

SIR JOHN THOMPSON ON COPYRIGHT.

SIR JOHN THOMPSON has sent to the British Government a report on the objections to the Canadian Copyright Act of May 2nd, 1889, raised by English experts. A few quotations are here made. A fuller history of the question was given in the February issue of this journal.

Sir John first points out that Canada, by the terms of the Berne Convention, can withdraw from its provisions by a year's notice, and that this notice has been given. He intimated that the Berne Convention had injured rather than helped Canada, as it had in view considerations of society widely different from those prevailing in Canada.

Sir John then goes into the discussion of English pledges to the United States. He says: "It seems, from the committee's report, to be considered that Lord Salisbury in 1891 made an agreement with the United States which is an obstacle in the way of the Canadian request for improved copyright legislation being granted." He maintains that Lord Salisbury in 1891 only explained the law to the U.S. Minister at London (Mr. Lincoln), showing him that an alien could obtain copyright in Great Britain by publishing simultaneously in that country. Lord Salisbury showed him that British law complied with the requirements of the Berne Convention, and he could not have by a simple explanation made the Berne Convention binding on Canada forever, when the Convention itself allows a country to withdraw on a year's notice. "The Canadian Government and Parliament ask for no other condition of affairs, and Lord Salisbury's statement to Mr. Lincoln will still be good, and the reasonable requirements of the United States Government will still be satisfied if the Canadian Act of 1890 be ratified, because American holders of copyright in Great Britain will still be on the same footing as British copyright holders."

He goes on to say: "The copyright holder outside of Canada not only enjoys in Canada a monopoly which the Copyright Act of 1842 gave him, but can, and does, sell to foreigners that monopoly in Canada, and the foreign purchaser thus acquires the right, under the statute of 1842 and the Berne Convention Act of 1842, TO LOCK THE CANADIAN PASSES IN ORDER THAT HIS OWN MAY BE KEPT IN OPERATION TO SUPPLY CANADIAN READERS."

Sir John points out that the Canadian publisher does not complain about being undersold, but that the United States publisher buys the right for Canada, with the right to publish in his own country, and nothing is left to the Canadian publisher to buy. The United States publisher has first chance, because, to obtain a copyright in that country, the book must be set up there. That is, Canadian publishers are not on an

equal footing in an open market with their United States competitors.

Great Britain's generous treatment of Canada in this regard is treated in the ably sarcastic language of which Sir John is master. Dealing with the experts' suggestion that the import duty on books be removed so as to cheapen them, Sir John quietly remarks: "It must be repeated that it is desired that the Canadian publisher be permitted to sell in his own market—a market which under present conditions is reserved for the benefit of persons outside of Canada. The removal of the Canadian import duty would undoubtedly be an additional boon to the publishers and printers of the United States, but the undersigned ventures to think that the interests of this class have been already sufficiently cared for and do not require additional advantages from the Government of Canada."

Sir John Thompson's reply was an able one in every respect, and he answered every argument of importance advanced by the English exports. Moreover, he explained fully and ably defended the Act of 1889, which awaits the Governor-General's proclamation to put it in force. He has won for himself the respect of every citizen in whom surges the deep feelings of patriotism, and the gratitude of the printers and publishers of Canada, whose interests he has so nobly defended.

DO THE PEOPLE DEMAND A COPYRIGHT ACT?

AFTER all that has been written and spoken on the Copyright Act of 1889, it seems strange that we should ask: "Do the people Demand a Copyright Act?" But the question is asked that it may be answered, and answered with proofs of every kind.

Who are interested? The authors, the publishers, the printers and the reading public.

The reading public in general have taken little interest in the matter. Those who have studied the matter declare that some arrangement must be arrived at that would give Canadians better books at prices more suitable than are asked for the costly editions issued in London or New York. Books published in a country for that country will be published in editions suitable for that country and that country's people. The cheap literature now in this country consists of bad and good books, with the accent on the bad books.

The authors of Canada have made a protest many times against a continuance of old laws. They are not protesting now. Why? Because they have gone to London and New York, preferring to live well abroad than starve at home. The Copyright Act of 1889 properly enforced, would bring them back to their native land.

The printers and publishers have done everything in their power to have a Cana-

dian Copyright Act put in force. Some of them have spent hundreds and hundreds of dollars, days and days of time, hours and hours of thought—some of them have even prayed that the scales might be removed from the eyes of those who could not see what was best in this matter.

The Canadian Press Association in March declared: "The Executive of the Canadian Press Association urge the Dominion Government to proclaim the Copyright Act assented to by the Governor-General, May 2nd, 1889, believing that such action would be of immense and immediate benefit to Canadian printers, publishers and authors."

The Toronto Employing Printers' Association recently adopted a resolution instructing their President to write Sir John Thompson, thanking him for his able services in this direction, and urging him to enforce the Canadian Copyright Act of 1889. A letter was sent, and Sir John Thompson answered in a manner which leaves no doubt that he will do his utmost to have the Act put in force.

Canadians have been buffeted about long enough in this matter, and it is a surprise that a democratic people would have tamely submitted to such an injustice so long. The English publisher doesn't think enough of Canada as a book-buying country to bother putting out an edition suitable for the purses of the people, but, like the dog in the manger, he doesn't want to let any native publisher have any chance whatever.

MUTILATED BOOKS.

BOOKSELLERS and others wonder sometimes how books can be produced so cheaply as to be sold for 25 cents. Let us explain one process. A local dealer showed us two copies of Chas. Reade's famous novel, "Cloister and Hearth," each one printed by different publishers. One contained 565 pages of 45 lines to the page, and the other 264 pages of 36 lines to the page. That is, the latter book only contained about one-third of the story.

This is the meanest piece of business that any man could be found guilty of, and one which should be discountenanced. The publisher who mutilated that book of Chas. Reade's also mutilated his other books. His place of business is Chicago, the firm name being E. A. Weeks & Co.

What is the remedy for this kind of business? Enforce the Canadian Copyright Act of 1890, and let Canadian publishers publish the books for Canadian readers. Let it remain unenforced, and the process of trying to raise intellects on food from which the best elements have been extracted will continue until the result can be imagined.

If the Canadian Government will stand firm on this question, they will find a united people behind them, and in this way they need fear no opposition from British publishers.