



Man Before Metals, Vol. 45 (Classic Reprint)

Nicolas Joly

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Book of Nature; to it, therefore, we should have recourse. Unfortunately many leaves have disappeared, or have been effaced from this great book, written by the hand of God, and those which remain are for the most part hard to interpret. Hence, in spite of the precept of ancient philosophers (yv dt, a-eavrov), that which man knows least well is himself. For in fact neither his body, his affections, nor his mind, nor the vital principle which animates him, are entirely known to him; he is ignorant of his origin, his cradle, his history. But on the other hand, man has measured the heavens, and calculated the weight of the earth and the distance of the stars. He has converted Jove, the Thunderer of old, into a mere messenger, who instantaneously transmits the thought, and even the voice of man from one end of the world to the other. He is able, moreover, by another unlocked for wonder, to recall the voice of the dead. He has taught golden-haired Phoebus and pale Diana to paint their image, his own, or that of anything he wishes, on the lens of a camera-obscura, and has even reduced them to the humble role of copyists of our ancient manuscripts. He has dethroned Neptune, and laughs at his terrors.

(Typographical errors above are due to OCR software and don't occur in the book.)

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