

THE CHRISTMAS NUMBERS.

The Christmas numbers of Canadian papers cannot be congratulated on their progress. Compared with the standard reached by them in former years they must be said to have gone back. They had a very good run, however.

The English special holiday issues were quite up to the average. They were deserving of the immense demand they met with, which took off a larger number from distributors' hands than in any former year. They are popular with the trade, both because they are good sellers and because they yield a liberal profit. There was more room for their expansion this season than in that of any former recent year. A considerable extra margin was left for them by the shrinkage of the trade in expensive cards. The Christmas cards that found sale this year were for the most part low-priced ones, retailing at prices ranging from 25c. downward, with the majority not above 15c. The place of the higher valued cards went to the advantage of the special Christmas numbers. These had the further benefit of local canvassing on a considerable scale this year. Lads after school hours went from house to house in this city for advance orders throughout the month of December, and they booked a considerable demand that might not have been heard from voluntarily. Last year's practice in that respect will afford a hint to dealers who may not have tried it, and will be found useful. Two halves are equal only to a whole in everything but trade, where they are equal to more sometimes. It is more to the interest of the bookseller to give half his profit to a canvasser and sell twice as many papers, than to keep all the profit, employ no canvasser and sell only once as many. Every sale made is a connection established. One little newsboy in this city worked so diligently on special numbers between hours of business with the newspapers that he netted himself \$50. There are many such lines for the pushing of which one outside salesman is worth two or three inside ones. It is a case of Mahomet going to the mountain, rather than wait for the mountain to come to Mahomet.

There appears to be some danger that the profits on these numbers will be sacrificed in the competition that has to be met in the sale of them. It would not be surprising that they should share the fate of so many other lines of goods which should, but have long ceased to, render any remuneration to the trader for carrying them. There were flagrant instances of cutting in this season's trade in special numbers, which made them as unproductive to the cutters and their immediate competitors as the children's annuals have been made by the same people. We understand that persons who cut the price this year will not be stocked again unless they give satisfactory assurances that the price will be maintained. It seems that that is the only way to prevent some people from spoiling the trade in a good line.

JOHN HUNTER.

American Agent of Alex. Pirie & Sons.

A truly unselfish man is an exception, but the unselfish man generally finds himself successful, especially when he deals directly with men. This quality is especially necessary in a traveller, who hourly comes in contact with men and on whose individuality depends the amount of his sales. A traveller whose interest is in his work must acquire the habit of forgetting himself, to all appearance, and be thinking only of the interest of his customers. Such a truly unselfish man is Mr. John Hunter, American manager for the celebrated Scotch paper firm, Alex. Pirie & Sons, Aberdeen.

Mr. Hunter, who is now about forty-two years of age, was born in Aberdeen, and for some years was a village schoolmaster, but his vocation could not sour the genial temper



inherent in the man, but rather sharpened the keen intellect and probably gave him an insight into the working of the human mind. When Mr. Hunter entered the service of Pirie & Sons, he was not long in finding the road to promotion and success, and for eighteen years he has been their agent, first in England and now in America. He lives at present in New York, but has also a pretty residence in his native town, where his American friends always find a welcome when they visit Aberdeen. Occasionally Mr. Hunter visits Toronto and Montreal, and his countenance is well known to the leading stationers and bookmen of these two cities.

Messrs. Pirie & Sons have three large factories, the Stonewoody Works, the Woodside Works, and the Aberdeen Works. Their paper is unsurpassed in British markets in certain lines on which they specialize. Their name is a guarantee of true merit, wherever it is known.

THE NEW RATES OF TORONTO DAILIES.

The following letter speaks for itself, and opens up the subject as to whether the new rates of the three Toronto dailies—the Mail, Globe, and Empire—are as fair to the trade as before:—

WINDSOR, Ont., Dec. 30th, '91.

DEAR SIR,—I would like to enter a protest through your valuable journal against the new prices arranged by the Toronto dailies. We are now charged 2c. per copy, which amounts to six dollars and twenty-six cents per year, or just twenty-six cents more than the yearly subscription price. Why should the dealer, who takes anywhere from ten to one hundred copies, year in and year out, pay more than the man who takes only one copy? I find that several of my customers are going to take the paper by the year, through the mail, in preference to paying us the advance, and I won't even get the commission on their subscription, as they will almost invariably send direct to the publishers. I would like to see some action taken by the newsdealers against this arrangement, and would be obliged to you if you would give us your views in your next issue.

Yours, M. COPELAND.

The newspapers have been interviewed, and Mr. Dyas, of the Mail, spoke somewhat as follows:—"The dealers had formerly the privilege of paying yearly subscriptions in advance and making a full dollar. This remains at present. Further protection has been given to the dealer, as the half-yearly subscription is placed on the same basis as the yearly, and he can now pay six months in advance instead of a year in advance. If customers will not pay the dealer in advance the latter has no right to give them the advantage of this rate. Dealers should be just as independent as the publishers." Mr. Gledhill, of the Empire, remarked that the papers have great trouble in changing the number of copies each dealer takes, as the dealer varies his orders according to his sales, changing perhaps once a week, and that this new arrangement will tend to make the business of a more stable character.

Now Mr. Dyas points out the advantage of the new six months rate, but that does not meet the point raised by Mr. Copeland. Mr. Gledhill points out that the change is to benefit the publishers by making business more stable. But, while the dealer may pay many of his subscriptions six months in advance, there will still be the floating custom to be attended to, consisting of from 2 to 20 copies per day, and this will vary, and as it varies the dealer will still write his post card to have his order changed to suit the demand. It is scarcely to be expected that Mr. Gledhill's hopes will be realized.

The real point is that formerly the dealer, buying by the copy, paid \$4.68 per year or 32c. less than the general subscription price, while now he pays 26c. more, thus the price to the retailer has been advanced 58c. per year. The only advantage to offset this is the six months subscription. The tendency of these two changes is for subscribers to pay six months in advance, and compel the dealer to pay for all his subscriptions in the same way. If he goes on according to the old method of paying his account at the end of each month, he is going to lose