

Editorial

This issue is somewhat singular (in comparison to our norm), in that it carries only two actual articles. So firstly I apologise to those contributors who might have expected to see their piece in print but for whom there was not enough space at this time. Their turn will come. And from my view point there is nothing more reassuring than to know there is spare material in the pending file. Please do not let that deter anyone from sending in fresh material; the file is not that full! Again you will possibly notice that, despite going to four extra pages (making this our biggest issue yet) there was not room for the usual accompanying 'Contributors' Notes', but as both are regular writers for our *Journal* I felt that any reader needing to know such details would not mind for once looking in our back Issues for this information.

I particularly find Peter Lewis's examination of the background of the Hawthornden Prize most interesting because I had tried to find this information for the *Tarka* Jubilee Issue (*Journal* No. 16, September 1987), and singularly failed. It is only too easy to tend to think we know all about the Hawthornden when in fact our knowledge is really quite superficial, and I for one am glad to have the few facts that I know filled out. Personally I like to have as full a view of a subject as possible.

The mystery engendered by Noel Beer's 'Forty Years in Wild Devon' in our last issue (*Journal* No. 25, March 1992, p.24) – a fragment that certainly left me wondering what the actual matter of HW's lecture had been – is explained if you read the last item in the Society's newest publication *Spring Days in Devon*. This is reviewed by John Homan on p.56 and if you haven't yet bought a copy may this remind you to do so.

With Part II of Dr. Blench's examination of the influence of Richard Jefferies on HW now before us we can see that this is a most important contribution to our understanding of HW's work. There are many important points in it that need to be marked, learned, and inwardly digested. We need to extract to the full the inferences therein. Not least his penultimate point that HW's basic viewpoint is that the artist is a medium of the Spirit of Life; i.e. that HW's viewpoint is a religious one. HW was not perhaps a religious man in the sense that the term is normally interpreted, but there is certainly an underlying theme in his work which has a great spiritual value. His idea of 'ancient sunlight' is more than just a convenient title for his collective novel. It is a metaphor for his whole philosophy.

Certain symbols are particularly important and recur in many places; for example – Dawn, Eosphorus, the morning star, all symbols of returning hope and life. Possibly *The Starborn* is the epitome of his belief? Whilst there is certainly much food for thought in HW's focus on the 'Lucifer' theme, with the dichotomy of Lucifer being the light bringer, the morning star, and the fallen angel, Satan.

It would be interesting to hear your views on these aspects and where you find instances in HW's work that illustrate this thesis. For in sharing and exchanging thoughts we all come to a deeper understanding. Dr. Blench ends by saying that although HW was undoubtedly influenced by Richard Jefferies, in no way could his work be called derivative. This is most certainly true. HW was born with his own gift within him. His reading of Jefferies' work was the catalyst that released that gift. And, however much HW may have absorbed the ethos of Jefferies, he was at all times 'his own man'. His reflection of the ancient sunlight comes from his own soul's mirror, which at times illuminates and at others, blinds. But it is a true reflection of so many aspects of life, from the tiniest of creatures to the supposedly loftiest, that we can with truth say that HW was a medium for the Spirit of Life.