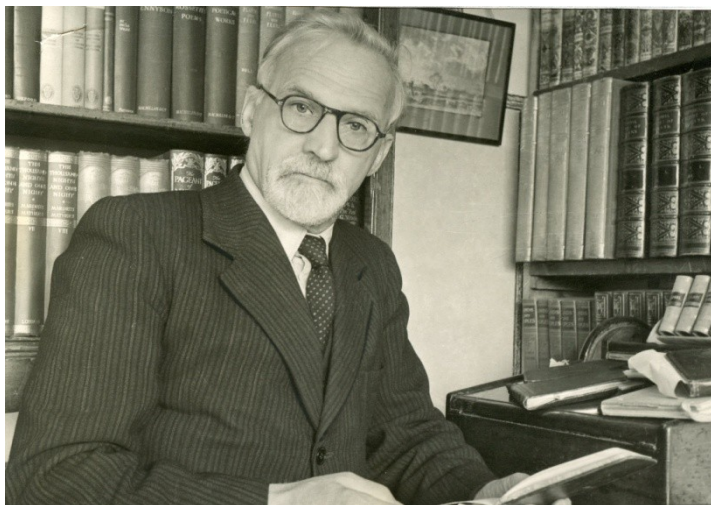


SAMUEL JOSEPH LOOKER

Writer, Journalist, Editor, Councillor.
Authority on Richard Jefferies,

A TRIBUTE



Samuel J. Looker, 1948, in his study at Cheadle,
holding one of the precious Jefferies' notebooks.

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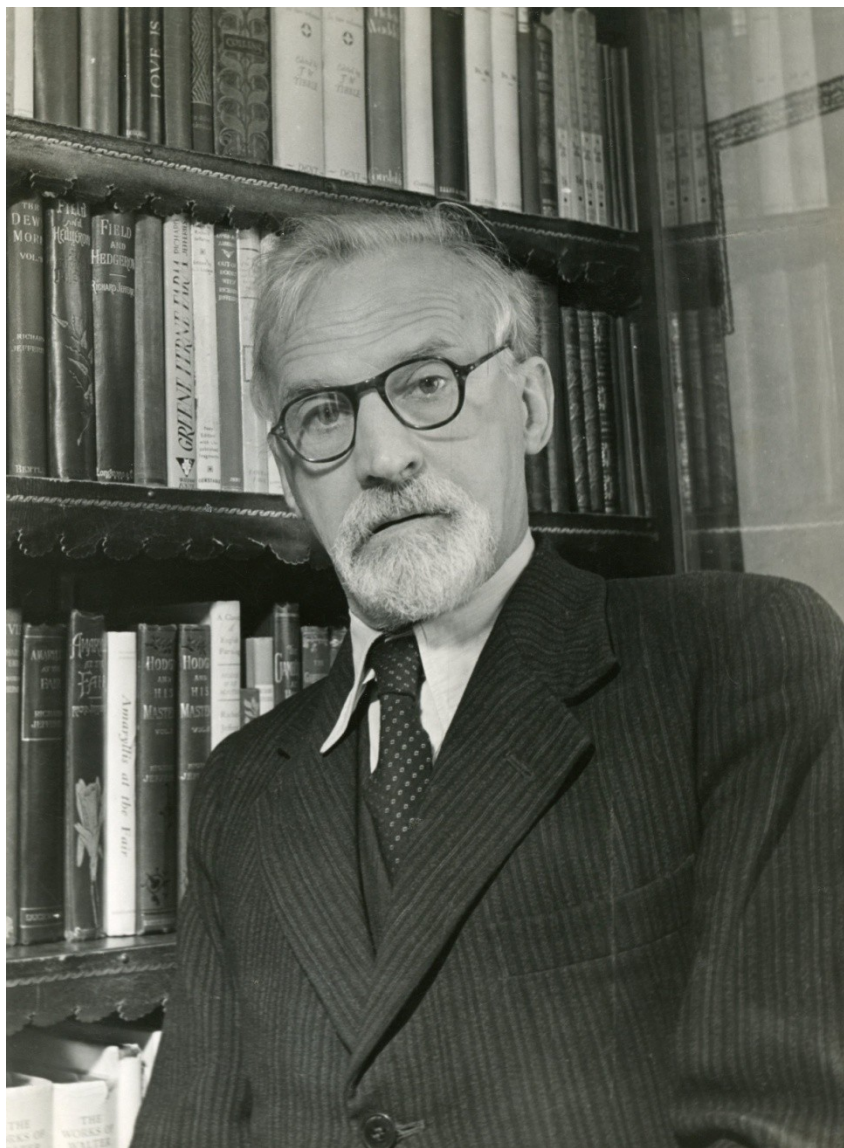
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November 1948

Photographs by kind permission of Miss Joan Looker.

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The Obituary that appeared in *The Times* has been added to this Tribute; with thanks to the newspaper and the anonymous author of the article - Frances Gay.



Samuel Looker, 1948, aged 60

SAMUEL J. LOOKER 1888-1965.

A TRIBUTE

I

INTRODUCTION

Acting upon a reminder from one of our members, Mr. Howard Kensett, of Eastbourne, the Richard Jefferies Society decided to repair the omission of fifteen years standing, by producing a symposium of tributes to its one-time President, Mr. Samuel J. Looker, in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the world of Richard Jefferies.

Most of the contributors to this small collection knew Samuel Looker personally, and all were in correspondence with him. Whilst a more critical and comprehensive assessment of Mr. Looker's life and work is still to come, this initial offering is a sincere token of personal admiration and gratitude, which we hope that our members and their friends will be happy to place among their books.

Samuel Looker, in a letter quoted herein, said that 'all true adventures at last...are adventures of the mind'. He was certainly no stranger to mental exhilaration and excitement. One has only to read his chapter entitled 'Adventure and Discovery', in *Man of the Fields* to be aware of the thrill he experienced in tracking down a Jefferies manuscript or notebook, or in communion with Jefferies' son and daughter. It is difficult for a layman to appreciate the passion that enthusiasts put into literary debate. Malcolm Elwin's stringent assaults on certain accepted attitudes regarding Jefferies in the introduction to his book; *The Essential Richard Jefferies*, brought forth from Looker an equally hard-hitting pamphlet: *The True Richard Jefferies*, reminiscent, though on a smaller canvas, of the famous controversy between H.G. Wells and Hilaire Belloc over *The Outline of History*.

Samuel Looker received strong criticism, and although he was depressed when he felt it to be unfair, he was never a man to take it lying down. He crossed verbal swords with Betjeman and Grigson, and received honourable scars from the pen of the distinguished critic, Mrs Q.D. Leavis.

It is no idle claim to make on his behalf that the great production of Jefferies editions, both of new and of previously published material for which Mr. Looker was responsible, is the basis upon which the present increasing popularity of Jefferies was built.

Samuel J. Looker was born in North London in 1888, and in 1910, married Caroline Finner, who came from North Staffordshire. He lectured in literature for the L.C.C. from 1920 to 1936, and was a W.E.A. Tutor. As a journalist he wrote for numerous magazines, including the ever-lamented *John o' London's Weekly*. Crabbe, Shelley and Hudson were among his subjects. As if his literary efforts were insufficient to satisfy his ambitions, he was elected to the Staffordshire County Council, in the Labour interest, serving in numerous capacities with great enthusiasm from 1949 until 1954. He was a member of The Fabian Society and had met George Bernard Shaw. For 41 years he was Publisher's Reader and Adviser to Constable & Co.

