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THE REV. J. G. WOOD, M.A.: A MEMOIR.

Quite suddenly, on the 3rd of March last, while absent from home upon a somewhat prolonged lecturing tour, the Rev. John George Wood, author of more than one hundred books upon natural history subjects, was struck down by mortal sickness, and passed away after only a few hours of suffering. Less than forty-eight hours before his death he delivered his last "sketch-lecture" at Burton-on-Trent; on the following day—Saturday—he travelled to Coventry, where a lecture had been arranged for the Monday, and succeeded in reaching the house of an old friend with whom he had promised to stay. But almost immediately after his arrival he was seized with violent pain, which he at once knew to be the beginning of the end. And at sunset on the Sunday he died.

Mr. Wood was born in London on July 21st, 1827, and was the son of a well-known surgeon, who for some years held the post of chemical lecturer at the Middlesex Hospital. At the unusually early age of seventeen, he matriculated at Morton College, and notwithstanding his youth he was elected Jackson Scholar in the following year, and in 1848 he graduated as Bachelor in Arts, proceeding to his Master's degree three years later. Being still several years short of the prescribed age for candidates for ordination, he now spent some little time in systematic labor in the Anatomical Museum of Christ Church, Oxford, and there it was that he obtained that thorough knowledge of comparative anatomy which in after life served him so well. In 1852 he received ordination at the hands of Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, then of Oxford, and preached until 1872, in which year, finding his family increasing, and his name fast becoming a household word in the land, he abandoned stipendiary clerical work and finally adopted literature as his profession.

His first book, however—the smaller "Natural History"—had appeared no less than ten years before, and had been followed by a translation of Alphonse Karr's charming work, "A Tour round my Garden"; by his own "Anecdotes of Animal Life," in two substantial volumes; and by the two hand-books which first brought his name into prominence—viz., "Common Objects of the Sea Shore" and "Common Objects of the Country." With such favor was the latter of these more especially received by the public that no less than thirty-six thousand copies were sold in the course of a single week. Next followed a small book for boys, entitled "The Playground," and then Mr. Wood entered

upon his largest and most important work, the second "Natural History."

This appeared in monthly parts, the first of which was published in 1859, the year of Mr. Wood's marriage. The best artists were pressed into the service, no expense was spared by the publishers—Messrs. Routledge & Co.—and in thirty-six numbers the whole was completed, the entire animal kingdom having been accurately

described, from the great anthropoid apes down to the infusoria and the sponges. Almost before the MS. was completed the still better known "Homes without Hands" was commenced, comprising a full account of the various dwellings constructed by animals of all kinds, either for their own

use, or for that of their young. And then Mr. Wood entered upon what must be considered as the busiest portion of an unusually busy life. For two years he was now simultaneously engaged upon two large and important works—"Bible Animals" and the "Illustrated Natural History of Man." Both of these—the latter a companion to the larger "Natural History"—were issued in periodi-

cal form, and thus for twenty-four consecutive months Mr. Wood was obliged to send in a double quota of MS., besides performing all the heavy labor connected with the revision of proofs and the correction of artists' blocks. Still he found time, however, for occasional contributions to

magazine literature, and also acted as honorary curate of St. John's Parish Church, Erith (for twelve years in all), besides undertaking the tuition and management of the choir.

It may well be imagined that Mr. Wood's leisure time at this period was of the scantiest, and indeed only a man of the strongest constitution could have performed the manifold duties which he unsparingly imposed upon himself. Often at his desk before five o'clock in the morning, he usually wrote steadily for three hours, and then, with little regard for weather, he would set off for a sharp run of just over three miles along a specified course. Always a good athlete, and skilled from his boyhood in gymnastic exercises of every kind, this run—completed without a check, and concluding with the ascent of a long and steep hill—occupied little more than twenty minutes, and was immediately followed by a cold bath and by breakfast. Then came steady work until luncheon at half-past one, after which a couple of hours were spent in repose; and then followed work again until half-past seven. Almost immediately after dinner Mr. Wood again returned to his desk, not to leave it until after eleven; and so was accomplished a daily tale of work which probably few writers of any age have exceeded.

This great pressure of literary labor was followed by a comparative lull, of which Mr. Wood availed himself to take up choir training upon a far larger scale than ever before. Being requested to undertake the Precentorship of the Canterbury Diocesan Choral Union he consented, and immediately set to work in his own energetic way to bring the annual festivals to the highest possible degree of perfection.

So enthusiastically did Mr. Wood work at this labor of love—for his precentorship was entirely honorary—that at the last of the seven great festivals which he conducted the choir consisted of no less than twelve hundred voices, all those of *bona fide* choristers of the diocese, while the music reached a state of perfection which had never before been attained. No one who ever attended one of those wonderful services is ever likely to forget the seemingly endless procession of white-robed choristers, as it wound slowly through the grand old cloisters and up the stately nave, or the effect of the great wave of sound which came rolling into every corner of the mighty building from the vast body of voices in the choir. But the demands made by the preliminary organization upon Mr. Wood's time increased with each succeeding year, his health suffered from the constant travelling and the ceaseless anxiety, and in 1875 he found himself compelled, with



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