

A Retrospect of the Book and Stationery Business for 1903.

Opinions of Several Booksellers Expressed—A Successful Year's Trade—Bright Prospects for 1904.

IN the book and stationery business, the year, which has just closed, has been one of unqualified success. Reports from all parts of Canada repeat the same story of increased sales and general satisfaction with returns. The Christmas trade was considerably in excess of previous years, while the business from year-end to year-end maintained itself at a satisfactory level.

In order to supply readers of "Bookseller and Stationer" with the exact condition of the trade, information has been sought from leading retailers all over Canada. A large number of letters were received in reply, from which the following extracts are culled:

C. H. Ruggles & Co., Halifax.

So far as we can understand the book and stationery business in this city for the past year has been exceptionally good. As regards ourselves it has been ahead considerably of any previous year in the history of our business. No any grievances so far as we are concerned everything is fairly satisfactory except that perhaps we might mention when goods are ordered from Montreal and Toronto they so often take such a ridiculously long time in reaching their destination, no doubt as a result of long delay in shipment.

J. & J. Sutherland, Brantford.

We are pleased to say the book and stationery business for the year just ended has been most satisfactory, being with us by far the best year's business since our house was established, over 50 years ago. It has been an exceptionally good year for books, the people buying eagerly and wanting the better editions.

Robert Duncan & Co., Hamilton.

We have no criticism to make of the book and stationery trade of last year. Trade to us in all departments has been very satisfactory indeed, and we have no grievances unless it be that our competitors are disgustingly active. This condition of affairs we do not think can be improved by kicking.

Charles L. Nelles, Guelph.

The book and stationery trade for December and the past year has been very satisfactory and prosperous, as far as I can judge, in this section of Ontario. In my own business the volume of trade for last month seemed greater than ever, but the sales hardly reached the same month in 1902, although the whole year is larger than I have ever had the pleasure of doing in my 13 years' experience. I think as far as December is concerned that the more valuable goods were very slow in moving, but the medium and lower priced articles were more saleable than ever. My book business was a great surprise to me as I had bought a fine line of standard sets in good bindings, which were very successful a year ago, but this season seemed to be a drag on the market as we carried almost the complete line over, only two sets having been sold by Christmas.

Calendars and cards had as great a sale as ever and the annuals were even better than usual, for which we are

very thankful. I had a nice range of private postal cards with Guelph views made up in November, comprising 12 in the series. The sale of these reached nearly 3,000 for the December month and were considered just the thing to send to friends abroad. The new up-to-date books were also very satisfactory and, as we carry a heavy stock of these for the holiday season, we did an excellent business with them.

Taking our whole business together, trade was very satisfactory and we do not carry over any perishable stock of any description, while the outlook for 1904 is very encouraging. The Book Lovers' Library have had to close their branch here after one year's trial. They were only able to procure about 40 subscribers and consequently must have had quite a loss during their short life. While on this subject, I would like to say that with the present postal rates it is impossible for the bookstores in the smaller towns to keep up-to-date with the new books as published, as they cannot purchase a sufficient number of any one of the new books to come by express and the cost by mail being from eight to ten cents on one book or double that on two, which is about as many as are required of eight out of ten of the immense number published, making an extra cost of 20 per cent. to books that we pay 50 and 55 cents for and are retailed in the departmental stores at 65c. I wonder if it is possible for the publishers to make an arrangement with the retailers to send five of the new books as published and accept returns within 30 days of those unsold. They could then go by express at a cost of five or six cents and make quite a difference in the cost, also enabling the retailer to make a good display in the window and on the table, an item that always helps the sale of a book.

Hattie Tweedie, Moncton, N.B.

Trade has been good with me during the past year; in fact it has been the best year I have ever had. There seems to be more money and people are more willing to spend it. I find an increasing demand for a better class of books and for better stationery. For Christmas trade I put in a good stock of expensive books and fine stationery and found no difficulty in disposing of it. I get all the latest novels as soon as they are to be had and do a good business in that line. Certainly our Canadian houses are deserving of great praise for the fine stationery they turn out as also for the well and attractively bound books. Regarding grievances I have none. My business relations with the trade in Toronto and Montreal are of the most friendly character. Twice a year I take a trip to your city in order to get new ideas and I am always well repaid.

Since starting in business I have taken the "Bookseller and Stationer" and find it a very great help.

Thomas H. Manley, Sarnia.

The book and stationery business around Sarnia varies somewhat from that of inland towns as our people visit Port Huron and Detroit daily. Sarnia has had the good fortune to enjoy somewhat of a boom during the past year, both in the way of becoming quite a Summer resort