



The Birth of a Naturalist
and
By the Brook

By Richard Jefferies
Edited and introduced by George Miller

The Birth of a Naturalist

On pages 3–15

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Round About a Great Estate by Richard Jefferies.

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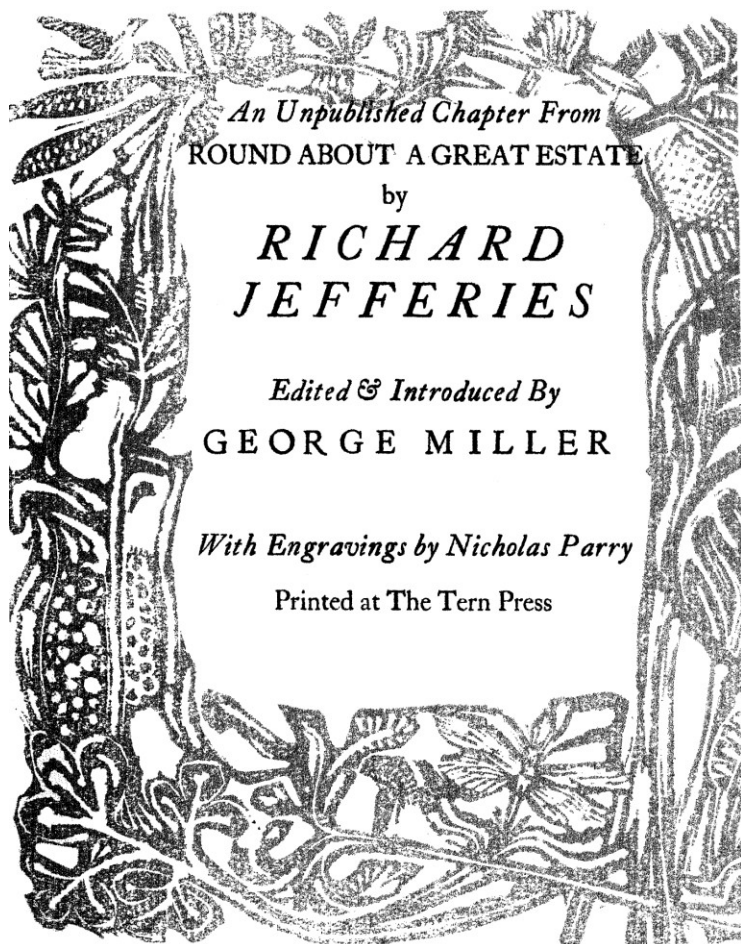


By the Brook

On pages 16–26

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The Birth of a Naturalist



Introduction

The following pages are transcribed from a manuscript now in the British Library.* It was acquired at Hodgson's sale in April 1942, the sale catalogue describing it as the "Original manuscript of Chapter XX of *Round About a Great Estate* with alterations in the author's hand, on 14pp, 8vo." Only, however, in more recent years have students of Jefferies become aware of its existence, and its importance. For though indeed headed "*Round About a Great Estate / XX*" and consistent in every way with the contents of the book as published in 1880, the MS material does not appear there, nor in the book's earlier serial publication in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. S. J. Looker apparently did not know of it, though he bought other Jefferies MSS in the same sale; and his edition of Jefferies' working notebooks contains no hints of any possible extension or revision of the published text.

In fact the only clue to how the MS might relate to the book are the numerals "XX". These must refer to the numbering of the instalments in the *PMG* which run from I to XX, and are the same length as the MS. The book itself has only ten chapters, each consisting of two journal sections, though arranged in a different order. If we assume that Jefferies' plan or contract was for a work of a certain length, then the unpublished chapter XX would appear to be an alternative conclusion to the book; and there is a noticeable similarity in the effect aimed at in the final sentence of book and MS. But the theme of the alternative ending would have needed some preamble in the preceding section for it to fit in place of the existing one. The MS itself, with many excisions and corrections,

looks more like an exploratory draft than copy prepared for inclusion then later omitted.

