

THE POSTAGE QUESTION.

The Government has not yet taken definite action on the postage question, but it is to be hoped that something will be done before the close of the session. Since last issue the following has been received from the Postmaster General:—

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, CANADA.

OTTAWA, 22nd March 1890.

MR. J. B. MCLEAN,

Sec.-Treas. Booksellers & Stationers

Association, Toronto, Ont.

SIR,—I am directed by the Postmaster General to acknowledge your letter of the 12th instant, enclosing proof of an article since published in BOOKS AND NOTIONS, on the subject of certain disadvantages under which Canadian news dealers are alleged to be laboring as compared with the news dealers of the United States as regards the remailing of British newspapers and periodicals.

In reply, I am to say that this matter has had the Postmaster General's careful attention, and that he fails to find that the news dealers of Canada have any substantial grounds of complaint in the matter to which the article refers.

The Canadian postal regulations allow news dealers in Canada to repost British newspapers and periodicals which they have received by mail from Great Britain free to subscribers in Canada, whereas United States dealers have to pay one cent a pound on all such matter, whether addressed to the United States, or to Canada.

As regards the reposting of such matter to addresses in the United States, the Postmaster General doubts whether an assimilation of the Canadian to the United States regulations in this particular, supposing it otherwise expedient, would have the effect of causing subscribers in the United States to obtain their British periodicals through Canadian newsdealers to any appreciable extent. The Canadian dealers seem to the Postmaster General to stand on very favorable ground in being able to repost such publications to subscribers in this country absolutely free of charge.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. D. LE SUEUR.

Secretary.

On the receipt of the above letter the Executive Committee met and instructed the Secretary to send the following letter to the Postmaster General:—

TORONTO, APRIL 10TH, 1890.

THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,

Ottawa.

SIR,—I am directed by the Executive Committee of the Ontario Booksellers and Stationers Association to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of 22nd ult. regarding the postage on foreign periodicals, and to state in reply.

That the Committee is under the impression that you do not thoroughly understand the contention of the Association. In your favor referred to above you greatly overestimate the advantage of the remailing privilege. When first granted the English postage was only one penny on each maga-

zine or periodical regardless of weight, now it is 8 cents per pound while on some of the larger magazines which form the greater proportion it is equal to about 8 cents per copy, a rate which practically prohibits their importation by post. In consequence the trade both in Canada and the United States bring their supplies by freight. The rate across the Atlantic to Toronto and Montreal is practically the same as to New York. On the arrival of the magazines at New York the American dealer can mail them to subscribers at one cent per pound, while on the arrival of the Canadian supplies we cannot mail them under one cent per four ounces or fraction thereof. The trade now desires to be placed on the same footing as our competitors by amending the regulations so as to permit Canadian dealers to mail all periodicals at one cent per pound. This we maintain will increase instead of decreasing the revenue as a very large portion of the periodical matter now coming into Canada by mail from England and the United States and carried free by our Government will be mailed in this country. Therefore, we earnestly hope that our humble request be granted, which must be admitted is a just and reasonable one.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. B. MCLEAN,

Secretary-Treasurer,

Ontario Booksellers & Stationers, Association.

THE NEW YORK PUBLISHERS' SYNDICATE.

The merging of the great American publishing concerns into one corporation is almost a completed undertaking. A few prominent firms there are which yet stand aloof, though the overtures of the organizers are still kept before their consideration. Another fact that will force itself upon their consideration is that of the odds against which their non-federation involves their competing. Should they remain obdurate, and open up a campaign upon the prices of the houses leagued together, in whatever line their price cutting operations run, they may expect to be undermined. A survey of the combined strength of the federating houses will, therefore, be likely to be followed by the alliance of the few leading outsiders. The consolidated concern, which goes under the name of the John W. Lovell Company, has obtained possession of the plates of the competing editions of standard sets, 12 mos. and poets of fifteen great publishing houses. In addition to the plates of standards, the stock and plates of the paper covered series of the following New York houses have been secured: Geo. Munro, Norman Munro, National Publishing Co. Only a very small residuum of the American publishing interest is not included.

In so comprehensive an amalgamation of the leading book producers, there should be

guarantee of surcease from the cutting of prices, so far at least as the publishers are responsible for it. The only motive for any more of it on their part will be to extinguish the evil in firms that negotiation fails to bring in. These firms, as pointed out, are few, and can only for a very short time hope to measure strength with the big aggregation that will be against them. They will, therefore, be only a brief obstacle to constant prices.

The circular sent out by the John W. Lovell Co. seems to be the shadow of better coming events for the trade. These will begin to be realized towards the close of the present year. First, there will be better books. In the paper, print and binding there will be marked improvement. Second, there will be uniform prices to all the customers of the John W. Lovell Co. All jobbers will have to sign an order contract pledging them to sell at the publishers' prices. Third, dealers will be protected against any competing editions which appear. Such shall no longer be permitted to stagnate business in lines they aim to displace. Fourth, no discounts will be given to any but the trade. This will remove that vicious publishers' competition against their own customers, a competition carried on through the large "universals" and the tea stores of the towns and cities in Canada. All these objects are tributary to the one grand object, that of building up and sustaining a book-trade. Such a trade the methods of American publishers have for some years been most hostile to. Their dismaying onslaughts upon the very existence of a stable system of prices, and their ready sale to general dealers had gone far towards destroying the conditions of a book-trade.

The only solicitude that need now be felt is as to the loyalty of individual retailers to the interests of their trade. Jobbers will not be stocked after they have broken prices. But will the retail trade stand out for the intractness of prices? It should require but a grain of prudence in any man to restrain him from taking liberties with prices that are once assured. The trade needs to co-operate with the publishers, otherwise the benefits flowing from union among the latter will not avail to make the book trade a paying one.

Advices just received from England are to the effect that the Imperial Government has disallowed or is about to disallow the Canadian Copyright Act of last session on the ground that it is ultra vires of the Dominion Parliament. This action, it may be stated, was not altogether unexpected, in view of certain remarks made by Mr. Daldy, secretary of the English Copyright Association, when here last fall, and who came to Canada as a quasi representative of the Imperial Government. The Dominion Government has, however, not yet received any reply to Sir John Thompson's despatch recently presented to Parliament, and until a reply is received no action will be taken.