

I used to look upon the book agent as a "bad man" who should be suppressed, or at least repressed, and I would not have murmured if special legislation had compelled him to limit his persistence, or enlarge his chances of truthful dealing, or even prevented his selling my note to an innocent third party who could collect from me by course of law, notwithstanding the frauds practised upon me by the wily agent. To an ordinary individual who does not dig too deep into the wisdom of politics, this book agent would appear to need more fatherly care and correction than the mild-mannered, long-suffering booksellers, but it is evident that the politician gazes below the smooth surface and sees the dynamitish nature beneath. In like manner, let the Minister of Education insist that every sewing machine manufacturer shall sell to the general public at the same prices that he gets from his agent—somewhere about fifty per cent. off—and see what a buzzing there would be about that minister's ears in a very short time, for they say that the sewing machine agent is as persistent and as talkative as the book agent. It is a poor rule that won't work both ways and the book-seller and the news-dealer should not even be used as a subject on whom to try experiments.

I wish one of our good paternal governments would turn its kind attention away from the book trade for just about one day and apply a few of these rules to some other trade. Say they talk up the piano business. Let the postal authorities say, as they did in the case between the newsdealers and the foreign publisher of periodicals: "Goods forwarded to the trade must necessarily pay duty; but when sold direct to the consumer they go free." How does that sound when applied to pianos, or stoves, or furniture, or any other of our well-protected industries? "Absurd," you say, yet that is just what you said to the newsdealer and it is the law that grieves him. A poor law, but yet "his very own."

TRouble IN THE CAMP.

A variety store lately established in Toronto has been selling school books to the public at the same prices that retail booksellers buy at, and the neighboring dealers, whose sales at this time of the year are mainly of such goods, are indignant and seeking a remedy.

They brought their grievances before the local members of the Executive Committee of the Ontario Booksellers' Association, Messrs. Donald Bain, A. G. Watson and J. J. Dyas, Secretary. On the first possible opportunity August 30th the committee waited upon Hon. G. W. Ross, Minister of Education, and presented the dealers' case.

In the course of a full discussion of the matter, the Minister expressed himself as not seeing his way to do anything to remedy the

grievances, as a clause in his agreement with the publishers compels them to sell a dozen books to anyone at twenty per cent. discount. The Committee obtained no further satisfaction from the interview than a promise that the Minister would take the matter into consideration.

It is stated that the offending store is one of a large number of branches doing business in various parts of Canada.

HOW THE CUTTING BEGAN.

Speaking of the trouble in the school-book trade, a leading wholesale merchant, who has been taking an active interest in the efforts being made to remedy the evil, said to BOOKS AND NOTIONS: "I think the cutting commenced in London last season, where Mr. Woods, who carries on a fancy goods store, received a consignment of Readers from his brother in Kingston. Being unable to sell them he offered them at a reduction of ten per cent. He was anxious for the booksellers to take the stock off his hands; but they do not appear to have accepted the offer. Some of them proposed to take no notice whatever of the reduction, but the majority determined to announce a still further reduction, and immediately books began to be offered twenty per cent. below regular prices. A couple of weeks later Mr. Woods came down to the same price. This session he supplemented his stock with all kinds of public school books, and offered them twenty per cent. below the regular price. Mr. Woods is a partner in the concern here known as the American Fair with Mr. Bentley, which commenced to cut this fall. He sells to three or four other stores, at St. Thomas, Stratford, Guelph and Chatham. Some of these commenced cutting school-books this fall. In Chatham, however, no cut was made by the booksellers, and some of them in that town report having the largest school-book trade they have ever had. Mr. Woods was seen by a member of the trade who says he is a fair-minded man, and is disposed to act fairly, and, I believe, there is every likelihood that he will use his influence to bring about restoration of prices.

"Mr. Bentley, who is the manager of the American Fair here, also expressed himself as favorable to a policy of no cutting in future. I believe that the adoption of a policy of conciliation and good common sense will bring back old prices again in a month or two. The wholesale trade will do all in their power to help any such scheme."

C. M. Taylor & Co. have secured the agency for Canada of the following well-known wall-paper manufacturers: Henry Gledhill & Co., Whiting & Sons, Beck & Co., Wilson & Fenimore, New York; Birge & Sons, Buffalo; Janeway & Co., New Brunswick, N. J.

FEWER COMPROMISES.

The agitation going on among the retail and wholesale merchants of Ontario, and for that matter of the entire Province, for the past year or so against indiscriminate compromises has borne more fruit than many in the trade imagine. Mr. Knox, chairman of the Merchants' Convention, pointed out this fact during the discussion on the question. Three years ago he explained that almost anyone could get a compromise. None of the creditors ever thought of inquiring into the justice of signing a composition. They were all glad to get out of the trouble as quickly as possible. Now matters were very different. Each creditor, before agreeing to a compromise, generally looked into all the circumstances. If he found that the applicant had endeavored to do an honorable and upright business, and was likely to succeed if allowed to resume, he was willing to compromise. If, on the other hand, it was shown that he was an habitual cutter of prices, and allowed neither his neighbors or himself to make a profit, or was not a man who was likely to succeed, a compromise was generally refused. As a result, during the past few months, a number of such men were driven out of business, much to the benefit of the general trade. The agitation should be kept up. Retailers should refuse to deal with wholesale houses who agreed to compromise with any but deserving applicants. There would then be fewer failures and less reckless cutting done in the retail trade.

BILLS OF SALE.

Mr. George E. Bristol, of Hamilton, suggests an important amendment to the law relating to bills of sale. At present, when a merchant wants to defraud his creditors he goes to a moneyed man and explains his position. He says he wants to sell out his stock and leave the country. He has \$1,000 but offers to sell for, say \$300. The moneyed man jumps at the bargain. The merchant gets his money and disappears, the moneyed man gets his goods, while the creditors get nothing. This is no imaginary case. These are occurring every day. Mr. Bristol's remedy is a very effective one. He proposes that official notice should be given in the local papers and in the Canada Gazette before any sale of goods could legally take place, and that no sale could be legally made for fifteen days after the notice had been given. Under such a law if the sale were made the creditors could take possession of the goods at any time.

A HINT TO MERCHANTS.

Merchants very often put commercial travellers to a great deal of unnecessary trouble and expense by their thoughtlessness. They have no desire to do it, but, without thinking, they do it. A case in point, and it