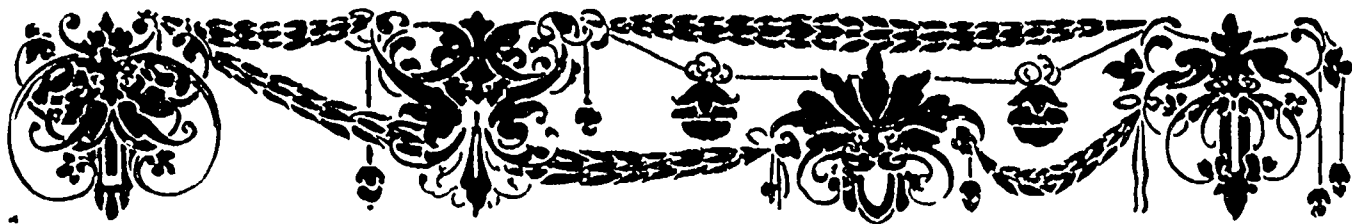


The Bookseller and Stationer



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Topics for the Bookseller.

SEVERAL times we have referred to the objections to the policy of school boards giving text books free to pupils. We quoted the remarks of Trustee Hales, of Toronto, that many of the books in use by children in the city schools were dirty in the extreme, and, from the standpoint of health alone, unfit for further circulation.

As the school board has to practise economy, it naturally economizes on the books, which, being furnished free, are quite an item of expense. It appears that some Toronto parents will not allow their children to use books which have been in other hands, and they buy new books from the board at cost price. This, it seems to us, is an entirely objectionable proceeding. The board has no right to go into the business of selling books. The electors of Toronto authorized the board to furnish free books, not to sell books to pupils. If any parents object to their children handling soiled books, that have been through other hands, let them go to the regular dealers and buy them at the retail market price. By doing the trade out of these sales, the board are pursuing a course which is, we contend, both unwarranted and unwise. If there existed a retail booksellers' league or association in each Province, injurious attacks like this upon a legitimate and a beneficial business could be resisted, or at least exposed. As matters stand, we are powerless.

We regret not having space enough to record the voluminous reports connected with the subject of Canadian copyright which have been appearing in the daily

press during the past month. As the trade are aware, a case in favor of a new Canadian law on this subject has

The Copyright Agitation.

been prepared by the wholesale booksellers and stationers' section of the Toronto Board of Trade in cooperation with the leading printing firms, and was presented recently to the Minister of Justice at Ottawa by a deputation. From this case Mr. G. N. Morang, of Toronto, dissents, and has issued an ably written pamphlet embodying his views. Two letters from Mr. Wm. Tyrrell, the Toronto bookseller, have also appeared in *The Globe* voicing views which are probably held by other booksellers as well as by many book-buyers. To him Mr. W. P. Gundy has replied with much force and clearness. In fact, all phases of this controversy have drawn forth much able writing. In his closing letter, Mr. Tyrrell makes a suggestion which we have not seen before, and one, moreover, which seems to offer a way out of the chaos which must necessarily result when those interested in copyright hold widely divergent opinions. "This important matter of copyright," he says. " * * * should be given to a carefully-chosen commission, whose report would be the basis of Government action." This is probably as practical a solution of the difficulty as is possible. To legislate, a Government must consider the author's rights, the publishers' interests, and the public's welfare as buyers of books. How to consider all three standpoints and arrive at a result fair to all is not easy, under present circumstances. A well-chosen commission could collect evidence from all

quarters and give a finding on the facts. A commission with Professor Goldwin Smith as chairman and with certain gentlemen prominent in publishing and bookselling circles and certain successful Canadian men of letters as members would carry weight. As mere onlookers, it appears to us as if the Government would be glad to act, providing they knew how far a Canadian law could be drawn up which would at once satisfy the copyright owners and the book-buyers.

It is well to keep an eye on how the net-price system works in the United States. If it cannot be enforced there, where publishers are powerful and united, its extension to Canada is hopeless. A recent move of the united publishers was to bring a departmental store to time. The big dry goods stores in New York, with book counters, agreed to maintain prices except Macy's. The latter store has been fighting the net-price system. How the publishers view the case may be inferred from an interview with the secretary of the American Publishers' Association who said: "Macy's has been a thorn in the side of the Association ever since it came into existence. They refused flatly to make any agreement with the publishers to maintain a fixed schedule of prices. The firm buy no books from the publishers because it is boycotted and could not do so if it wanted to. The Association includes every copyright publisher in the country and it is in a position to have some influence. The Macy concern features its book department. Many of the books are bought at retail in the large stores and are then sold by them at less than cost. Its book department does not amount to much, as it is not as large as similar ones in other big stores, and is only used to antagonize the Association." It is reported that the publishers asked the daily newspapers to stop advertising Macy's cut prices on books, but the newspapers refused. The publishers will try some other way of checking the evil. Their action will be watched with interest.