His books included nine volumes of poetry, some of them humorous; anthologies on cricket, angling and travel; but his crowning glory was his Jefferies books, for which he wrote expansive Introductions, which are in themselves, important sources of knowledge and illumination. The one which prefaces *The Richard Jefferies Companion*, alone runs to forty-one pages. Some of these editions were beautifully illustrated by those outstanding wood-engravers Agnes Miller Parker and C.F. Tunnicliffe. In his Introduction to *The Old House at Coate* Looker writes:

'Richard Jefferies had been dead for fourteen years only, and his books, since so difficult to obtain, were then easy of access, although he was passing through a period of comparative neglect. I read every one of his books on which I could lay my hands. It was then, many years ago, that I first made the resolve that, if I lived, I would one day edit this great writer, and devote all my energies to making his creative and consoling work more widely known and appreciated. I have been able, in spite of many difficulties in the way, to keep this vow of early youth.'

At the Centenary Celebrations in Swindon in 1948, Samuel Looker personally described the original Jefferies MSS. which he had loaned for the Exhibition, and led a party of pilgrims to Day House Farm, one-time home of Jessie Baden, whom Jefferies married, and where he gave an address. He also carried the banner into Worthing, in Sussex the county which in his last years, Jefferies came to love, and where he died. He persuaded the Worthing Art Development Scheme to sponsor an impressive and unique series of handsomely produced, illustrated Tributes, three to Jefferies and one to Hudson. These 'Worthing Cavalcade' volumes are much sought after for their enduring attractiveness and varied content.

Samuel Looker was a man of deep convictions and sympathies, and his concern for the oppressed and wretched of the world, the victims of famine, neglect and war, weighed heavily upon him, as some of his letters reveal. He was a good conversationalist and enjoyed public debate. He had the true

scholar's passion for thoroughness and accuracy. The scope and extent of his correspondence show that he left no possible source of enlightenment or information unexplored.

Today's students of Jefferies, and of other writers, have the inestimable advantage of examining the large holding of Jefferies MSS in the British Museum, much of which was gathered together through the indefatigable efforts of one dedicated man – Samuel J. Looker.

Following several years of illness, Samuel Looker died on January 11th 1965, too soon to see the publication, in collaboration with Crichton Porteous, of *Richard Jefferies. Man of the Fields*, which, though it is a biography of the great writer of whom he was so ardent a disciple, is also a memorial to Samuel Looker himself.

Cyril Wright
Hon. Secretary:
The Richard Jefferies Society.

II

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

PROFESSOR W.J. KEITH is the President of The Richard Jefferies Society. He was recently awarded the high, distinction of Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He was born in Highgate, London in 1934, gained a B.A. at Cambridge, and an M.A. at Toronto University, Canada. His thesis *Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study* won him the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1961. Its publication under the same title by the University of Toronto Press in 1965, and in the same year by the O.U.P. in Britain, won it immediate acclaim as a major work on the 19th century writer. A subsequent book *The Rural Tradition* includes chapters on Jefferies, Edward Thomas, W.H. Hudson, and Henry Williamson.

MR. LESLIE CRICHTON PORTEOUS is a novelist, biographer, and writer on topography. He contributed a book on Derbyshire to the County Book Series, published by Robert Hale; and he has written on other country matters. His collaboration with Samuel Looker made possible the publication by John Baker in 1965, of *Richard Jefferies. Man of the Fields*, as so frankly recalled by Mr. Porteous in his article. This book is still the latest authoritative biography of Jefferies, taking its place beside the classic work by Edward Thomas, published 56 years earlier. Mr. Porteous lives at Matlock.

MISS EDNA MANNING is a founder-member of The Richard Jefferies Society, and is one of its Vice-Presidents. She was born in Western Australia, but lived in Swindon from the age of two. She now resides in Bournemouth, with her husband, Mr. F. Mazzolin: a Swindon man. She writes stories and features for radio and magazines. Her articles include studies of Jefferies, and she has completed a full-length book on the writer. She is a member of The West Country Writers' Association, and is Publicity Officer for the British Amateur Press Association.

MR. ROBERT OWEN WRIGHT A.B.S.M. was born in 1934, at Smethwick, Staffordshire. His major interest is the study and performance of music. He has contributed to journals and newspapers on Delius, and is a Founder Member of The Delius Society. Mr. Wright has worked for the last 22 years in a local hospital, having been exempted from military service on moral grounds in 1958. His membership of The Richard Jefferies Society goes back to 1955. He lives in Dudley.

III

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF THE MAIN PUBLICATIONS
EDITED BY SAMUEL. J. LOOKER IN CONNECTION WITH
RICHARD JEFFERIES.

- 1937 *Jefferies England* Constable
1939 *To the Immortal Memory of Richard Jefferies* (Pamphlet) Aylesbury: At
the Sign of the Dolphin.
1941 *The Nature diaries and Notebooks of Richard Jefferies;*
with an essay 'The Tangle of Autumn'. The Grey Walls Press.
1944 *Jefferies Countryside* Constable
Jefferies London Lutterworth
1944 *The Worthing Cavalcade. Concerning Richard Jefferies.* Aldridge Bros
1946 *The Worthing Cavalcade. Richard Jefferies: A Tribute by Various Writers.*
The Spring of the Year Lutterworth
1947 *The Story of My Heart* Edited with the first draft of the authors MS.
(Constable)
1948 *The True Richard Jefferies* An examination of the misunderstandings of
Malcolm Elwin in *The Essential Richard Jefferies* (J.A.Holmes. Cheadle)
The Jefferies Companion Phoenix House
The Old House at Coate Lutterworth
Chronicles of the Hedges Phoenix House
The Notebooks of Richard Jefferies The Grey Walls Press
The Worthing Cavalcade: BEAUTY IS IMMORTAL Aldridge Bros.

NEW EDITIONS OF JEFFERIES' WORKS BY LUTTERWORTH PRESS

*The Life of the Fields. Wild Life in a Southern County. The Open Air. Field and
Hedgerow.*

- 1957 *Field and Farm* Phoenix House
1965 *Richard Jefferies. Man of the Fields* (with Crichton Porteous) (John
Baker)

No claim is made that this is a complete list. For details of contents etc. see in
particular the Bibliography in *Richard Jefferies. Man of the Fields.*

IV

SAMUEL LOOKER AND THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

In August 1949, Mr. Harold Adams whose efforts and enthusiasm have earned him the distinction of Founder of The Richard Jefferies Society, wrote to Mr. Samuel Looker in these terms:

'I hope that you will agree to stand nomination as President of The Richard Jefferies Society, as a humble tribute to the tireless effort you have made for so many years, to present to the public and to the world, the works of this great philosopher and author.'

Mr. Looker replied to the effect that he would consider such nomination an honour. He was duly elected to this office, and served the Society as its first President from 1950 until his death in 1965.

Initially, Mr. Looker, in common with a number of others, had not favoured the formation of a Society dedicated to Richard Jefferies, fearing that it might serve principally as a vehicle for an exchange of views and memories about the countryside, and do little to promote a serious study of Jefferies. However, when he became aware of the dedication and resolution that fed the flame, he gave it much encouragement, offering the names of people of his acquaintance in literature and other spheres, as possible members, and linking the Society through his frequent correspondence and personal gifts with a unique repository of knowledge about Jefferies.