Jefferies' stated purpose in *Round About a Great Estate* was to record curious customs and superstitious beliefs of isolated country people before national education and other social changes transformed their lives and outlook. "In this book some notes have been made of the former state of things before it passes away entirely." It's easy to see how this preoccupation with things past and passing might lead to the subject of archaeological and historical enquiry. Indeed he approaches it in Chap. IX of the book: "After a while in walking along the footpaths of the meadows and by the woods, a feeling grew upon me that it would be pleasant to know something of their history." His narrator goes in search of "an old book" on such matters to be found at a neighbouring inn. It turns out to be a typical provincial town history and there follows a satirical account of its contents. The learned author "begins with the story of Brutus and shows that one of the monarchs descended from the illustrious Trojan founded a city here. Some fossil shells, indeed, that had been dug up furnished him with conclusive proof that the deluge had not left the site uncovered... Thus he commenced, like the monks themselves, with the beginning of the world; but then came a wide gap down to the Domesday Book... There was an air of precision in the exact sentences and the writer garnished his tale with frequent quotations." The joke, it might be said, is on Jefferies himself, since he could well be describing one of his own efforts in this genre. He ends with a comment reminiscent of his remarks on White's *Selborne*: "But he had totally omitted his own times. Had he described the squires and yeomen, the townspeople of his day, their lives and manner of thinking,

how invaluable and pleasing the work would have been.” In other words much the same conclusion is reached on the value of antiquarian research as in the unpublished draft, though by a shorter route.

In this treatment the local history theme is no more than a further illustration of limited rural/regional ideas, whereas the detailed narrative of the draft would have made it more central, and changed the emphasis of the book. But though there were good reasons for its exclusion, the piece in itself is of great value. It is mature work from the same mint as the book, which Edward Thomas describes as “masterly gossip, with a sensuous quality in the words and sound of it beyond anything he had yet written.” It develops the character of Cicely, an archetypal Jefferies heroine, and, intriguingly, her relationship with the narrator. Its chance survival gives us a rare insight into Jefferies’ working methods; but above all its interest is autobiographical. In a fictionalized form it presents an accurate picture of a period in Jefferies’ own life and career, and embodies his later feelings and reflections upon it.

Jefferies’ fascination with the past began in boyhood explorations of his grandfather’s library, and a countryside rich in the relics of antiquity. At 18 he was already well enough versed in local lore to produce a *History of Malmesbury from Earliest to Modern Times* for publication in the *North Wilts Herald*. This was followed by histories of Swindon and Cirencester in local newspapers. In 1873 he published *A Memoir of the Goddards of North Wilts compiled from ancient records, registers and family papers*, and gave a lecture to the Wiltshire Archaeological Society. In ’74 and ’75 he was collecting materials for an augmented edition of *Goddard* and preparing a still weightier history of Swindon,

which he told a correspondent he had spent ten to twelve years researching. It seems the work progressed to a draft prepared for printing and a publisher's announcement; but nothing now is known of it.

Jefferies' biographers have been largely dismissive of this phase of his career, but surviving letters bear witness to his seriousness and enthusiasm while it lasted. He addressed himself to men of learning and position in the region, such luminaries as Canon Jackson, librarian to the Marquis of Bath, to whom he wrote in 1869: "I have no pretence, sir, whatever to any assistance from you, except that I may say 'I too am an antiquarian'." He corresponded regularly with Goddards, and his letters contain apologetic references to his "literary work" and to novels "got up to catch the mood of the moment". It is I think more in pride than complaint that he describes his labours in writing to his aunt: "I visit every place I have to refer to, copy inscriptions, listen to legends, examine antiquities, measure this, estimate that; and a thousand other employments essential to a correct account take up my time... To give an instance there is a book published some twenty years ago founded on local legend. This I wanted, and have actually been to ten different houses in search of it; that is have had a good fifty miles walk, and as yet in vain..." The passage highlights the difficulties of his research, without funds or facilities, and having to borrow, copy and return all books and documents. But if the letters reveal Jefferies' painstaking earnestness – and they reiterate his desire to produce a "complete" and "reliable" record, with "exhaustive pedigrees", to "perfect" his researches, etc. - they also betray the basic flaw of his method: the sheer randomness of his information gathering. A friend finds an important Goddard document on a London bookstall.

