

Our Competition.

THE apprentices' half-bound book Competition was not the success we anticipated. In order to swell the number of entries, the judges' decision was suspended for a month. However, this brought few additional competitors, and we now have to make our award upon a very small number of samples.

Our prize of half-a-guinea is awarded to Charles Forty and Vincent Walker, apprentices in the employ of Mr. V. Walker, Longwall Street, Oxford. Forty, who has served six years' apprenticeship, forwarded the book, and Walker, who has served only two years and a half, finished it. The volume sent in is "Oliver Twist," bound in half morocco with paper sides. The edges are well gilt, and the finishing is neat and clean. The judges report that the work is as good as could possibly be expected in a half-morocco binding, and is highly creditable to the house. It is doubtful whether it could have been turned out better by any leading London firm.

A copy of our new volume, *The Bookmaker*, will be sent to William Bradshaw, Preston, as a reward for his efforts upon a volume entitled, "Out of Doors," and which was both forwarded and finished by him. Bradshaw has served five years with Mr. C. W. Whitehead, of Preston. The cloth used for the sides is a good imitation of morocco, and the binding is generally good. The judges suggest that the edges should have been cut with a plough instead of the guillotine.

In the first number of our new issue will be announced the particulars of our next Competition. The value of the prizes will be found to be increased, and the conditions simplified.

Trimming the Ends of Blank Books.

FOR many years previous to the introduction of the Mallory cutting machine there appeared to be no means except by press and plow of preventing the tearing away of portions of fronts or backs of blank work while in the act of trimming the same. But the Mallory machine is now a sort of defunct institution. It was gradually disused when the sliding-knife motion was generally introduced in all the newer machines. This last did not prevent the separation of certain portions of the fronts and backs of books when cut in the round, as did the Mallory arrangement, which was the main object aimed at in its invention; consequently various little schemes had to be introduced to obviate the difficulty attending machines now in common use.

One of the earliest ideas to prevent unsightly breakage at the points previously noticed was a round piece of wood of convenient length and suitable diameter, closely resembling a portion of a broom handle, by the use of which, when the book is under the pressure of the clamp, one end is held firmly against the upper part of the fore-edge to be trimmed until the knife has passed the critical locality, at which time it should be withdrawn to prevent the knife from coming in contact with it also. Where large books are being trimmed, a block of some kind should be placed on the bed of the machine, so that the wood can have a proper

leverage while in the act of trimming. In adopting this method a certain amount of dexterity is required to be successful. A more simple way to prevent the disfigurement of fronts of books is by placing three or four strips of thin strawboard in the upper part of the round at such a distance apart as to the workman in his judgment appears necessary from actual demonstration. A book will rarely ever rag out with this treatment. There is also another way. As soon as the clamp of the machine rests upon the book, the workman can force the point of his thumb against the upper part of the round, and in this way the paper can be held firmly against the knife until it passes the point intended to be free from defective results.

In trimming the ends of blank books it is usual to place a block made from binder's board, and thick enough when laid a short distance from the back to make up for the "swell" usually accompanying every book. The object of this mass of board is to prevent the book from twisting out of shape at the time the clamp is pressed upon it; but by a slight modification of these blocks they can be made to produce more pressure upon the front than at the back of a book, which is an advantage most desirable in preventing those casualties which every blank-book maker should endeavour to overcome.

In making these blocks glue together pieces of binders' board to produce a thickness of half an inch or more. Cut them the width of the clamp and long enough to meet the various sizes of blank books known to the workman. Having made a block in the way suggested, take a piece of No. 15 board of the same size and bevel off gradually from one end to the other and glue the same on the block previously made. The block is then complete, and when applied to the work for which it was prepared it should, of course, have the thickest end placed at the front of the book.

Up to this point attention has been limited to the fronts of books. It is, however, equally important that the backs shall receive due consideration. A very simple way for preventing defective cutting at the back is by building up with pieces of No. 40 or 45 strawboard a sort of quarter circle so that it will correspond with the lower portion of an ordinary blank-book round. The several pieces when glued and put together should not be much farther apart than the thickness of board used.

When the block is formed it should be glued also and fixed at one end of a piece of thin strawboard of convenient size, the plain surface of which is pushed under the book itself and the block drawn snugly against the back, so that when the clamp is applied the whole is firmly held in position until the cutting is finished. These protection blocks can be more or less modified in size according to the thickness of any book in hand. In trimming books these blocks need not be cut into at random, but should be utilized to the best advantage; in fact, for some work they need not receive more than one cut, if partly glued and fixed against the side gauge of the machine. It should be understood also that in adopting these methods the knife is supposed to run from right to left, and thus the front of every book is first operated upon.