

## A BELATED AND DEFECTIVE BOOK LIST

For the convenience of the public libraries of the Province of Ontario or such of them as stand in need of guidance in the choice of contemporaneous literature, the Education Department issues annually, a small pamphlet, containing a selected list of books, recommended by the Ontario Library Association. The list is sub-divided under a number of headings, such as bibliography, reference books, philosophy, religion, sociology, natural science, history, biography, fiction, etc. In the case of each book, the name of the publisher and the price is given.

The idea is an admirable one if only it were properly carried out. But unfortunately the list seems to be prepared in a very slipshod fashion. If the selection of the books is made in as careless a way as the individual titles are frequently recorded, then the sooner the compilation of the list is put into the hands of a competent bookman the better.

The reason advanced for the insertion of the publisher's name and the price opposite each book is that it will enable booksellers to order books for the library when desired. Such irony! Who ever heard of a bookseller ordering books for a library nowadays? But, granted that there may be a few left, their work would be much facilitated if the list were made out with a greater degree of accuracy.

A directory of publishers mentioned, with addresses, would be most useful. Refer to the 1906 list. Here we find the name of Henley, not a very familiar one to the average Canadian bookseller; the Palestine Exploitation Fund, another nebulous concern; Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Co., Jarrold, Stock, Lawrie, Spon, Wiley, all undefined. Why can't these names be recorded in full with a proper address attached?

This is a sin of omission: now for the sins of com-

mission. When a title is listed, it should be listed in such a way as to give the bookseller the least degree of trouble in securing the book. Take, for instance, the very first title in the 1906 list, "Cyclopedia of American Horticulture," by L. H. Bailey. This book is credited to Doubleday, of New York. If we mistake not, the book can be obtained in Canada from the Macmillan Co. of Canada, who have a Canadian edition.

Again, under the list of books devoted to education, there appears "Introduction to Business Organization," by S. E. Sparling, Macmillan, five shillings. The use of English currency (an unnecessary complication) would naturally lead one to suppose that the book was an English book, procurable only in London. In reality, it is an American book, by an American author, and can be purchased in Toronto. The same thing applies to "How to Choose a Farm," which is also an American book, though listed at 7s. 6d.

Books are credited to English publishers and are listed in English currency, when Canadian editions exist. Surely it is not too much to ask that the Canadian publisher be given a little preference in the matter. It would not hurt the compiler of the list to come down from the Education Department and consult with one or two of the local publishers. He might even be given an opportunity to see some of the books he refers to.

Particular care should be taken to have the prices accurate. "The Statesman's Year Book" and "Who's Who," are listed at the old prices, instead of the higher price now obtaining. Such errors spoil the whole list.

Other defects might be pointed out, but these should suffice to show how the usefulness of the list is minimized. Doubtless the people pay for this list and the people should therefore be given an accurate and useful list.

## FURTHER REMARKS ON EXPRESS RATES

Pursuant to a hint conveyed by one of our correspondents, that perhaps big mail order concerns are favored with a special express rate, a representative of Book-seller and Stationer took the matter up with Mr. R. G. Wilson, the Toronto agent of the Canadian Express Company. Mr. Wilson most emphatically denied that anyone had a better rate than other shippers of the same class of merchandise to the same point. He said that a schedule of rates applicable to all shippers was strictly adhered to. This schedule is printed and is free to all. Moreover, Mr. Wilson said, the Railway Commission, having jurisdiction over express rates, rate discrimination in favor of anyone, mail order concern or otherwise, would be a dangerous policy for the express companies to pursue. The companies, according to Mr. Wilson, have from time to time received overtures from mail order concerns, but these had always been turned down.

Dismissing for a moment the question of rate discrimination, the three questions of great importance to booksellers are: (1) Is the existing rate of 8 cents a pound on book packages with a minimum rate of 10 cents, excessive? (2) Could a good case for a reduction of that rate be made out before the Railway Commission? (3) What would be the effect on the book-selling trade, were such a reduction to take place?

Regarding the first question: A comparison of the book rates of the Canadian Express Co. with the general merchandise rates shows the former to be by far the better rate for packages of books weighing three pounds and under. The lowest rate on general merchandise to points out of Toronto is 40 cents per hundred pounds. This

rate per hundred is arrived at on a basis of mileage, and is increased proportionately for a greater mileage, going up to as high as \$13.50 per hundred from Toronto to Vancouver.

The minimum charge under this 40 cents per hundred rate, is 25 cents for packages weighing five pounds and under. This minimum applies to general merchandise for all distances in Canada, except in some instances where the minimum is 30 cents. Thus the lowest rate for expressing a single pound of general merchandise is a little over three times the rate on a single pound of books; one third more than the rate on two pounds of books, and one cent more than the rate on three pounds of books. It follows, therefore, that the shipper of packets of books not exceeding three pounds in weight is better off than the shipper of the same weight of general merchandise. It is cheaper, however, to ship book packages weighing over three pounds as general merchandise, as over that weight the general merchandise rate is much cheaper.

There is another important element entering into this question, and that is, what rate of express charges can a one to three-pound book package stand if a bookseller is to get any profit out of the transaction? Take an ordinary \$1.25 novel. The bookseller, let us say, gets an order for one copy. He writes to a Toronto publisher for it, and it is shipped by express (prepaid). He pays the publisher 88 cents for the book and 10 cents for expressage. There is an apparent margin of 27 cents for his profit on that book. This profit, however, dwindles