

EDITORIAL NOTES.

THE QUARREL IN THE BOOK-TRADE.

The falling-out among the Toronto School-Book Publishers is an enlivening episode of the dull period which usually closely follows upon the holiday season. The trade have never been what may be called a happy family. There have always been jealousies, disagreements, and more or less of inward-ravening. A certain degree of interest in common has hitherto, however, been proof against disruptive influences. Unhappily this can now no longer be said, for one house of the fold has gone out in wrath and in anger. What immediately has precipitated the outbreak, we, not being "of the ring," can only distantly surmise. Possibly the boom in the "Iron-bound books," of which one house has had a monopoly, may have had to do with the matter, or the exciting cause of rebellion may be discovered in the announced "relays of night-hands" which the house in question has had to press into service. But why inquire? Success, we know, as often turns the stomach of the observer as it turns the head of the observed. But the outbreak has a literature. There are letters; and the departmental constable is abroad. Education Office slumbers were not to be rudely broken for nought, nor must the public interest be endangered by attacks upon its pocket. Besides, the House, you know, is in session. But with this trade squabble what has the public really to do, and what vital educational interests are in danger? The public, it is true, have been appealed to, but only, it would seem, to make a show of virtue or to gratify disappointed greed. As to the educational interests, if any were affected, they were presumably safe in the hands of the Minister. Mr. Crooks, at the first sound of war, we

admit, was visibly alarmed; but, considering his somewhat thorny official seat, allowance must be made for occasions of even violent perturbation. Of course it was naughty for the publishing houses to form a ring—for, despite a little casuistry, a ring there was;—and the name of a ring, though the public is not affected by it, has an ominous sound. But all were in it, and with the motive, so far as we can understand, of keeping faith with each other. Looking merely at the combination, it was not a happy alliance; looking at its alleged design, we cannot say that it was either treasonable or unholy. Like all compacts, however, that endeavour to bind discordant interests, the publishing combination failed to remain cemented; and, following the conventional course, when a split occurs, there was the usual silly appeal to the public.

Since the above was written the matter has come up in the local House, now in session, and there are a few aspects of the discussion that may be seriously treated. With the trade bickering, as we have said, the public has no concern, as the publishers' combination only contemplated the readjustment of discounts to the retail trade, which competition was of late ruinously extending, while the public in no way benefited by the sacrifice of the manufacturers' profits. So keenly of late were the prices cut in these School Books that a Montreal publisher of the Readers, we learn, had shut down upon their manufacture rather than incur the loss of putting them on the market at a price lower than they cost to produce. Such a condition of affairs was neither advantageous to the trade nor to the public. The joint protective effort of the majority of the publishers was, therefore, not unreasonable. The later attitude of the Minister in regard to the