Even while the Society was still in prospect, he indicated in a letter to Mr. Adams (December 1948) his willingness to offer for sale, one of the most famous of the items in his collection, the manuscript of Jefferies' essay: 'A True Tale of the Wiltshire Labourer', which was published posthumously in *The Toilers of the Field*. (1882). The condition was that it should be preserved in a public collection such as a library or museum. In due course, this is exactly what did happen, and the manuscript is one of the exhibits in the Richard Jefferies Museum at Coate.

In November 1950, Samuel Looker addressed a joint public meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society and the Swindon Branch of the Workers' Educational Association. At that time he represented Cheadle on the Staffordshire County Council.

A valuable collection of the works of Richard Jefferies, including many first editions, handsomely bound in green leather, passed into the care of The Richard Jefferies Society, through a nomination by Mr. Looker, acting as Trustee

for the owner, Mr. William Gough, of Wootton Bassett, who died in August 1953. These volumes, forty-one in all, were the foundation of the Society's library.

In these and other ways, Samuel J. Looker's Presidency of The Richard Jefferies Society was translated into a constant and practical concern for its objectives.

C.F.W.

Permission to make use of correspondence he had with Mr. Looker has been freely given by Mr. Harold Adams, Chairman of The Richard Jefferies Society.



Samuel and Caroline Looker 1945

SAMUEL J. LOOKER. Extracts from letters addressed to Mrs F.J. GAY, Chairman of The Richard Jefferies Society, and quoted by permission of Mr T.G. Gay of Swindon. Mrs Gay was a Founder Member of the Society, and served it with distinction from 1950 until her death in 1974 at the age of 88.

From 48 Ingarsby Drive, Evington, Leicester. Sept. 11th 1963.

‘All true adventures at last, including travel, are adventures of the mind. It is possible to girdle the whole earth and return as vacant in mind at the end as at the beginning. I have known men travelling through the most breathtaking scenery in Europe, with the blinds down in the carriage, under electric light, playing cards.’

In the same letter, Mr. Looker quotes figures for the sales of his Editions of Richard Jefferies:

1. Published by Lutterworth

The Old House at Coate, (6000 copies); *Richard Jefferies’ London*, (10,000); *The Spring of the Year*, (7000); *The Open Air*, *The Life of the Fields*, and *Field and Hedgerow*, (6500 each); *Wild Life in a Southern County*, (7000).

2. Published by Constable

Richard Jefferies’ England, (30,000. 7 impressions); *Richard Jefferies’ Countryside*, (6000);

3. Published by Phoenix House

Chronicles of the Hedges, (6000); *Field and Farm*, (2000); *The Richard Jefferies Companion*, (5000)

A total of around 110,000 copies (including *The Worthing Cavalcade* publications) were in circulation.

After dwelling sorrowfully on the waste and suffering in much of human life, Mr Looker writes: ‘And yet, for all pains can be found compensating pleasures; for grief affection and friendship and love, the consolation of religion, art, beauty and of nature. As Blake said, “Joy and grief are woven fine” / and I believe, indeed know, that one must accept life as it is, and equally suffer and enjoy, hope and despair, as life turns its circle.’

From Leicester. October 24th 1964.

‘(Crichton) Porteous has been a close friend of mine, ever since *Jefferies’ England*, in 1937, and we have written and met to talk about Jefferies very often. He is well known for his excellent book on Derbyshire in the County Series, and is also the author of books of country interest, and of some good novels — Anyone more pleasant to work with than Crichton Porteous I have never met, or hope to meet.’

VI

We are indebted to Mr. Donald T. Berwick of Burnage, Manchester for permission to quote from a letter that he received from Mr. Looker on October 22nd 1957, written from Leicester.

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Dear Mr. Berwick,

How very kind of you to write me such a charming and welcome letter. Nothing has given me greater pleasure during my long years of Jefferies' research and editing... It may interest you to know that, many years ago now, it was 'A Tangle of Autumn' which was my first discovery of an unpublished Jefferies MSS. I found it in a small book-shop, long since defunct, near the British Museum and I remember my excitement at the time, for I was young then. I had gone into the shop to look around and asked I remember if they had any books by Jefferies. The old bookseller said no, but he believed that he had somewhere, a manuscript by him. After a long rummage, he unearthed the MSS of 'A Tangle of Autumn', Jefferies' own title, and it was signed by him too. I read it quickly and realised, for I knew his work inside out even then, that it was unpublished. I gave him two pounds for it (it would be worth much more now) and went home delighted. That was the beginning of my Jefferies' collection of MSS.

Note 'A Tangle of Autumn' was first printed with *The Nature Diaries and Notebooks of Richard Jefferies*. Ed. S.J. Looker. Grey Walls Press 1941. Later it appeared in *Field and Farm*. Ed. S.J. Looker Phoenix House 1957.

## VII

### SAMUEL J. LOOKER: THE STORY OF A CORRESPONDENCE

*W.J. Keith*

I never met Samuel J. Looker, though we almost met while I was still a schoolboy. When I sat for the School Certificate examinations in 1948, the assigned prose-text was Ronald Hook's anthology, *Readings from Richard Jefferies*. I attended Brentwood School, Essex, and the senior English master, knowing that Looker lived only a few miles away at Billericay, invited him to come and address the class. Unfortunately, however, he was in the process of moving to Staffordshire so the idea came to nothing.

Because I later became actively involved in the study of Jefferies, I have often had cause to regret that this meeting never took place. Nonetheless, a time came when I established contact by letter, and we corresponded quite regularly between 1956 and 1964. I have in my possession seventeen letters and one postcard that he wrote to me during these years together with two of his letters to Mrs Frances J. Gay which she forwarded at various times and said that I might keep. They bring back poignant memories when re-read. No one who received a letter from him—at least in his later years—will be likely to forget those irregularly-shaped pages either typed closely from margin to margin or filled with his thin, rambling, spidery handwriting.

I originally wrote to him when composing a short, voluntary research-paper for Part I of the English Tripos at Cambridge. I had chosen *The Story of My Heart* as a topic, and decided to consult Looker about the scope of Jefferies' reading. The reply was friendly, exhaustive, and surprisingly prompt. (In a later communication he remarked: 'In my old age I make a practice of replying to all letters that deserve it by return of post, as some compensation for my earlier years when I was most remiss with correspondence.') My queries at that time must have been stumbling and naive, but my interest was at least genuine and I suppose this came through. I remember being highly gratified by this attention from an acknowledged authority on the subject. I had begun to collect Jefferies' books—many of them in Looker's editions—since that School Certificate year. He was, I think, the first writer (not counting my academic teachers) with whom I had come even remotely into contact. I was frankly awed—especially when he passed on information which he had gathered but not yet printed.

Necessarily, our correspondence concerned itself for the most part with details about Jefferies' works, Looker's letters answering my queries with both care and patience. Only occasionally would hints about his own personal life

come through, and these were all the more valued for their rarity. I had assumed, for example, that he was living in retirement, and was therefore surprised when he wrote: 'I have completed no less than forty years' continuous Reading for the one firm (Constable). Almost a record I should say and in my 75th year I suppose I am one of the oldest working Publisher's Reader(s) in action now.' Even more fascinating was the following account. He was writing about the mystical side of Jefferies and confided:

I myself have had in much earlier life some examples of this vision of Cosmic Consciousness. It is not a thing of which I talk much about but, if we ever meet, I will tell you about it. Life is never the same again after the experience. It comes as the wind 'whither it listeth' and at no extraordinary moments either, but in the midst of an ordinary day and avocations.

