

Books, Old and New.

THIS title has been chosen for the book reviews of the JOURNAL during the present session, because it gives a pretty wide range to deal with any books whatever that may be of interest to me or to any of my probable readers. I propose to avail myself of the liberty thus afforded as far as may serve any good purpose, and I shall not be deterred from noticing a work that may have been long before the public, if there seems any reason to suppose that it has fallen into undeserved neglect or achieved a fictitious popularity. But for the most part the notices will be of books either very old or very new. I am moved to include the former by the fact that we are fortunate enough to have in our Library an alcove of curious old books belonging mostly to the unique Sebright collection, which are never likely to be much read, but which present no end of interesting features to those who care for the history of literature. Some of these have already been referred to in the pages of the JOURNAL. But the mine is a long way from being exhausted. As these old curiosities have already kept so long, however, they will always keep a little longer if the space

be needed to speak of new works that may fairly claim early attention.

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Anything pertaining to Shakespeare is of interest to the whole world of literature. I make no apology therefore for introducing the reader to a couple of old volumes in the alcove above mentioned, that shed a ray or two of light on the products of his marvellous genius.

The first of these is the *Hecatombithi* of Giraldo Cinthio, an Italian writer of the seventeenth century. As the name suggests, the work is a collection of a hundred short stories, strung loosely together, somewhat after the fashion of the *Arabian Nights*. They are very varied in character and quality as stories, being good, bad, and indifferent, but are all written in a rich, easy, flowing Italian, which shows a vivid imagination and a facile pen. It is one of these stories which is now usually supposed to have furnished the plot for the play of *Measure for Measure*. There is no reason to believe, indeed, that Shakespeare had any knowledge of the Italian language, but the rich storehouse of Italian fiction had already been drawn upon