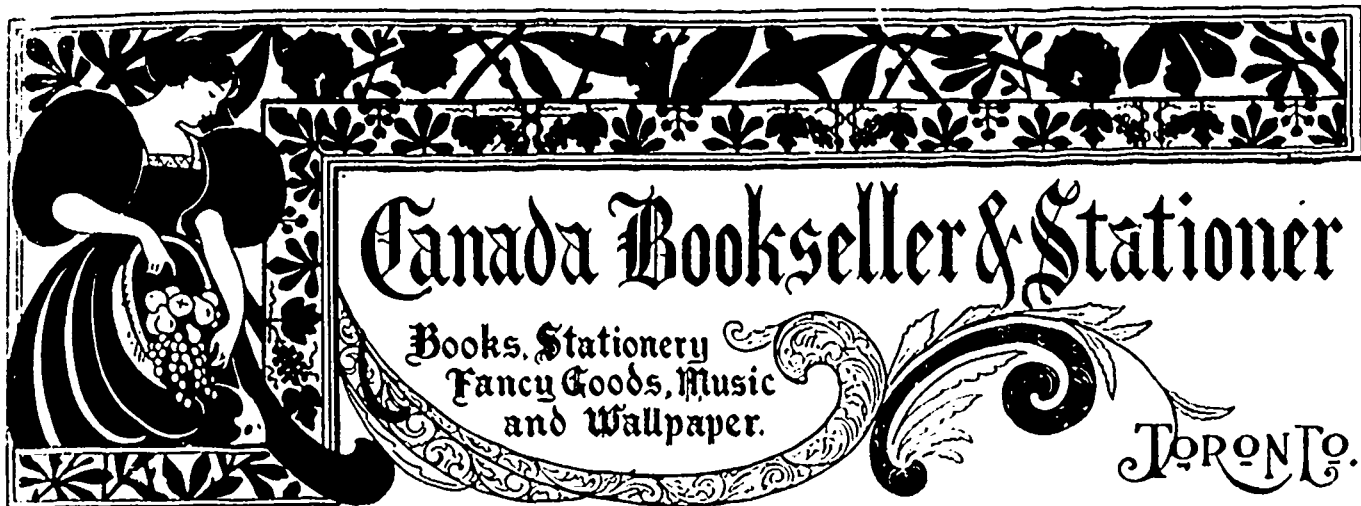




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CURRENT NOTES.

COMPLAINTS against the cutting of the department stores are particularly loud this month, especially in Toronto. Trade is not very brisk at the present moment, and the cutting takes away a good deal of what life is left in it. In Montreal, also, the competition of the department stores is more felt than formerly. What is the remedy? It is contended that a tax, doubled for every additional business carried on under one roof, would be illegal. The big stores would fight it in the courts until they won. In Toronto the municipal taxation is on the stock carried, and this assessment has been largely increased this year.

BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER has discussed the matter with many leading men in the trade. The big stores are hard to fight. If refusal to sell them books to be slaughtered could be generally followed by publishers it might have some effect. But the departmental men have large capital, and if they are determined to get hold of books, will do so from some source or another. This limits the powers of publishers. The advocates of the Canadian

Copyright Law assert that their policy would be at least a partial remedy for cutting in the book business. The new law would give absolute control of certain books to the Canadian trade, and they could refuse to sell them to any dealer who placed the retail price below a fixed figure. This would, in Canadian copyright books, clip the wings of the departmental stores.

Even as it is, there are some foreign supply houses which stand firm. One line of goods we heard of this month, the foreign makers of which will not allow to be slaughtered. A Canadian wholesale firm sold some to a department store at a cut price, and they duly appeared on the "bargain counter." But the foreign firm heard of it, and now that Canadian wholesaler cannot get any more of the goods.

The utmost vigilance has to be used to prevent cutting. A Toronto departmental store imported a quantity of the paper edition of "Titus, a Comrade of the Cross," published by a Chicago house. The edition appears in one of the numerous library series which profess to be regular publications and entitled to mail privileges on this account. The Canadian Customs passed them free. But a fresh lot, on the real nature of the publication being recognized, were subjected to the duty. Meanwhile, the departmental store was offering any quantity at a price which even the Canadian wholesalers could not touch.

A story is told in this connection of a dealer in western Ontario who sells drugs

as well as books and stationery. He ordered some of the books from a wholesale house, but finding that he could buy a sufficiently large quantity from the departmental store at a less figure, cancelled the order. This was agreed to, because he is a respectable man who was simply taking advantage of the cutting mania of the departmental stores. But in discussing the matter with the wholesaler, he went on to complain of the cutting in the sale of drugs pursued by these same stores. We submit that his case was weakened by having bought at a cut price in another line.

A gentleman who has given the subject some attention was asked what a town or country dealer could do to minimize the evil of the cutting done by the big city stores. He replied: "Let the bookseller go in for specialties as much as possible. Let him be better informed than his customers as to new books and new lines. Take the case of school books, for instance. By keeping in touch with teachers and publishers, and the regulations, he can know beforehand what books are required. In such cases he might carry a small stock so as to prevent ordering direct. It often happens that a bookseller's offer to order the book will meet with, 'Oh, I can write to Toronto myself.' By keeping ahead of his locality the dealer will be able to secure orders which would go away to the cities."

The next issue of BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER will contain some articles of special interest to our readers who deal in wall papers. The new goods now going