And I am not an occult person or a spiritualist or even a medium so far as I know. But these experiences came to me nonetheless and I cannot repudiate or forget them or fail to recognise their deep impact upon my mind and life and attitude towards the Reality beyond Appearances.

Our correspondence continued through my final years at Cambridge, my M.A. and PhD. studies at Toronto, and up to the time when a revised version of my doctoral thesis on Jefferies was accepted for publication. For Looker these were distressing times since his wife had become crippled with arthritis and he was in failing health himself. Hence it is not particularly surprising that a darker—almost querulous—note should occasionally enter his letters. As he remarked at one point, 'I have at times been subject to a touch of depression now and then.' This often took the form of a bitter sense of failure, a belief that his work on Jefferies had not received the attention that it deserved. So on one occasion he wrote:

I have always remained a Free Lance, completely outside all cliques and groups, and, as a result, have no doubt suffered. But I prefer a position of Independence. Imagine what would have been the publicity on Literary Press and Radio if comparable hitherto unpublished MSS had been discovered by James, Conrad or Hudson, by some well known member of a clique!

And again:

Perhaps I get older and more cynical, but hardly anyone seems to care twopence (except yourself and a few others) what I do or do not do, on Jefferies. The B.B.C. and all the Pundits absolutely ignore what I have done. I do not belong to any cliques, nor have I ever pulled any wires. So I am ignored.

More than once I wrote reassuring replies that were, I hope and believe, a comfort.

These moods led him sometimes, I think, to exaggerate this neglect and suspect snubs where none had been intended. At one point, indeed, our relationship trembled on the brink of collapse through misunderstanding. Looker had seen a copy of my PhD. thesis where, since no formal publication was involved, I had followed customary procedure and included no list of acknowledgments. Having indirectly discovered that he felt aggrieved, I wrote as soon as the revised version had been accepted for publication and told him what I proposed to say in my introduction. Unfortunately, a remark I made about Jefferies scholarship having been dominated hitherto by the biographical approach caused him to suspect that I was covertly criticizing the narrowness of his own contribution. Nothing could have been further from my thought. I knew that he was working on a full-scale biography, and I had no wish to intrude into that area. At the same time, I believed that my literary-critical training qualified me to offer some original commentary on Jefferies' writings as literature. Happily (and the incident would not be worth recounting if it did not lead to a satisfactory denouement), when my position and intentions were thoroughly explained, he immediately and graciously withdrew all reservations. In what proved, alas, to be one of his last letters to me he wrote:

I think you have convinced me on the point, certainly about Jefferies and the lack of academic interest. Your argument cannot be gainsaid and as I believe one should argue for Truth rather than for victory I would not deny the validity of what you have said. ...I do appreciate your most understanding letter and find nothing whatever in it with which I do not agree in fullest measure.

I confess that I had some anxious moments during these exchanges, and was relieved at the dignity and generosity of his ultimate response. Sadly, he did not live to see the publication of either his own biography (completed by Crichton Porteous) or my critical study which (I hope) usefully complements it.

His death, though not unexpected, was a grievous loss to all admirers of Jefferies. It is particularly embedded in my memory because I first heard of it in a very curious manner that is perhaps worth recording here. I was teaching at McMaster University, Hamilton, and in mid-January 1965 we had a visit from John Crow of the University of London, a well known Shakespearean scholar and academic eccentric. When I was introduced to him as someone about to publish a book on Jefferies, he exclaimed: 'Ah I then I have something for you I' He then rummaged about in a string bag which he always carried with him to contain books, lecture-notes, etc., and eventually fished up a press clipping. It proved to be Looker's obituary from *The Times* that had appeared a day or two

before. It was a sad moment for me. I could not, however, resist mentioning the fact that I knew who wrote it. It was compiled by Mrs Frances J. Gay, who had told me in confidence some years before that she had been asked to provide it. I have that clipping still, along with a voluminous correspondence from Mrs Gay—and, of course, these treasured letters from Samuel J. Looker himself.

## VIII

### SAMUEL J. LOOKER

#### *Crichton Porteous*

I first met Samuel J. Looker on August 24th 1949. We had corresponded, and he had invited me to his home at Cheadle, Staffordshire. I was there six hours, and it is one of the very memorable days of my life.

Our correspondence had begun in 1941, after the issue of 'A Tangle of Autumn' by Grey Walls Press of Billericay, Essex, where Looker was living then. I wrote him because I also had admired Richard Jefferies' writing since my schooldays, and I was much interested to learn of Looker's hope (declared in 'A Tangle of Autumn'), 'at some future time to print the complete Diaries and Notebooks.' The selection given, he said, embraced 'Just two-thirds of the entries.' That of course was correct at the time when he had only four of Jefferies' notebooks, and thought he had all there were extant. By 1914, when he had moved north, Looker had a further twelve notebooks, which he was very proud to have discovered and bought.

On that memorable August day in 1949, I was at once struck by Looker's vitality and almost boyish enthusiasm. I quote from notes put down the day after. 'Looker is small, with a white nanny-goat beard – reminded me of pictures of Captain Kettle – very talkative, rather excitable, proud in a rather nice, naive way.' His greatest treasure was the hand-written MS. of *The Story of My Heart*, the first thing handed to me, almost with reverence.

We were in his workroom in his villa, the large window looking over the back garden across quiet fields to the red roofs of Cheadle, on a gentle hill-slope a half-mile distant. Looker took the MS., and then many other papers and letters, out of shallow, tray-like drawers in the bottom of a tall bookcase. The upper part had glass-fronted shelves full of first and rare editions of Jefferies.

It was fascinating as Looker kept bringing out from the drawers, package after package. Imagine receiving into one's grasp such precious things as the holograph of *Bevis*, or of one of the last essays in Mrs Jefferies' handwriting, taken down from her husband's dictation, off his sick-bed during his final illness!

We talked so long that first day, that it came to eight o'clock in the evening and I had not seen any of Jefferies' notebooks. At last, Looker went upstairs and came down with a locked leather large-size attaché case, which, while he had been away from home had been in the strong-room of his bank. From the case, he brought out, in large envelopes, the notebooks at last, and my wonderful

day's experience was complete, I assume Looker had been watching me carefully, and considering, and it was not until evening that he was satisfied I would be trusted to handle and inspect his final treasures.

This was one trait in his character: he was a little suspicious, and perhaps, jealous, of other writers, and particularly of any who might set up to be as knowledgeable as himself about Jefferies. But from that moment, when we began to go through those notebooks, secrecy and suspicion were gone, and from then on, I can only record that he treated me with a trust and friendliness that could not have been deeper or more generous.

It was on that day too, before I left not long before midnight, that he told me he intended to write a new biography of Jefferies, more factual and complete than any that had been possible before. Obviously Looker was the one to have done it, and across the years till 1961, whenever I wrote him, I asked how the biography was going. His replies never varied; alas, he had not begun; he had had no time.

After his move to Cheadle, Looker had been elected to Staffordshire County Council, and this he enjoyed. His sympathetic nature made him happy to help any who sought advice, or for the influence he could exert as a councillor on their behalf. He put his great enthusiasm into this work, and did a lot of good. Only it interfered with his literary interests; and I did all I could to persuade him that he would be serving many more people if he concentrated instead on giving us the definitive book on Jefferies. Yet I failed to convince him.

