novels was. It never achieved any distinction as a novel, nor, apparently, did it receive any reviews, so few people at the time would be aware of its existence, outside that is the readers of the *New Monthly Magazine.* The second reason that it wasn't discovered, and probably the major one from a present-day researcher's point of view, is that the British Library does not have copies of the *New Monthly Magazine* for the months when *The Rise of Maximin* appeared in its pages. This, incidentally, is the reason why Samuel Looker didn't find it in his searches for new Jefferies' material. The third reason why the novel was not discovered before now is associated with the fact that it wasn't published as a book. To be frank it isn't one of Jefferies' best works - I think that we must remember that at this time he was still a relatively immature writer - so though it tells us a lot in terms of Jefferies' scholarship, it can't, by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as a literary masterpiece.

However, most of these facts are incidental to the main point which that a novel by Richard Jefferies, previously thought to have existed only in manuscript form, had in fact been published. So what is it about? I think perhaps the introduction which Jefferies himself gives will explain this best :-

> It incidentally appears (he says) from notices scattered over the pages of Lucius, that the Occident in which Maximin arose was a continent of vast extent. We are not informed in what precise quarter of the world it was situated, except that in a general sense it was somewhere towards the west, but it must, in its southern extremity have been shone upon by an almost tropical sun. Knowing, as we do now from the labours of celebrated geologists, that continents have arisen from the waves in one era and disappeared in the succeeding one, there can be no great difficulty in accepting the records here presented. The continent described by Lucius was bounded by a freshwater sea of unknown extent, and contained large rivers, immense forests, deserts, and ranges of mountains. It was inhabited by various races of men acquainted with some of the arts of civilisation, but in the main ignorant, superstitious, and cruel. Among these Maximin arises, and though his progress is necessarily attended with bloodshed his chief object is the abolition of slavery and superstition, and the improvement of the race. The book now at last translated and given to the world, does not represent all that remains of the literature of the Occident. There remain in the possession of the Editor a variety of memoirs and archives, private and public, full of interesting information, and extraordinary adventure, which may perhaps one day be published.

So, here we have Jefferies creating an entirely new continent in which to place his hero, and his hero's adventures. And now I think we should approach the first of the questions which I set at the beginning - why did he write this kind of a novel? Let me say immediately that the main reason seems be that he wanted a means of escape, of mental release from the life which he was leading in Wiltshire at this time - that is about 1873 to 1874. There is substantial evidence to suggest that he was not happy with life in Coate and Swindon in the early 1970s and there is little doubt I think that, although he found a rewarding relationship with nature in the Wiltshire countryside, social relationships were, to put it mildly, somewhat strained. In one of his last essays, 'My Old Village', he says of the villagers, "there was not a single one friendly to me." Of course, it probably worked both ways - Jefferies gained a reputation as a solitary who "mooned about" on the downs and had little to do with the locals.

But circumstances at home can hardly have helped at this crucial time in his writing career. Jefferies refers to life at Coate as "distant and unsocial," in a letter to his aunt Mrs. Harrild in 1870, and we know from the scenes in *Amaryllis at the Fair* that life at Coate Farm was made more difficult because of his father's casual attitude to life and his mother's shrewish temperament. Richard Jefferies' circumstances are summed up, as they often are at this time, in a fictional work - this one is a fragment entitled Hyperion. He writes:-

> There was once a youth in an obscure country village, quite lost in the rudest and most illiterate county in the West, who passed a great deal of his time reading and dreaming, so much so that he was useless upon the farm.

There is, I think, little doubt as to the autobiographical nature of this character.

Such difficulties must have made it extremely hard for Jefferies to settle to successful writing, and this lack of success in itself represents the other major reason for his dissatisfaction. Jefferies regarded himself primarily as a novelist, and he was at this stage of his career (and don't forget that he was still only twenty-five) an ambitious man. He says in a letter to Disraeli in 1871:

> I traced the effect of personal influence in every sphere of life. I decided that success in life depended upon personal influence and I wrote a book to reduce it to an art, I have called it 'Fortune or the Art of Success in Life'.

Above all though, he wanted to be a success as a novelist and he found it very hard going. He intervenes in a short story he is writing for the *New Monthly Magazine* at this time, to give this cry from the heart on the constricting nature of his life then:-

> How few of us are what we should have been, had circumstances given our nature scope to expand itself! But most of us have been

> hemmed in and pressed down and compelled to meet daily with dull and dispiriting circumstances, till at last these react upon our nature and warp our original bias.

