

MANUSCRIPTS. EDITIONS AND COMMENTARIES.

§ 1. SINCE the first volume of this edition appeared, an autotype fac-
simile of the best and oldest ms. of Sophocles,—the Laurentian MS., of The Lau-
rentian
MS.(L).
the early eleventh century,—has been published by the London Society
for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. The defects of such a produc-
tion are only those which are inseparable from every photographic
process, and amount to this, that photography cannot render all the
more delicate gradations of light and shade. Yet even here there is
sometimes a gain to the student through the intensifying of faint strokes,
as when in *Tr.* 1106, $\alpha\upsilon[\theta\eta]\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, the erased letters $\theta\eta$ become more
legible in the photograph than they are in the ms. On the other hand
such a photograph will, with the rarest exceptions, tell the student
everything that he could learn from the ms. itself. Erasures are not
among the exceptions, for they are almost invariably traceable in a good
photograph. In this facsimile they are seen as clearly as in the original.
It is often difficult or impossible for the collator of a ms. to foresee
exactly every detail of which he may afterwards require a record; and
it is obviously an inestimable advantage to have permanent access to a
copy which not merely excludes clerical error, but is in all respects an
exact duplicate. In 1882 I collated the Laurentian ms. at Florence,
and I have now used the facsimile during several months of minute
work on the text of this play, in the course of which I have had
occasion to test it in every line, and in almost every word. Having
had this experience, I can say with confidence that, in my opinion,
the autotype facsimile is, for an editor's purposes, equivalent to
the ms. It may be not unseasonable to say so much, since in some
quarters a prejudice appears still to exist against the photographic
reproduction of entire mss., on the ground that, while the process is
costly, the result can never be an adequate substitute for the original.
It will often, doubtless, be inadequate for the palaeographer's purposes;