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TAKING into consideration the actual and prospective position of the Canadian book trade, I feel that it has begun the curve of that turn which the longest lane must finally take. One gleam of improvement, already meekly hailed by BOOKS AND NOTIONS, is the outlook for better profits. A sign and a reasonably good surety of this was the merging last summer of the leading United States publishing concerns into a syndicate, of which the ostensible purpose—and so far the effect—is the raising up of prices. The consolidation of these houses has not put an end to cheap books, but it has made the sale of most of them profitable to the retailer. Truly some

improvement was called for, when 12 mos. that were sold some years ago for \$1, had come to be valued at only 19c. retail.

But I am convinced that the booksellers have much more to hope for from copyright legislation than they have gained from union among United States publishers. If the Canadian Copyright Act of 1889 be allowed—and the chances are strong that it will be—the trade will have in it a lever for the lifting of prices to a profitable level. That measure would put it out of the power of the English author to prevent the publication of his book here, as it gives him the option of taking out copyright and publishing one month after publication elsewhere, or allowing the government to issue license to any applicant to publish it subject to a royalty in the author's behalf. Publication, therefore, would take place here either under copyright or license. The question then is, would American reprints

be allowed to come in as they have been, upon their paying a duty assessed for the English author? Another form of the same question is, would the Foreign Reprints Act of 1847 be repealed? Of course that is an Imperial Statute, and Canadian legislation has not yet been admitted as paramount here. But the Canadian Copyright Act makes provision for the suspension of the Foreign Reprints Act by prescribing that when a Canadian license has been granted, and the Canadian demand for the work seems to the Government to be satisfied thereby, the Governor General may by proclamation prohibit the importation of copies of the work from any country excepting alone the United Kingdom. This provides for the exclusion of United States reprints. This, I consider, augurs well for fair profits, The Canadian publishers would not be likely to slaughter prices, as the conditions are not here as they are in the United States to urge publishers into such a course. Publishing would not be on so gigantic a scale, it would not be among so many competitors, and it would have a restricted field to take its matter from. Prices would therefore be almost certain to be adequate.

But if the Canadian Act should not be allowed, there are good grounds for hoping that the United States measure for the securing to authors of international copyright will become law. If it should, the book trade would be greatly benefited. A book copyrighted in Great Britain and also copyrighted in the United States, would not then circulate freely between the latter country and a part of the British Empire. It would sell only where its publisher had the right of trade. This would keep out that influx of rubbishy reprint, which was legalized by the Imperial Act of 1847, and the Canadian trade would be the better of the exclusion.

I recognize that one of the greatest evils of the trade has long been low profit on books, and the remedy repeatedly urged—concerted action on the part of booksellers—has not been applied. It is well that other influences are at work to do what lack of unanimity prevented the trade itself from doing. Combination of publishers in the United States, the possible allowance of the Canadian Copyright Act of 1889, and the chance of the United States Act passing are likely to work out the emancipation of the bookseller from the yoke of low-priced literature.

Nor is the influence of jobbers and publishing wholesalers an entirely negative quantity in the cause of stable profits. Though I regret that these distributors cannot come to any understanding for the exclusion of interlopers from the retail trade—that indeed they vie with each other for the big orders such interlopers bring—yet I observe with satisfaction that there is a clearly defined line drawn, within which encroaching traders have no special privileges. I think that with nearly every house it is a rule to give no favors to the big department stores in lines which the house has the sole publication or control of. In these specialties a big order has not usually the talismanic effect that it has in lines there is local competition in. This preserves a profit to the retailer in some of his wares at all events, and though it does not hinder the department store from selling at or below cost, yet it makes such lines less desirable as stock in such a store. It is in goods that are common to the stock of several wholesalers that the cutting is done for the benefit of the big department store. Even in these lines there are jobbers who undertook to stand by the trade and to keep their prices intact in the face of strong temptation. They claim that they were not more dissuaded from continuing to do this by the opposite example of competitors, than they were by the ingratitude of the trade for whom they made the sacrifice.

The fact that jobbers and publishers usually uphold prices in lines that are controlled by individual houses, seems to me to bear out the view that copyright legislation would be good for the retailer. If the holders of an exclusive right or sole agency in the present circumstances of book supply are tenacious of profits, it is fair to assume that they would be equally so at least, when their copyright or license was backed by a proclamation shutting out foreign copies,