Thus, we get the picture of an ambitious man, whose homse life is not a particularly happy one, and who has little to do with his fellow villagers. It is no coincidence that this is exactly the picture that we are given of Maximin, the hero of the new novel. There is no doubt that the man Jefferies presents is an idealized, self-portrait. I'd like you to consider the facts: Maximin is twenty-five - just Jefferies' age at the time he wrote the novel. He (Maximin) is a hunter, with a great interest in firearms, he lives in his parent's farmhouse on the edge of the downs, and he does not get on particularly well with the people in his native area, who he feels misunderstand him. But, most revealing of all, Maximin has a special, intense relationship with nature; this is what Jefferies writes about the bond between Maximin and physical nature:-

> He knew he was young, only twenty-five, but he felt that his brain was full of original conceptions. Filled with a species of romantic mysticism, he had wandered with his gun all over the width and breadth of the land, he had penetrated the solemn depth of the vast forest, … He had studied the works of the ancients, he had pondered upon the stars, the hills, the waters, and the great sun, till out from the depth his own soul there sprang forth a poem, yet not in verse, which embodied the truths he had learnt. This he had written and circulated a few copies of, and already he knew that it had been recognised by enthusiastic readers and was being scattered broadcast over the land.

Here, nine years before it was published, is the prospectus for *The Story of My Heart.*

So, like Jefferies, Maximin has a special bond with nature, but there is another way in which Nature seems to assist in stimulating the author's creative faculty. Jefferies arranges early in the story for his hero to travel across the downs and to hide in a 'Fern Forest' which is a manifest reproduction of Savernake Forest near Marlborough. Both these activities, on the downs, and in the forest, are preliminaries to Maximin's adventures in the Occident, where he experiences incredible landscapes, fights impossible battles and eventually becomes an all-powerful figure. The conclusion to be reached is, I think, inescapable; through the very process of writing about these areas that he is familiar with, Jefferies imagination achieves a kind of "take-off" into fantasy, into wild, improbable exploits. In an essay around this time entitled 'A Summer Day in Savernake Forest', Jefferies says this about the forest:-

> … it cheats us into a passing forgetfulness of the weary horse-in-the-mill sort of life we all lead more or less in this work-a-day world; it reminds us of the books of woodland sports read in our boyhood; it beguiles us from the region of fact to the realms of fiction.

This, of course, is exactly what it has done in Jefferies' case. It does seem to have been a conscious process, but it can be seen in the way in which the prose is raised in tone and the hero's aspirations take flight, as he treads the downs:-

> Maximin's heart rose within him and daring schemes and hopes which had long-harboured in his mind gathered strength and vigour; "I felt," he writes in his notes "as if an inspiration had sprung up within me, as if the great planet Jupiter which I remember well glittered in the southern sky, beckoned me on to glory."

But the kind of escape achieved by Jefferies in *The Rise of Maximin* is, and can only be, a partial one. Our President, Professor Keith, points out in his critical analysis of Jefferies' work that his dream world "in various significant ways reflects everyday experience. Jefferies is not escaping fantasy; instead he is bringing the world of imagination to the forefront and demonstrating its close connection with, and subtle influence upon the so-called 'real world'." What Professor Keith applies to the romances, applies just as readily to the imaginary Occident, this "vast continent," which Jefferies creates, a continent which has "arisen from the waves in one era and disappeared in the succeeding one," and which owes its existence to a combination of scientific theory and practical scientific observation. The Occident is the creation of a pre-eminently <u>practical</u> man, who has not only read Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, and so appreciates how continents can be built up and can disappear over geological time, but who has seen the process operating in miniature in the Wiltshire countryside , and so can see the evidence for such change. Charles Lyell, whose book on geology was published over forty years before *The Rise of Maximin*, has this to say about the kind of geological processes which obviously influenced Jefferies:-

> It is proper (Lyell writes) to derive our explanations from things which are obvious, and in some measure of daily occurrence, such as deluges, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, and sudden swellings of land beneath the sea . . . And it is not merely … the islands, but the continents can be lifted up together with the sea;- and both large and small tracts may subside again.

But Jefferies is not the kind of writer to accept this kind of theory without observing for himself, and, in fact, Coate Reservoir near his home provided the substantiation of Lyell's theory. The kind of method employed by Jefferies is in fact that recommended by none other than Charles Darwin, who says of scientific study :-

> Not that it sufficed to study *Principles of Geology*, or to read treatises by different observers on separate formations … A man must for years examine for himself great piles of superimposed strata and watch the sea at work grinding down old rocks and making fresh sediment, before he can hope to comprehend the lapse of time.

