

SUMMER READING.

As the season of leisure and recreation draws near, it behooves the bookdealers to remember that their trade is no small branch of the commissariat from which the great army of summer campaigners is to be supplied. Year by year the proportion of Canadians who yield to the migratory instinct in the sultry months is increasing. The cool retreats which are popular summer gathering places in this Province alone are numerous. There is hardly a bookseller who cannot calculate upon his nearness to one of these places as an influence in his business. In his neighborhood, at all events, there will be some residents whose life during the high summer will be passed at a resort more or less distant. For these, special literary provisions have to be laid in. And not for these alone. The home-keeping public will have a relish for the same delectable reading matter. It has therefore to be supplied.

Summer is the season when mental energy is believed to be most in repose. That belief is the basis of the practice, everywhere observed, of closing educational institutions in the hot season. Public and high schools, residence seminaries, academies, and colleges are shut up, some for a longer some for a shorter portion of the warm months. Intellectual vigor is then at its lowest. This fact is as much observed and submitted to by our publishers as by our educational authorities. The literary pabulum most grateful to the summer reader is that which is assimilated with the least mental labor. It is what book-makers look upon as their staple commodity for June, July, August and September trade. This, then, is the kind of literature that dealers need to lay in.

It is not enough that books for the summer trade should be of the light sort. The exterior of such books has nearly, if not quite, as much to do with their selling as have their contents. With works intended for graver hours it matters less what the outer fashion is like, although it is not to be despised as a consideration in the furnishing of such books. But volumes that are designed to wile the hours past, or to chase away loneliness, are now invested with an outer comeliness that recruits or varies its captivating arts every year, that in short conforms to fashion. The same work as was a favorite last year may be one this year, but its outer and visible form will be new, the fresh 1890 issue of the mint of taste and fancy. The books that will circulate in the summer's trade will therefore be new as well as light.

The fact that a book is light and arrayed in the summer suit of 1890 does not furnish sufficient data to the dealer to determine buying. The book should be modish. The assayers who pronounce on all books have usually been heard from long enough before the stress of the demand is on for their opinions to guide the dealers. The repu-

tation of a work is therefore within reach to decide the dealer for or against the buying of it. The reputation of a book is often independent of its literary merit. It is dependent, however, upon popularity, which has whims that cannot be ignored by the trader. The modishness of a book, then, is what sells it. That modishness is determined by the fact that the book is in favor with people of fashion. That circumstance alone has been the cause of many books being read by people who found nothing in them that sorted with their tastes or ideas. But the trade has nothing to do with anomalous reading habits, further than to make the most money out of them.

One of the best tonics of trade is known to be novelty. It has ceased to be enough that the dealer should be able to assuage a demand that comes ready formed. The dealer who would be abreast of the times must now be able to impart a demand where there was none before. This he can do only by keeping and exhibiting what is fresh and pleasing in some new resource of attraction. He can make half the season's trade by creating half the season's demand. Therefore, it is all important that he should have the latest wares. Because they are new and fashionable they will awaken consumption that was latent. On the other hand, he who relies on old stock will find his store lacks the resource to satisfy a premeditated buying impulse, or to create one. Old stock is not the saleable property of the midsummer holiday season. Our lists, given another page, exhibit what may be of service to the trade in making summer selections.

RECENT POSTAL CHANGES.

Heretofore the publisher had no advantage over the newsdealer as a distributor through the mails of Canadian newspapers and periodicals. Matter of this sort was exempt from postage, whether it was mailed from the printing office or the newsroom. This has been changed. Hereafter our newspapers and periodicals will be carried free to the subscriber from the publishing office alone. The privilege of the dealer has been cancelled. His mailing list he has now no further use for. The effect of this will be a perceptible loss to the trade, and a considerable decline in the circulation of national periodical literature. So long as postage was free to the dealer, the publisher had an agent at every point within the district that he might consider his constituency. The many salesmen could not but greatly enlarge the list of the publisher's subscribers. Now all that work, so far as the mail subscribers are concerned, must be done by the publisher himself, for the trader will certainly not be so good a canvasser as he was salesman. The effect will therefore fall more heavily on the publisher than on anyone else. Another change, touched on in a former issue, but now modified adversely for the

trade, is that relating to the re-mailing of British newspapers and publications. Some time ago Canadian news dealers were given the privilege of re-mailing such matter free, if they had received it by mail from Great Britain. The American dealer, however, was not exempted by that change from the postage of 1c. a pound. The modification referred to is the condition that such re-mailing shall be direct to subscribers. A large wholesale dealer can not fill orders to retailers, therefore, without paying 4c a pound of postage, even although the matter did reach him by direct postal carriage from Britain. This change not merely neutralizes, but overwhelms that which put the American dealer under the requirement of paying the American postage rate of one cent a pound. The comparative terms are much more to the advantage of the American importer than they were before the free re-mailing privilege was granted at all.

It may turn out, however, that reactionary legislation on the part of the American Congress will correct the disability. The House Committee on Post offices has concluded to report in favor of a bill to re-classify "libraries" and periodical literature as mail matter. These are now rated second-class and are carried for one cent a pound. The difficulty of determining what is matter that may be admitted under the second-class rates is what has led to this bill being brought up. The contents of Lippincott's or of Drama, for example, may according to the point of view be regarded as book literature or as periodical literature, and endless confusion result from the questions that arise in practice in the Post Office Department. The passage of such a bill, which is likely to be delayed this session, would be a good thing for the Canadian trade.

ORDERING GOODS.

If there is one thing more than another that distinguishes the inexperienced or unsuccessful merchant it is lack of system, and especially in regard to ordering goods. The stock is let run down in one or more lines until the circumstance suddenly becomes known by a call for the articles from some customer whom the dealer particularly wishes to please. Hence, there is danger that customers may be lost, because the mere fact that the stock has been allowed to run down so low augurs gross carelessness, and patrons are apt to reason that a dealer who is careless in one important respect may be neglectful of other important matters. When articles have been completely sold out, it is not always advisable to rely on freight transportation in obtaining a new supply, because of the delay that ensues, hence merchants often are compelled to have their orders sent by express at higher cost, of course, but time in such cases is of the greatest moment. The increased cost of express transportation grievously handicaps the neglectful dealer in competition with more businesslike and