I know now what Looker did not reveal to me then; that after he settled in Leicester in 1957, he was in much poorer health than I imagined, and it must have been that, rather than other work, that ultimately kept him from starting the biography. At last, sensing frustration and disappointment, I wrote in 1961, asking if I could help him with the task. Unexpectedly, he phoned me by return to ask if I would take on the writing.

Thus *Man of the Fields* came about. This is my heartfelt tribute to my friend's memory: nobody could have been more generous in his help than Samuel. He passed on to me everything, to do as I liked with it. I was surprised that not even the letters had been sorted into date order, and there was a lot of work to do. The writing was begun on February 23rd 1962, and not completed until 1963. By then his physical vigour was weakening, and he endured repeated heart attacks. But my friend read the MS. as it was written, and accepted it completely. He supplied his own chapter on how he acquired all the Jefferies material. The book-title was his. The selection of the illustrations he saw to, and the final typescript he sent John Baker, with whom he negotiated all contract details. He seemed delighted the book was going into production, and I

never imagined he would not live to see it issued. His death came as a great shock.

I owe him two sad apologies about the book, which I make now in the only way left to me. The inscription on Jefferies' grave in Broadwater Cemetary, Worthing, is quoted in *Man of the Fields* on p.216 as 'To the honoured memory of the prose-poet of England's Fields and Hedgerows'. It should be, 'of England's Fields and Woodlands.' This error was mine. If my friend had been his normal fit self at the time we went through the typescript, I am confident he would have spotted it. The second error is more heinous. Looker died while the book was being set up, and the publisher rang, asking what could be done. I dictated a paragraph which they said they would try to insert. In the rush I stated he died 'in December 1964.' It should, of course, have been, January 11th 1965. There errors were pointed out to me as soon as the book came out, by Sam's friend, George A. Morley, to whom I am grateful.

My contrition for these errors was the deeper because of my appreciation of Looker's great regard for precision and his carefulness with facts. After his 41 years as a publisher's reader with Constable, he abhorred slipshod work.

Although he was unable to write the biography himself, it should not be overlooked that he did in fact write a lot over the years on Jefferies' life. The introduction and essays he put into his many books beginning with *Jefferies' England*, in 1937, particularly in the centenary year of 1948, to *Field and Farm*, in 1957, total enough pages to have made a considerable book. His knowledge of Jefferies was much greater than mine, and I still feel sad he was unable to write the biography himself. He would have stressed the more poetic side of Jefferies' writing, which he like the most. He did not care for *Bevis*.

But all who enjoy Jefferies' writings must feel grateful for Looker's untiring search, and for his collecting so great a quantity of previously unknown material. He told me that in his twenties he often went without meals to save cash for purchases. As many others must be, I personally am everlastingly grateful in particular for the chance his efforts brought to read *The Notebooks*, *The Old House at Coate*, and the first draft of *The Story of My Heart*. These are all inestimably precious.

## IX

### A PERSONAL MEMORY of SAMUEL J. LOOKER

*Edna Manning*

**I**t was during the centenary year (1948) of the birth of Richard Jefferies I met Samuel J. Looker.

The Editor of the *West-Countryman* wrote that Mr. Looker would be calling on me at our house in Downs View Road, Swindon. That meeting proved to be one of many.

Samuel J. Looker was a small energetic man with a neatly, pointed beard and greying hair, but he struck me as a man who would carry the spark of youth in spite of adversity, age, and even suffering. He was intensely interested in people and the countryside. I can see him now stepping jauntily in a grey herring-bone overcoat, no hat, and a strong umbrella at the ready.

He was fond of Marlborough so we took him there on top of a double-decker 'bus. We had a wonderful time on that day talking, walking and quoting Jefferies, discussing Jefferies, and our own lives.

Samuel kept us entertained with anecdotes all the way to Marlborough on top of the 'bus. We discussed *The Story of My Heart* over tea at a café in Marlborough, and finished up with Mr. Looker delivering a sermon from the pulpit of St. Peter's church to the two of us.

Samuel J. Looker was the embodiment of a literary, aesthetic man, with a love of life at its highest level. He was a man, with a love of life at its highest level. He was a man of letters, a publisher's reader, a thorough, excellent Editor of Richard Jefferies' manuscripts. With all of his qualifications he was a very human, and modest man, quick to recognise and appreciate real worth and friendship; impatient with pseudo-intellectuals. This is illustrated admirably in a burst of unfashionable indignation and passion he had published in a booklet called *The True Richard Jefferies* in answer to Malcolm Elwin's *The Essential Richard Jefferies*.

In *The True Richard Jefferies* Mr. Looker takes Elwin's criticisms of Jefferies point by point, and places his own answers to them, with such veracity that his essay is equal to the great literary figures of the last century, when men of letters did a lot of this, by taking up the pen instead of cudgels and went into battle outwitting their opponents with wit and knowledge.

He challenged Elwin declaring that Elwin was unfairly hostile towards Jefferies.

I received a letter from Mr. Looker stating that *The True Richard Jefferies* 'is entirely mine, as I had 1,200 copies printed by a local newspaper editor friend of mine at Cheadle and they all sold out in no time, except about twenty copies which I left for myself and friends.'

Cheadle was his wife's native country and 'only three miles from the place where she was born.' At that time he represented Cheadle itself and his wife's village of Oakamoor on the Staffordshire County Council. He held numerous offices as chairman of various committees and threw himself into such local work with unstinted service.

Samuel J. Looker discovered Richard Jefferies when he was a boy, and for over forty years collected his books and manuscripts.

He was also a poet, recognised by many eminent men and women. His book of poems of North Staffordshire, verses collected together, ranging between 1910-1950, received praise notices in *The Times Literary Supplement* and other literary papers.

The poems were on Cheadle, Oakamoor, Dovedale and the Peak, as well as other places loved by Mr. Looker.

In 1956 he wrote to me from Patcham, Brighton about his strict copyright on Richard Jefferies' many essays he discovered that go to make up *The Old House at Coate*, some of *Chronicles of the Hedges* and *The Notebooks*. He was at that time working on a new life of Richard Jefferies based on his collection of manuscripts and unpublished letters.

He was then working on the revision of *Field and Farm* for his publishers. Unfortunately, the publishers of *The Notebooks* folded up and Mr. Looker's book was out of print. He wrote saying 'he hoped to prepare another and fuller edition as 'there is still a fair amount of the Notebooks still untranscribed and before I die I would certainly like to complete the revision and completion of the Notebooks.'

Unfortunately, he suffered many months of illness since his move with his wife and daughter to Brighton. He wrote that it was very disappointing for him. No doubt he had been looking forward to the move and for retracing the steps of Richard Jefferies when he lived at Hove and later at Goring-on-Sea.

Mr. Looker's wife's health also got worse since the move. He wrote saying that she had developed acute arthritis in her broken hip and was then a cripple and at times in great pain. Because of his own illness and his wife's painful disability they were unable to travel anywhere in any way. Both found this restriction hard to accept. Walking, even for Samuel, was denied him. He writes how frustrating it was for them both.

The next year in 1960 I heard from him that in June he had been ill with heart trouble which did not clear until November. He was not expected to live but he

adds in his letter 'but still here I am.' He writes with love and enthusiasm of his new home and surrounds.