And, watching the everyday continuous processes on Coate Water, Jefferies writes in a letter to Oswald Crawfurd in 1876:-

> You can trace the action of the rain and frost and the waves on its banks just like Lyell delineates the effect of the ocean on our coast line, of course on a smaller scale, but the illustration is perfect. You can trace the action of the brook which feeds it - the sediment and sand carried down have formed shallows and banks like the delta of a river.

And in his essay 'Sport and Science', which outlines a similar geological movement, Jefferies enlarges upon boyhood experience by relating his scientific reading to the processes taking place upon the reservoir :-

> . . . the little brook was making a delta, and a new land was rising from the depths of the wave. This is exactly what has happened on an immensely larger scale in the history of the earth . . . Going by with a gun so frequently, one could not help noticing these things, and remembering them when reading Lyell's *Geology* or Maury's book on the sea, or the innumerable other treatises bearing on the same interesting questions."

But, if the reaction to these discoveries in science has its positive side in the way that Jefferies creates a continent, it also has its negative aspect. It is clear from his writing that the geographical exploration taking place at this time was alarming as well as fascinating him. Many of the authorial remarks passed in his novel *Restless Human Hearts* point to the fact that the discoveries in central Africa were leading to a removal of sense of that mystery which Jefferies found so essential to a full life. He says in the novel:-

> The world has grown so small. Time was . . . when there was a Verge; an Edge, beyond which there was an unknown something for man to seek. All the continents are found now, the geographers assure us that no more remains to be discovered. Excepting only a few small spots, and these, too, narrowing daily, the whole surface of the earth has been surveyed and mapped out and reduced to scale.

This paradox of expansion making smaller is accompanied by a feeling of near-claustrophobia, and a sense that the world is worn-out. Jefferies enquires at the end of *Restless Human Hearts:-*

> We are all tired of our lives; we have done everything, felt everything, tried everything. What shall we do with ourselves?

And the possible answer is supplied by Neville, again a character embodying many of Jefferies' own qualities. Neville's suggestion provides the start: point for the next novel, *The Rise of Maximin:* -

> I think that 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 ever, beginning in youth and going on till death came, straight away as the crow flies, and never reach the other side . . . Then we should have a resource - somewhere to hide ourselves;- now the world is so small.

It is only a small step from this wish to the actual creation of a new continent - the Occident - in *The Rise of Maximin*. Jefferies debt to science is therefore a double one; he relies on it for the information which he needs to reinforce the likelihood of the continent's having existed in geological time, but this in itself provides a means of escape from a world which geographical exploration is making smaller and less mysterious. Little wonder then that Aymer Mallet, a character in Jefferies' next novel, *World's End* comments that, "Science,is . . . a double-edged sword."

I would like now to turn to the other main influences upon the writing of *The Rise of Maximin*, and I think that the first thing that strikes one on reading the novel is the pains which Jefferies has taken to make the work appear to be historically factual. The devices he uses - the invoking of an archivist, Lucius, and ancient memoirs and records, is not an original device - we see Defoe, for instance, using a similar device in the previous century - but the idea of an historical chronicle does show just how indebted Jefferies is to both his early reading and his historical researches for the three local newspapers he was employed by. It was these antiquarian interests which first brought the chroniclers of the past to Jefferies' notice. In l866 he started work for the *North Wiltshire Herald* and over the following four years he completed the histories of Malmesbury, Swindon and Cirencester for the paper and for the *Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Standard.* Now, these histories are similar in style to those of the ancient chroniclers from whom he derived many of his details. We know for certain that he the work *Six Old English Chronicles* , which contains the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Nennius, Gildas, Ethelwerd, Asser and Richard of Cirencester, and also that he had seen the chronicle of William of Malmesbury, for he quotes all these writers at some stage in his histories. It is no coincidence, I think that the first of Jefferies' histories completed under the pseudonym of Geoffrey, for the evidence points to the fact that he was strongly influenced by Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *History of the Kings of Britain* breaks the tedium of continuous narrative with the inclusion of interesting tales of dubious origin and stories with a "human interest." Geoffrey of Monmouth claims falsely that his chronicle is taken from a Breton book which he asserts, "I have on this wise been at the pains of translating into the Latin speech;" Richard Jefferies, in the introduction to *The Rise of Maximin* varies this approach by hinting through the name of the archivist, Lucius, at a Latin origin of the chronicles of Maximin's promotion. This medieval tenor is sustained by the harking back to the times when the monasteries were the main depositories of knowledge, and monks the most educated men, through Maximin's reading of a book entitled 'The Travels of a Roumanian Monk in the Occident'. In fact, both Monmouth's and Jefferies' narratives straddle the border between history and fiction, though it be said that Monmouth's account occupies this ground more easily than *The Rise of Maximin.*