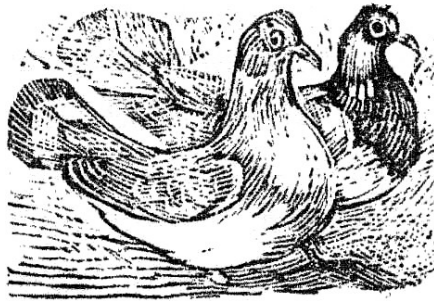
Phrases like “curiously enough in Reading about a month ago I picked up...” and “I happened to see the magazine in a gentleman’s house...” recur. In 1872 he listed the villages he had visited “after exhausting all other sources”. But it is in the same year that he seems to have realized, like the narrator in the MS, that the parish records and libraries of local gentry were inadequate by themselves. I shall have to explore the *Calendars Inquisitiones Post Mortem* and *Rotuli Hundredorum*.. these works extend to ten folio volumes”. . . “I would propose to include all that could be learnt from the British Museum Library”... “I’m afraid it would be too expensive (to have copies made of BM material) and in that case must wait until I can personally examine their large MS volumes...”

The letters peter out in November 1875 with the fateful visit to the British Museum still unmade. But no doubt the account that follows is essentially true to Jefferies’ own experience and enlightenment, and the great dome, which now ironically holds this testimony to its oppressive riches, must have finally extinguished his scholarly aspirations. The moment and the theme are further translated and epitomized in an essay written a few years later, *The Pigeons at the British Museum*:

Sitting at these long desks and trying to read, I soon find that I have made a mistake; it is not here I shall find that which I seek. Yet the magic of books draws me here time after time, to be as often disappointed... The mind wearies of books, yet cannot forget that once when they were first opened in youth they gave hope of knowledge.

But the pigeons:

They have not laboured in mental searching as we have; they have not wasted their time looking among empty straw for the grain that is not there. They have been in the sunlight. Since the days of ancient Greece the doves have remained in the sunshine; we who have laboured have found nothing. In the sunshine, by the shady verge of woods, by the sweet waters where the wild dove sips, there alone will thought be found.



*EGERTON MS 3254. To assist the flow I have introduced some additional punctuation and paragraphing, and for the same reason have not attempted to indicate the many minor revisions in the MS. Deleted sentences, however, are included as footnotes. Some words are difficult to decipher: “buried” Roman roads, no mortal “mind” could achieve, and the arquebusier’s “rest” are all guesswork. The traffic’s “volume” of sound could be “violence”.

George Miller

I now accidentally stumbled on a fresh mine of valuable information. There was a monument in a certain church to a knight who had fought, it was understood, against the Spanish armada, and I applied, not without apologies for intrusion, to the present representative of the family for some account of his ancestor's prowess. He hastened to reply in a most courteous manner that very little was known upon this point, but at the same time enclosed what he had no doubt would interest me. It was a manuscript composed of several sheets of cartridge paper, full size, covered with small and neat handwriting on each side, and giving the pedigree of seventeen branches of the family. He further offered to give me any similar information I might desire.



Till now I had fancied, with most other people, that all pedigrees were printed in heraldic books, but my eyes were now opened. I found that there were gentlemen who spent their time — like old Mortality — literally scraping away the moss from the tombs to ascertain genealogical facts. Registers were ransacked and copied from end to end : copies of old wills, leases, covenants and so forth collated ; in short there was not a scrap of old paper that had not its value. Whole shops were devoted to the storage and sale of these things. There was in fact a pedigree market with customers all over the world, for orders came from silver

miners in Nevada and stock-breeders in Texas, These gentlemen wanted to know all about their ancestors and were at once supplied with minute details.

These enquiries — this fresh fund of investigation — led to much and lengthy correspondence. I kept my archaeological papers at Luckett's Place, and thither came every now and then bulky envelopes. Cicely regarded these treasures with utter scorn, with such detestation that she would not touch them with fingers, but took them from the postman in the corners of her apron and filled a vase on the table that their scent might overcome the horrid musty dusty flavour. Whenever she met me she asked with a curl of her scarlet lip if I had received any more news from my "fellow workers in rubbish", for so she contemptuously designated the science of archaeology.



Yet what a fascination that study has had for men of ability and position. There was a gentleman for instance, a man of property, who passed at least part of his mature

years riding about the county in search of tunnels, and accompanied by several workmen who with spade and pick hardly left a turf unturned. He surveyed buried Roman roads and restored them to scale on paper with as much energy as a Lesseps might display in levelling for an international canal. These discoveries too were all original, and, printed, must have cost a fortune. Those who ride a-hunting so carelessly across the fields can never know the patience that has been expended in tracing the course of the muddy lane they curse so heartily as it splashes them from boots to cap.

