

**THE STORY OF MY
HEART. MY
AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

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The story of my heart. My autobiography by Richard Jefferies

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RICHARD JEFFERIES

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THE
STORY OF MY HEART

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MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY

RICHARD JEFFERIES

AUTHOR OF "THE GAMEKEEPER AT HOME,"
"WILD LIFE IN A SOUTHERN COUNTY,"
ETC.

WITH FRONTISPIECE

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P R E F A C E

THE title of this book is "The Story of my Heart: my Autobiography," but it is not an autobiography in the ordinary sense of the word. It contains no history of the events of Richard Jefferies' life. It is in no way concerned with his birth or his marriage, his actions or his fortunes. All that is known of these has been told in "The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies," by Walter Besant. *Sunt lachrymæ rerum*, as the ancient poet sang, and for those who have tears to shed, what story is there more sure to draw them than that tale of heroic struggle against the agony of disease, of

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vi THE STORY OF MY HEART

genius unappreciated until it was too late, of lofty aspirations and noble thought cut short all too soon?

But none of these things are dwelt on in "The Story of my Heart." Surely it is one of the most singular books that man of genius ever wrote. It is well described by its title. It is an outpouring of Jefferies' innermost soul. Like many another, he found himself at odds with the world. He saw the beauty of the land, the grandeur of the sea, the interest of life—above all of human life—but he was not satisfied. He longed for more beauty, a fuller grandeur, a deeper interest. This feeling completely mastered him, and in "The Story of my Heart" he poured out with what strength and what skill he possessed the intensity of his longing. In republishing such a book it will not be thought out of place to gather together such few scraps of his writing as remain

which seem to throw light on its genesis and its meaning.

On June 22, 1883, Jefferies wrote as follows:—

SAVERNAKE, LORNA ROAD,
WEST BRIGHTON,

June 22, 1883.

DEAR SIR,—Thank you for the concession —I will write the story-sketches and send them. Mentally, the peasant paper is written: I mean it is composed; the MS. shall reach you in good time. I have just finished writing a book about which I have been meditating seventeen years. I have called it "The Story of my Heart: an Autobiography," and it really is an autobiography, an actual record of thought. After so much thinking it only makes one small volume—there are no words wasted in it. I do not know whether or no you would care to see the MS.; if so, I will forward it—I do not