

THE ANNOUNCEMENT that Prof. West of Princeton, in editing the 'Philobiblon' for the Grollier Club, had found it necessary 'to thoroughly revise the Latin text from the best manuscripts before translating' (*The Critic* of Dec. 10, 1887), led readers outside of the Club to look forward to the appearance of the book with an interest by no means limited to the consideration of fine mechanical effects in bookmaking. Now that the work is issued (only three hundred copies being printed, 297 on paper and 3 on vellum), the exquisite taste and skill shown in the manufacture of the three beautiful volumes command the warmest admiration—sometimes, it may be, at the expense of a just appreciation of the thorough scholarship and conscientious labor of the editor. Surely no book-lover's book was ever before set forth in so winsome a garb. Harmony of design and artistic finish are equally apparent in every detail of typography, presswork and binding. But nothing more need be said on this head. The volumes speak for themselves, even to those who are not familiar with all the intricacies and technicalities of the bookmaker's art.

On the literary side it may be remarked, at the outset, that Mr. West has contributed to this edition original work of permanent value. He found the received text of Richard de Bury's book hopelessly corrupt, in some places unintelligible. His first task was to restore the true text, so far as possible from documentary evidence. Of the thirty-five manuscripts of the 'Philobiblon' now to be found in the libraries of Europe, he personally examined twenty-five. He obtained reports of sufficient fulness and accuracy regarding the remaining ten to render it possible to assign them their proper place and value in the transmission of the text. A similar collation of the manuscripts was made about the same time by Mr. E. C. Thomas, whose edition of the 'Philobiblon,' containing both text and translation, was published in 1888 (*The Critic* of May 11, 1889). But the text as given by Mr. Thomas, though a manifest improvement on all previous editions, is far inferior to that established by Mr. West. Mr. Thomas's own account of the manuscripts (in his edition, pp. lxx.—lxxix.) indicates that, while he is probably a good palæographer, he may be deficient in knowledge of the principles of textual criticism. At any rate he has not carried his examination of the manuscripts far enough to discover their exact relation to one another or to the archetype. By comparison he has emended many passages previously obscure; but his best work after all is as a commentator rather than as a critic of the text. Mr. West has made a rigid application of scientific method to the whole textual problem. He has grouped the manuscripts, settled what weight should be given to each

* The *Philobiblon* of Richard de Bury. Ed. from the best Manuscripts and Trans. into English, with Introduction and Notes, by Andrew F. West. Vol. I., Latin text. Vol. II., Translation. Vol. III., Introductory Matter and Notes. Printed for the Grollier Club.

document, and weighed individual reading according to the canons of textual criticism. He is thus enabled to present very nearly the exact words of the genial Bishop himself.

The superiority of Mr. West's edition over all others is even more apparent in his translation, which fills the second volume. The excellence of his rendering is due in some degree to the fact that it is based upon a better text. His English is entirely free from that bookishness unhappily so prevalent in translations from the ancient languages. It follows the author's meaning closely, without doing violence to native idiom. It is fluent and finished, and at the same time full of the spirit and quaint flavor of the original. The introduction and commentary, which fill the third volume, furnish helpful information regarding the previous editions and the manuscripts, and explain obscure allusions in the work itself. As a whole, the Grolier Club 'Philobiblon' is a credit at once to American bookmaking and American scholarship. It is to be hoped that the Club will see fit to issue an edition for the market, that those outside the fortunate circle of membership may have an opportunity to possess in its best form the pious Bishop of Durham's priceless legacy to lovers of books.