Somewhere I think I have read that in Spain they have little or no literature like ours, which mainly issues from the metropolis. Their books are all local, all printed in country towns : each department has its poets and its novelists, and men of science. Barcelona knows nothing of Pamplona, and Valladolid is ignorant of Cadiz. This sounded strange but I now found that something very like it existed in this country. The world indeed, knows nothing of the mass of local literature that has been published for its instruction. Bristol, for instance, can show whole libraries — positively libraries — of books and pamphlets written and printed about itself. There are not only antiquarian, but domestic and practical publications ; squibs, political denunciations, romances, in short the whole round of letters. Birmingham, which many have ignorantly been accustomed to regard as a very modern and upstart place, has really an ancient history and has likewise a great store of local books. Indeed there is not a town in the kingdom, be it ever so small, that has not got its literature. [The curious and interesting city of Salisbury has even more than that. Besides its accounts of pre-historic man, besides its folios of Roman, mediaeval and

Civil War antiquities, its squibs, pamphlets and endless series, besides all these Salisbury has almost a religion of its own. For have we not heard of the “use of Sarum”, and are not collectors always eager to purchase a fine illuminated manuscript of the *Horae Beatae Virginis*.¹] But in these local books the view is generally circumscribed to the district as in Spain. Bristol knows nothing of Birmingham, and an old Sheffield author is oblivious of the existence of Salisbury. [But after all even the Koran was a local book originally and now it is very carefully read by many millions.²]

It was now evident to me that the history of the small scattered hamlet of Okebourne Wick could not be satisfactorily completed on the spot. The meagre fruit that could be gathered there bore no proportion to the information that was buried in the national archives. The history of Okebourne Wick was in short to be found in London. Cicely bade me farewell with sarcastic wishes for success, and promised to preserve the mustiest letters that came.

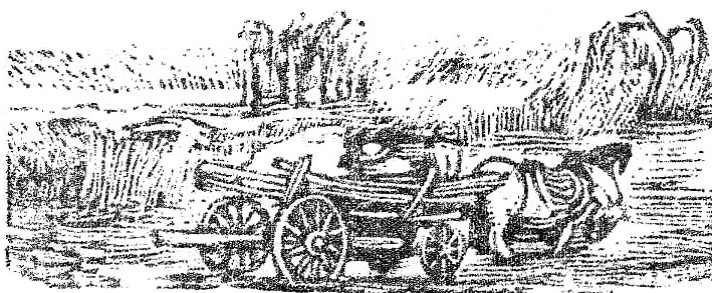
In the metropolis, while the roar of the traffic maintained its steady volume of sound, while countless myriads of engine would not have been necessary. In order to complete my information respecting the name just alluded to, to trace the ramifications of the family, it would be necessary to look all through these, and then there were the thousands of pamphlets, deeds, charters and documents to which they referred. And many of them had no index.

At the thought, the dome overhead seemed to descend upon my head like a vast extinguisher, putting out the vital

¹ Sentence deleted from *The Birth of a Naturalist*.

² Sentence deleted from *The Birth of a Naturalist*.

spark of hope. I went out into the open air among the pigeons which alight so trustfully at your feet onto the broad gravel approach. The white clouds of summer floated over — the sky was blue — the lovely sunshine fell on the roofs ; what beautiful haymaking weather it must be at Luckett's Place! The truth forced itself upon me that it was utterly impossible to write the history of little Okebourne Wick. No mortal mind could achieve it ; no mortal patience was enduring enough, nor indeed any life sufficiently long. The next express took me out of town, and the swift pleasant motion, when the green fields came into sight, soothed me.



Something at least had been gained. A formal history was not possible, but somehow I had found the men of other days. You read of Armada and Civil War, and Dane and Norman, of ancient Briton and invading Roman, and they are words only. But if you handle the rusted spearheads, if you touch the trigger of a matchlock, if you linger over the original documents of those days, something of the spirit of the old times comes back to you. I knew now that I should see the men in armour who battled in Okebourne Chace. I should find an arquebusier

with rest and lighted match about to “give fire” over the stile by the Overbore’ road.

It was a beautiful July afternoon when I spread out my papers — what labour they represented — on the table before them all at Luckett’s Place. Pedigrees, copies of old pamphlets, extracts from deeds, letters ; pages would hardly catalogue them. And then somewhat hesitatingly, for it seemed cowardly to retreat, I confessed that I had been beaten and had decided to abandon the project. Up sprung Cicely and came and stood before me, and dropping me an old fashioned curtsy, fairly congratulated me upon having regained my senses, as if I had been Don Quixote besotted with books of chivalry. Then sweeping the papers into her lap she carried them into the garden and neatly built them up in a pile, with two twigs underneath to keep them hollow and increase the draught. With her own white hand she applied a match, the flames arose, and I must candidly own that I watched the blue smoke with a sigh of relief. Then we had a dish of strawberries in the orchard.

