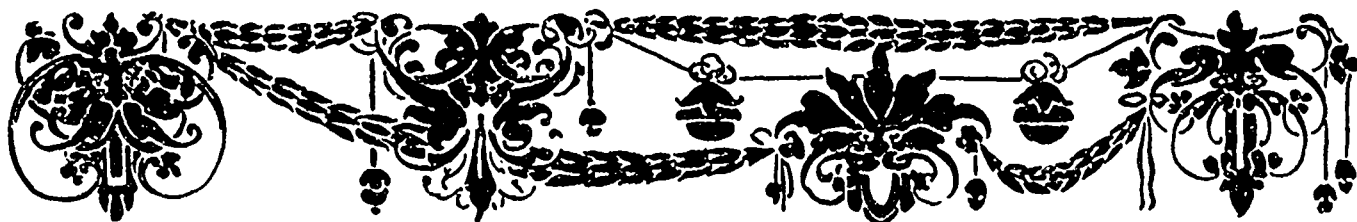


The Bookseller and Stationer



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Topics for the Bookseller.

BOOKS AT NET PRICES.

THE question of introducing net prices into Canada has its amusing side. Judging from the correspondence that has appeared in these columns, the publishers and booksellers both favor the plan. Each branch of the trade, however, seems to think it is "up to" the other. Neither, as far as we can learn, is prepared to take the first step. While each branch is politely bowing to the other, the publishers, as a body, are not getting together to consider the subject, and the booksellers are not discussing a plan for pressing it upon the publishers.

We can see good reason why each side should take action. The publishers are well aware that if the profession of book-selling is not to dwindle, and finally disappear, something must be done to check the competition of departmental stores in new books. These big stores may sell a good many copies, but they spoil the regular trade and take away from the individual bookseller the inducement to push sales. No medium for selling books can equal a competent bookseller.

There is also ground for the booksellers to unite and press for reform. They should realize that publishers are human beings just like booksellers. They are competitors with one another, and each attends to his own business. To unite in favor of some line of policy is rather an unusual course.

Do the booksellers in one town or city hold conferences on trade matters and unite to maintain prices and the common interest of the trade? They will realize, therefore, that the publishers are beset by the same difficulties as the booksellers themselves.

Now, the situation has this advantage: The largest Canadian publishing houses are situated in one city. There are probably not half a dozen departmental stores in the whole country that go in systematically for cutting prices. This concentrates and simplifies the matter considerably. Who will be the first to take action?

OPINIONS OF THE TRADE.

WE have received some fresh correspondence on the subject of net prices. It is exactly in line with the letters previously published. Mr. A. T. Chapman, Montreal, writes:

"No one, I'm sure, can object to net books. It is, after all, only agreeing to sell books at the published price, an agreement that might even now be put into force with the present prices and rates of discount, which surely do not give the bookseller more than a reasonable profit. The remedy of the present price-cutting lies wholly in the publishers' hands. If they will resolutely and unitedly stand for books being sold retail at the published prices, being careful not to transgress the law themselves, the trade will support them as one man."

The Thomson Stationery Co., Limited, of Vancouver, write:

"The prices at which paper-bound Canadian 75c. books are supplied to the trade leave little enough margin when retailed at list price. It is a matter for regret that many of these books are being largely advertised and sold by departmental stores at cut prices. For this course we decidedly feel that the publisher and copyright holder is fully responsible, notwithstanding the various excuses made by the publisher to the contrary. There is no question that if the publisher determined to put a stop to the selling of his book at cut prices by the departmental store he can do it. A book is different from most other merchantable articles in that it has a distinct and generally recognized set value, and thus forms an excellent leader for a departmental store to use in booming its business, even though it may make no profit on the sale of the book. The question with the publisher is: Is it better to have his book reach the public through over a hundred or more recognized bookstores scattered all over the country, or through one or two departmental stores in the larger centres? If he decides on the latter course, does he not see that as soon as the departmental store has crushed the book trade throughout the country and can control it, it will become its own publisher, taking to itself what profit the publisher now has?"

"This has been the history of the departmental store with relation to all other lines that it handles."

We entirely agree with these gentlemen regarding the injurious effects of depart-