FROM MESSRS. BELL & SONS we have received the latest of their Technological Handbooks, "The Art of Bookbinding," by Joseph W. Zaehnsdorff, and have given it the careful examination and consideration that it deserves by reason of the repute of its well-known author, than whom probably no one knows more as to the value of many of the processes of book preservation in binding; and we confess to a great deal of pleasure in its perusal, for it is written in a lucid style; it deals directly with the subject in hand; it has none of the ambiguity of expression which characterises the work of many would-be teachers of matters they are not practically acquainted with; and it is without the padding commonly used to fill up and dis tend the covers of a book into fair proportions. We cannot put our finger upon a page where more words are used to describe any operation of the binder than are fairly necessary, and every explanation or direction given has been carefully and completely thought out with marvellous precision, which we must recognise the more because it is the work of a practical binder, to whom many of the methods of procedure come as instinctive rather than thought out motions, and consequently are in danger of being forgotten. We walk, but we do not calculate the measure or think out each motion of the muscles which move us forward. So we work, not without thought, but with such a trained motion in many things that it requires very patient study to write down all the minutiae of our doings. It was not surprising, therefore, to come across one little mistake, rather the surprise was that we found only one (page 12), where a rolling machine is described as having two heavy rollers "revolving in the same direction." Of course the rollers revolve inversely.

The Introduction gives a fair general outline of the art in the various stages of its history, and is illustrated by several examples of the different styles of ornamentation in vogue during the periods traced, those chosen being good characteristic specimens, the Monastic, Venetian, and Grolier centres, and borders in the Harleian and Roger Payne styles. There is a great deal that savours of the museum about this part, but no mention is made of the tremendous development of the art for general purposes during the last twenty years, and the two branches of the trade mentioned, "cloth work and extra work," by no means cover the ground. Indeed it is in other branches of the trade that the greatest changes have been made both in the methods of binding and style of ornamentation.

The author, however, only essays "to give instructions to the unskilled workman how to bind a book."
So far that is well and thoroughly done, and, indeed, many skilled workmen will turn to these pages for practical hints, which may be found in greater abundance than in the edition published in 1880, a rich mine of information lying in the concluding pages where “washing and cleaning” is exhaustively explained, with many admirable recipes for eradicating the different varieties of stains which mar a book’s appearance.

On the subject of “end papers” Mr. Zehnchsdorf gives what we deem a good method of obviating the eye-sore occasioned by the breaking away of the first and end sections, which are usually rendered stiff by the pasting up and end papering, that is “to sew the ends on with the book when sewing. The paper is folded at the back with a small fold, the sheet placed in the fold, and the whole sewn through. It is at once apparent that under no circumstances can there be any strain on the ends, and that there is hardly any possibility of the ends breaking away from the sheets. For books subject to very hard wear (school books, public library books, &c.) this method of placing the ends is by far the best.” See illustration.

Chapter XVIII, on head-banding, commences with some remarks with which we we do not altogether agree, and because the reason given for the use of machine-made head-band is not the right one. He says: “Few binders work their own head-bands in these times of competition and strikes for higher wages.” In the previous edition Mr. Zehnchsdorf did not appear to recognise that competition had anything to do with the question, but placed the whole responsibility on “strikes and struggles for higher wages.” Well, the present book is that much better than the last in that it recognises the existence of competition. It proceeds: “It takes some time and pains to teach a female hand the perfection of headband working, and but too often, since gratitude is not universal, the opportunity of earning a few more pence per week is seized without regard to those at whose expense the power of earning anything was gained, and the baffled employer is wearied by constant changes. Owing to this, most bookbinders use the machine-made head-band.” The real reason why patent or machine-made head-band is used is because it is cheap, and the best imitates worked head-bands so well that binders will not go to the extra expense of working up by hand. With declining practice comes declining proficiency, and fewer females have the chance to learn. When, however, a revival sets in, as has happened lately, skilled hands being scarce their value rises commercially as factors in production, and the worker would be thought a simpleton both by her employer and her fellow workers if she did not “seize on the opportunity of making a few pence more per week,” just as any man of business takes advantage of a rising market for his wares.

“Russia should be well rolled out with the rolling pin” (page 29). We rather thought the rolling pin had been relegated to its proper quarters, the kitchen, by this time, since there are so many better methods of improving the even appearance of the leather in general use.

