

THE NEW DUTY ON BOOKS.

THERE is a good deal of feeling just now among the dealers in second-hand books on the subject of the recent imposition by the Finance Minister of fifteen per cent. duty on all literature imported into Canada, irrespective of the date of publication. Until last month the duty was imposed only upon books issued within seven years of the date of publication, but all books are now placed upon an equality in the matter of customs duties, and must contribute their share of revenue to the national exchequer. ARCTURUS had its say about this latest tax upon knowledge some weeks since, but has no hesitation in returning to the subject in the present issue. It appears that some of the largest buyers of second-hand books in Toronto took the new impost as deeply to heart as did the dealers themselves, and that several of them made special appeals to the Finance Minister on the subject. The Rev. William Brookman, among others, wrote a strongly-worded letter, calling the Minister's attention to the retrograde character of the new regulation, and of the different line of conduct pursued by the United States authorities under *their* protective system. The Minister replied to the effect that the tariff admitting free of duty books printed more than seven years had led to innumerable frauds. New publications, it was alleged, had been printed with false title-pages, and brought in as old books. We have been favoured with a copy of Mr. Brookman's response, and as he presents the case strongly his remarks will probably be of interest to readers of this paper. "I would suggest," he writes, "the following course:—Extend the time for the admission of old books free, say, to twenty-five years, or even a longer period; or, which would effect the purpose also, though not so well, limit the period to a certain year, say 1850, or any other reasonable date which may recommend itself to your mind. With regard to old engravings, whether loose or bound up as books, the limit could be well extended as far back as 1835. Such a course would really answer all the beneficial purposes of culture I have in view; and whilst at the same time such a period of limitation would form a line which could not be fraudulently passed in face of ordinary intelligence on the part of the Customs Appraiser, it would also cut off the incentive to fraud which the limit of seven years or any other short period, including really very modern books, would, I am sorry to think, be liable to produce. Thus you would guard your revenue from the mean frauds of probably some half-dozen booksellers or publishers—for I cannot think all or many are so dishonourable—and also preserve us as a people from the literary and artistic loss which eventually, from the very circumstances of the case, would be felt in the future homes of Canada; as every year witnesses the diminution of the sources by the exportation of such literature and art from their fountain heads to this North American Continent. From these sources the literary wealth of the United States is being continually increased, even by the accession, as I see lately, of whole libraries from the Continent and Britain, thus freely admitted. Permit me here to

furnish a little practical illustration of the discouragement such a course as now entered upon, has already produced. Encouraged by the previous liberal policy pursued by our statesmen there has been large importations, comparatively speaking, of old literature into this country direct from England to a branch house established here. The intelligence of a duty henceforth to be placed upon such works was cabled home by the agent. What is the result? The branch house receives advice to the following effect: 'In returning thanks to the thousands of our customers and friends, including Members of the Legislature, Ministers of the Gospel, Professors and Teachers in the Universities and various Seats of Learning, for their appreciation of our endeavours to place within their reach a good portion of the best literature of the past, you will have to tell them that the Canadian Government, apparently considering that the continued importation of such good old English literature is not needful for the public welfare, has shown it by enforcing a prohibitory duty thereon to the discouragement of of such business; therefore, under such conditions, our next catalogues, after our clearance catalogue, will probably be issued from the United States, where encouragement rather than discouragement is given to such pursuits.'

ON CERTAIN ARTISTIC CANT.

AN esteemed contributor who has already aired his opinions in these columns on certain matters pertaining to art and artists, writes as follows:—I have no desire to defame in any manner the members of a cultured profession, who have done and are doing so much good in this world. The object of these few remarks is to show that honesty of purpose and purity of deed ought to be clothed in robes of honest manner and pure truth, and not garbed, as they often are, in the clownish patchwork of affectation and the finical finery of foolish pride. I propose to speak plainly on the matter, in the belief that the naked truth can only offend the prurient mind that hates to recognize its own blemishes. It is a common remark that artists are peculiar; that their actions are eccentric, and their natures different from those of average mortals. It is only with reference to those artists whose conduct gives occasion for these and other common remarks that I wish to say a few words. The peculiarity attaching to an artist is not greater than attaches to any other person; but it is often wrongly associated with his calling instead of himself. To take a high example. Blake was not mad because he was either an artist or a poet. His insanity was due to physical causes, no less than were the drunken habits of Poe, and parallels to both may be found in asylums and police cells all the world over. Therefore to excuse the absurdity in attire, irregularity in behaviour, rudeness in conversation and insolence in conduct which characterize many persons who pose as artists is a mistake, and exposes the shallow credulity of their professed admirers. I should like to know by what special arrangement custom has cozened with decency to let certain members of society wear their hair a foot long, their clothes unusually absurd, and their manners threadbare. Artists should conform to the laws