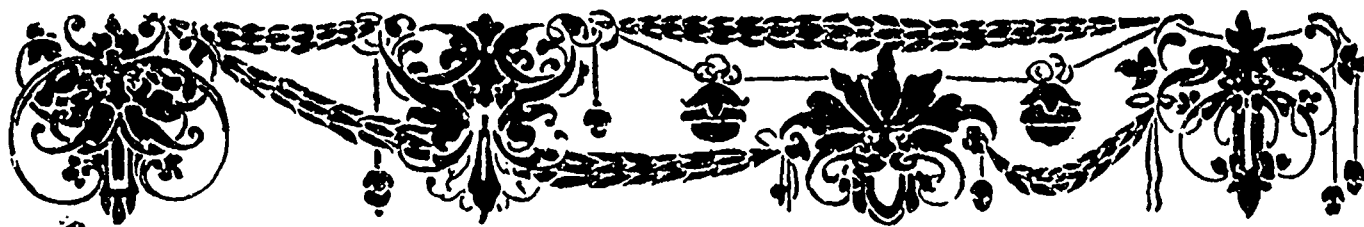


The Bookseller and Stationer



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Topics for the Bookseller.

MONTREAL'S OPINION ON THE NET PRICE SYSTEM.

DURING the past two weeks a petition was circulated among the Montreal book trade, and signed by a fair proportion of its members, asking the Canadian book publishers to take means to adopt a net-price system. They were to be asked to bind themselves into associations that would force all retailers to sign a declaration that they would preserve the face value of newly-published works before they could get stocks, and that any who should violate this pledge should be blacklisted until he should renew his contract. The majority in the trade consider such a scheme feasible; all consider it desirable. But it was finally decided not to do anything in the matter, as it was considered futile to urge the publishers in this manner. The publishers are well acquainted with the dire position in which the bookseller finds himself located to-day; they do not need to have the facts drawn to their attention. The retailers are thoroughly convinced that the first step towards an amelioration of their existing grievances must be made by the publishers.

Mr. Grafton regards the matter very seriously, going so far as to say that if things don't mend the bookseller must ultimately go out of business. All the regular paper novels are now being sold on St. James street at 65c., and, it is his opinion, that on a 20 per cent. profit a bookseller must go into insolvency some time or other. If he is crowded out of business, the pub-

lisher will find his trade seriously wrecked, for it is the bookman who does the selling of the modern book, except in the case of a work by a well-known author. Advertising will not take the place of the retailers' talk nor the book display; the department store furnishes neither. In his opinion, then, it behooves the publishers to make a move and try to remedy the price-cutting evil. It would seem to be a very simple matter to change the general price from 65 to 75c., for no one gains over the other by giving the 10c. discount. All that the situation requires is a little action. Mr. Grafton believes in the feasibility of forcing retailers to take the full value of the book. At times there may be a "bolser," but he thinks all retailers are so disgusted with the present state of affairs that transgressions would be few. Certainly, price breakings would be easily detected, and the combined strength of a publishers' association ought to bring the wayward into line without much delay.

Mr. E. M. Renouf expressed himself strongly in favor of the net-price system, but believed the initiative should be taken by the publishers. He thought that the publishers should call a meeting in Toronto and have retail representatives attend from leading centres. There, the matter could be threshed out in all its details, and he felt sure that some arrangement might be devised whereby the existing grievances could be largely removed. Till the publishers take action the retailers can do nothing.

Mr. Foster Brown says that he has given up trying to have arrangements made in regard to prices among the retailers. They won't keep their promises, and the only thing that remains for us to do is to get the publishers to keep them in line.

"Do you expect them to give you a net-price system and enforce it?"

"No; they don't seem to realize the necessity of protecting the booksellers, and till they feel the stringency of a dearth of bookstores they will not likely take steps to prolong their existence. There is no doubt that the present business tendencies are killing the bookstore trade, and the only means of preserving it lies through some such system as BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER has suggested.

Mr. Wm. Drysdale said: "I quite approve of the idea of a net-price system, and believe that for the object it is intended, to do away with competitive price cutting among the retailers, it is the only proper thing. Some difficulty might be found in its operation in the case of books that do not prove popular and must be forced by low prices, as was the case with Malet's 'Gateless Barrier,' but due provision can surely be made for such cases in the constitution of the system. I strongly approve of urging the publishers to take the matter up; they should form an association and confer with the retailers."

Mr. J. Henderson, of Peel street, spoke strongly in favor of a net-price system. "As yet I have not reduced any of my prices, but nevertheless I feel the price-cutting that is going on and would like to see it stopped. The retailer is not getting his fair profit when he sells the current novel under 75 cents."