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John George Wood

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Nature's Teachings, first published in 1877, was one of many books on natural history by J.G. Wood, a Victorian clergyman who was hugely influential in popularising the subject, as well as being the editor of 'The Boy's Own Magazine'. Here he examines the close parallels between nature and human inventions in areas including seafaring (the raft, paddle and oar), war and hunting (barbs, poisons and projectiles), architecture, tools, optics and acoustics, as well as 'useful arts' including sewage disposal. His text contains over 750 figures and illustrations, and he argues that future great discoveries could be made as a result of careful observations of nature. Although a contemporary of Darwin, Wood largely ignored the evolution debates and focussed on communicating his enthusiasm for the natural world to a non-scientific audience. His successful publications still make fascinating reading for those interested in Victorian culture and the history of education.

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NATURE'S TEACHINGS

*HUMAN INVENTION
ANTICIPATED BY NATURE*

BY THE

REV. J. G. WOOD, M.A., F.L.S., ETC.

AUTHOR OF "HOMES WITHOUT HANDS,"

"MAN AND BEAST, HERE AND HEREAFTER," ETC.

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PREFACE.

A GLANCE at almost any page of this work will denote its object. It is to show the close connection between Nature and human inventions, and that there is scarcely an invention of man that has not its prototype in Nature. And it is worthy of notice that the greatest results have been obtained from means apparently the most insignificant.

There are two inventions, for example, which have changed the face of the earth, and which yet sprang from sources that were despised by men, and thought only fit for the passing sport of childhood. I allude, of course, to Steam and Electricity, both of which had been child's toys for centuries before the one gave us the fixed engine, the locomotive, and the steamboat, and the other supplied us with the compass and the electric telegraph.

In the course of this work I have placed side by side a great number of parallels of Nature and Art, making the descriptions as terse and simple as possible, and illustrating them with more than seven hundred and fifty figures. The corollary which I hope will be drawn from the work is evident enough. It is, that as existing human inventions have been anticipated by Nature, so it will surely be found that in Nature lie the prototypes of inventions not yet revealed to man. The great discoverers of the future will, therefore, be those

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who will look to Nature for Art, Science, or Mechanics, instead of taking pride in some new invention, and then finding that it has existed in Nature for countless centuries.

I ought to mention that the illustrations are not intended to be finished drawings, but merely charts or maps, calling attention to the salient points.

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