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CURRENT NOTES.

BRISKER TRADE IN BRITISH BOOKS.

THE trade in imported books is picking up. The duties paid under the new tariff are considerably less. These are the two prominent features of the official returns to November 30, 1897, recently made public. Roughly speaking, the new tariff came into force about June 1, 1897, so that we have five months' figures to judge by. From these it appears that we have imported \$8,373 worth more books during the five months and paid \$28,034 less duty upon them compared with the same period of 1896. The returns for the two concluding months, namely for October and November, are, however, more striking than those for the whole five months. In the two months

referred to the imports were greater by \$10,000 and the duty paid was less by \$11,000. These are heavy months on account of the imports for holiday and Christmas trade, so that the returns for December and January are not likely to bulk so large, unless trade keeps booming. The official statistics we have quoted contain no intimation of the place of origin of the imports, but the increase is generally attributed by the trade to the expansion of business with England. All our Government statistics are annoyingly late or scanty, and we have not received the details for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1897, which reduces the interest in them to a minimum. The figures in detail, referred to above, are as follows:

IMPORTS OF BOOKS INTO CANADA.				
	1897.	1896.	Duty '97.	Duty '96
June	\$ 57,628	\$ 60,964	\$ 13,347	\$ 18,562
July	48,028	56,947	10,327	13,857
August	66,489	62,608	13,804	15,496
September ..	95,303	96,062	17,683	23,920
October	101,633	90,130	16,504	21,648
November ..	109,274	102,977	19,075	25,291
	478,360	469,988	90,740	118,774

THE ONTARIO DEPARTMENT STORES.

The Ontario Legislature, as was indicated last month would probably be the case, has been discussing a bill to limit department stores, or if they won't limit themselves, to bear taxation accordingly. Mr. J. T. Middleton, member for East Hamilton, introduced a measure providing that after Jan. 1, 1899, the council of any city, or town, may pass a bylaw or bylaws for the purpose of imposing upon any departmental store carrying on more than three distinct classes of business a special tax in respect of each additional class of business, and in impos-

ing such business tax, the same may be regulated in and by the bylaw so as to provide either a uniform tax in respect of each additional distinct class of business or the same may be graded in such a manner as may seem proper; provided that no such bylaw shall be passed or take effect under the authority of this Act, without having been carried by a two-thirds vote of the members of the council present and voting thereon.

A discussion took place. The politicians are very amusing persons. On a question like this, affecting as it does the whole system of retail trade, one would expect our elected (and well paid) representatives to have collected information and considered the problem thoroughly before offering a decisive opinion. There is nothing except uncertainty and lack of definite opinion in the views expressed. However, we give a summary of the debate just to show how little real attention is given by politicians to an important economic and social question.

Mr. Kerns (Conservative, Halton) pointed out that care was necessary in order to avoid injuring private interests. The departmental stores had in some respects been productive of good, inasmuch as they had been successful in introducing a cash system of doing business, which in itself was of importance.

Mr. Stratton (Liberal, Peterboro') admitted that there are strong arguments for and against the bill. In towns like Peterboro' business men were finding it necessary to carry larger variety of goods than ever before, owing to the keen competition. There would be, he feared, a difficulty in defining what are separate classes of goods. If the matter is to be taken hold of and legislation is to be effective, he believed it would have to be taken up by the Government, but it