

THE POSTAGE RATES ON BOOKS.

VIEWS OF THE PUBLISHERS.

AS a result of the increase in book postage, which went into effect on July 1, a great deal of dissatisfaction has arisen all over the country among local booksellers, and there are rumors of concerted action being taken by both the wholesale and retail trade to secure a return to the old rates. While the majority view the increase as decidedly detrimental to the retail trade, there are some who see in it quite a slap at the departmental stores. They argue that whereas the management of the big firms could secure large shipments of, say, school books right on the spot without any postage, they were enabled to scatter them broadcast over the country at 20 per cent. reduction without losing much. They charged up their loss to the advertising account and realized that in selling school books cheap they were advertising themselves profitably right in the homes of the people. With the increase in the postage the limit will be reached and the loss on the books will amount to so much that they can no longer afford to sell at such a reduction. In addition, many wonder why it is that the retailers complain. If books do cost them a little more why not let the customers pay that little extra amount? But there are always two sides to every argument and, judging by the almost unanimous disapproval expressed by Western retailers, there must be something radically wrong with the change. Just before going to press *BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER* interviewed some of the leading publishers in regard to the matter.

Mr. Thompson, of The Copp, Clark Co., said in effect: "We have had a number of letters, especially from British Columbia, asking us to cooperate in securing the removal of the increases. Taken all in all we are of the same opinion as before, that the increased postage will injure the book trade. There is a great deal of talk, and the inference is that the change has been made to benefit the railways and the express companies. Of course, it may be that it does not pay the Government to carry books at the old rate and the parcel post should have to bear the cost, but I cannot see that the change helps the Government. There will be less carried for one thing, while a reduction might have increased the business and made it profitable."

Asked as to the effect on the departmental stores, Mr. Thompson expressed his opinion that they would not suffer at all, because

they paid the same postage as the retailers anyway. At present the change was merely helping the express companies.

Dr. Briggs, of the Methodist Book Room, did not care to express an opinion on the subject, but hoped that a meeting of the Publishers' Section of the Board of Trade might be held, at which some definite policy might be adopted.

Mr. W. P. Gundy, manager of The W. J. Gage Co. Limited, expressed himself as follows: "We are decidedly in favor of the raise in postage on books. So far as we can determine, no legislation in recent years will be more effective in protecting the dealers in the smaller towns and distant parts of the Dominion from the competition of the large centres. A private individual in the smallest hamlet in British Columbia has been as near Toronto in the past with a sixpenny order as the dealer with his car-load shipments, because of the low rate of postage on books and merchandise, which has not been more on a journey of 1,000 miles than to the suburbs of Toronto. Take the matter of books. It has been the custom of many of the large departmental stores to use books as an advertising medium, mailing them postage free at a small advance on cost throughout the Dominion. To such an extent has this been carried on that the booksellers from Halifax to Vancouver have felt the competition keenly, and, in order to compete, have had to sell below a living profit. Postage on books has now been doubled, and we may confidently hope for a revival of trade where it properly belongs, in the various centres where the booksellers pay their taxes.

"There is no earthly reason why the Government should carry merchandise at a loss. I don't think it is intended to use the mails that way. It seems to me infinitely better that if the Government requires revenue it should be made up from an increase on parcel postage rather than an increase in the postage on letters. I don't think it will be a serious blow to the Dominion booksellers. I think it will be a good thing all through the Dominion. Remember, in this matter I am not dealing at all with the rate of postage to the Yukon which is an entirely different matter."

Mr. George N. Morang had very little to say on the subject. As he put it: "When you don't know anything about it, there is no use saying a lot." All he had to remark was that booksellers were generally dissatis-

fied, especially in the West. He had no idea how the change would effect the business of the departmental stores.

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL CRAZE.

Signs are not wanting that the American craze for historical novels is going the way of other crazes. The New York Journal cites the words of a prominent bookseller who reports the demands of his patrons among the novel-reading public to be expressed in substance thus: "Give me an old-fashioned, simple love story. I am tired of the historical romance of European life and American colonial and revolutionary times and of the swashbuckling heroes." Another American paper recently published a symposium to which several publishers contributed their opinions on the trend of fiction, and some of the best-known prophesied that the tale of American domestic life would supplant the historical novel in popular favor. A glance at the announcement of forthcoming fiction seems to support their position. The American public has never wearied of the tales of New England life which have appeared periodically ever since American fiction began.—London Academy.

CONVENTION OF BOOKSELLERS.

Editor *BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER*.

SIR,—I have been thinking it would be a good idea for the Booksellers' Section of the Retail Merchants' Association to organize and carry out a convention of the retail booksellers and stationers, to be held in this city during Exhibition time, or late in September if more convenient.

I have just written to Mr. Tyrrell, the chairman of the above section of the R. M. Association, making the above suggestions, and asking him to bring the matter before the executive of the R. M. Association. Several Toronto and outside booksellers, to whom I have spoken of this project, endorse it highly and promise their support, and the Toronto publishers will subscribe to any entertainment provided.

The following are a few of the subjects which seem to me would prove very profitable questions for general discussion by the retail booksellers of Ontario:

1. The new rate of postage on books, etc.
2. Canadian Copyright.
3. The Book-Lovers Library.
4. Discounts to Public Libraries.
5. "Net" prices in Canada.
6. "Net" prices in the States—a request for an extra export discount on "net" books purchased from United States publishers.
7. To regulate cutting prices in retail, etc.

Yours truly,

A. E. HURSTIS,

Manager The Bain Book and Stationery Co.
Toronto, August 2.