The “knock-out” at Book Sales.

Sly, my dear, when I am told
of the “bargains” that
have been picked up at
such and such a sale.
I always ask who was
there, and when I hear
the names of several
second-hand booksellers,
I tell my informant that,
beyond all doubt, they
were the men who got
the bargains, not the
general public.

For we take care to get
anything that is worth having, or make an outsider
pay dearly for it, and whatever we get we sell
among ourselves afterwards and divide the profits.

The way we do this is by putting the lots up to
auction again among ourselves, all profits realised
being thrown into a pool, and afterwards equally
divided. We do not bid against each other at
the auction itself, but run up the price against outsiders,
so as to “knock them out” of the sale, as it were.

I remember a gentleman who tried to break down
our ring at a sale. If we bid at anything, he went
for that lot and secured it, no matter at what cost;
and we bled him, I can tell you. After the sale, when
he had grown cool, he repented of his temerity.

“Look here,” he said, coming to me, “I don’t care
much about those books. You can have them for
£20 less than I gave for them.”

“You bought them,” I said, “and you can keep
them.”

Sometimes we have more than one “knock.” One
day two of us were at a sale where there was a collec-
tion of books—nearly three hundred volumes—on a
THE BRITISH BOOKMAKER.

certain subject, and we both thought we could find a customer for them. At the auction they were knocked down for the preposterous sum of 15s., and in the “knock” afterwards the other booksellers would only go 7s. on them. So you see that there are sleepy folk in our trade. I suppose that the local booksellers did not know of a likely customer, and they thought we two would not go any higher. However, I bought the lot for 22s. On the way home we had to go in the “knock” again between the two of us, to decide who should have them.

“T’ll go half-a-sovereign on them,” said my friend.

“And I’ll go another,” I replied.

We went on like that until we got to £1 10s., when I had had enough.

I was present at another sale where a set of Bewick’s works were knocked down to the booksellers for less than a sovereign—I forget the exact amount. While we were on the way to a publichouse afterwards, some of us egged on a man who did not want books, but only joined us to get a share of the money, to buy the Bewicks. They ought to have been worth over £20; but the books had been given to children to look at, and they had torn many of the leaves and soiled all of them.

However, this particular man knew nothing about this (nor, for that matter, did many of the others); the Bewicks had not been opened in their presence. So, after a lot of dodging, we got him to offer £12 for them, and they were resold at that.

I’ll guarantee he was furious that night when he reached home and saw what he had bought. His wife found the money for the business and really managed it. I felt so confident that he dare not show her his purchase, that on the following morning I said to a friend of mine—

“If you want some Bewicks cheap, go down to So-and-so’s. I think he has some to sell.”

I met him again later in the day, and asked him how he had gone on, and he told me he had bought the lot for £6.

This will show you that even the “knock” is not an unmixed blessing for our trade. There is any amount of trickery in it, and I have known many wish they had had nothing to do with it. Besides, a man in a small way hasn’t much chance, and a beginner none whatever. The men who utilise and benefit by the “knock” are those who have a thorough knowledge of our business, and plenty of money to back them up.

—Cassell’s Saturday Journal.

ALDERMAN TYLER, the latest brand new lord mayor of London, is a paper manufacturer; also a member of that peculiar set of individuals who style themselves “Ye Sette of Odd Volumes,” of which he was president in 1886, having joined it in 1878; he is also master of the Stationers’ Company. One of his earliest acts in his official capacity was to escort the Prince of Wales to the stone which the prince was to lay as the memorial stone of the St. Bride’s Institute, on November 20th, and we hope that he may yet grace his year of office by inducing the Stationers’ Company to do something for the trade they are supposed to represent.

FOREIGN NOTES.

THE bookbinders’ exhibitions at the Tyrolian Industrial Exhibition recently held in Innsbruck were very good. Herr Osw. Kob, of Bozen, went beyond the ordinary work, and sent a large and original collection of one hundred and fifty pieces representing mediaeval armory, helmets, swords, shields, etc., also jugs, goblets, locks, and similar articles, marvellous imitations of the metal work, and very suitable for ornamenting mediaeval rooms. But also in modern work, such as bindings, albums, boxes, etc., this exhibition held its own. Other exhibitors, especially Herren A. Möss, M. Jeggle, and Ed. Glätzle, of Innsbruck, all showed not only elegant but very solid work.

DIAMOND JUBILEE.—Herr Gustav Slaby, senior bookbinder in Berlin, and a member of the Berlin Bookbinders’ Association, has celebrated its sixtieth anniversary of becoming a master binder and a citizen of Berlin. He was born in 1805, and established his firm in 1833, so that he has seen a great many changes during his successful career.

PRINCE ALBERT of Flanders will one day be the possessor of a priceless collection of books. As successor to the throne of Belgium, he will inherit the private library of 100,000 volumes accumulated during the lifetime of the present monarch, and the fascinating library which came to the Court of Flanders from his father.

INFORMATION has been received from the Italian Post Office to the effect that packets containing books, whether bound or not, will in future be allowed to pass through the post in that country in the ordinary manner, provided that they are not sent in considerable numbers to any one person.

The Gira School for Gilding has lately had another exhibition of pupils’ work, which showed great progress in all classes of work. Many well-deserved diplomas were given to successful exhibitors.

ACCORDING to the most recent statistics available on the subject, the exportation of toys from France is steadily increasing, while that of books is decreasing.

An industrial and trade exhibition is about to be held in Freiberg, in Saxony. The bookbinding trade in particular intends to make a good show.

At the late Nuremberg exhibition of apprentices’ work the bookbinding trade was represented by two exhibitors, both of whom received prizes.

The Berlin Bookbinders’ Association is making preparation for the worthy celebration of its three hundred years’ jubilee.

I wish THE BRITISH BOOKMAKER splendid success and a larger circulation. Every workman, old and young, and employers as well, should subscribe and keep the only journal of our trade in brimming prosperity.—ANDREW BROWN, Burslem.
“Knock-Out” Sales.

A propos of our recent article on this subject, the following will interest our readers:— “Mr. Walter, of the Times, was the plaintiff in a suit which came before Mr. Justice Kekewich on the 8th inst., the defendant being Mr. Charles Low, second-hand bookseller, of Birmingham. Mr. Warming, q.c., and Mr. MacSwinnny represented the Times, and Mr. Ashton Cross represented the defendant. The learned counsel stated that Mr. Low issued a catalogue at the end of which was printed an extract from the Times in the following words:—‘An auction is the most unfair of all sales, and is the most ruinous method of disposing of any sort of goods. As matters are now managed no one will resort to an auction who can dispose of his goods by any other means.’ Plaintiff now sought an injunction restraining Mr. Low from publishing any more catalogues containing such extract. The catalogue was brought to the notice of the Institute of Auctioneers. They complained to Mr. Low, who agreed not to print the words again till his rights had been settled, while the auctioneers complained to the Times, and the Times took up the matter, saying that they never printed such an article. It was, however, found under date of September 24th, 1866, but the extract in the catalogue turned out to be two sentences, one from the early part of the article, and the other from the end. The article itself was on the abuse of the knock-out system then prevalent, and upon which there had been considerable correspondence in the Times. Mr. Ashton Cross contended that the two sentences were an absolutely accurate summary of the article. The judge held that the article was a fair summary of the knock-out system, but the extract was not, and he granted the injunction and costs.”—B. & C. P. & S.