Printing and Publishing History

The interface between authors and their readers is a fascinating subject in its own right, revealing a great deal about social attitudes, technological progress, aesthetic values, fashionable interests, political positions, economic constraints, and individual personalities. This part of the Cambridge Library Collection reissues classic studies in the area of printing and publishing history that shed light on developments in typography and book design, printing and binding, the rise and fall of publishing houses and periodicals, and the roles of authors and illustrators. It documents the ebb and flow of the book trade supplying a wide range of customers with products from almanacs to novels, bibles to erotica, and poetry to statistics.

Philobiblon

Distinguished above all for his zeal for learning, Richard de Bury (1287–1345) was an influential figure during the reign of Edward III, becoming bishop of Durham and serving on several diplomatic missions abroad, during which time he accumulated many rare works. The Philobiblon is his passionate treatise on learning and book collecting. Lodging a complaint in the voice of books themselves, Richard expresses his frank views on the current state of learning and scholarly practice. This translation, the first such into English, was prepared anonymously in 1832 by the scholar and linguist John Bellingham Inglis (1780–1870). Unlike other book collectors, Inglis was noted for actually having read the books he acquired. The present work contains a brief preface discussing previous scholarship and editions of the text, and ends with extensive notes by Inglis on the original text and his editorial decisions.
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Philobiblon

A Treatise on the Love of Books

Richard de Bury
PHILOBIBLON,

A TREATISE

ON

THE LOVE OF BOOKS:

BY

RICHARD DE BURY,

BISHOP OF DURHAM.

WRITTEN IN MCCCLIV,
AND TRANSLATED FROM THE FIRST EDITION, MCCCLXXIII.

WITH SOME COLLATIONS.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THOMAS RODD,
2 GREAT NEWPORT STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.
MDCCCXXXII.
ERRATUM.

PREFACE.

It was not my intention to add anything to this tract, as the Author has not only sufficiently explained himself, but given as much of his history, as was necessary to let the reader know who and what he was, and when he lived; and further particulars may be found in several Biographies. When the Translation was nearly all printed, a learned friend, "cujus hamum pisciculus nullus evadat," lent me the Bibliographical and Retrospective Miscellany, containing the most ample and best drawn up account of the Author I have any where seen. To that the curious reader is referred; for it would be unjust to make use of so recent a publication here, and the work is moreover in other respects worthy of perusal. The error noticed in it,—for such it must be,—of attributing the Philobiblon to Holcot, will perhaps be best
corrected by the book itself, the proofs of autobiography it contains being sufficient for that purpose. Whatever Holcot may have been in his younger days, he certainly was not an amanuensis at the time this book was written: nor is it likely he drew it up from notes; for the following notice in Mr. James’s Preface shows that it was finished in the Author’s life-time: "Quod opus (Philobiblon) Aucklandiae in habitacione sua complevit, 24 die Januarij anno a communis salutis origine 1344, ætatis sue æ 58 et 11 sui pontificatus;" he died 14 April, 1345. Holcot died in 1349. In the quotations in the Bibliographical Miscellany all the u’s are turned into v’s:—they may be so in the MS. quoted from, but the custom of writing for some centuries before 1300, and of printing down to the end of the 15th century, was never to use the v but as an initial; and many books are without it, except as a capital. My knowledge, however, of MSS. is very limited, but I suspect the one in question is not early.

It is noticed in the same Miscellany, that a translation of this book with the Latin text
was about to be published. The gentleman above alluded to also pointed out to me the same notice in Brunet’s Catalogue 1828, and it is said to have been given elsewhere some years before that time. If it had appeared, this translation certainly would not. It is only now printed at the request of others: the Notes were written at a similar request, after it was sent to the press. They were therefore hastily gathered from such sources as were nearest at hand, and as memory supplied: but illustration is endless, and from monkish authorities perhaps neither amusing nor instructive. The Philobiblon is almost entirely composed of allusion and quotation, which may account for the peculiarity and abruptness of its style in some parts. There is also an appearance of negligence in it; as a change from the first to the third person, breaking off the part where books are made to speak for themselves, and taking it up again; omissions, redundancies, and some things misplaced. This was not to be expected from a person so particular about books, as we must suppose the Author was;
vi

PREFACE.

—it is also no mark of editorship. The best inference is, that the author had lost his health; and having elsewhere drawn up his directions about the custody and disposal of his books in a legal form, as the 19th chapter indicates, he was the more careless about this work. Thomas à Kempis is the only early writer I know of, who ever made use of the Philobiblon, three or four chapters of his Doctrinale Juvenum being taken from it without acknowledgement. He died in 1471, and may have written his Doctrinale much earlier; his MS. must have been of early date; and it is probable that the edition 1473 was printed from it, or a copy of it: this is in favour of its genuineness; though it is badly printed, and in some places difficult to read. It was not thought necessary to reprint the Latin text, as the few who take an interest in it may find it elsewhere, and it may perhaps yet appear from the hand of a more competent editor.
## CONTENTS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chap.</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.—On the Commendation of Wisdom, and of Books in which Wisdom dwelleth</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.—Showeth that Books are to be preferred to Riches and Corporal Pleasures</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.—Books ought always to be bought, except in two cases</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.—How much Good arises from Books; and that the corrupt Clergy are for the most part ungrateful to Books</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.—Good Professors of Religion write Books; bad ones are occupied with other things</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.—In praise of the ancient, and reprehension of the modern religious Mendicants</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.—Deploring the Destruction of Books by Wars and Fire</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.—Of the numerous Opportunities of the Author of collecting Books from all quarters</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.—The ancient Students surpassed the modern in Fervency of Learning</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.—Science grew to perfection by degrees. The Author provided a Greek and a Hebrew Grammar.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI.—Laws are, properly speaking, neither Sciences nor Books</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
viii CONTENTS.

XII.—Of the Utility and Necessity of Grammar ......  76
XIII.—A Vindication of Poetry, and its Utility ......  77
XIV.—Of those who ought most particularly to love Books ........................................  81
XV.—Of the manifold Effects of the Sciences which are contained in Books ......................  84
XVI.—Of writing new Books and repairing old ones.  90
XVII.—Of handling Books in a cleanly manner, and keeping them in order ......................  96
XVIII.—The Author against Detractors ............... 102
XIX.—A provident Arrangement by which Books may be lent to Strangers .......................... 106
XX.—The Author desires to be prayed for, and notably teaches Students to pray ................ 110
Notes ........................................................................ 115