

The Canada Bookseller

MISCELLANY AND ADVERTISER.

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[NEW SERIES.]

Advertisements should reach the office of Canada Bookseller not later than the 15th of the month.

THE CANADA BOOKSELLER.

TERMS OF ADVERTISING.

One page.....\$20 00
Half-page.....12 00
Quarter.....6 00

Situations Wanted. Free insertion of five lines; 10 cents for every exceeding line.

Rare or Second-hand Books for Sale or Exchange, 10 cents per line.

COVERS FOR BINDING.

THE publishers have issued a handsome cloth case for binding the first volume of "THE CANADIAN NOVELIST" ending with the June number. The cost will be 40c, or by post free for 50c. City subscribers can have their volumes bound, including case, for 75c. The publishers will issue gratuitously with the Sept. number an elegant tinted duplicate title-page, preserving the elegant character of the magazine cover. Subscribers had better, therefore, wait receipt of this before binding the volume.

UNDERSELLING.

THE discussion which for the past year or so has been so vigorously carried on, concerning what is generally regarded as the one cause of the demoralization of the book trade—underselling—is by no means new. The trade organs of England and America of ten years since all contain articles and communications of which those of the past year are almost duplicates, in form and suggestion as well as spirit and complaint. All this time, notwithstanding most vigorous protest, the evil has been growing from bad to worse; the chief hope now-a-days is that the system has become so ruinous that a change for the better must be near at hand.

The history of this matter begins early in the present century. Up to the turn of the century, and indeed for a few years later, the English country bookseller could not buy on his half-yearly account at less than 10d. on the shilling, or 16 2/3 discount. Paying transportation charges, and frequently giving credit, he had no idea of selling a book at less than the stated prices. About 1810, the system of travelling came in vogue; then trade dinners (sales) became common, at which special rates were offered, and a twenty-fifth copy thrown in gratis; still later 25 off was a common discount, and a thirteenth

copy was given away with each dozen bought. Entering retailers began to offer discounts to customers, in some cases 20 per cent., and the trade in England grew thus into its present demoralization. There has been very general complaint in England over the difficulty, but it is nothing there to what it is here. Twenty-five off and a thirteenth copy with the dozen, makes one-third off; here forty off is a common publishers' discount; fifty is not unfrequent; at "special sales" we have heard that sixty has been reached; while, at the trade (auction) sales there is of course no limit to the lowness of price, and books have been slaughtered as far below cost as ninety per cent. of the published price. The retail discounts have followed closely upon these, with much the same history as in England. Like complaints of the demoralization of the book trade come from Italy. The difficulty has never arisen in Germany, because of the thorough and excellent organization, *esprit de corps*, and wise far-sightedness of the German trade.

During these ten and more years of discussion, there has been one cry from the trade—English not American—the remedy unanimously suggested by the retailers themselves being the reduction of the stated price to such an extent that not more than twenty per cent. could be in any case allowed by the publisher. All the difficulties and all the problems of the book trade are intimately associated with this question of underselling, so that in discussing it everything seems to come up. In connection with this suggestion, the retail trade protests against the selling of books at retail by publishers or jobbers, especially below the stated retail price, and against the "mailing notice" system, now adopted by all our publishers in advertising, to send any of their books free of postage on receipt of retail price. It asserts that under the present cut-throat system, *it does not pay* to "keep up stock," and that to earn bread and butter, the "book-stores" must be chiefly filled with stationery and "gim-cracks," and books made a subsidiary matter, to which little attention can be paid. Buyers who wish more than a single book, habitually order from the publishers, who act also as jobbers for them, and procure what they want at a rate as low as, frequently lower than the bookseller can himself obtain, because he must pay his own express bills, while his should-be customer is furnished carriage free. And so the majority of "book-stores" through the country keep but two or three hundred dollars' worth of book-stock on hand, order few new books, simply offer to obtain what the infrequent chance-