It is noticeable that the novel, like Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* is concerned mainly with accounts of battles and triumphs in battle. Jefferies' notebook for 1876, before *The Rise of Maximin* was published, shows that he was planning a regal chronicle similar to the one which Monmouth had written. It was to be called *A Vision of Kings – a crowd of all that have worn the diadem*, but it was never written. We can see Monmouth's influence too, in the way in which Jefferies tries to persuade his readers of the truthfulness of his account of Maximin's rise - "there can be no great difficulty in accepting the records here presented," he confidedently asserts. It must not be assumed however, that Jefferies took Monmouth's accounts as gospel truth - he regards them as most people at the time did, as pseudo-historical and warns that they should be "received with caution." Despite this, Geoffrey of Monmouth's influence upon Richard Jefferies was a profound one, and the chronicle tradition in general was one which exerted a strong pull on him in his preparation of *Maximin*. In a significant defence of the old historical records, as compared with the modern, late nineteenth century, scholarly approach to history, he says this:-

> I prefer the ancient, original records: Neither can I read the ponderous volumes of modern history which are nothing but words. I prefer the incomplete and scattered chronicles themselves, where the sword shines and the armour rings, and all is life though but a broken frieze.

It is the immediacy, the vitality of these accounts that appeals to Jefferies, but there is perhaps another reason why he chose to present the initial stages of *Maximin* as a chronicle. He was, as we have asserted previously, ambitious to be a successful novelist, yet up to the time that *The Rise of Maximin* was written his achievement did not match his aspirations. Several attempted novels, titles like 'Fortune', 'Only a Girl' and 'In Summer Time', had failed to reach the publication stage, and the only novel he had had published by this time, *The Scarlet Shawl*, had been a miserable failure. I think what we are seeing by the time *The Rise of Maximin* is written is a recognition by Jefferies that successful novel writing is not an easy task, and a consequent stepping back, a reliance on those skills which he is sure of - those o: experienced reporter and historian. By using these in the initial stage of the novel, Jefferies gradually eases his way from the apparently factual-historical basis of Maximin's triumphs towards his fantastic exploits in the Occident.

The qualities most admired by Jefferies and transmitted in *Maximin* are those ones he regards as inherent in the English character, having been passed down through generations. They are, he explains in an earlier essay written for the *Swindon Advertiser*, entitled 'A Natural System of National Defence', those of strength and courage, "the two great characteristics of a first soldier." "Our nation," he says in this essay, "is a compound of several races, but the stem and trunk of the tree was that Saxon and Danish race, whose gods - and the nation's gods always personify its character - were Odin and Thor, gods of the sword and mace. Their heaven - always a picture of the heart's wishes - was a huge field in which to fight all day, and a hall in which to feast and drink all night. The actual earthly life, of these people

was a counterpart of their ideas of heaven: it was a life of continual fighting upon sea and land, and their heroes, like their gods, were the greatest warriors. Their one only virtue was courage . . . Pre-eminent courage – it exalted a man in their estimation almost to the level of the gods. Such was the race who formed the foundation and stem of England." And such too are the figures of Maximin and his friends whom Jefferies creates.

It is these characters who most readily attract the eye, despite the unusual structure of the novel. They are clearly based upon earlier examples in literature, one of the main ones being what Alfred Lord Tennyson described as "the greatest of all poetical subjects," the history and myth surrounding King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Now the nineteenth-century, and particularly the period after 1830, had seen a tremendous resurgence of interest in the subject in several artistic spheres, not least that of literature. Jefferies refers in his notebook to the revival of medieval topics generally at this time, styling it a 'Medievalaissance', the proposed title of an essay which was never written. We know that Jefferies had read both Monmouth's and Malory's accounts of King Arthur's adventures, and I think that it is fair to say that it was probably the commercial possibilities the Arthurian theme which first attracted him. The major Arthurian work of the day was undoubtedly Tennyson's *The Idylls of the King*, which was written between 1859 and 1886, but more importantly, completed except for one part by 1872, only two years before the completion of *The Rise of Maximin*. The set of poems which form *The Idylls* were among the best-loved and most popular of Tennyson's works, and inspired many subsequent reworkings of the Arthurian legend in various art forms, including a reproduction of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* by the Early English Text Society in 1871. So that, in taking the Arthurian motif and re-shaping it, Jefferies was following a popular and tried idea, and one whose revival was at its height in the 1870s when *The Rise of Maximin* was published. Strangely though, the story of Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table had not been reworked as a prose adventure story (apart that is from the reprint of Malory's version) during this revival.

