

Paper, ink and binding have become much cheaper. The class of paper prescribed in the contract is cheaper by at least two cents a pound than it was when the contract was made. What makes a further shrinkage in the cost of production is the fact that the three publishing firms combine to buy their paper, and thus by the largeness of their orders secure the highest discount. These circumstances, and others antecedent to them existing at the time of the contract, appear to warrant the belief that the books, without any lowering in the quality of them, can be supplied to the consumer for less than they now cost him.

Whatever may result from the present inquiry, whether it does or does not bear out the opinion of the Department and the public that the prices are too high, one thing it cannot do: it cannot make the contract considerate of the traders' interests. In the opinion of the Department the public has not been sufficiently considered, and that opinion is now being examined. But it is manifest to any one that the trade has been ignored. The minimum rate of discount has been fixed, and the holders of the monopoly have it in their choice to increase that discount. This is almost equivalent to making the discount immovable in either direction, so that its extreme lowness will be preserved. In the next place any one may buy a dozen books or more as cheaply as the retailer may. This is a menace to the very existence of a school-book trade, inasmuch as by it every twelfth person might be a retailer. Again, the prices are limited upwards, but not downwards. The bookseller who relies on one line of goods for a living trade, may find himself undersold by a general dealer next door to him, who can buy at as low a price as the bookseller and can sell at a lower price, inasmuch as he can look for profit on other lines than books, while the bookseller cannot.

ASSOCIATION MEETINGS.

The Executive committee has been working hard this month. They have held a number of informal meetings and various sub-committees have been performing numerous duties.

A special meeting of the Committee was held at BOOKS AND NOTIONS office on April 25, with Mr. A. S. Irving in the chair. A letter was read from President H. Fred. Sharp saying that the Minister of Education wanted representatives to give evidence before the Royal Commission to meet shortly to consider whether any change should be made in the prices of the Public School readers. Mr. Sharp suggested that an effort be made to secure an increased discount to the trade. It was stated that a representative of BOOKS AND NOTIONS had been informed by the Minister of Education that he had it in his hands to increase the discount to the trade if necessary. In consequence the Executive appointed Messrs. Wallace

and Wilson a sub-committee to interview the Minister on the question. As there were no further communications from the Postmaster General regarding the reduction in the postage on foreign periodicals, the meeting then adjourned to await the report of the committee appointed to see the Minister of Education.

Another meeting was held at this office on Tuesday, April 29. Mr. Wilson reported that he and Mr. Wallace had seen the Minister of Education on Saturday. He received them very kindly and arranged to discuss the question with a deputation on Monday, May 5th, at 1 p. m. It was decided therefore to invite the city retailers and as many as could come from outside to assemble at the Department on that day. It was arranged that Messrs. Wallace and Wilson should have an interview with the publishers of the Readers, and that Messrs. Wallace and Porter should see that the city retail trade were well represented on the deputation before the Minister. The Minister will be asked to give an increased discount on Public School Readers of 25 per cent. to the retailers and 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ to the jobbers and a cash discount of 5 per cent. and a decrease in the amount of from \$1,000 to \$500.

The following gentlemen gathered at the Educational Department on Monday last: Messrs. Wallace, Plaskett, Porter, Sutherland, Wilson, and McLean, (Sec. Treas.), Toronto; Day and Nelles, Guelph; Cranston and Emslie Galt; for the retailers, and Messrs. C. M. Taylor and J. F. Ellis for the jobbers. Letters of regret that they could not be present were read from R. S. Cormack, Whitby, A. Robinson, Belleville, Wm. Middleton, Kingston, and J. Eastwood, Hamilton. President Sharp wrote that he could not arrive in time unless he left home on Saturday. The Minister of Education received the deputation courteously. Mr. Nelles who was Chairman made a few general remarks on the question, and called upon Mr. Day who made out a good case for the retail trade. He pointed out that it cost the retail dealer 20 per cent. to do business, and there was therefore no profit in readers with only a 20 per cent. discount, especially when they had to give that discount, and pay the freight to some of their customers in villages near by. Mr. C. M. Taylor said that it cost the wholesale trade 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to do business and with the present discounts they could not make a profit on the readers. He complained of the unfair way in which the jobbers were treated by the School Book Combine. Mr. Ellis said the request of the trade for increased discounts was reasonable, and the publishers could easily afford to grant them; he showed that since the contract was made the cost of the paper in the readers had been reduced from 10 to 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. per lb.; ink from \$1.25 to 40c. per lb. cloth from 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. and the board was also cheaper. Mr. Wilson said that retailers in the States had a much larger dis-

count than we were asking, and Mr. Day reminded the Minister that on the old series of school books they had a discount of 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ to 50 per cent. Replying to the deputation, Mr. Ross said he thought the request was a fair one. He would not promise that anything could be done in the discounts on general school books until the expiration of the present contracts in 1891, but he would endeavor to secure better terms. He promised, however, that if it were at all possible, that he would give them a 25 per cent. discount on readers.

DUTY ON BOOK PLATES.

Until the revision of the tariff proposed in the budget for this year, the duty on electrotype, stereotype or celluloid plates of standard books was ten per cent. ad valorem. The new tariff bill contained no explicit reference to any alteration in this duty, but customs officials have held that there was an implication of one in item 150 of the bill, which reads as follows: "Stereotypes, electrotypes and celluloids for almanacs, calendars, illustrated pamphlets, newspaper advertisements or engraving and all other like work for commercial trade or other purposes not elsewhere specified and matrices and copper shells of the same—2c. per square inch."

In the words "or other purposes not elsewhere specified" collectors hold plates for books are included, as such plates are not reserved in any other clause of the bill. Consequently ever since the appearance of the budget 2c. per square inch has been collected at our ports on all such book plates.

In committee of the House, the Minister of Finance moved "that the item imposing a duty of 10 per cent. ad valorem on stereotypes, electrotypes, and celluloids for standard books be amended so as to make the duty two-thirds of a cent per square inch for these articles which were in whole or in part of metal or celluloid." The resolution was carried.

The item, however, imposing this ad valorem duty is not to be found in the new tariff bill, but is in the old one. Evidently the Minister felt that this clause in the old tariff bill had not been amended by the clause in the new one before quoted as that upon which collectors are now proceeding to tax standard books. Therefore, until this amendment in committee of the House, the duty on plates of standard works must have been ten per cent. The duty of 2c. per square inch manifestly refers to advertising matter.

The determination of the duty on plates of standard books does not settle the full question between the collectors and the importers. Plates of books that are not standard will still be rated by the former as falling under the budget clause fixing the duty at 2c. per square inch. That is, the duty on such plates is to be three times that on plates of standard books. No doubt the question will soon be settled upon some importer's appeal against 2c. a square inch on plates of non-standard books.

The alteration in the method of levying the duty, which substitutes a space basis for the value basis of duty calculation, will not make much difference to the importer of standard plates. The change is made to secure the amount of duty originally contemplated and yielded a 10 per cent. rate. A change in the manufacture of stereotypes has lately reduced the weight and the duty has shrunk in correspondence with this. The two-thirds of a cent duty is expected to restore the old duty merely.