

## DEPARTMENT STORES IN ONTARIO.

THE DISCUSSION ON MR. MIDDLETON'S BILL IN THE ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

SINCE the last issue of THE BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER appeared the Ontario Legislature discussed the bill of the member for Hamilton relating to department stores. It will be remembered that the bill was very short and provided that any city having a population of over 30,000 inhabitants could impose a tax upon any departmental store carrying on more than three distinct classes of business, a special tax to be imposed upon each additional line. Mr. Middleton said that the departmental store had deteriorated the mercantile standard of the business of the country and had brought in a Cheap John system of trade.

Mr. Haycock (Patron) said that he was not prepared to say that he was opposed to the principle of the bill, but he thought that a good purpose would be served if the bill, being thus brought to the notice of the House, be dropped until the next session, when there would be more time for consideration.

Mr. Howland (Conservative, Toronto), pointed out that in Vienna, where a license was required for every trade, permission to conduct a departmental store was refused. He said that he mentioned this to show that the matter was a proper one for legislation. He was not of the opinion that the stores could be prohibited, but they could be restricted.

Mr. Meacham (Conservative) said that the bill was of such importance that it should have been a Government bill. Then if big stores were to be taxed why could not factories be taxed? The House ought to be consistent. If it attacked the stores it should attack the factories. He thought the bill incomplete.

## A SERIOUS MATTER.

Mr. Hardy (the Premier) said that when the smaller tradesman, who was expert at his business, was crowded out by the large businesses it was a serious matter, and it was also a serious thing to interfere with the natural channels of trade. He was not stating, however, that he was opposed to the principle of the bill. He thought that the departmental store destroyed individuality as well as property. He, however, thought that more time should be allowed, so that the matter could be looked into. No one could see the signs of business firms which had been along King street for years come down without a feeling of sympathy. He hinted that a Parliamentary committee to take evidence on both sides of the question and to enquire into the wages of employes, etc., would be appointed before the

next session. He suggested that the bill should be withdrawn.

Mr. Whitney (Conservative leader) said the gravity and importance of the subject was such that it would not be possible to deal with it in an intelligent way with the time or double the time at their disposal. He had strong sympathy with the objects of the bill. Coming from a rural constituency, he knew, perhaps, better than members from cities, that the retail merchants throughout the country were suffering terribly from the system of departmental stores. The Government would have to grapple with the question sooner or later, and adopt some means of solving it. If the bill had been introduced earlier in the session something might have been done.

## HAD HIS SYMPATHY.

Mr. Willoughby (Conservative) said that no measure of greater importance had been brought before the House during the session. Nothing was doing more harm in the community than departmental stores, and the harm would have to be counteracted by legislation. He was in entire sympathy with the bill.

Mr. Cleland (Liberal) defended the departmental stores. They were all over the world, he said, and he did not see how or why they could or should be legislated against. If people could buy their goods better and cheaper from them than elsewhere, there was every reason for their existence. Something had been said about people going there and working for little wages. Why did they go there? The wages in smaller stores were not any better. Lots of the people who went to these stores came from the country. There was land in plenty and work enough for them on the farm, but they wanted to come to the city, and were willing to work for one, one and a half, two, or three dollars per week. He did not think the House could do anything on the matter, or what benefit would result from any steps taken.

Mr. McNichol (Patron) thought it was a question of the greatest good to the greatest number, and therefore there was some justification for the stores.

Mr. Matheson (Conservative) pointed out the great difficulties in the way of dealing with the question.

Mr. Stratton (Liberal) thought the most successful way to grapple with the question was for the city to tax the concerns for all the goods on the premises.

Mr. St. John (Conservative) said that as all monopolies interfered with private rights the House could not deal with the question

unless it dealt with monopolies or quasi monopolies.

## SYMPATHY IS CHEAP.

Mr. Middleton (Liberal) defended the bill. Referring to the sympathy expressed by various members, he said, "Sympathy is cheap, anyhow." He hoped that those who had expressed themselves as in accord with the objects of the bill would keep their promises in mind when it came up next year.

The bill was then withdrawn.

## VIEWS OF THE MONTREAL TRADE.

(From our Special Correspondent.)

MONTREAL, May 8, 1897.

THERE are several things in the new tariff which the Montreal trade object to and which they feel to be an injustice to a trade which has been always held in high esteem by all classes of the people.

The part that gives most annoyance is one introduced by the Conservative Government, and retained by the present Government, by which colleges, free libraries and numerous other bodies are exempted from paying duty. Under the old tariff the booksellers found this very hard, as the privilege was much abused and these bodies did all their own importing, causing a great loss to the bookseller, who, however, was compelled to keep just as large a stock to cover the possible wants of his customers. The hope of the trade was that under a Government professing to favor a revenue tariff only all classes would be treated alike. They accordingly thought that the Government could recognize no exemptions, but that all classes should be treated alike.

The increase in duty from 6 cents a pound to 20 p.c. ad valorem has also caused much dissatisfaction, being entirely in the interests of the publisher, those of the bookselling trade being disregarded. The tendency of this is to cheapen the cheap, trashy books and raise very considerably the price of literary or scientific books.

Among the list of prohibited articles is found: "Reprints of Canadian copyright works, and reprints of British copyright works." With the first part no one disagrees. Nor with the second, if it were slightly modified. As it stands, it prohibits the importation of books from the United States which are published simultaneously in Britain and in the United States. Suppose, for instance, a book were published by Macmillan & Co., who have a publishing house in London and another in New York. Such a book would have to be imported from London. This the booksellers here denounce, and wish to have altered so that all books published under international copyright can be imported as before.

It might be mentioned here that an article