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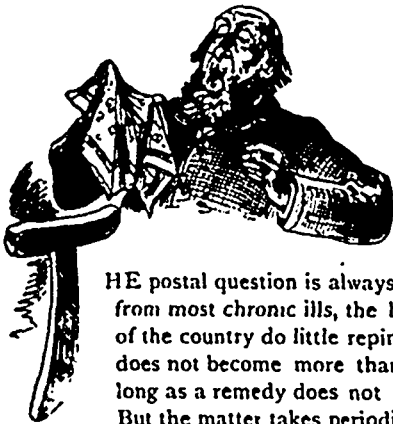
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## CANADIAN POSTAGE ON PERIODICALS.

THE postal question is always with us. Like the sufferers from most chronic ills, the booksellers and newsdealers of the country do little repining against it, so long as it does not become more than ordinarily irritating, or so long as a remedy does not appear to be in easy reach. But the matter takes periodic spells that are alternately exasperating and hopeful. Just now a mixture of these feelings prevails, as, on the one hand, the trade are experiencing vexatious outcomes of the ill balanced postal regulations between this country and the United States, and on the other, there is a possibility that the new Postmaster General may be more favorable to a fair postage rate than his predecessor appeared to be. The agitation ought to be renewed at headquarters, at all events. Mr. Haggart did not discourage the petitioners who urged the adoption of a rate of 1c. per lb. on periodicals, he might possibly have seen his way to recommending it, but he apparently took no action in the matter. His successor, Sir Adolphe Caron, is not committed by promise or predilection to any course, and will be apt to consider the question on

its merits. He never shelved the question, and therefore has no former policy of inaction to follow up by further prolonged delay. Action should be taken before the opening of the next session of Parliament. The arguments in favor of one cent postage increase as the United States publishers and dealers increase their hold on the Canadian trade.

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Subscription agents, representing United States publishers of magazines and other periodicals, have been canvassing in all parts of the country for subscribers. They go from house to house and show the difference in cost between furnishing any given magazine directly from the publisher's or agent's office in the United States and furnishing through a Canadian trader. On a heavy magazine like Harper's the Canadian postage will run from 4 to 6c. a month, while the United States postage is 1 to 2c. Thus our postage rate discriminates in some cases fully half a dollar a year in favor of the United States distributor as against the Canadian. That fact of itself must weigh with readers who have in view the placing of a subscription, and the fact is made prominent in the representations of canvassers and in catalogues that are freely scattered among the homes of the people. The United States subscription agents appear to be waking up to the full value of the advantage they have in the more liberal postage charges of their country. They are pushing business here as they never did before, and every name they get on their list is there for keeps. Not only is the Canadian dealer handicapped by 3c. per lb. that his United States rival has not to bear, but he has the duty to pay on every parcel that is dutiable, while the separate books that come to consumers very frequently go directly to their destination without any detention at the Custom house, the trouble of looking after so many small parcels making it well-nigh impossible to collect the impost on all of them. This is calculated for by the subscription agents, and the allowance made for it further lowers prices.

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Few of the trade are now so indolent as to turn over the lists to the publishers for the mere purpose of avoiding the trouble of writing and affixing addresses at their own stores. The lists so generously given up formerly, were nothing less than conveyances of the subscribers to the publishers, whose hold upon them would not be relinquished till the utmost benefit for the publishers was got out of them in succeeding years. This means of catching renewals without any cost for retailers' good offices is pretty well exhausted. Seldom is a trader so foolish nowadays as to surrender his hold on customers. The mode of personal canvassing has had to be resorted to to take the place of this free transfer system. The new mode is fully as good as, though less convenient than the old. It attaches as many direct subscribers. That is shown by the fact that an enormous shrinkage has taken place in the business done by retailers during the last year. It is said that the trade are not buying near the number of periodicals they handled in former times, though there is undoubtedly an expansion of the magazine-reading constituency. This however goes to the benefit of the subscription agents. Surely in order to get the required postal concession from the new head of the Post Office Department, no more need to be clearly represented than that there is an increase of readers and a decrease of sales as the result of the present cheaper carriage to outsiders.

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The only plea yet advanced for a continuance of a four-cent postage is that the Government cannot carry our matter for less. Surely it is better to get 1c. per lb. on all the paper covered books and magazines carried to consumers than to carry a very large proportion of them for nothing. The country gets nothing for delivering the books sent by mail directly from the United States to the addresses of subscribers. The one cent of postage originally paid goes to the United States. We therefore get nothing for distributing these parcels, simply because our Post Office Department is not satisfied to take what the United States Government deems sufficient for its services between dealer and subscriber.