Here at Leicester we are on the very edge of the pleasant countryside of the Central Midlands, only a few miles from the beautiful and quite unspoiled Rutland County. The open fields are just across our own road.

Evington once a little ancient village, is now part of the city but still one of the most pleasant environs of any city I know. I have neuritis in both my feet nowadays and find walking (which I love) very difficult, but when not too bad, still manage some rambles with my elder daughter who lives here with us...

Samuel J. Looker died in 1965 aged 76 years.

How proud and pleased he would have been at the Exhibition at the British Library of his life's work of collecting and discovering, editing and publishing the work of Richard Jefferies.

Samuel J. Looker will be remembered as the man who did more for Richard Jefferies' place in English Classical Literature than all the other literary men of letters who acclaimed Richard Jefferies as a writer of genius. And there were so many.

## SAMUEL J. LOOKER (1888 – 1965)

*Robert O. Wright*INTRODUCTION

My friendship with Samuel J. Looker covered the last thirteen years of his life. A school child during World War II, I had read selected passages from Richard Jefferies in one of the school text books of English Literature. The excerpts were probably *Wood Magic – Bevis?* I cannot now recall. (An imaginative choice of text book for a war time Elementary Junior School I) Such excerpts left a repository of beauty in my mind. Little did I know then that this period – 1944/49 – was to be the great post-war period of Jefferies rediscovery, culminating in the 1948 Centenary Celebrations of Jefferies birth and all instigated by the passionate championship and editorial research of S.J. Looker. (In English art of the period Beecham's championship of Delius is in every way a comparable parallel. Curiously, and unknown to me during the period 1937 – 1950 an English nature writer, Henry Williamson, and musicologist Arthur Hutchings in books about Jefferies and Delius, commented on the emotional and spiritual affinities between nature writer and nature-inspired composer).

In 1952 I was 18. Since the age of 11 my love of music and nature had grown, my principal passion being for the English 20<sup>th</sup> Century Musical Renaissance and especially the music of Delius. During 1952 I discovered in Hudsons, Birmingham's leading bookshop, *Bevis* and Looker's 1947 Lutterworth edition of *The Life of the Fields*. From that moment I started reading and collecting Richard Jefferies' work. Inevitably, the entire Lutterworth Edition superbly printed, marvellously illustrated by Agnes Miller Parker (those incomparable woodcuts!) and the text sensitively introduced and edited with scholarly fastidiousness by S.J.L. were mine within a few months. (As a sixth former waiting to become a full-time music student at a Birmingham College of Music, monetary funds for book purchases were strictly limited.)

NOVEMBER 1952 – FIRST VISIT – CHEADLE – NORTH STAFFS

The enthusiasm generated by my reawakened childhood encounter with Jefferies led me eventually to write to Lutterworth asking if I might be allowed to write to Mr. Looker, telling him of my feelings for Jefferies' work and what it meant to me. Thoughtfully they sent my letter direct to S.J.L. at his house in North Staffordshire. Within a few days a reply materialised from Cheadle. What a delight to receive that first letter enclosed in an autographed copy of his 1947

edited Constable edition of *The Story of My Heart*. How well he understood my youthful intoxication. He told me a good deal about himself in his long, fascinating letter – that he was still one of Constable’s principal readers and a member of the Staffordshire County Council. Concluding, he kindly invited me to spend a long weekend with him and his wife. I was taken aback by this but secretly thrilled and excited. A further exchange of letters followed and a weekend in early November fixed for my visit. At that time I was living in Smethwick, close to Birmingham. A three-stage bus journey was planned – he was to meet me in Stafford and we were to travel by local bus to Hanley and then on to Cheadle. Looking back over 25 years I realise now how awe-inspiring for me that first meeting was. Samuel appeared a distinguished looking man. He was then 64, wore a beard and had a mane of grey hair. No wonder I was awe-struck! Our bus journey to Cheadle was the beginning of a memorable weekend. Conversation turned immediately to Richard Jefferies. By the time we reached Samuel’s Cheadle home our bond of friendship was secure. Caroline, Samuel’s charming and devoted wife (crippled by a serious hip injury in 1949) greeted me on our arrival. During that weekend I discovered twin aspects about Samuel’s character. He had been a life-long collector of books and an omnivorous reader, principally of poetry. In this field I discovered how out of my depth I was’. Never mind – I greatly enjoyed listening to him reading extensive excerpts from favourite poets. Though not a great reader of fiction he revelled in magnificent prose. My visit included walks in the beautiful North Staffs countryside – fortunately the weather was fine and dry for early November. The final evening of my stay was spent in the excellent company of their musical neighbours. Samuel was always a kind and generous man and as a souvenir of my visit he autographed a copy of his 1944 Lutterworth collection, *Jefferies London* and a fiery article published in 1949 entitled *The True Richard Jefferies: An Examination of the Misunderstandings of Malcolm Elwin*. (Elwin had written a scabrous introduction on Jefferies to the Cape volume *The Essential Richard Jefferies* published in 1948) .

#### WHIT WEEKEND 1954 – BRIGHTON, PATCHAM

I did not see Samuel and Caroline again until Whitsun 1954. In 1953 I had become a full-time music student in Birmingham. They had moved down to live in a Brighton suburb, Patcham. This had been necessitated on doctor’s advice; Caroline had to live in a warmer climate. The cold winters in North Staffs were aggravating the arthritis in her injured hip. The doctor would not be held responsible for any deterioration in her condition if they stayed in Cheadle. Sussex was an ideal move, both loved the downland landscape and for Samuel it meant living in the county in which Jefferies had spent his last years, dying at

nearby Goring-on-Sea. And was he not interred in the Broadwater Cemetery, Worthing, along with W.H. Hudson? Samuel and I had corresponded frequently since November 1952 and my next projected visit was Whit weekend 1954. He had been keen to hear all my musical news and was gratified to hear of my steadily growing Jefferies collection. While visiting Cheadle he had shown me the splendid 'Worthing Cavalcade' series on Jefferies and Hudson, edited by himself. I had managed to acquire all these in addition to commencing a small collection of Jefferies first editions and one or two early reprints. I cannot now recall much of that Whit '54 visit. The Lookers were living with their unmarried daughter Joan, a school teacher. I know I went on trips with them around Brighton which included buying some new furniture. Samuel was a member of a local ramblers association and during my stay we joined them on a ramble over the South Downs, an area to the rear of Shoreham-by-Sea, near to Lancing Clump. Fortunately, the weather was fine and dry for early May. Again, a delightful weekend that passed all too quickly. A souvenir of my visit was the 1941 edition of the *Notebooks*. A limited edition, my autographed copy was No. 31.

#### SUMMER 1955: A THREE WEEK VISIT

My visit in midsummer 1955 was to be my most important stay. A full-time music student's summer holidays were longer than school holidays! Samuel invited me for a period of not less than three weeks'. That year I was 21; I could not have had a better 21<sup>st</sup> birthday present. 1955 was a good summer, sunny and very hot. That was to be a daily hell for S.J.L. as he suffered from a dermatitis condition, mainly on the back and hands. This infection dated back to their years at Billericay. During the early 1920's, a germ from the soil had infected him whilst gardening. Hot, sunny weather exacerbated the irritation. So to relieve this he journeyed every day into Brighton for cortisone injections. Despite all this discomfort my long stay enabled me to get to know them both better. Samuel and I went on many short walks together (his back garden gate opened directly onto downland) and he took me to Worthing to visit the Broadwater Cemetery where Jefferies and Hudson are buried. The most moving part of my stay was the complex but fascinating job of helping him to collate unpublished Jefferies manuscripts. Samuel hoped to edit many of these for publication purposes. Unfortunately this never came about, due in no small part to the mid-50's decline of interest in Jefferies work and the deliberate delaying tactics of Samuel's publisher, Phoenix House. They had put off publishing *Field and Farm* again and again. The manuscript had been in their hands since around 1950-51. Samuel's bitterness over all this can be easily imagined. I discussed many aborted Jefferies projects with him; most

unfulfilled, unfinished. He had long wanted to work on a revision of the *Notebooks and Nature Diaries*. This would extensively unfold much additional material. But he doubted whether he had the strength to complete such a difficult and involved project.