Richard Jefferies



By the Brook

By Richard Jefferies

Introduced by George Miller

Introduction

Jefferies was more than half way through his writing career when his first successful book was published. *The Gamekeeper at Home* in 1878 gave him his contemporary popularity, and with the country books, essays and novels that followed, forms the basis of his reputation and readership to the present day. His earlier, prolific output of agricultural journalism, local history and conventional fiction has never received much attention, and indeed, apart from its autobiographical and documentary content, and occasional arresting passages, cannot claim to be of great value. One exception to this overall pattern is a group of essays that appeared in the *Globe* and *Graphic* newspapers from 1875–77.³ Their titles alone, such as ‘The Wiltshire Downs’, ‘In a Pine Wood’, ‘Backwoods

³ A number of these essays were reprinted in *Landscape and Labour*, edited by John Pearson, Moonraker Press, 1979. Other examples can be found in *The Hills and the Vale*, edited by Edward Thomas and *Chronicles of the Hedges*, edited by S. J. Looker.

of London', and 'The Old Mill', anticipate the themes and landscapes of his later work. They have something too of the authentic rural atmosphere, the freshness of interest and narrative charm that so distinguished *The Gamekeeper* and its successors.

The present essay certainly belongs to this group, though apparently never printed and taken here from manuscript. Its general scheme—the observations and reflections of a day spent in a particular locale, ending at sunset—is common to several others in the group. It shares their tendency to literary allusion, direct quotation, and self-consciously poetic phrases like 'Pluto of the water', and 'feathered Moses'. The evidence of handwriting is also consistent with a date of composition in the mid '70s, in particular the fact that the signature at the end has a looped capital 'R' rather than a detached upright stroke, indicating that it is unlikely to have been written later than 1876. A further clue is the reference to Bashi-Bazouks, the Turkish irregulars whose notoriety was revived by the Bulgarian atrocities of that year. However the religious sentiments expressed at one point in the essay are untypical even at this relatively early date, harking back to a "brief interest in conventional religion"⁴ during his teens in the 1860's.

Mention of 'the mere', a term used in *Wild Life in a Southern County* for Coate Reservoir, tells us that Jefferies is writing of his native countryside, and in

⁴ See *Richard Jefferies, Man of the Fields*, S. J. Looker and Chrichton Porteus, 1964.

particular of the little river Cole with its feeder to the reservoir. In one way or another this brook is present in every phase of his work. Its life and lore are richly chronicled in the country books. In *Wood Magic* and *Bevis* it is the background to childhood dreams and adventures, and in *The Story of My Heart* its waters have a mystical purity, flowing through a sublime landscape. In his last essays, when long after leaving Coate, Jefferies wrote that 'every curve, and shore, and shallow is as familiar now as when I followed the winding stream so often', it becomes the theme of many of his most poignant elegies.

It is then as an early example of the kind of writing by which Jefferies is now best known, and on a subject that recurs throughout his work, that the present essay is of special interest. Its faults are obvious enough, but there is much that prefigures his mature writings. The occasional vivid phrase like the description of the water beetle 'propelled with oars too slender for his size', the mood of reverie and awareness of the past, such thoughts as that the great forces of nature can be understood in microcosm from commonplace phenomena, and the need for complete stillness and silence in observing wild creatures, all these have many parallels in the later books. More specifically the accounts of wiring fish, the supposed leaping of snakes, and the ravages of pike recall pages from *The Gamekeeper* and *Wild Life*, while as late as 1883 in the essay 'Sport and Science' we find the horsetail again 'thick as a walking stick',

and linking us, as here, with the forests of pre-history. Such comparisons provide numerous illustrations of Jefferies' development as a writer and observer. For instance the moralistic approach to nature, seen here especially in his remarks about the pike, gives place to a more objective curiosity. This can be seen in *Wild Life*, though even here the pike is still a 'tyrant', whereas in 'Mind under Water' (1883) he is treated with great respect—if not quite the affection Jefferies felt for his London trout. But Jefferies never attained, or pretended to, universal sympathy for life in all its forms. What is in this early sketch no more perhaps than a traditional aversion to snake or reptile, deepens eventually in *The Story of My Heart* into a philosophic statement about the inhumanity of nature.