How then, do we know that Jefferies was affected by the Arthurian 1egend when writing *Maximin*? By the mid-1870s it is clear that he had read and stored several Arthurian tales. In the autumn of 1869 he was planning a holiday and he states in a letter:-

> I think next spring, all being well, to start for a long journey, most probably into Cornwall, or else the north of Scotland, but I would sooner see <u>wild</u> Cornwall and hear the <u>wild</u> Cornish legends of King Arthur.

The emphasis through repetition of the word "wild" suggests that the quality which appeals to Jefferies is that of disorder leavened by certain strands of 'civilized' life - in fact just the kind of world which the hero of *Maximin* inhabits. Yet, the Arthurian ethic of the nineteenth-century is founded on the opposite of this discord and disorder, another example of the confluence of ideas crowding the author's mind. That the Arthurian theme was on Jeiferies' mind at about the time *The Rise of Maximin* was being planned is clear from the novel preceding it, Restless Human Hearts; one of the characters is depicted as "languidly looking at the last *Idylls of the King*

issued by the Laureate." And in the novel itself the character and place-names, and the coincidence of events suggest overtones of Arthurian history and legend. The maiden whom Maximin loves from afar is never actually seen, but her name Genevre, is an obvious modification of Guinivere. Like her more famous counter-part she lives in a castle that is at once the prison of the maiden in the typical medieval tale and the symbol of power in those days. And in addition both heroines, Guinevere and Genevre fly to the sanctuary of a convent and are loved by a suitor with apparently inferior claims to their hand in marriage. Apart from Genevre though, other names used by Jefferies owe much to Arthurian myth; names like Aurelius, Constans, Lucius and Carausius are evidently derived from this source, as are places like Lyonnesse, Ambrosius, Armorica, Badom and Cythia, which are-simultaneously a kind of "shorthand" for a world as the author conceived it to be once, and which has now been lost to the machine, and an indicator of the author's own lack of imagination in not being able to invent his own, entirely original set of place and character names.

But the parallels with Arthurian legend extend further than these surface similarities; the whole or animation of Maximin's council of seven friends is based upon similar medieval concepts of loyalty, honour and courage and, course, military prowess, as that of the Round Table. In Jefferies' novel though, these values are embodied in the 'Rah' a religious hymn, and the 'Four Books', a set of laws which the hero has drawn up. Politically and geographically Maximin's native land is one where "there are numerous petty kingdoms at war with each other," a similar state to that in Tennyson's *Idylls*, prior to Arthur's arrival, where:-

> … many a petty king; ere Arthur came
> Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
> Each upon other wasted all the land.

Maximin, like Arthur, "Drew all the petty princedoms under him," and "Made a realm." Moreover, the land of Arthur and that of Maximin share the cyclical renovation and destruction seen in the Occident's rise and submersion and the country which Arthur enters and leaves, summed up in Tennyson's phrase "The old order changes, yielding place to new." Tennyson can in fact be seen influencing Jefferies in two distinct ways; primarily his success provided a financial spur to his less-famous imitator. The serialization of *The Rise of Maximin* in the *New Monthly Magazine* must have been carried out with an eye to its final publication as a book; this was a lucrative combination used by contemporaries of Jefferies' like Thomas Hardy, Rider Haggard and Anthony Trollope, and by Jefferies himself with *Greene Ferne Farm* three years later. Secondly, he (Tennyson, that is) crystallizes the author's ideas of the heroic round, the Arthurian legend at a time when Arthurian topics were enjoying a revival, and when Jefferies was seeking a suitable theme.

I'd like finally after this consideration of some of the major influences affecting the writing of *The Rise of Maximin* to turn to the third question which I asked at the beginning, - what happened to the work? Now it's quite obvious that it didn't turn out in the way Jefferies had anticipated; this is what he says in the Introduction to the novel:-

> There remain in the possession of the Editor (that's Jefferies himself) a variety of memoirs and archives, private and public, full of interesting information and extraordinary adventure which may perhaps one day be published.

