

[illegible]

## CORRESPONDENCE

April 17, 1889.

DEAR BOOKS AND NOTIONS, I have read with a great deal of interest the three letters signed "Montreal," Robert D. Richardson and "Excelsior." They speak upon a subject which I have frequently discussed with myself, and upon which my proper love of profit and my conscience have frequently come into conflict. I believe with Mr. Richardson that the bookseller who will manfully stand up for his convictions, handle nothing unclean, and who will let the public know it, will in the end secure the best trade of his town; but to a man who is already doing the mixed business, who has to drive away one class of custom and only hope for the other it takes nerve. "*C'est le premier pas qui coute,*" is the old French saying which tells of my feelings.

I have many a time argued to myself just after the fashion of "Excelsior," for that reason I know how weak the arguments are. Must I cease to sell Shelley, Byron, Shakespeare, Goethe, Heine? I think not. I know the class of people who buy classics, and I do not fear for them. It is the buyer of the latest novel, the boy and girl with immature mind, so easily led to destruction, so willing to follow the ignis fatuus of the "know it all, know nothing, sensual, agnostic." They do

not know whither they are being led, if they did they would shudder and draw back, they are not naturally fond of carrion, in fact they abhor it, but we call the foul odor of decay "Gamey," the rot and maggot of the old cheese a delicacy, and thereby deceiving our palate by smooth language and a rich dressing we may make foulness in literature palatable, nay, a necessity. I blush to acknowledge the fact ; but fact it is nevertheless, I keep some of the latter novels hidden away so that my family may not see them, yet I sell them every day to my customers. Is it not so with you too, oh brother booksellers ?

HAMILTON.

DEAR SIR, -Your article in May number on the "Union Scale" for daily papers was just to the point. It is always our fault if we do not make money out of the news business. It is the petty little jealousies that exist between us that prevent our business being as profitable as it is pleasant and honourable. Jones cuts prices because it is reported to him that Robinson is doing so. More than likely the report is incorrect, in fact a lie manufactured for a purpose, and that purpose simply to enable the teller of it to get his own paper at a cut rate. Why don't we have sufficient manliness to stand up on our own feet and not be worrying about what some other member of the trade may be doing.

Then as to the cheap papers. I don't handle them; they neither give profit of them-

selves or allow goods to be sold which would give profit. I will not handle any evening paper until I can find a high-priced one, and I certainly will not have anything to do with a cheap morning paper.

I hope you will succeed in obtaining the new schedule outlined in the May number. If you do, I, for one, will guarantee to stand by it, and to do my level best to work up the circulation of the paper that give it. —Yours,  
NEWS AGENT.

DEAR BOOKS AND NOTIONS.- Your correspondent "Enough," in last number takes a very low class view of the bookseller's occupation. If he was one of the much maligned whiskey sellers, he could not take a much meaner view of his business. The questions, Will it sell? and Will it pay in money? can not cover the whole ground of a man's life and work and aims- not even those of the lowest members of the social scale- and certainly the booksellers do not lie on that level.

I believe that ours is the highest and most honourable trade that exists, and it would be so regarded by the public generally, but for some of the men like "Enough" who are in it "for revenue only." I don't want to discuss the question of our right to sell certain classes of books : such questions can only be settled by the consciences of the individual dealers. For myself, I may just say that I am very particular, *especially* in novels. In educational works, in essays, in