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BLAME LAID AT THE DOOR OF THE TRADE.

MONTREAL, 15th June, 1891.

To the Editor of BOOKS AND NOTIONS.

SIR,—Your editorial remarks on the subject of bookselling in Canada in the June issue of your paper hit the keynote of the unprofitableness of publishing works of merit in this country. It has long been claimed that the Canadians are not readers, and that their literary tastes are confined to dime novels and the like. This is the opinion expressed by booksellers. Now, from personal observation and knowledge, I can positively assert the contrary, as can all energetic personal canvassers, such as the agents for the Encyclopædia Britannica, the Virtues, etc., and if there are not more buyers of works of a higher literary calibre at the stalls of booksellers, it is entirely due to the ignorance and apathy of the bookseller and his staff. There may be one or two exceptions in this country, but I am sorry to say I do not know where they are. I produced a book in this city which received the encomiums of some of the highest literary critics in France, England, and the States. Every copy sent to those countries was readily sold, but what was the result in Canada? About a dozen score of copies sold in the whole Dominion! And when simmered down it was found that the bulk was sold upon demand of the purchasers at one store and in one city. Everywhere I traveled, the leading booksellers would reply, "Never heard of the book," "Would like to see a copy," "Send a book" As you describe it ought to sell well; "I am sure so and so would like to have a copy." When this was reported to the publisher, the reply was "A circular was sent to him, and if he wanted the book he should have sent for it." All this goes to show conclusively that

there are no publishers worthy the name in Canada, that there are no booksellers who understand their vocation, and that to produce a book of merit in this country as matters now stand is simply to have it fall flat and a waste of the author's time and money. Had I put no publisher's name on the title page, I would have been much better off, as a friend of mine, by issuing a private circular, sold more copies than the so-called bookseller, and other authors have told me the same story. AUTHOR.

Work can always be found in a store without double-million microscope.

The trader who pays his way must sell at a profit, and cannot afford to cut below others in the same line.

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Commercial Travellers.

To any traveller who will send us one new subscriber for three months we will send all the back numbers of the paper containing "Drum Taps." A most entertaining sketch of a week spent on the road by a well-known American Traveller.

M:U:S:I:C

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