

A TALK ON COPYRIGHT.

MR. GOWING'S LETTER TO THE BRITISH PRESS—THE SITUATION IN CANADA—
AN INTERVIEW WITH THE GOVERNMENT—MR. HALL CAINE'S BOOKS.

MR. RICHARD GOWING, the well-known secretary of the Cobden Club, who was in Toronto recently at the meeting of the British Association, has written a very interesting letter for several British journals on Canada. While here he talked copyright with well-posted publishers like Mr. George Morang, of Toronto, and we reproduce a portion of his letter for the benefit of our readers. Mr. Gowing says:

"The general body of newspaper readers, though not in any special way interested in questions of copyright, will remember Mr. Hall Caine's pilgrimage to Canada with especial reference to this subject, and will not have forgotten the vivid hopes that were entertained that his mission would lead to the adoption of a copyright act by the Canadian Legislature, which, if not all that he and those whom he represented desired, would at any rate be a great improvement on the old condition of things, and perhaps be a stepping stone to a yet more satisfactory arrangement. Mr. Hall Caine had had communications with the Colonial Office before he went to Ottawa, and may be said to have been to some extent an emissary of the Government at home. I think that only a small proportion of those at home who were specially moved to take an interest in Mr. Hall Caine's efforts, and rejoiced with him when things seemed to have reached a hopeful stage, are aware that in point of fact nothing as yet has come of it. There can be no doubt that our distinguished novelist did a good deal to make the way easy for a satisfactory solution for the problem so soon as the Dominion Government can be induced to turn attention to the subject afresh, but for the hour it is hung up.

WHAT CANADIAN PUBLISHERS SAY.

"I have had conversations on the question with some of those in Canada who are deeply interested in it, and also with some of those in whom the power to do something is vested, and if the season and circumstances had been favorable for making more use of the personal introductions with which my friend, the author of 'The Manxman,' favored me, I might have had a good deal more to say. The difficulties and grievances of Canadian publishers are of a kind which our experiences at home do not enable us to fully realize. It is partly the difficulty of contending against cheap American editions, which can easily be excluded from the Canadian side of the frontier in a very clumsy way; and it is the difficulty of badly defined conditions of competition with the London publisher. Mr. Morang is a

Toronto publisher with whom I have had an interesting conversation on the subject. It is a complex situation. Mr. Morang has actually produced—manufactured on the spot in Toronto printing and binding offices, and on Canadian-made paper—an edition for Canada of Mr. Hall Caine's new story 'The Christian' and he is very proud, and justly proud, of it, as a piece of Canadian workmanship comparing very favorably indeed with the British and American editions. It is really an admirable production in the matter of type, paper, finish and general appearance. Here is a book which in all but the authorship is manufactured in Toronto, but in order to save the author, and to place the Canadian publisher in a position to meet the wants of the Canadian readers, the ownership of the Canadian copyright has to be vested in a firm of New York publishers.

THE MINISTERIAL POSITION.

"At Montreal I was favored with opportunities of conversation with the Hon. Sydney Fisher, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Minister of Agriculture, one of the Premier's ablest and most popular members of the Dominion Cabinet, on many subjects, and I ventured to mention the copyright question. . . . Mr. Fisher did not hesitate to admit that he does not understand the copyright question, and, as agriculture is his own favorite subject, and about the greatest practical subject which a Minister can have in hand in this country of magnificent territory, he has not yet had time or opportunity to give to the question of copyright the attention to which he feels it to be entitled as a part of the duty of the Department of Agriculture. He is not, he says, responsible for the fact that no practical result came of Mr. Hall Caine's able efforts during his visit to Canada. The policy which hung the question was the policy of his predecessor in office, and the only answer he was able to give at present to Mr. Chamberlain's recent communication was to refer to the decision of his predecessor in office, and to indicate that as yet the Government are not in a position to give serious and practical consideration to the points at issue.

"Mr. Fisher's present impression appears to be that the local stumbling block in the way of a better solution of the problem is the attitude of some of the principal Canadian publishers. Anyhow, I am sure that Mr. Fisher has an open mind and no prejudice on the subject, and I should look very hopefully to any well-considered attempt to bring the real merits of the ques-

tion, in the interest of the literature, before him. The notion must not be gathered from anything that I have said that the Minister of Agriculture, with all his knowledge of and devotion to agriculture, is consequently a man apart from high literature or intellectuality. He is a gentleman of much intellectual refinement and versatility, much interested in wide ranges of subjects, and certainly one of the leaders of thought and general policy in the Cabinet.

THE HOOM OF "THE CHRISTIAN."

"Though I have drifted into some length on this question, I cannot run away without some mention of the enthusiasm with which Mr. Morang, the Toronto publisher, referred to the unparalleled popularity in Canada of Mr. Hall Caine's new novel 'The Christian.' He had never known anything like it in that country. The population is comparatively small, and the bookshops teem with an abundance of excellent reading, American, English and Canadian, at a few cents a volume. 'The Christian' is a book which at its present stage cannot be had, even in Canada, for a few cents. Three shillings for a volume in paper covers is a high price for a novel in that country, and the first edition of 3,500 was the largest edition of a book under such conditions ever produced in Toronto. But the edition was sold as soon as it was printed, and another edition of two or three thousand was immediately put in hand. Mr. Morang had never known a book to be so eagerly demanded by the public. My own observation confirmed the publisher's statement. The book was in evidence everywhere. People were reading it in trains, in electric cars, upon steamboats, in waiting rooms, and at dinner tables. I have a cloth-bound copy of this Toronto edition in my knapsack, to bring home as a sample. I hope it will not be impounded by the Customs authorities at the British frontier.

"Authors and publishers have good reason to look with interest upon the fast-growing population of the Dominion of Canada. It is a country where all the leading tendencies and temptations are in the direction of a practical life, but the Canadians are nevertheless emphatically a reading people."

Mr. J. W. London, for many years connected with The Belleville Intelligencer establishment, has purchased the book and stationery business of Miss Martin, Belleville. Mr. London has many friends both locally and throughout the country, having been grand president of the Sons of England and a prominent Oddfellow. He has all the qualities that make a successful business man, and BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER wishes him every success.