The second part, which deals with finishing, opens with some pertinent remarks on the styles of various past masters, and a clear idea is given of the difference in the cut of the tools used by the Italians, Grolier, Le Gascon, and Derome. These points of difference are not usually worked out with sufficient fullness, for though finishers have commonly an idea as to the general character of the various styles, more definite tuition is needed, and we do not remember seeing anywhere else so short an explanation which so clearly puts the matter before the reader. On page 117 we have the advice that the tools should be
impossible, and where it is possible, emblematic work is usually an abomination, to be eschewed by all who come afterwards. Ornament as you will, taking care only that nothing incongruous creeps into the design.

The illustration facing page 131 is an admirable help to the reader of the written instructions, and shows at a glance the order of procedure in gilding a back, while the three most popular styles are shewn on page 138.

Altogether, we may safely recommend the work to every binder, for the best of advice concerning the binding of first-class work, and for good specimens of the various styles, but for the thousand and one tips and wrinkles in use at large binderies where other classes of work are being done, the puzzled binder
may look in vain. Perhaps after all it is best so! We are overmuch anxious to find a cheap way, and too often drop into slovenly work in consequence, when we might have taken more time and patience and put our souls into our work as the grand old master binders did, and made our books creations of beauty like theirs. But commercialism is upon us, it grasps us tight, and threatens to starve us unless we obey the cut-throat instincts which it arouses in us. In such days to read Mr. Zechnsdorf’s book is to call up visions we fear are not for us to enjoy.

Those who wish to know all about the Public Library movement, now rapidly extending all over the kingdom, should read the third edition—entirely rewritten and very considerably enlarged—of Mr. Thomas Greenwood’s “Public Libraries” (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., Ltd. Price 2s. 6d.) Mr. Greenwood is indefatigable in making known and representing a library ladder and collecting shelf designed by Mr. Herbert Jones, librarian of Kensington Public Library, and a “card catalogue” drawer in use in many libraries.

A Companion Volume on a kindred subject—“Museums and Art Galleries” by the same author (also published by Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall & Co., Ltd.) is equally interesting and instructive. In many towns the public library, the museum, and the art gallery are all under one roof and form invariably the most popular places of resort in their respective localities, combining instruction and entertainment in an easily accessible and inexpensive form. The book is written in popular style, and is profusely illustrated with views of the more prominent public libraries in Great Britain and the United States.
"The Author's Manual" by Percy Russell (London: Digby and Long, 18 Bouverie-street, E.C.) has already reached a second edition, so we may conclude that it has been found of value to literary aspirants. Mr. Russell writes from personal experience and his manual includes notes on all departments of professional literature from paragraph writing to the production of a complete book. Considerable information is imparted on subjects of detail not to be found in other works of its class. Journalistic writing receives special attention, and a strong plea is put forth for the "signed" article. Mr. Russell is down on the "new journalism" and advises aspirants to write "plain, nervous, vivid, familiar, and yet refined English, and this style can be acquired by taking pains and reading good authors."

A handy introductory guide to the knowledge of books is the "Manual of Bibliography" by W. T. Rogers, F.R.S. Litt., just published by Messrs. H. Grelv & Co., King-street, Covent-garden, W.C. It combines a concise introduction to the subject with hints on library management and the art of cataloguing, and forms a useful key to open other and more exhaustive works on bibliography. Much useful information is given on book making and ornamentation, and at the end is a copious list of books of reference, a good glossary, and a well compiled index. The illustrations—mostly reproductions from the old masters—are well chosen, and an illuminated Zaehnsdorf cover forms the frontispiece.

As a souvenir of the recent Plantin celebration at Antwerp the Cercle de la Librairie de Paris has published an interesting and handsomely got up volume, from the press of MM. Dumoulin & Cie., rue des Grands Augustins. The book is crown 4to in size, the type page 3½ x 5½ inches in red line Oxford borders worked off at the edges, with an inch and a half margin all round. It is embellished with numerous pressmarks of the old printers and some modern ones, and in typography, paper and presswork is a model of excellent workmanship.

"Poems and Translations," by W. J. Linton (London: John C. Nimmo, 14 King William-street, Strand) is a luxurious edition of the poetical writings and translations of the great master of modern wood engraving. Embellished with a fine etched portrait and autograph, it is printed on hand-made paper in the best style of the Chiswick Press, and very neatly bound. It is an admirable example of modern bookmaking, of which the edition is limited, only 466 copies having been issued in England and America. Mr. Linton writes with feeling and like the true artist that he is.

An announcement from the Leadenhall Press intimates that the subscription list of "London City" is closed. The published price will be 42/-, and "large paper" copies 45/-. "London City" bids fair to be the most sumptuous, as it will be the most lavishly illustrated, work ever issued from the Leadenhall Press, and the 250 illustrations promised in the prospectus are being increased to nearly 300. The book will be issued about the end of the year.