Similar reasons were voiced when we discussed a possible Jefferies biography which I hoped he would one day write. Among special Jefferies unpublished material that he wanted to publish, he singled out the lovely 'Beatrice and the Centaur', but this never materialised. I did urge him to hammer away at Phoenix House to imprint *Field and Farm*. (In the event, this appeared in 1957 and in his Acknowledgements Samuel's kindness is again illustrated by mentioning my name and that of Crichton Porteous as having 'spurred him on' to finish the project.) My final memories of that visit include meeting other members of his family: daughter Peggy and grandson Peter Jacques, Peggy's child. Towards the end of my stay I accompanied him to the Brighton and Hove Debating Society, of which he was a member. He was a vigorous conversationalist and made an excellent debater. Samuel gave me a special souvenir of my visit – a study of William Blake by Edwin J. Ellis. This was autographed by himself and Caroline in a touching, moving manner, ending: 'With special appreciation of his love and loyalty for the writing of Richard Jefferies.'

#### 1956 – 60: AN INTERLUDE

During the 1956–7 period the Lookers, accompanied by Joan, moved from Brighton to the Leicester suburb of Evington. (Joan, a teacher by profession, had obtained a post in Leicester.) In 1957 *Field and Farm* was finally published by Phoenix House. This was to be Samuel's final edited collection of unpublished Jefferies material and long-out-of-print essays. There followed a scandalous review in the *Sunday Observer* by Geoffrey Grigson, a life-long antagonist of Richard Jefferies. The review was headed 'Stewed Prunes'! Looker wrote a brilliant defensive letter to the *Observer* totally demolishing Grigson's review. (This had included a reference to Looker as 'Jefferies pious editor'. Anyone who knew Samuel discovered his total dedication, a quality far removed from piety!) I was not to see Samuel until 1961, but we corresponded frequently. In 1958 he gave me wise advice prior to appearing before the Local Board that examined Conscientious Objectors in Birmingham. In the event my appeal (on moral/aesthetical grounds) to be placed on the Board of Conscientious Objectors was dismissed and I had to go before the Appellate Tribunal in London. I recall him saying to me during a 'phone conversation: 'Whatever you do Robert, don't allow them to browbeat you.' What a good, loyal friend he was.

Within two months I found myself working on a geriatric ward in a local hospital.

FINAL VISIT. EVINGTON, LEICESTER. MID JUNE 1961

By mid 1961 I was entering my fourth year in geriatric nursing. I was longing to see the Lookers again, six years having elapsed since my Brighton stay. I knew Samuel was curious about my geriatric work. Letters continuously passed between us – he wondered what was happening to my musical aspirations. A letter dated June 1st 1961 suggested June 24th for a long weekend. A revelatory letter of Samuel's state of mind three and a half years before his death; an ennuï of creative editorial despair: 'I am glad indeed that your interest in J.'s continues. It is certain that I shall not now write the biography that I planned. To begin with, interest in J.'s is almost non-existent and at over 73 and my health not first-rate, I do not feel I can undergo the intense labour the writing of the biography would mean. Dare I whisper it? Another reason is that I feel I have written almost all I have to say about J.'s, (although my interest in his writings of course continues) and it would be a real bore for me to repeat (which I should have to do) much of the substance of what I have said already...But the real reason is that I do not think at the moment there is any general interest in R.J.' He went on to say that *Field and Farm* had been a comparative failure, selling only 1,000 copies. This, despite splendid reviews (the *Sunday Observer* apart) meant general interest in J.'s was practically dead. He did think the *Notebooks* ought to be republished (nineteen years later they still remain out-of-print.) 'My long introduction to the *Jefferies Companion* which Richard Church said was the best thing ever written on J.'s and the most comprehensive in 12,000 words, got but little notice, so what is the use of writing something which is not wanted apparently?' All this saddened me, but I looked forward keenly to my visit. My visits to Samuel coincided with fine weather and late June 1961 was no exception. My late father drove me over to Leicester, dropping me off in Evington. Little did I then realise how disappointed the Lookers would be not to meet my parents. They gave me a warm welcome. I noticed both had aged considerably since my 1955 visit, Samuel now in his early 70's and Caroline approaching her mid 70's. Both questioned me avidly regarding my hospital work. I indicated that owing to various domestic problems etc. I would have to continue with it indefinitely and forgo any idea of picking up the threads of my intended musical career. I stressed that my musical and literary interests were not neglected in my precious leisure time. I realised in 1952 that Samuel was not musical and despite my efforts at explanation he was unable to grasp or appreciate the kinship between Jefferies and Delius, noted by Williamson and Hutchings (and more

recently reiterated by musicologist Wilfred Mellers.) I told him how saddened I had been by the recent death of Sir Thomas Beecham, Delius' life-long champion and greatest interpreter, and of my plans to attend the forthcoming Delius Centenary Celebrations planned for 1962 in his birthplace, Bradford. Turning to literature, I enthused to him over my discovery of J.R.R. Tolkien and the impact *The Lord of the Rings* had made upon me. But heroic fantasy had little appeal for him. The recent publication of the unexpurgated edition of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and the preceding trial with its brash publicity had incensed him. Like myself, he did not care for Lawrence and thought the publication served little useful purpose. He still read occasionally for Constables, but his justifiable bitterness over indifference to Jefferies work moved me profoundly. In retrospect I think that my visit afforded him some consolation. I don't recall any conversation relating to a Jefferies biography or the preparation necessary for such an undertaking. As a souvenir of my visit Samuel gave me a volume of poetry by Ruth Fitter, one of his favourite living female poets. When I left them, at the end of a particularly happy visit, I did not realise I would never see either of them again.

### EPILOGUE

During 1962-4 fewer letters passed between us. I sensed Samuel's health was deteriorating. My attendance at the Bradford Delius Centenary Celebrations 1962 provided me with a once-in-a-lifetime experience. All of this I wrote about to Samuel. It was not until July 1965, when his and Crichton Porteous' Jefferies biography, *Richard Jefferies: Man of the Fields* appeared in print, that I discovered with astonishment he had been working on such a project after all. And this was eight months after his death. In late November 1964 my usual Christmas card and letter were dispatched to him. Imagine my amazement and grief early in January 1965 to receive a letter from daughter Peggy informing me of his sudden death. A little while later I received a grateful letter from Caroline. So ended my 13-year friendship with Samuel Looker, a great, kind and noble man, to whom Richard Jefferies lovers are inestimably indebted.

March 20<sup>th</sup> 1980

## XI

It is fitting that we conclude this collection of tributes with an extract from the pen of Samuel Looker himself, words forming part of an address given by Samuel Looker to the gathering at Jefferies' grave at Broadwater, Worthing, Sussex on the occasion of Richard Jefferies' Birth Centenary 6<sup>th</sup> November 1948.



