CURRENT NOTES AND COMMENTS

OF INTEREST TO THE TRADE.

The Import Trade. That book buying is much on the increase cannot be denied. In spite of the issue of Canadian editions, which to some extent replace the imported ones, the figures for the fiscal year 1899, just issued, show that, as compared with 1897, the value of books and periodicals brought into Canada has increased by a large sum. The value of scientific books, brought in free under the new tariff to encourage industrial studies, amounted last year to over $20,000. The imports of bibles and hymn books were less last year than the previous, due probably to the large demand in 1898 for the Presbyterian Hymnal, issued from the Oxford Press. There is also a large increase in the demand for college text books, likewise free of duty. It will also be seen that fiction, either in paper covers, or brought in in sheets to be bound up here, has had a large demand. The sale of sheet music is steadily on the gain. We subjoin a short table of these imports which may interest the trade:

	1899	1898.	1897.
Books and periodicals	$581,493	$532,107	$524,661
Novels, paper covered or in sheets	71,901	67,379	....
Bibles, hymnals, etc.	143,682	211,754	125,784
College and school text books	151,123	137,601 }	113,933
Books over 12 year sold	12,220	12,168 }	
Scientific books	23,770	12,401	....
Maps and charts	10,925	12,807	18,281
Music	29,174	21,804	21,935
	$1,123,491	$1,027,931	$824,654

Orders in Advance. It is said that advance orders by Canadian dealers are not as liberal as they used to be. The trade prefer, as the expression goes, to buy from hand to mouth. This is the fashion now in other lines besides books. It doubtless works well enough in the case of dealers who are situated close to the sources of supply. They can depend on prompt shipments. But it is a risky proceeding for dealers who cannot get a book any quicker from the city than a purchaser himself can. He is apt to think his dealer slow-going, and will get into the habit of ordering direct. A local bookseller ought to know his customers well enough to gauge with some accuracy the extent of their wants, and if a book is much talked of he ought to have enough copies to go around. Otherwise, the trade will slip away from him.

* *

After Departmental Stores. The Ontario retailers are pressing forward with their plan to get an Act from the Legislature to tax departmental stores. In Toronto cooperation is sought from the city council and the board of trade. The proposed measure asks that a graded and progressive tax be imposed on the gross proceeds of the sales in these establishments, in addition to the ordinary tax on personalty. No reduction, it says, shall be made in the assessment on account of debts owing upon the stock. The section shall apply only to departmental stores whose annual sales exceed $50,000.

* *

Selling Books. The stories told us of how some dealers conduct their book business are enough to create a feeling of dismay. Books don't sell themselves. They must be talked-up and brought to people's attention. One book dealer, carrying also stationery and fancy goods, and doing a good business in those lines, was noticed to sell few books. A friend pointed out that more business in this department could easily be worked up. The dealer replied: "Well, we never ask a person to buy a book." This remark was actually made by a professed dealer in books! It is hard to see how he made any book sales at all. To suppose that books—any more than another class of goods—should be kept on the shelves until people call around and ask for them, is too absurd to argue seriously. We do not believe that any of our readers think so. But there is often a disposition to think that the same efforts which sell dry goods or groceries should also dispose of books. But these are necessaries, and books are luxuries. To stimulate the book-buying habit every effort has to be made to bring personally before customers the merits of a book. The policy of drawing the attention of callers to