

School Books.

The *Printer's Miscellany* brings up for discussion a question which has often puzzled the press of New Brunswick, and, no doubt, the public. It is in regard to the printing of the school books. All, or nearly all, of the books used in the schools of this Province are printed in Edinburgh. The sum paid by the people for school books is a very large one, many of the books seeming to be very costly, and for all of them a good price is charged. One would suppose that the Board of Education would think it worth while to make an effort to get these books printed in our own Province; but on the contrary they seem disposed not to allow this. They cannot, as a Board, have any pecuniary interest in the matter, for it never appears in their accounts that anything is added to the revenue of the Province from such a source. It is reported that prominent publishers in St. John have offered to print these books at quite as low a figure as, if not a lower figure than, they are printed and imported. If any such offer has been made directly to the Board of Education it does not appear to have had a successful result. There is no reason to believe that the printers could not print books quite as well as they are printed in Edinburgh, and we certainly think that they could bind them better than the flimsily bound works which are to be found in the hands of most of our school children. At a banquet given to Sir John Macdonald by the Conservatives at Ottawa, the leader of the Government in New Brunswick, and one of the prominent members of the Board of Education, heartily applauded Sir John's sentiment that his Government preferred Englishmen to Americans and Canadians to Englishmen. If Mr. Fraser concurs in Sir John's view he should make a practical application of it, by giving to our own people either the right to print their school books, or at least he should open the door sufficiently wide to enable our people to compete on their own soil with the imported article. Practically, they are not allowed to do this, as the works are either copyrighted, or, if not, they are not authorised by the Board of Education. We cannot and do not understand why this course is adopted. We do not know of any reason, why the people who have to support an expensive system of education are not allowed to print their books. If the Board of Education has any reason to offer on

the prohibition we would like to know what it is; and we shall be happy to state it to the public.—*Globe*.

Low Prices.

Whatever may be the truth with regard to the cost of government printing, there never was a time when those whom the University preachers designate "the commons of the realm" were able to make such good terms for their typographic necessities. This is, of course, no small advantage to the said commons, but to the professors of the printer's art it is anything but an unmixed blessing, even allowing the force of the maxim that competition is the soul of business. Those who are not conversant with the trade would be astonished to hear of the vast amount of printing which is done at utterly unremunerative prices. Whose fault is it that this is so? It must be confessed that by far the greater part of the responsibility for it rests with the printers themselves, and, indeed, that part which is shared by the public is to a great extent due also to the action of the members of the trade. The increasing readiness of printers to estimate for even paltry jobs begets a disposition on the part of the public to seek for tenders for the very pettiest contracts, and one printer is now pitted against another in cases where a very few years ago no one would have dreamed of taking or giving estimates.

Estimate-giving is the very bane of the modern printer's existence. Instead of being able to devote his energy and attention to the development of the art as an art, and producing the very best typographical results, he is in too many cases concerned chiefly in determining how he may work passably at the very lowest cost; how long he may use his type before renewing it, how cheap an ink he may employ, and what is the very lowest quality of paper that can be purchased for the purpose required.

We do not blame the employer of the printer for getting the best value for his money, nor do we censure the printer for undertaking work at a lower price than his neighbor when he can make a reasonable profit by doing so. But what we complain of, on behalf of the trade generally, is the reckless manner in which some members of it give estimates for work. Some of these take contracts at wholly unremunerative rates from sheer ignorance. They have not studied the art of estimating with any diligence,