

# BOOKS AND NOTIONS

OFFICIAL ORGAN

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THE new scale of prices for daily papers an advantageous one for newsdealers? This is the question brought up by Mr. Robinson's letter in our last issue, and taking his view of the matter and accepting the facts as he relates them, the answer would be in the negative, but looking deeper and examining the inner facts as they were presented to our commissioners, Messrs. Sharpe, Day and Rot hwell, the whole case is altered.

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Mr. Robinson bases his calculations upon the exceedingly advantageous price list given by The Mail during 1888. Does not he know that this schedule of rates was the first fruit of the efforts of our committee? Therefore, it is to them that the credit belongs, and that the comparison must necessarily be with the former rates. The Mail issued and worked upon this scale at the solicitation of our committee, and with the hope that before long the other papers would fall into line, and by this means the promise of the committee verified viz. That newsdealers finding a good profit in their business would "push it for all it was worth," thus repaying publishers for the better terms.

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A year's trial left matters just as they stood before. No other paper gave the larger commission, the newsdealers made no further demand on the publishers, the trade made no special effort on behalf of the publishers who had acceded to the request for better terms. The Mail then announced that one of two things must be done; either they would return to the old scale and the small commission, or the newsdealers must secure a better rate from other publishers. They expressed their willingness to adopt any rate to which other publishers would agree. It was right here that our committee stepped in, and, after numerous interviews with the publishers, the present schedule, which was the most favourable that all the publishers would accept, was signed and issued.

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In view of these facts it is evidently unfair to compare the "Union" schedule with The Mail's 1888 tariff. That was to be abrogated in any event, and the probabilities were in favour of a new rate which would bring down the newsdealer's profit to the lowest margin on which he was handling any paper, which was in reality at that time one-fourth of a cent per copy. The profits now run from one-half to one cent per copy, certainly a great improvement.

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In this connection two or three points deserve special consideration. First of all, the condition upon which the publishers granted

the new rates, as follows: "These rates are made at the request of the news agents of Canada, expressed individually and collectively, and upon their assurance that they represent the minimum profits per copy at which daily newspapers can be handled, and they are given with the distinct understanding that any agent who can and does not sell any other morning newspapers for any less profit per copy, such news agent shall be expected to handle our papers at the same reduced rate of profit and shall have his wholesale price increased correspondingly."

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This brings us face to face with the question: Does it pay to handle cheap papers? It is now only on the cheap papers and the evening papers that the margin of profit is lower than the "Union" scale, and, it is only by handling such papers that we take the chance of losing that scale. Cheap papers, cheap books, cheap stationery have all of them the same tendency, viz. —Small margins of profit. Some dealers consider that they sell enough extra copies of cheap papers and books to make up for the smaller profits. We doubt this. For a time low prices produce an unhealthy increase in sales, but as the novelty wears off only the same old number are sold, and the smaller commission brings the dealer down another peg. It is good articles "not" cheap articles that create and keep up a demand.

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This brings us to another point. Although the "Union" scale is, in our opinion, a great advance in the right direction, it is not by any means what we aim at, and what we actually hope for. The three large morning dailies of Toronto are sold at prices away below their value, and it is for that reason that a larger profit cannot be afforded to dealers. Seven dollars a year, the old price, was little enough, and if publishers, instead of reducing the price to the public to five dollars, had retained the seven dollar rate, and sold to the trade at five dollars, both parties would have been infinitely better off. If so, why cannot we return to these rates? How would such a schedule as this suit?

	To the trade.	To the public.
Single Copies.....	\$0 02	\$0 05
By the Week.....	12	20
"    Month.....	50	75
"    Quarter.....	1 50	2 00
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Yearly.....	5 00	7 00

That would give us something worth working for, and would pay the publisher also. The newsdealer would push his trade;