

BOOKS AND CULTURE

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Books and culture by Hamilton Wright Mabie

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HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

**BOOKS
AND CULTURE**

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BY HAMILTON WRIGHT
MABIE



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To

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN




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Chapter I.

Material and Method.

IF the writer who ventures to say something more about books and their uses is wise, he will not begin with an apology; for he will know that, despite all that has been said and written on this engrossing theme, the interest of books is inexhaustible, and that there is always a new constituency to read them. So rich is the vitality of the great books of the world that men are never done with them; not only does each new generation read them, but it is compelled to form some judgment of them. In this way

Material and Method.

Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and their fellow-artists, are always coming into the open court of public opinion, and the estimate in which they are held is valuable chiefly as affording material for a judgment of the generation which forms it. An age which understands and honours creative artists must have a certain breadth of view and energy of spirit; an age which fails to recognise their significance fails to recognise the range and splendour of life, and has, therefore, a certain inferiority.

We cannot get away from the great books of the world, because they preserve and interpret the life of the world; they are inexhaustible, because, being vitally conceived, they need the commentary of that wide experience which we call history