The manuscript itself consists of sixteen pages measuring 25 x 16 cm, numbered 3–18. As the first two pages are missing, the title has been supplied and the first word of page 3 capitalized to open the sentence. No textual changes have been made, apart from the introduction of paragraphs and the replacement of ampersands with 'and'. The handwriting is fluent and legible with few corrections - its general appearance suggesting swift and easy composition, or a fair copy written without afterthought.

George Miller

By the Brook

Richard Jefferies

The busy world disappears, and the mind freed from its anxious strivings can turn inwards, and enjoy itself. The hot sunbeams cannot penetrate the thick foliage, the hardly audible murmuring of the water has a cool refreshing sound, and the tall reeds at the edge and among the willows rustle now and then. Their feathery tops wave gracefully to and fro with the slightest breath of air; lying here looking upwards they seem like painters' brushes tracing designs upon the blue ceiling of the sky as the famous artist did upon the dome of the chapel at Rome. They are surely as beautiful as the pampas grass cultivated upon lawns : this one runs up fifteen feet, and what a history they have. The children still cut the light straight stem for arrows, and when the barges upon the Thames are pitched it is with a bunch of reeds that the fire to melt it is applied, just as it was no doubt to the Danish galleys when they came rowing up the river to Reading.

In the long sedgy grass that grows between the willows and beside the reeds the fox is fond of making his bed to lie sleeping in during the day. Turning round and round he beats down the grass and makes a form—you may see your dog turn round two or three times before he lies down upon the hearthrug, an hereditary habit. The hemlock with its white flowers

tinged a little with yellow and its green, sickly looking smooth stems, casts a shadow over the water: and near it grows the pitcher plant (to use a foreign designation for an English plant) or wild...with its prickly head. Its leaves form cups around the stem and in these the rain collects, perhaps a quarter of a pint in each, and many insects which climb up find a watery grave in these curious reservoirs.⁵

The brook has worn away the earth almost under the ash tree, forming a deep hole where the water seems to pause upon its way, and first travel slowly round the cavity before gurgling onward, sweeping leaves and sticks into it, and larvae and insects for the fish that lie there in wait. The roach swim deep, each with a quivering motion of the frame and tail keeps its place against the current. The larger perch with prickly spines and deep barred sides is near them, and every now and then a shoal of tiny sticklebacks come trooping by.

⁵ It is difficult to see what alternative name Jefferies had in mind to fill this space, since his description of the name 'pitcher plant' as a foreign designation for an English plant is itself the reverse of the truth. In *A Dictionary of English Plant Names* (Allen Lane, 1974), Geoffrey Grigson describes the plants as 'species of genus *Nepenthes*, natives of East Indies, Ceylon and South China, of which the first was introduced in 1789'. *A Modern Herbal* by M. Grieve (Cape, 1931) gives the following list of synonyms, one of which Jefferies may have intended: 'Sarazina Gibbosa, Sarracenie, Eve's cups, Fly-catcher, Fly-trap, Huntsman's cup, Purple sidesaddle flower, Side-saddle plant, Water-cup, *Nepenthes distillatoria*'.

Across yonder where it is shallow and smooth, and the flags and weeds grow, there lies a long dark object just under the surface. It is a pike, or jack, motionless, basking in the sun and waiting like a long narrow pirate proa in the Malay seas till some helpless prey pass by. With an evil patience he watches there. From the muddy depths a black tench peeps up for a moment, and sinks again. He is the Pluto of the water: the darkness and the bottom are his kingdom.

The water beetle pushes itself along awkwardly, like a barge propelled with oars too slender for its size. A strange weird-looking newt rises to the surface and gulps the air: its repulsive shape recalls the memory of those huge and unnatural reptiles with which geology has peopled the early ages of the earth. The swallow, flying low—sign of change in the weather—follows the course of the stream, and passes so near that the rush of her wings is audible.

Slipping noiselessly as is his cunning nature into the brook from the meadow over there, the ‘spotted snake with double tongue’ glides with a crooked, twisting motion across, his head only visible above the surface. A slight rustling marks his course up the bank through the sedges - he sees us, and pauses, the bead like black eyes glitter suspiciously, the forked tongue quivers and trembles, darting to and fro not unlike the needle of a telegraphic instrument.

