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CURRENT NOTES.

THE SUBSCRIPTION BOOKS.

IT IS impossible to ignore the fact that, with a few exceptions, the most successfully circulated books in Canada have been sold by subscription. No doubt those publishers pay a good commission to the agents, but then they were warranted in doing so by a high price. The idea prevails in some quarters that the books sold by subscription are either some badly printed, cheaply illustrated works for country homes, or books which appear in parts, and as each part is delivered the purchaser pays an instalment. The real truth is that there is a good deal of bookselling by subscription in this country, and some of the books thus disposed of are of the very best grade. Editions of standard authors, like Dickens, Thackeray and others, have had a great sale in this way, while, if we recollect aright,

Parkman's works were very extensively circulated in the authorized edition of the Boston publishers by the subscription system. All this takes away trade from the regular dealer, and is greatly to be regretted. Whose fault is it? Does the dealer show the requisite energy? Perhaps he does or thinks he does. Yet there must be reasons why the selling of books should begin to fall into the hands of the traveling pedlar. The bookseller is by far the most competent and trustworthy man from whom to buy books. The only people who should buy from the subscription pedlar are people who don't know a book from a bag of flour. The pedlar does very well for them, because it is something to fill the shelves they want. But when we find standard works being successfully handled by subscription it is hard to resist the conviction that the bookseller is letting part of his legitimate business slip away from him. The modern subscription method is a very taking one. The whole work is delivered down on a small cash payment. Monthly collections are made of from \$1 to \$2, and the collector goes round to the purchaser on a certain date in the month. All this is very difficult for the bookseller to meet. One of our subscribers told us some time ago that he was not averse to seeing books on subscription when his customers demand it. If they cared to purchase one volume at a time in a set he would let them have it, and he rather encouraged this system. We see no objections to it at all. It is naturally a question for the dealer himself to determine, according to his circumstances and conveniences. It may be that some organized plan to sell expensive

works to one's customers on the subscription plan might pay many a bookseller. At all hazards he ought to retain as far as he can the business which is naturally his.

DEPARTMENT STORE COMPETITION.

Now that the Ontario Legislature is in session we are likely to hear more of the bill to regulate department stores. The present session is the last one before the general elections, and politicians who are looking for votes will do things then that they cannot be got to do at any other time. In the meantime competition continues unabated. Two large departmental stores, one in Montreal and one in Toronto, have enlarged their premises and have given the book department more room. By putting a qualified bookseller in charge of the department, there is no doubt that the menace to the regular bookseller will be greatly increased.

THE COPYRIGHT DISPUTE.

Our esteemed contemporary, *The Halifax Herald*, (in its evening edition, *The Evening Mail*) comments unfavorably upon our article of last month on the importation of reprints by owners of the Canadian copyright. It says:

"THE BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER was at one time quite orthodox on the subject of Canadian copyright. But it seems to have come under some malign influence, for in its November number it practically endorses the absurd and un-Canadian contention of the W. J. Gage Co., Toronto, that they can import United States reprints of books of which they have the copyright in Canada."

Now, we submit that this is hardly a fair statement, though probably the writer had no intention of misrepresenting the matter. It was a question of how the present law