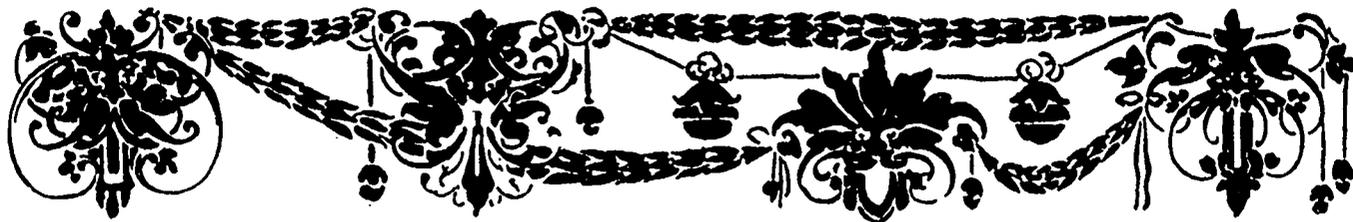


The Bookseller and Stationer



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Topics of the Day.

THESE are trying times for the ordinary bookseller and stationer. The competition of the departmental store is a constant source of irritation, while the various book-lending organizations tend to diminish the number of bookbuyers. A New York bookdealer is credited with having an experience which illustrates the bookseller's grievance in the latter particular. He was travelling one day in a street car. By his side was one of his customers with a catalogue of selected books which he had sent her from which she was marking into the Booklovers' catalogue the very list of books which he had gone to the trouble to prepare for her. He was correct when he said this was adding insult to injury. But people without a conscience are usually able to add insult to injury.

BUT after all the true booklover wants his own books. And, while he may be caught by fads for a time, he cannot always be satisfied with borrowed books. It is not in the heart of the booklover to part with the book that pleases him. He wants to keep it just as he would want to marry the lady he loves. So the books of his choice he wants on his shelves, where he can handily reach them and leisurely scan their pages. The bookseller's outlook is, therefore, not a hopeless one.

THERE is one great advantage which the bookseller has over his departmental store competitor, and that is in regard to

individuality. The individual is eliminated from the departmental store. He is swallowed up in the whole. In the up-to-date bookstore the individuality of the proprietor or manager is at the same time the centre and the circumference of the business. He knows his business. He is acquainted with the books on his shelves. He has studied his customers and he knows their peculiar tastes. It is almost as impossible for the head of one of the large departmental stores to do this as it would be for him to control and direct the planetary systems of the universe. He is not omnipresent.

WHERE the departmental store has one advantage over some of the retail booksellers is in regard to advertising. Their advertisements are to be found daily in the columns of the newspapers. These advertisements are regularly perused by book readers and the result is that the departmental stores get their orders. It is quite true the books are, as a rule, of the cheaper class; but it must not be forgotten that many bookbuyers are also stationery buyers.

IN the bookselling and stationery business to-day a higher state of efficiency is demanded than ever before. A superficial knowledge of the business means failure.

And what is equally demanded is resourcefulness: the ability to think out and develop new ideas. There are window displays to be arranged; catchy advertisements to be

devised; the tastes and peculiarities of customers to be ascertained; and the book and stationery world to be studied. The bookseller has got to be alive to live.

AS the inexhaustible source of information on almost any subject, the genial public librarian of Toronto, Mr. James Bain, D.C.L., has few equals. If he is not a Useful Man, personally acquainted with any question, his wide knowledge enables him very speedily to put his hand on the proper authority to consult. In matters of local history he is well versed, and on the shelves of the Reference Library he has collected many valuable works of this nature, for the possession of which the people of Toronto may well be thankful. A recent example of Mr. Bain's wide information is to be found in the light he has thrown on the vexed question, "Who discovered Muskoka?" Into two or three paragraphs he has compressed as much data as would take an amateur searcher two or three days to discover, and yet it is safe to say that Mr. Bain did not spend very long in acquiring his material. The value of having a man like Mr. Bain in every community who can devote himself to amassing and caring for local data which would otherwise be lost to posterity may well be emphasized.

AN effort is being made by Mr. Huestis, of The Bain Book and Stationery Co., Toronto, to secure a convention of booksellers and stationers in Toronto some time next month. In a letter from him, which appears in another column, is set forth questions he considers should be discussed. The questions he submits are seven in number, and they are all of more or less importance to the book and stationery trade. It is to be hoped that the efforts of Mr. Huestis will receive the unanimous endorsement of the book and stationery trade. Some of the questions proposed for discussion are of vital importance to the trade, but even if the booksellers and stationers of Ontario only get together, rub shoulders and exchange ideas good must result therefrom.