

**ILLUSTRATED  
NATURAL HISTORY  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

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Illustrated Natural History for Young People by J. G. Wood

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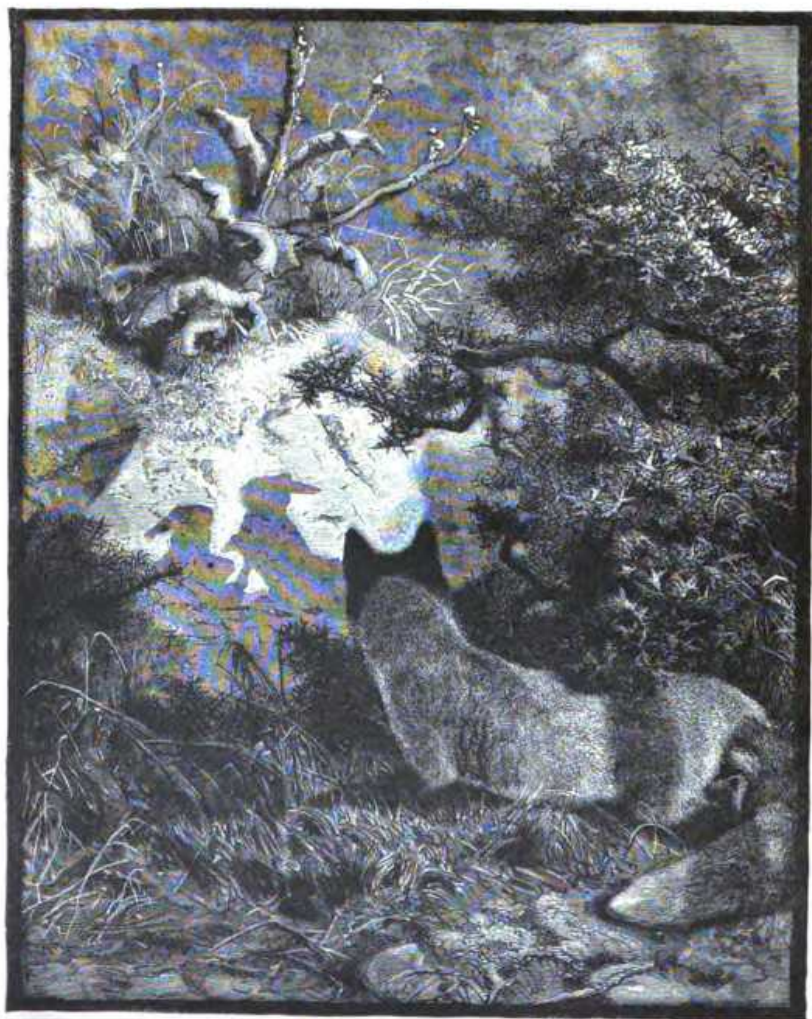
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NATURAL HISTORY

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BY THE REV.  
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## PREFATORY.

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ALTHOUGH the number of works on Natural History might deter any new writer from venturing on so extensively handled a subject, there is at present no work of a really popular character in which accuracy of information and systematic arrangement are united with brevity and simplicity of treatment.

All the best-known popular works on Natural History are liable to many objections, among which may be named a want of correct classification, the absence of explanations of the meanings and derivations of scientific words, the strange inaccuracy of many of the accompanying illustrations, and of the accounts of many animals. Nor do the conventional anecdotes chronicled in their pages evince that personal experience of the animal race which alone can repress romance and prevent inaccuracy. These deficiencies, it is hoped, are at all events partly supplied in the present work.

The present volume, although exceeding the limits originally contemplated, is but a brief digest of a large mass of materials, derived either from personal experience, from the most recent zoological writers, or from the kindness of many friends, who are familiar with almost every portion of the world, and to whom my best thanks are due. My original intention was to carry the work as far as the



Zoophytes, but it grew so rapidly, especially in the first two classes, the Mammals and Birds, that it was found necessary to conclude at the Insects, and even then to give but an exceedingly short and meagre account of them. This was much regretted by me, as my experience had lain so much in the practical entomological part of Natural History, that during the earlier stages of the work I looked forward with some pleasure to giving a very much fuller account of Insects than will be found in the last few pages of this volume.

It has been an object with me in the accounts of each animal to give as far as possible *new* anecdotes. In many cases the anecdotes related have never been published before, and in many more they have been extracted from works which, either from their scarcity, their cost, or their nature, would be very unlikely to be placed in the hands of general readers.

I dismiss these pages with almost a feeling of regret, that a task which has to me been a labor of love has come to an end. Indeed, the only drawback experienced during its progress was its necessary brevity, which constrained me to omit many creatures not only beautiful and wonderful in form, but interesting in habits. I was also compelled to describe many others so briefly as to render the account little more than a formal announcement of their name, country, and food. If, however, the perusal of the following pages should induce any one to look upon the great plan of Creation more as a whole than merely as an aggregation of separate parts, or to notice how wonderfully each creature is adapted for its peculiar station by Him who has appointed to each its proper position, and assigned to each its own duties, which could not be performed so well by any other creature, or even by the same animal in another place, my end will be attained.

Perhaps, also, this volume may cause some who have hitherto been troubled with a causeless abhorrence of certain creatures, against which they have nourished early prejudices, to examine them with a more indulgent—I should perhaps say a more reverent eye. I say reverent, because it has long given me deep pain when I have heard others stigmatizing as ugly, horrid, or frightful, those beings whom their Maker saw at the beginning of the world and declared very good. A naturalist will see as much beauty in a snake, spider, or toad, as in any of those animals which we are accustomed to consider models of beauty; and so will those who have before feared or despised them, if they can only persuade themselves to

examine them with an unprejudiced eye. In those three creatures mentioned there is great beauty even on a superficial examination. The movements of the snake are most graceful, and the changing colors of its varied scales leave the imitations of art far behind. The spiders, too, are beautiful, even in color. Some are bright crimson, some pale pink, some entirely yellow, some banded with broad streaks of alternately velvety black and silvery white, while the eye of the toad is a living gem of beauty. But when we come to look closer, to watch their habits, to note their instincts, or by the use of the microscope to lay open to our view some of the details of their organization, then indeed are we lost in wonder and amaze at the vastness of creation, which, even in one little, apparently insignificant animal, presents to our eyes innumerable marvels—marvels which increase in number and beauty as our power for perceiving them increases.

The present edition may rather be termed a condensation than an abridgment of the larger work. I have endeavored to make no omissions that would destroy one link of the marvellous living chain that binds all animate existences of earth into one harmonious whole; and in compressing the subject into a smaller compass I have concentrated the language without excluding any necessary information. In conclusion, I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to the author of the "Young Folks' Cyclopædia."

J. G. W.



