

The Net-Price System.

THE following article was awarded the prize of \$10 offered by The New York Bookseller, Newdealer and Stationer for the best contribution on the working of the net-price system.

The inauguration of the net-price system by The American Booksellers' Association is destined to restore the book business to a profitable basis, and is the only rational, logical and sound business method to pursue, my assertions for same being based upon my experiences with the holiday book trade just passed and which, in substance, is as follows.

The net price system was of incalculable value and benefit to my house as our book sales were more than doubled and we secured full prices on all net books, consequently we pushed net books whenever we could, realizing we secured a profitable margin, whereas, on all other fiction not net, we were compelled to sell at cost and even below, in competition with department bookstores which were slaughtering popular fiction from 65c. to \$1.15, using full page advertisements displaying the fact.

The net-price system means restored prices at a profitable margin, and a more complete stock will be carried by dealers thereby giving better satisfaction to their customers and retaining their trade, whereas under the old system you were either compelled to sell at department store prices or lose your trade, as the majority will buy where they can save the pennies, and particularly is this so with the women's trade, and they are the readers of fiction.

The public will pay \$1.25 or \$1.50 on any popular fiction when they know they must either pay the price or do without, and the undercutting of the department bookstores throughout the country will stop when the net-price system is in universal vogue, which will then allow the dealer a living profit and rehabilitate the book business.

Experience shows that when a customer ascertains a book is sold at a stated price and cannot be bought for less at a department bookstore, they will invariably patronize a bookseller, as they can be assured of intelligent, courteous and prompt attention.

As an illustration I have had customers inquire price of books, especially so on net books which were popular for instance, "Tarry Thou, Till I Come" (\$1.40 net) and they would say "Why, I can procure that for \$1.15 or \$1.25," which was a fact, but when the department bookstore was compelled to sell at net price, and customers ascertained they could not procure cheaper they bought of us for reasons before enumerated.

My experience during the holiday season has shown that the net-price system allowed us a living profit, increased the book trade and put us in a position to carry a more complete line of books, having the satisfaction of knowing we could look forward each year to a gradually increasing book trade under the net system, which is a profitable one, while under the old regime we were practically at a standstill as we could not see our way clear to put in a complete line and sell at department bookstore prices, the result of which is inevitable to all dealers.

We feel assured of the success of the net-price system and, based upon actual experience, it has profited us twofold. In a nutshell, the net system has benefited us by a larger margin of profit, increased the book trade, brought additional customers who formerly patronized department bookstores, prohibited undercutting and gave us a legitimate show in competition with department stores.

I have found scores of customers who did not clearly understand a book marked "net," but when the matter was elucidated I invariably found my customer in sympathy with the net-price system.

The public should be educated to the net-price system by means of circulars setting forth the system pro and con.

The net-price system can be bettered by forming local organizations in our large cities to work in conjunction with The American Booksellers' Association and to see that the net-price system is upheld in all its phases.

All fiction should be rapidly put on net basis, the sooner the better, as it has been demonstrated by a severe test that the majority of dealers are in sympathy with the movement and will push net books in preference to others.

I note The American Publishers' Association has fixed a maximum retail discount of 25 per cent. on all copyright fiction after February 1. It should have never been over 20 per cent., which would then bring copyrights at \$1.20, giving some margin; but at 25 per cent. it gives no margin practically, merely restricts department stores selling fiction below cost; nevertheless, recognizing the advancement The American Publishers' Association has made toward the correcting of price-cutting of fiction, it behooves every member of The American Booksellers' Association to lend their hearty cooperation and always push net books at all times, and by our energy and cooperation the net-price system will be gradually bettered until it shall stand as the Gibraltar of the bookseller, giving him once more return of prosperity and the rehabilitation of bookselling, elevating it to its proper place out of the quagmire of price-cutting and which, bear in mind, has been the ruin of booksellers throughout the country.

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MONTREAL STATIONERY NOTES.

THERE is not much to disturb the regularity of business among manufacturers and jobbers this month. March is a month when the active business of the season is in full swing, and wholesalers have all they can do to supply the trade with what might be called Summer stationery. There is almost nothing new shown, though everybody seems undecided whether to bring out something special for the coronation or not. The registering as a brand of the word "Coronation" by a Toronto firm on one of its stationery lines has, no doubt, prevented many manufacturers from going into anything of the same kind, for fear of trespassing. The representative of an Old Country house has been trying to get the firms here to handle a line of coronation stationery, but on this account they have refused.

Another line of stationery shown to Montreal houses by an English firm's traveller was a doubled-barreled affair, which did not take for obvious reasons. It was intended not only as a coronation stationery but also as a souvenir of the end of the war! "The war is bound to be about over by the time of the coronation," said the ever-hopeful Britisher who introduced it, "so it will be doubly appropriate." Had he called a day sooner, he would, perhaps, have been more successful. The head of the firm had been just reading in an afternoon paper of the defeat of 1,200 men under Lord Methuen and the capture of 200 of them along with his lordship, so, as might be expected, his reception of end-of-the-war stationery was not enthusiastic.

The most seasonable stationery was that for St. Patrick's Day. There were two or three lines of these, with shamrocks, Irish plays, and other appropriate devices, which looked well in a stationer's window at that time, and conveyed the impression that he was up-to-date. I did not hear that there was any remarkable sale for them, but they sold better than any other lines would have at the time.

There are doubtless many people who either admire very rough paper, or very smooth paper, for both kinds are always in demand. But the best selling writing-paper now is neither one nor the other. There is nothing approaching to a gloss on it, nor is it even as smooth as the linen-finished variety. Still, it cannot be called a rough paper, and it provides an easy surface for writing.

Azure is a leading color at present in stationery. It has been a favorite for a good while now, and it is surprising how the demand for it keeps up. There is a blue grey shade going well now. It is a popular line with ladies. "Paleogoric" is the name of it. It is boxed very nicely in dark blue paper, with red strips to represent ribbons, and retails for 25c. A merit in it is that, displayed in a store window, it has a very catchy appearance.