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[NEW SERIES.

THE NEW COPYRIGHT ACT.

THE many urgent and persistent efforts of the Dominion Government to get the Imperial authorities to take cognizance of the anomalies of the Copyright law in Canada, and to sanction native reprinting as a remedy for its defects, having failed of any result, our Parliament has taken the initiative in the matter, and has passed an Act legalizing the reprinting of English Copyrights in the country. This important measure, however, does not become law until the Governor-General issues a proclamation to that end—the delay being deemed expedient in order that the assent of the British Government may be obtained, in case we have exceeded our powers of legislation.

There is little fear but that Imperial sanction will be had, as the Colonial Office is fully aware of the substantial advantages the English author secures by the Act; while of the authors themselves, many of the more prominent of them have heartily endorsed the Act, and are now earnestly advocating its acceptance, in the English public prints, as being most advantageous to the *prime* interests at stake—those of the author.

The English publishers, it is thought, will probably endeavour to prevent the Act being assented to by the British Government, with the hope of hindering its going into operation here. Their object in taking this course in regard to the Bill is their desire to retain the Canadian market in their exclusive possession—a market they have hitherto snubbed and neglected. Like British statesmen in regard to our political relations, now that the market has grown to be of such importance, they wish to keep it ever in leading strings, in utter ignorance, at the same time, of the circumstances of its position, or of the necessities of the country.

What the peculiarities of our position in regard to this matter of copyright and the supply of our intellectual wants are, our readers of course know. That the Canadian trade draws so much of its literary supplies from New York and Boston, they equally well know, is not the fault of the Book Importers of the country. The men of the trade throughout the Dominion are almost entirely of Canadian or British origin, and all the wholesale dealers have sympathies and predilections in favour of the English market, whither they go annually to purchase for their several constituents. That they all should be represented in London, generally every year, where they come in contact with leading publishers in the business relations they are per-

mitted to have with them; and that with a full knowledge, which they freely communicate to the trade, of the circumstances of the Colonial market, and an enterprise which prompts them to buy largely if met advantageously and reasonably—that they, we say, should return to buy the same publications in a foreign and alien market is surely not the fault of the native trade. That we should have the option of buying in the American market is, further, not the fault of Canadian booksellers, but the consequence of our peculiar position, as contrasted with that of other British Colonies. And it is this geographical relationship to the United States (where these reprints are produced, and whence they radiate over a continent the reading capacity of the people of which is one of the marvels of the age) that the conservative English publisher will not see, and yet it is a circumstance in our case which calls for special attention and an adaptation of trade dealings.

It was this circumstance that led to the concession of 1847, permitting us to trade in American reprints of English copyrights; and for London publishers to shut their eyes to the thousand miles of almost indistinguishable boundary line that divides Canada from the Eastern and Northern States, and to prescribe the interchange in literary commodities between these countries is as absurd as it would be to limit the intimate trade dealings of Scotland and England at the borders, or to erect the parallel line of 2° west longitude in England into a restrictive commercial boundary across which the people of either side should have no dealings.

The circumstance of our contiguous position to the United States is thus an essential element in the consideration of our case; but the English publishers have been so slow to recognize this, and so inelastic in their style of doing business as to prevent their meeting the Canadian trade with such concessions in their terms as the circumstances required and they could afford. Considering the growing extent of the market, it would have been materially worth their while to have done so, as it is, it is no wonder that so much of the native trade has found its way to the American markets. Moreover, these very markets, large and important as they are, and being sundered from the jurisdiction of the Imperial Copyright Act, might have been, to a great extent, tributary to the English sources of supply, had the publishing firms of London, shaking off their old world notions and abandoning their insular restrictiveness, adapted the style and price of their publications to the