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CURRENT NOTES.

WRITING in The Toronto Weekly Sun, Mr. Goldwin Smith says that "the printing and publishing interest here is renewing its agitation for exemption from the Imperial copyright and liberty to reprint the works of British authors. Great Britain has become a party to the Berne Convention, which gives an author, ipso facto, copyright in all the associated countries, whatever his place of publication may be. Is it likely that Great Britain will, on the demand of Canada, take herself and the whole Empire out of the convention? To take a single colony out of it would be impracticable, the colony having no separate international status." We need not argue the question of probability with Mr. Goldwin Smith, because it is impossible for anyone to foretell the future. What we do say is that Canada must have its own interests protected, and it is for Great Britain to determine in what way this shall be done. If the Mother Country considers the rights of authors more important than the printing industry that is her own business entirely. But Canada does not propose to disturb anyone's rights while preserving her own publishing. She simply declines to be a sort of bargain counter for the United States publisher and a kind of dumping ground for the English

publisher. A more grotesque fraud for depriving British printers of their work than the Berne copyright agreement has never been evolved, but as long as Great Britain chooses to sacrifice her own printers to the superior acuteness of the United States the farce will continue. Canada has interests of its own, and desires that they shall be recognised. That is all. It was contended that Great Britain's interest in the German and Belgian trade would prevent the doing away with the treaties of 1862 and 1865, which rendered Imperial preferential tariffs impossible. But those treaties have been denounced. Continued effort will solve the copyright grievance also.

A New York paper has been drawing a dark picture of "the decay of bookselling." A trade journal in the same city takes the writer to task, pointing out that dealers in recent years have been forced to add special lines, ranging from knick-knacks to furniture, in order to eke out profits on books. "It is unfortunate," continues our trade contemporary, "that the bookseller should have been forced into the undignified position of lumbering up his store with goods foreign to his profession in order to enable him to eke out the losses on the sale of the very books that were once supposed to form the backbone of his business. But hundreds of booksellers have survived the operation of having this part of their business cut from the profit side, and are manfully struggling to maintain themselves until the time when ignorance, greed and selfishness on both sides give way in a measure to enlightenment, generosity and co-operation, and when the 'powers that be' shall find it unprofitable to make such discrimination against their natural sources of distribution as will make any part of the business unprofitable."

In certain parts of Canada the "decay" of bookselling is also complained of. Some

cities maintain that booksellers are not as highly endowed a class as they were formerly. We are rather inclined to think it is the greater difficulty of doing business that is the chief cause of the trouble. The department stores are rampant in all the large cities, and fiction, which has become so important a staple in the book trade, is the very item on which the big stores cut their prices. But the legitimate trade is not wholly blameless. By not pushing certain lines they often drive the publisher to the department stores. There is a want of unity between publisher, jobber and retailer which accounts for a good deal of the illegitimate competition now going on.

A correspondent in an Ontario town writes BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER complaining that the free library board in his town send their order for periodicals to a United States news agency. He says that even the Canadian papers for the reading room are thus ordered through a foreign agency. We coincide in his view that this is a "hard case." The local dealers should certainly get the order, and as there ought to be no difficulty in meeting the prices in the foreign agent's tender, we imagine public opinion will be on the side of the local trade. As the prices of many British periodicals are quoted lower in Canada than in the States the task should be quite within the power of the dealer.

It is said, however, by a well-known authority on these subjects that the number of British periodicals in an ordinary Canadian library list is not large. One town library, he says, out of 27 periodicals, orders 18 from the United States. All that occurs to us is that, if this be true, the publications from the United States must be popular in towns like this, and the people must likewise be contented to miss a great many good things.