

The matter of books is very various, as also are the merits conferred on books on account of their matter. All matter that is the outcome of experience, in other words everything that is founded on fact, whether it be historical or physical, taken by itself and in its widest sense, is included in the term matter. It is the \_motif\_ that gives its peculiar character to the book, so that a book can be important whoever the author may have been; while with form the peculiar character of a book rests with the author of it. The subjects may be of such a nature as to be accessible and well known to everybody; but the form in which they are expounded, \_what\_ has been thought about them, gives the book its value, and this depends upon the author. Therefore if a book, from this point of view, is excellent and without a rival, so also is its author. From this it follows that the merit of a writer worth reading is all the greater the less he is dependent on matter--and the better known and worn out this matter, the greater will be his merit. The three great Grecian tragedians, for instance, all worked at the same subject.

So that when a book becomes famous one should carefully distinguish whether it is so on account of its matter or its form.

Quite ordinary and shallow men are able to produce books of very great importance because of their \_matter\_, which was accessible to them alone. Take, for instance, books which give descriptions of foreign countries, rare natural phenomena, experiments that have been made, historical events of which they were witnesses, or have spent both time and trouble in inquiring into and specially studying the authorities for

them.