

CONFERENCE ON THE COPYRIGHT QUESTION.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
OTTAWA, 25th November, 1895.

The meeting was held in the office of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and was called to order at two o'clock, Hon. Mr. Ouimet, acting Minister of Agriculture, presiding. The other members of the Government present were Sir Muckenzie Bowell and Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper.

The CHAIRMAN.—I hope that the discussion to-day will result in benefit to all. We are ready to hear the representatives of every interest concerned. I understand that Mr. Hall Caine is not very well, and wishes to be free to retire, so we have agreed to hear him first.

Mr. HALL CAINE.—Mr. Chairman, all I have to say may be confined to a very brief summary statement. I am happy to be able to tell you that during my visit to the Dominion we have had the satisfaction of coming to an agreement with the Canadian publishers and the Canadian Copyright Association on the matter that has been so long in dispute between them and the authors of England. This understanding we have ventured to embody in a draft bill, which, for the sake of clearness and precision, we have put into shape and now with all humility and respect submit to the consideration of the Government. I may say about it at the outset that it is of the nature of a compromise, and, like most other compromises, would probably not cover the views of either party entirely. But it is, on the whole, the best agreement we could arrive at under the circumstances, and I think we would all be well satisfied if some measure drafted on these lines could be carried into effect. Speaking for the body which I myself represent, I think I may say that, although the draft bill does not cover certain principles we hold to be sacred, a measure framed on lines like this would meet with very general satisfaction among English authors. I think, sir, you would hardly wish me to traverse the measure which we here offer you in detail, but you will allow me, perhaps, to indicate its general scope. By this agreement the time which the copyright holder can publish in Canada and so secure an absolute and untrammelled copyright is extended from thirty days as it stood in the Act of 1889, to sixty days, with the possibility of an extension of thirty days more at the discretion of the Minister. Also, by this agreement, the license to be granted for the production of a book which has not fulfilled the conditions of the Canadian copyright law is limited to one license and this single license is only to be issued with the author's knowledge or with his sanction. Further, the copyright holder, who has an independent chance to secure copyright within a period of sixty days is to have a second chance of securing it after it has been challenged and before it has been finally disposed of by license. And finally, the royalties to the author are to be secured to him by regulation of the Inland Revenue which requires the stamping of an edition on the issue of the license. As to other points concerning serial publications and so on, I may say that they are based upon the same general principles of securing copyright and granting license. This, sir, is the general meaning of the draft bill which the Copyright Association of Canada have agreed with me to recommend to the wisdom of your Ministers. As to these general