Today it is one hundred years since John Richard Jefferies opened his eyes as a citizen of a nation whose literature he did so much to adorn. How glorious the genius of England, which has given so many great writers to mankind this fighting, practical, hard-headed race, which yet produces poets, prose writers, and dreamers, unsurpassed in the world.

As observer and interpreter of the English countryside, Richard Jefferies was among the great prose writers. It is right and fitting that he should lie in the shadow of the great chalk Downs, for it was their wide stretching beauty that was ever present in his thoughts, whether in Wiltshire or in Sussex. They had responded to his early dreams, quickened his brooding imagination, and made him their child. Jefferies was 'a man for whom the visible world exists'. His clear blue penetrating eye missed little, but the invisible world that dwells within was also present to his vision and inspired his finest writings.

What a remarkable man Jefferies was! He possessed that discernment which is so very rare: the ability to sense implications hidden from heedless eyes, and what is even more wonderful and creative, the power of transmitting his interpretation of almost intangible things to his readers. He seemed able to capture the most fleeting thoughts and impressions; to give voice to the inarticulate beauty of Nature. Yet this was only part of his strange and compelling power, for he could depict English country life in a realistic and vivid way and chronicle the life of the hedges, the lane and the woodland, as well as the human beings who people the land.

He who said 'Light and colour, freedom and delicious air, give exquisite pleasure to the senses; but the heart searches deeper, and draws forth food for itself, from the sunshine hills, and sea, was a realist too, who understood the dark shades which so often lurked behind the fair appearance of rural life. Like the poet of the 'Village', George Crabbe, Jefferies did not hide the truth. This is no mean part of his achievement as a nature writer.

What an immense volume of work he accomplished in his brief day I He would be indeed remarkable and outstanding were it only for his industry under conditions of severe and long-continued difficulty.

Jefferies lived much alone with his thoughts, as all great writers must live alone, if they are to give form and substance to the shapes that haunt their hearts and minds. He did not court the world or pander to the great . power and Place, for which men strive so often, were less than nothing to him. He disliked publicity and never sought the limelight or for favour. In his great yet unassuming nature he wished to be himself, and to express his vision of the world. Ambition, apart from this he had none.

... Elie Faure, a great French critic, once wrote, 'Every author writes but one book, every painter does but one picture, or to put the idea another way; the life of an artist is always a process of perfecting.'

This illuminating saying is true of Jefferies, whose writings show his vision and his faith. I think of him as a child of Wiltshire, but as a son of Sussex. Standing beside his grave one hundred years after his birth and sixty-one after his death, where his mortal part is laid in this Sussex earth he knew and loved, I proclaim to you that this lonely and shy solitary and gentle being, almost forgotten for a time after his too early death, now has name and fame. A name which continues to grow, a fame whose end we cannot see.

Other men have climbed upon his shoulders, for Jefferies was a pioneer. With that other nature writer whose grave is not far away, W.H. Hudson, Jefferies remains one of the greatest and most significant writers of his century. Most sensitive, a wonderful observer, original and courageous. He spend the riches of his mind without stint for us all. He was without reward in his own time, he died neglected and in suffering. But I think that when he passed 'the trumpets sounded for him on the other side'.

Now at his birth hour we remember this mortal man who believed in immortality. He who gave to modern man eyes and ears in Nature. Alas I too soon, the music of his pen was stilled, silence came to that golden voice:

Dust to the Dust 'but the pure spirit shall flow  
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,  
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow  
Through time and change, unquenchably the same.



Samuel Looker, Leicester 1960 (Golden Wedding time.)

HERE ENDS THE TRIBUTES

MR. SAMUEL LOOKER  
EDITOR OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Obituary in *The Times*, Tuesday January 12, 1965

Mr. Samuel Joseph Looker, a life-long champion of the works of Richard Jefferies, died yesterday at the age of 76.

He was born in 1888 in north London, but after early manhood lived in Sussex, Staffordshire, and Leicestershire. His was an active and dedicated life. After early commercial work he became a writer, lecturer, journalist and publishers' reader, in this last capacity he worked for Constable and Co. from 1923 until his death. Between 1921 and 1935 he lectured on English Literature to L.C.C. evening institutes and for W.E.A. classes. He also reviewed books for *The Times Literary Supplement* under the editorship of Sir Bruce Richmond, wrote on George Crabbe for the *Nineteenth Century* and contributed articles on W.H. Hudson, Shelley, Trelawney and Henley. He contributed to *John O'London's Weekly*, then edited by his friend, Wilson Midgley and edited anthologies on travel, hunting, shooting, and fishing. He contributed to *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* the section on nineteenth-century fiction in volume three and wrote or edited some 50 books, including nine volumes of poetry.

He came to know and love the writings of Richard Jefferies early in life: he was 13 when he read *The Story of My Heart*. He wrote in his introduction to *The Old House at Coate* which he edited and published in 1948 'I read every one of his (Jefferies') books on which I could lay my hands. It was then, many years ago, that I first made the resolve that, if I lived, I would one day edit this great writer and devote all my energies to making his creative and consoling work more widely known and appreciated.'

He described also how he sought out not only every book and every bit of information but also every scrap of Jefferies' manuscript which either came into the market or was to be had by private treaty. He pursued a long and finally successful search for the field note books and occasional nature notes of the writer and for any hitherto unpublished papers including letters and essays hidden away, often unsigned, in old magazines until he was able to claim that he owned most of the material of any importance relating to Richard Jefferies.

Much of this research was done in the British Museum Newspaper Room at Colindale where Looker spent many hours poring over old periodicals, nosing out long forgotten contributions which he recognized as the work of Jefferies. As a result of all this he was able to publish two new volumes of essays, *The Chronicles of the Hedges* in 1948 and *Field and Farm* in 1957.

Previously he had edited and published a number of anthologies after the copyrights had expired in 1937 and later edited with introductions and notes nine of Jefferies' books to mark the centenary of the writer's birth. He caused Worthing, where Jefferies is buried, to become intimately conscious of its association with the writer by publishing under the Worthing Art Development Scheme several handsomely illustrated volumes containing a wealth of information about the life and work of Jefferies.

It was known that Jefferies had left 24 notebooks containing his day to day comments, descriptions and observations but of these only 16 were ever found which Looker transcribed and published in 1948 under the title of *The Notebooks of Richard Jefferies*.

This work entailed the closest application and infinite patience, since many of the notes were hurriedly written in pencil and often in the writer's peculiar shorthand, most difficult to decipher, but Looker, in persevering thus to interpret and preserve them, has left a valuable legacy for students and readers of Jefferies.

Looker had been working for some years on what he hoped would be the definitive life of Jefferies, to be called *Richard Jefferies, Man of the Fields*. Latterly he had had the help of Mr Crichton Porteous in preparing the book, which is due to be published in the spring.

In the midst of all this literary work Looker found time to serve from 1949 to 1954 on the Staffordshire County Council while Living at Cheadle. he was chairman of the Records Committee and served on the Trent River Board until he left the Midlands.

He was a conversationalist of charm and had a capacity for making and keeping friends, among whom he included during their lifetime the son and daughter of Jefferies.

He was president of the Richard Jefferies Society since it was founded in 1950.

Looker married Caroline Finney, and they had three children, a son and two daughters.