

## A DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE TRADE.

The death of the Right Honorable W. H. Smith, First Lord of the Treasury and leader of the House of Commons in England, removes a man who acquired great wealth by the sale of books. He was formerly a member of the well-known firm W. H. Smith & Son, of the Strand, London, who for years have had the contract of supplying with books, newspapers, etc., all the stalls of the railway stations in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Their place of business in the Strand is the most gigantic distributing centre of its kind in the world. It is also one of the most perfect. The number of trains they despatch every morning with newspapers for all parts of the United Kingdom would never get out in time for their connections if the system of collection and distribution were not marvellous.

The deceased statesman was a son of the founder of this business. He was born in 1825. He sat in the English House of Commons since 1868, having in that year defeated John Stuart Mill in a contest for the representation of Westminster. He was Financial Secretary of the Treasury from 1874 to 1877. From that till 1880 he was First Lord of the Admiralty. While he was in this office Gilbert & Sullivan's "Pinafore" appeared, and Mr. Smith has always been identified with the Sir Joseph Porter of that whimsical opera. In 1885 he was appointed Secretary of State for War. In 1886 he became Chief Secretary for Ireland, but held office for only six days, the Salisbury Government having fallen at the end of that time. In Lord Salisbury's second administration he became First Lord of the Treasury and leader of the House of Commons. He is said to have several times declined the offer of a peerage.

## JAMES BAIN & SON.

Mr. Donald Bain has the sympathy of the trade in his present business embarrassment, which we hope will be but a momentary one. There is every reason to believe that it will be. At the large meeting of creditors which he called to confer with him upon the situation of his affairs a feeling of regret at the unfortunate turn they had taken was very generally expressed. His offer of 45c. in the dollar—of which 30c. in the dollar is to be cash, the remainder in secured paper due in equal instalments in three, six and nine months—was unanimously approved by the twenty-five creditors present, and recommended to the favorable consideration of such as were not present. There is very little doubt that this basis of settlement will be accepted by all who have claims against the estate, as, in view of all the circumstances, it must be deemed a very good one. The present crisis passed, Mr. Bain will be in a position to resume the business with fair

prospects ahead of it, as it is understood arrangements have been completed for the introduction of new blood and new capital into it.

The business of James Bain & Son was founded forty years ago, and has been carried on from the beginning on King St. Its founder, Mr. James Bain, sr., retired a few months ago, leaving his son, Mr. Donald Bain, sole supporter of the old style "James Bain & Son." Mr. James Bain was for 15 years continuously a member of the Toronto School Board, and never during that time did he sell, directly or indirectly, one cent's worth of school supplies to the Board. This was a business sacrifice, and a very considerable one, to upright principle. It shows that sterling honesty was an element in the business done at all events.

In the first newspaper report of Mr. Bain's financial difficulty it was stated that he had assigned, but in subsequent issues of the papers which had fallen into this error the statement was corrected. He did not assign: he merely called a meeting of his creditors' whose disposition appeared to be very averse to forcing him into a position that would render assignment necessary.

## THE ANNUAL MEETING.

The annual meeting of the Booksellers' and Stationers' Association will be held at the Queen's Hotel, Toronto, on Oct. 28th, at 2.30 p. m., that is, the last Wednesday afternoon in October. Every member of the trade who possibly can should be present. Let us have a large and enthusiastic meeting. It must be admitted that the trade in general have not supported the Association as they should. The work has been left to a few. This is not fair, because all participate in the benefits derived from organization. The executive committee are particularly deserving of the thanks of the trade throughout the provinces. They have been indefatigable in their efforts to secure better terms, reduced postage and many other concessions, as well as in preventing increases in duties that would be detrimental to the trade. We have not got all we asked for. No association ever did. By continuous agitation we will get the other concessions to which we are justly entitled. It took nearly three years of constant application to secure the increased discounts announced in last month's issue on the Public-School Readers. Was it not worth our while to keep up the agitation? How many thousand dollars has this concession put in the pockets of our readers? But how many of them assisted to secure it? Were you one of them? If you were not, make up your mind to do better in future. Come to the meeting; if you cannot come, write the Secretary, care of BOOKS AND NOTIONS, enclosing the annual subscription of one dollar, and make any suggestions that you think may be of value and interest to the association.



## TRADERS OR PEDLARS.

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Editor of BOOKS AND NOTIONS, TORONTO.

SIR,—My entry into the ranks of the retail booksellers is but of recent date, and having no previous knowledge of the trade, I am obliged to keep my eyes and ears wide open in order to gain that knowledge. I am a constant reader of your valuable journal, and, by buying small quantities from various houses, I am quickly discovering the best houses to patronize for the different classes of goods. But there are two things which puzzle me, and I should like to know how to deal with them.

The first is this: Some time ago there was an agent here, working for a certain book Association. He thoroughly canvassed the country and got a great number of persons to pay the membership fee of \$15, in return for which he promised them a large atlas "worth the money," and further agreed to furnish them with all the books they might want at a price which, as nearly as I could judge, was about 30 per cent. advance on publishers' prices. Such business as this is simply cutting the ground from under the feet of the retail bookseller. What can he do in the matter?

The other point I would refer to is in reference to a somewhat similar matter, and I am prompted to write you on the subject by your editorial comments in the June number of BOOKS AND NOTIONS. It appears to me that you are unjust to the retail trader when you say that the fact that there are certain books which publishers will sell only through travelling agents is a reflection upon his energy. In making this statement you appear, for the moment, to have forgotten the fact that, as we do not deal in the necessities of life, we see only a very small number of customers each day; a book agent will probably see ten times as many as we do: you refer to our stock of other goods as though that were an advantage towards selling books. It is not so at all. We have to recommend those other goods, and the greater the variety, the less attention we give to any particular book; and the more we sell of these other goods, the less money have our customers for books. It is true we have personal influence but we should soon lose it if we were as persistent in our recommendations as the necessities of the book-agent compel him to be. It is no fault of the retailer that he cannot effect as many sales as the book agent, and you have already admitted as much when you tell him, as you do, that "he who wants a custo-