

CORRESPONDENCE

MONTREAL, Feb. 27, 1889.

DEAR SIR, I want to place before my brother booksellers a subject which has of late years been giving me a great deal of worry. Probably the greater number of your readers will, when they read this letter, say that I am a fool for my pains, yet with all the argument I can bring to bear upon the subject I cannot relieve myself.

My question is: "Is the bookseller responsible for the evil that may be done by the books he sells?" The question was first brought home to me at a temperance lecture. The speaker went on to prove that the brewer, the distiller, and the tavern-keeper were all responsible for the evil done by the whiskey made or handled by them. He showed that it was no excuse to prove that if they had not made it or sold it some one else would have done so; neither was it an excuse that in their dealing they had no intention of evil.

If these arguments are valid as against manufacturing or dealing in whiskey why not against making or selling books which hurt? Take, for instance, "Robert Elsmere." The man or woman who has arrived at years of discretion, and who weighs words and arguments, can read that book without harm, but to the young, to those who, when they read accept the writer's facts and arguments without dissection, this is a most pestilential book. Suppose, knowing all this, that I put up signs in my store calling attention to this book; suppose that I have it lying on my counter in view of the general public; suppose that I sell this book to some one whom it will injure; or, going further still, suppose I sell it to some one whom it will not injure but who trusts it in wrong hands am I responsible for the injury done by that book?

Should I keep in stock a book which I know to be immoral, indecent, misleading, infidelistic? Then, again, is ignorance a good plea? Is it my duty to know what books I sell?

I have stated the case broadly, my brother booksellers can fill in the details. Now let them give their opinions; I want to settle my mind on the question, and I want to ease my conscience.

Yours respectfully,

MONTREAL.

COLLINGWOOD, Feb. 6, 1889.

DEAR SIR, We have great pleasure in reporting Christmas sales as good, better than last Christmas, and what we consider of more importance—the profits were satisfactory; where, last year, one of our fraternity here was satisfied to sell goods for fun, this Christmas he was out of business, and consequently we all succeeded in getting our legitimate prices. Plush goods sold well; a couple of dry goods houses carried a large line but did not succeed very well with them.

One of them, we are pleased to say, is carrying most of his yet. Booklets and cards sold very well, cards especially for a line that is supposed to have run out. Annuals were not good sellers, but on the whole trade has been satisfactory. Enclosed we beg to hand you \$1.00, two years' subscription to BOOKS AND NOTIONS ending October, 1889. We would not be without it.

E. S. BROWN.

WALKERTON, Feb. 14, 1889.

DEAR SIR, BOOKS AND NOTIONS, in its pretty, new dress, and enlarged size, to hand this morning, and in wishing it greater prosperity in the future I enclose \$1.00, which will pay up to the end of 1890.

Yours truly,

E. W. ATTWOOD.

PORT OF MANITOWANING Feb. 22, 1889.

Dear Sir, What have I done that your printer should make "afford" out of "offset," and "adopt" out of "adapt," in my report of trade in your February number. As set up there is no sense in it. Who is your proof-reader?

Yours truly,

W. J. TUCKER, Captain.

We apologize to the Captain, and assure him of our sorrow for the blunders. Let him try another letter—say on the Compromise question—and see if we don't get him right then.

Dear Sir, I am very much interested in a discussion now going on in the columns of the Canadian Grocer on the "Compromise" question. It is one of the most important of subjects to every retailer at the present time. I have been a sufferer lately from the slaughter prices of a compromised estate, and fear another very shortly which, when it occurs, will have been caused by the cut rates of the former one. I want to raise up my voice now against compromise, and I ask the whole trade to join with me in the same cry. I send by this mail a copy of The Grocer, with the letters I refer to marked. If you could find space for a couple of them you would be doing a good service to the

RETAIL TRADE.

In compliance with the request of "Retail Trade" we reproduce a couple of the letters referred to.

HAMILTON, Feb. 18, 1889.

Sir, I am strongly in favor of doing away with compromise, as in the event of such a thing taking place no merchant who has hitherto paid 100 cents on the dollar need fear coming to grief, barring some unforeseen calamity, as in that case honesty and punctuality in paying accounts would count for something in such a man's favour, which at present it does not seem to do. As we do not hear of any wholesaler failing, it is evident that the 100 cents on the dollar men are bearing the brunt of the whole thing, and I think they have the right to demand that the

wholesale houses should stop it. There is a good deal of maudlin sympathy expressed for some of these compromisers who have stinted themselves of no pleasures that their creditors' money would buy them, but where is the pity for the other man who denies himself the year round in order that his little profits, which are much smaller than they need be but for the other fellow, may be sufficient to pay every one their own. Can anything be more galling than to pay \$100 for a thing which your compromising competitor gets for \$40. I cry shame on the wholesalers that they do not instantly sweep away such an astounding state of things. There used to be much shame in not being able to pay one's full liabilities, but now the less a person (I was going to say a man, but person will do better) gets off with paying, the higher he cocks his beaver. Some of them even pay their pew rent and subscriptions to mission funds with money really belonging to the wholesaler. Sit down on them hard, friend wholesaler, and sell only to A1 men. You will sell quite as many goods, have fewer accounts, less losses, and the pleasure of allowing your humble friends who have hitherto paid 100 cents on the dollar a chance to make a little profit.

GORRIE, Feb. 21, 1889.—The letters you have published on the question of Compromises have the right ring about them. It is high time that something was done to stop this pernicious practice. The fact is that for the past few years it has been very difficult in many places at least for the honest, careful dealer who aims at paying 100 cents on the dollar to do so and make a living. There are so many men who have neither capital of their own nor business ability, who are helped into business by some wholesale house in order to make an outlet for their goods. The usual result is that these men go to work and slaughter goods, compelling their neighbors to follow suit or else see their trade leaving them, and in the end there are sometimes two or three failures when there should not have been any. We claim that the wholesale men are very largely responsible for a great many of the failures that occur. If they would use more prudence in the selection of the men they sell goods to, and not be so ready to grant compromises when asked to do so, the retail trade of the country would soon be in a much healthier condition than it is at present. Yours truly,

W. S. BEEM.

S. T. White, of Hamilton, in paying his subscription, says he would not be without BOOKS AND NOTIONS.

In our last issue we mentioned that Mr. Vardon, representing the Reinhardt Manufacturing Co., had invented a very convenient tissue paper. We should have said tissue paper holder. We will illustrate it next month.