Keep still and silent: it is the one grand secret which puts man *en rapport* with wild creatures. Re-assured the snake curls himself up in a spiral on the sandy bank in

a place where the sunbeams fall. The country people have a belief that the snake can jump a ditch: this is not true, but when frightened, he projects his body over the edge till overbalancing, gravitation causes it to fall, which incorrect observation has reported to be jumping.

There is a slight splashing sound as of fishes nibbling at the stems of the weeds. A black shadow falls and passes quickly: it is a crow seeking a shallow sandy reach where he may find a mussel to carry out upon the shore and dash to pieces with his strong beak, eating the creature within, and leaving the broken shell to glisten with prismatic colours in the sunlight.

Ha! A splash—a quick wave of water—a curling eddy, the pike has struck. With one swish of his powerful tail he has darted upon some fat and foolish roach and his sharp teeth crush its ribs. Gruel tyrant: most hateful of fish. After long drought in the autumn, the pools and ponds filled by the brook will become shallow, and then these ruthless fresh-water sharks, very Bashi-Bazouks, slaughter mercilessly. Then in the broad mere farther down, from mom till dewy eve, and all through the night the deadly pursuit goes on. A continuous wave marks the course of the flying shoals, and here and there the frightened creatures leap into the air.

The pike grows to an enormous size: the writer saw one taken over thirty pounds in weight and a yard in length. This monster had a ghastly, demoniacal

appearance. His great glassy eye glared with unmitigated ferocity, even in death: the pointed teeth set thickly in the strong jaw menaced torture. The slimy scales felt treacherous, and the tail broad as the blade of an oar seemed as if it could break an arm with a blow. How many thousands of fish were swallowed up in this living tomb? Abominable tyrant, unlike the beautiful trout or gallant salmon: you are almost a legitimate object for the poacher's art.

Attaching a thin but tough piece of copper wire to the end of a long slender pole, the poacher bends it into a loop which slips easily. He drops the wire into the stream softly, and lets it float slowly as with the current down, till it passes over the head of the pike and behind the first fins, then with a sudden jerk lands him on the bank, usually killed by the sharp compression. A practised hand will pull the fish out with a twisted rod of willow, if a wire be not ready. Some persons cannot see through water, others can pierce the shadowy depths, and distinguish a fish in a moment from a stick or a stone.

On the opposite bank which is low and shelving, the equisetum or horsetail grows thickly: the air between its many knots explodes with a sharp crack if you step on the dead plant. These are but eighteen inches high: but in places it will reach a yard with a stem as thick as a walking cane. It is a strange plant - the lingering representative of those prehistoric and weird forests which formed our present coal. And this narrow brook, sweeping down its sand and tiny gravel

stones, its driftwood and twigs, dead branches, and leaves, building up in one place a bank and scooping out a channel in another, illustrates to those who will but think, the very same processes by which vast rivers such as the Ganges and the Amazon are at this hour gradually altering the face of the earth. For the power of water in rain and rivers, in snow and glaciers, has literally ere now made of the dry land sea and of the ocean homes for man.

The true forget-me-not which is larger and brighter than the other plant which much resembles it, hides modestly between the tall flags, whose lively green is now dimmed by coming autumn, and many of their streamers are broken and dead. Yet even now

The wind blows and uplifts thy drooping banner
And round thee throng and run
The rushes, the green yeomen of thy manor
The outlaws of the sun.

Thistle down for thoughts! Like our dreamy reveries the soft silky balls float by, lingering for a moment, yet as we idly put forth a hand away again – not to be fettered nor tied.

The sun sinks, the shadows lengthen: the blackbird chuckles in the hawthorn, and the rooks wing homewards. A calm peace, the utter absence of mental striving, falls upon the spirit, and in its purity this peace which comes from communion with Nature, with the creatures and the plants which as the

sparrows are in the immediate hands of God - this peace is very near to religion.

What is this—a rushing as of wings, a twittering, a talking without words; hundreds and hundreds of swallows have suddenly descended and perched upon the tall willows. It is a very Parliament: how eagerly they chatter and discuss. It is a mournful measure which is before them—their departure and journey into more southern lands. Evening after evening they will come here and deliberate upon it until at length the day of exodus arrives, and following some feathered Moses in one flock they cross the narrow seas. Still the brook flows on, and its story is in truth as endless as its flow.

