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Richard Jefferies

Frontmatter

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### **The Gamekeeper at Home**

Richard Jefferies (1848–87) remains one of the most thoughtful and most lyrical writers on the English countryside. He had aspirations to make a living as a novelist, but it was his short factually based articles for *The Live Stock Journal* and other magazines, drawn from a wealth of knowledge of the rural community into which he had been born, which when brought together in book form brought him recognition (though not wealth) and which continued to be read and admired after his early death. *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *The Amateur Poacher* (also reissued in this series) were both collections of essays in the style of reminiscences of a rural way of life which, though never idyllic, was by the 1870s beginning to undergo a period of rapid change, through both the onset of mechanisation and agricultural depression.

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# The Gamekeeper at Home

*Sketches of Natural History and Rural Life*

RICHARD JEFFERIES



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THE  
GAMEKEEPER AT HOME

*SKETCHES OF NATURAL HISTORY  
AND RURAL LIFE*

When shaws beene sheene, and shradds full fayre,  
And leaves both large and longe,  
It is merrye walking in the fayre forrest,  
To hear the small birdes songe

*Ballad of Guy of Gisborne*

LONDON  
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## P R E F A C E .



THOSE who delight in roaming about amongst the fields and lanes, or have spent any time in a country house, can hardly have failed to notice the custodian of the woods and covers, or to observe that he is often something of a 'character.' The Gamekeeper forms, indeed, so prominent a figure in rural life as almost to demand some biographical record of his work and ways. From the man to the territories over which he bears sway—the meadows, woods, and streams—and to his subjects, their furred and feathered inhabitants, is a natural transition. The enemies against whom he wages incessant warfare—vermin, poachers, and trespassers—must, of course, be included in such a survey.

Although, for ease and convenience of illustration, the character of a particular Keeper has been used as

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*Preface.*

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a nucleus about which to arrange materials that would otherwise have lacked a connecting link, the facts here collected are really entirely derived from original observation.

R. J.



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