It is evident from this that what Jefferies had in mind was some kind of epic possibly on Homeric lines. It seems unlikely that he had written more of the adventures of Maximin than those which appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* and the closely-packed nature of the final chapters suggests that even the completed parts were concluded in a hurry. It may well be (though this is only speculation) that by the time he came to write these concluding chapters some other project had taken precedence. But, in any case the reaction, or to be more precise the lack of reaction, to *The Rise of Maximin* must have been a disappointment to both Jefferies and the proprietors of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and the fact that the serial never appeared as a book tells its own story.

But the novel did not disappear into oblivion. Indeed, it ought to be evident to students of Jefferies' work that his early writings were never wasted, but were used either directly or indirectly in subsequent works. And so it was with *The Rise of Maximin*. Eight years after the final episode of the novel was published, Jefferies brought out *After London, or Wild England* and the parallels between this work and its predecessor are sufficiently striking ones to lead us to the conclusion that the later work relies to a substantial extent on Jefferies' serial for both its structure and for the events related. But, in fact, the time gap between *The Rise of Maximin* and *After London* is substantially less than eight years, for Jefferies' letter to his publishers just prior to the publication of *After London* makes it clear that the manuscript for this novel was completed as early as mid-l882, only five years after *The Rise of Maximin* had been concluded.

I think it is fair to speculate then that Jefferies, being aware of the limited circulation of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and knowing that *The Rise of Maximin* had received no widespread publicity in the form of reviews, substantially re-worked the early novel and issued it in volume form. To see this, one has only to examine the descriptions of the two heroes Maximin and Felix Aquila; both men are twenty-five years old, and both are skilled as hunters. This is how the figure of Maximin is described:-

> Maximin carried together with his matchlock a long two-edged knife, used in hunting, a steel, flint, and tinder-box, and a small hatchet slung in his girdle.

And we are told in *After London* that in Felix's bedroom were "a flint and steel and tinder . . . There too lay his knife, with buck-horn hilt, worn by every one in the belt, and his forester's axe, a small tool, but extremely useful in the woods." Both these heroes are great readers too, and are knowledgeable beyond their fellow-countrymen in an age of widespread illiteracy. Despite belonging to entirely different social classes - Maximin is the son of a farmer, Felix Aquila the son of a Lord - both men are despised and suspected of subversion, and are in danger of persecution by the authorities for their proud, solitary, independent ways. Both too,yearn for a fuller spiritual existence, though this is more evident in *The Rise of Maximin* than it is in *After London*, probably because Jefferies' autobiography, *The*

Story of My Heart, had been published in between these two novels, and had said all that the author wished to say upon the matter. Finally, the adventures of the two men are also very similar - both go on solitary boat journeys which recall Ulysses' journey, both overcome many dangers, and both unite the various factions in the land behind their leadership.

The social background to the two novels is, on the face of it, completely different, with *The Rise of Maximin* looking back in time to the mythical Occidental year Y.F.744, and *After London* pushing forward some two centuries or more in conventional time to a post-disaster England. But these facts are less important than the kind of society which Jefferies portrays in the novels. Broadly both are societies whose modes of life and technologies belong to a distant, medieval past; what the society of Maximin has never learned, that of Felix Aquila has forgotten, and it must be said that although both societies are cruel, semi-primitive ones when viewed from a nineteenth or twentieth-century perspective, they embody just the kinds of vigorous, vital .activities which the author sees as missing from modern industrial societies. The conclusion is inescapable - not only does Jefferies create a society of the past in both novels, but he also goes a long way towards building a society which is more congenial to his own ideas.

However, it is not only the events in *The Rise of Maximin* and *After London* which coincide - the structures of the two novels are very similar too. Just as the earlier novel starts with an account of the history and geography of the Occident, the first part of *After London* relates the changed face of England after an unspecified disaster has occurred. Both works then narrow down to focus upon the adventures of an individual, albeit an unusual individual, in these semi-primitive societies. The historical-chronicle sources which are so evident in *Maximin* are, it is clear, carried over into *After London*, though in the latter case the accounts related are by word of mouth, rather than by manuscript.

So, there it is; there are many other facets to *The Rise of Maximin* which I haven't time to delve into tonight. If you get a. chance I advise you to read it. As I have hinted, it is not a great novel, but to the student of Jefferies' life and writing it fills a gap which has long existed and it makes fascinating reading.