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WHETHER associations exist or do not exist there ought to be in every trade an all-pervading enthusiasm on which the interests of that trade are up-borne. The 'sympathy of the craft' ought not to be wanting. Nevertheless it is sometimes. It might be more highly cultivated among the book and stationery traders of the country. Among many of them there is plainly an indifference to the real welfare of the trade. The return from the petitions sent out for signature in the matter of the postage question show this to be a fact. That these petitions should not be signed by every bookseller through whose locality one of

them circulated would seem inexplicable, but the actual fact that only 21 out of 100 of the petitions were returned with signatures affixed is dum founding. What movement in behalf of the trade can succeed in the face of such apathy? The real friends of the trade who have worked hard to further its interests cannot be otherwise than disheartened, when they consider that their cause is nearly as much hindered by lukewarmness on the part of their followers as by steadfastness on the part of their opposition.

* * *

Some very good books have gone forth from the presses of Canada during the last two or three years, but the returns from the sale of them have in very few cases been satisfactory to the pub-

lishers. The class of books particularly in mind is that intended for general readers, got up in superior mechanical style and put before the public through the medium of the trade exclusively. Such books as a rule, though excellent in matter and perfect in form, go through one edition very slowly in this country. They may attain a high reputation and a big sale in the United States and the United Kingdom, but make little progress here. What is the reason of this? Are the Canadian people not to a large extent capable of appreciating good books? Two facts prove that they are. The first is, that good editions of books of a high order of literary merit are imported and read very largely. The second is that expensive books sold by traveling agents find buyers everywhere. Plainly the people do read books and costly ones.

* * *

Why, then, do they not buy more freely the best class of Canadian books that are put before them by the trade? The trade, perhaps, can answer that question better than anybody else. It may be because the trade are not assiduous enough in pushing these books upon the market. The books will be on the shelves if the booksellers are not apt at selling. A bookstore man ought to be as persuasive a salesman as an itinerant book agent, and he usually has a much better article to offer. And the bookstore man must take to some of the ways of the travelling agent. He must canvass. That is the way the publishers and the jobbers have to do. They have to employ travellers to get orders from the retail dealers. The retail dealers, on their side, ought to recognize the change that is coming over trade. It must have its envoys. He who wants a customer had better hunt him. The big distributors know this well.

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There would be many more books sold, much more money made by the retailers and many more books produced by the publishers, if this aggressive method were more generally followed by the trade. Every new book that comes out ought to be noted by the retailer and prospective buyers ought to be picked out and soon seen by him. He will be able to place many a book that he would otherwise never have a call for, and will be so alert a trader that no agent, no representative of book buying associations will be able to make much money out of the people in that particular bookseller's neighborhood.

* * *

There are some books which the publishers will sell only through traveling agents. This fact is itself a reflection upon the energy of the booksellers of the country. The publishers of such books feel that their selected traveling agents, going through the country at a large expense, having no source of income but their sales from one book, will bring in many times the returns the stationary trade can. And yet the stationary trade have big advantages. They know the people, have personal influence therefore, and can discriminate between good and bad customers; they have a stock of other goods from which they make a great part of their living: yet they are not considered to be the best means of putting subscription books on the market. It is the fault of the trade if they are not. They should show that they are, and ought to reach out for every deserving agency that offers. There is money in it for live men.

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The itinerant competitors of dealers in other lines have been driven from the field by the active measures taken by the resident traders. The grocers have run most of the tea-peddlers to cover, because the grocers have taken energetically to the sale of the best lines carried by the tea-men, and have co-operated to control the retail trade in those lines. The same progress is being made by most retailers in trades where there are peddlers. It is a good deal better way to meet them than to seek municipal legislation to put heavy licenses upon them, because by the former way the dealer gets trade that he had not previously. Booksellers ought to be the only book agents.