

BOOKS AND NOTIONS

ORGAN OF THE

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ADDRESS BOOKS AND NOTIONS, TORONTO.

We beg to advise readers of a change in our premises, made last week. Our office and place of publication is now at No. 10 Front St. East, next door to the Board of Trade building. This removal, itself an improvement, enables us to add many other features that former limitations of space would not allow. Correspondents or visitors will please remember the change.

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FREE text-books are not yet in use in the public schools of Toronto. The Board is slow to impose upon the public a burden that a snap verdict at the polls decreed that the public should bear. It is probable that the introduction of free text-books might have been indefinitely postponed but for the pressure of the labor organizations, which have begun to pass resolutions reminding the Board that the books of the people's children are to be paid for out of the people's taxes. The Board has resolved, how-

ever, that only text-books shall be so supplied during the current year. Stationery and all blank books are to be purchased by the parents. Only such pupils as require new books in consequence of promotion or of the wear-out of old books shall be furnished with new ones. The sum placed in the estimates for this purpose is \$5,000. Trustee Baird has given notice that he will move that it be an instruction to the Committee on Supplies that when providing free text-books they purchase from the small dealers throughout the city at wholesale prices, in such quantities as may be needed from time to time, any stocks they may have on hand of said text-books. This is only bare justice. It is almost certain that when the School Board comes on the market to buy the year's supplies in 1893, prices will be easy, as no big contract will be likely to cause a good deal of shading among the publishers. The retailers found it hard to get concessions until the results of the arbitration on the prices of Readers last year were reached. It remains to be seen if the Board can buy any better.

Even people of limited means who send children to school are not in the long run necessarily on the side of free text books. A little after-thought enables them to realize that so far as the inten-

tion of the by-law is concerned, free text books are to be perpetual. That is, each citizen has to help buy all the public school books used in the city as long as he pays taxes; whereas, if he were simply responsible for the cost of what books his own children used, he would be released from the school book expense in a comparatively few years, having no books to buy after his children ceased attending school.

Many of the travelling representatives of British book and British stationery houses are taking a swift and sure way of running their business in this country completely into the ground. When the traveller reaches such a point of wholesale distribution as this city, he commonly takes a run into the country, visits the leading retailers of the principal towns and invites them to call at his sample room in the city to examine his stock and his prices. He catches some business in this way, but also alienates wholesale customers, who are as justly indignant at this skimming off the cream of their trade, as the retailers are when a jobber deals directly with the best consumers among their customers. The representatives of the United States houses, if we except those carrying pencils and pads, show more respect for the rights of their customers, and deal only with jobbers.

Since our own stationery manufacturers have been able to make so good a class of pad as is now generally produced in this country, the representatives of United States houses have betaken themselves to the retail trade for business. The results have not always been entirely satisfactory to the latter. They do not discover, sometimes before it is too late, that they have bought 40's, 60's or 80's instead of 100's. Our manufacturers never put up in pads smaller than 80 sheets. The quality is also generally accommodated to the cheapness, and this makes the goods backward sellers. A great lot of stuff can be made to show well for very little money, but something more than show should be necessary to capture the retailer's order, for value is always obtainable from our own manufacturing stationers.

Travelling representatives of British houses find Canadians slow buyers, and the reason probably is that the Canadians find them slow sellers. A jobber is in no hurry to place his order if he knows that he has several weeks of grace in which to decide. He always has this ample time, for the traveller generally makes a very long stay at every leading centre of trade. In the United States a like impediment is reported by English and Scotch travellers, who can not see why American jobbers do not make up their minds at once, as the jobbers in British cities do. In British cities the travellers do not settle down to a quiet siege as they do here.

It is cheering to note since Christmas the general absence from the weekly change sheets issued by the commercial agencies, of the names of book, stationery, fancy goods and notions dealers, in connection with assignments, chattel mortgages or other business difficulties. The sobering discipline of past mistakes has had the beneficial result of repressing buying zeal where it used to be too strong. Retailers are harder to sell to than they used to be, according to travellers' reports, and it is manifest that they are. To be sure there is not much being made, but less of what is made goes to pay for white elephants in the form of excessive and unsalable stock. The book jobbers are generally showing an example of steadiness that cannot fail to have good influence. Profits are coming into importance in the regard of the book jobbers. This of course applies to the class of books that are not slaughtered by the big miscellaneous stores. In the latter description of books, that is cheap 12 mos., prices are lower. This gives an advantage to the bookseller that places him on an equal footing with the department store trader, but it is only while the latter has books that were bought under the higher price. He will be able to get concessions on the reduced figures, on account of the largeness of his orders.