

**A MANUAL OF
FRET CUTTING AND
WOOD CARVING**

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A Manual of Fret Cutting and Wood Carving by Sir Thomas Seaton

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SIR THOMAS SEATON

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BY
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WITH DIAGRAMS

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P R E F A C E.

THIS little manual on Fret Cutting and Wood Carving is not to be looked on as a scientific work, or as having any pretensions thereto; it is to be regarded simply as the familiar advice of an elder amateur to his younger "mates," telling them all the difficulties he encountered, and the way he overcame or avoided them.

The advice of the Author to all his young mates is, "put yourselves under the guidance of an experienced carver, you will learn more from him in six months than you could from any book in sixteen."

But great numbers of young amateurs are not in a position to follow this advice; to all such this manual is particularly addressed.

The history of this little work is as follows:—Several years ago I was induced to seek a change of air for my family in a milder climate and under brighter skies than we have in England, and accidental circumstances landed us in a picturesque old town in France.

In England, my farm and garden afforded me abundant healthful occupation, and endless interest and amusement. Our removal to France swept all this away, and after a few weeks' residence, when the novelty of all around me had worn

off and I had become familiar with all the walks in the surrounding country, and every point and place of interest, I missed all my former occupations, and began to feel a want of something to supply their place, something to fill up those leisure hours, of which an old retired soldier has so many, and which are so tedious to a man of active habits. I felt that this "something to do" should not be too sedentary, that it should be something I could turn to at any spare moment, or that I could work at for hours; that could be taken up or dropped at a moment, and that would be not only amusing, but interesting and useful.

I was greatly puzzled. Carpentry and joinery, at which I had worked, I had not room for, and there were other insuperable objections. One day, whilst thinking over the matter, an old resident, and, subsequently, warm friend, Mr. B——, called, and casually mentioned Fret Cutting and Wood Carving, and it instantly struck me that I had found what I wanted. Mr. B—— was himself a proficient in the art, and I had seen in his drawing-room some beautiful specimens of his skill, but, at the time, I did not know that they were his own work.

I jumped at the idea, and as Mr. B—— kindly procured for me a sawing-table, and furnished me with some saws and patterns, I commenced work eagerly, and made rapid progress.

But Fret Cutting did not satisfy me, so I sent to England for some tools to carve up my work. I was pleased with my first attempt, but soon found out how ignorant I was, and how much I needed instruction. At the same time, I was very ambitious to try a bit of carving in the solid; so I sent for some books on carving, and, notably, that nice little work by the celebrated Mr. G. Rogers. In a

very short time, I discovered that, although these works created an intense desire to excel in this beautiful art, they did not enter sufficiently into detail to enable me to push on. I had to seek for more information.

However, I worked on, studying books, and getting from other amateurs a hint here and there. Then I looked in occasionally on some French carvers, and though not first-rate men, got some hints from them also. Then I purchased a few rare bits of carving, and tried, by examining them carefully and looking at the tool-marks, to find out how they were done. I let no opportunity slip of getting information, and so, going on steadily and persistently, getting the best patterns I could, and, stumbling here and there, but always recovering, I made steady and great progress, and was at length able to produce pretty things myself.

A change of residence in France threw me in the way of a young French carver, a man of first-rate abilities in his art, and an enthusiast in it. I took lessons at once, and my instructor spared no pains to teach me all he knew. The more I asked the more pleased he was, and the more progress I made the more anxious he was to push me on.

About this time I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of that great friend of all English boys, Mr. Edmund Routledge, and, during a short excursion we made round the island of Jersey, I mentioned my employment of Wood Carving, and all the difficulties I had to meet and overcome. In the course of conversation, he mentioned that he was editing a magazine for boys, and suggested that I should write for it a few papers on Fret Cutting and Wood Carving. After due consideration, I consented, believing that no one, so well as an experienced amateur, with all his struggles fresh on his mind, could explain to

the young amateur the difficulties he will have to encounter, and how to meet and overcome, or how to avoid them; that no one could so well enter into those details of work of which he had so much felt the want.

These papers, ten in number, were published in the "Young Gentleman's Magazine," now "Every Boy's Magazine." They are now collected, some slight errors are corrected, some parts entirely re-written, much useful information added, and the whole made up into a manual for amateurs, which the Author hopes will encourage them in the pursuit of this beautiful art, and which is dedicated to

THE BOYS OF ENGLAND,

BY THEIR FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.