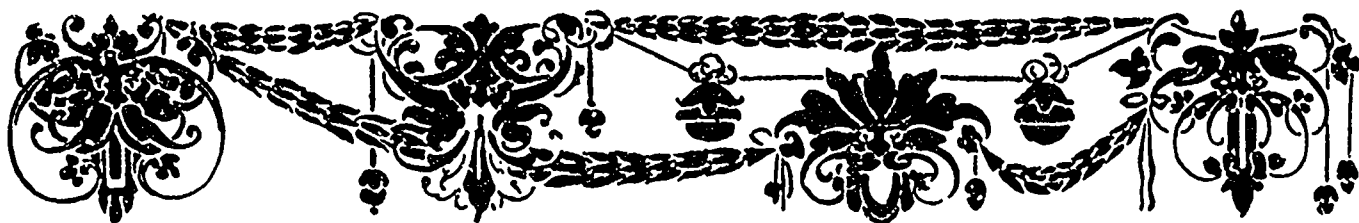


The Bookseller and Stationer



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TOPICS OF TRADE INTEREST.

THE Ontario Legislature is on the point of adjourning for the session and nothing more has been heard of the alleged free text book idea. It is doubtful if anything more ever will be heard of it. The story told to BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER is that the question came before the Government some time ago as part of the whole question of text books. One or two members of the Government, including, it is rumored—(although we do not vouch for this)—the Premier were in favor of some modification of the present system. The Minister of Education is supposed not to be in favor of free text books. So the matter rests. On this subject Mr. C. B. Scantlebury, of Belleville, writes us :

" I cannot but think that, while free publications would be a God-send to a certain few who really cannot afford to supply books to their children, it would create within the children a spirit of extravagance. As it has been and now is, parents warn their children to be careful of their books, assuring them of the cost of same, while I fear that few would be the parents who would take pains enough and think seriously enough of the public outlay to warn their children of being careful of publications supplied to them, as it were, free. For, as we all know, that which comes seemingly easy goes likewise. Then, too, I believe the vast majority of parents would even go so far as to encourage their children, even after they had destroyed their books (which

might have lasted so much longer with good care), to secure new books. I think economy in the distribution of free text books is next to impossible. Private enterprise can always be handled so much more economically than can, seemingly, public. As to the loss to the dealer, I cannot see that the school-book and the school-supply trade offer such remunerative profits that we need, as booksellers, worry over them. It is, however, a clean business, and usually comes at such a time in the year and during those seasons when we are not busy in other lines, so that it is, to a certain extent, desirable trade, which we, as booksellers, should look after."

* *

Not only in Ontario, but in British Columbia, the question has lately been discussed, and a contemporary, *The Trade Budget*, says : " The question of supplying school children with books free, or, establishing a Provincial printing house to publish all books used in the schools of the Province ; and these books then to be supplied to the children at cost of production, has been agitated now and again from the platform and through the press.—A similar agitation swept California some years ago, and resulted in establishing a State printing office at Sacramento. The plant originally cost \$30,000. It has been continually added to, until to-day, the total appropriations on this head alone amount to the stupendous sum of \$250,000.

A WESTERN
OPINION.

Last session of the Legislature, owing to complaints and general dissatisfaction, appointed an investigating committee. One of the committee was appointed to a good job by the State printer and the balance of the committee conducted the investigation very indifferently, yet it was proven conclusively that the establishment had many incompetent men, with political pull, that the books were inferior quality, and costing to produce from 15 to 60 per cent. more than they could be purchased in open market. Before British Columbia takes any action on this important matter, it would be well to look thoroughly into the experience of other States and Provinces."

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As this issue goes to press the members of the booksellers' section of the Toronto Board of Trade are holding a meeting to consider copyright. A report has been drawn up by the sub-committee, of which Mr. A. W. Thomas is chairman, and this will be discussed. The most important point in the report as affecting the retail dealer is its announcement that the Canadian Act of 1900 is in force. This appears from the fact that the power under it given to the Minister of Agriculture to prohibit all outside editions of a book issued here by license has already been exercised. The Minister has exercised the power in the case of Gilbert Parker's book " The Lane that Had no Turning." No other than the Canadian edition of this book can come in—except as provided in the Act of 1900. Our readers will recollect that we always contended this Act to be in force and urged compliance with its provisions as a measure of business safety.

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