

this and would be glad to see started, a movement having for its aim the elevation of the retail trade.

Free and full discussion of method is a splendid way for imprinting truths on men's minds. The columns of BOOKS AND NOTIONS are always open to such discussion, and yet very few retailers take advantage of it. They seem to lack public spirit, and it is for this reason that we fear that the retailers cannot free themselves from the forces that are pulling them downwards. If we are mistaken in this particular we would like to know it.

A letter from Mr. Cranston, of Galt, in which he touches on these and similar topics, is offered for the consideration of the trade, and will be a suitable closing paragraph for the article:

Editor BOOKS AND NOTIONS:

SIR,—I fear I am too late in writing you again, but pressure of everyday business must be my excuse. For several months trade has been rapidly increasing, but that's a bearable burden and we don't grumble. We don't feel a bit like saying: "Hold on, Mc-Duff," but rather, "let it come." We will try to take care of all that comes our way so long as it's of an honorable and fairly profitable character. It takes a big volume of trade to make money these days; profits are too small and trade too much divided up with outsiders and department stores. The public are not being robbed, that's certain. Can't the trade get a little more together than at present in the way of retail prices? It seems to me they can and should do so to save themselves from financial ruin. Many of the towns and cities are not yet affected with the evils of department stores and their cut prices, but there is war between the local men, and prices are down, down, down, and the end is not yet. Why this war? What's the good of it? No good whatever. Neither the merchant nor the public are benefited in the long run and instead of the merchant's making a comfortable living out of his business failure is the inevitable result, and then the public say: "He was a fool to sell goods without profit." Business men are not as a rule unreasonable, and I have found that a little mutual confidence and a talk over profitable prices for retailing is desirable and also of practical value. Let jealousy go. Let us be united and see that our best days for laying by a nest egg for the days when we shall be old and feeble are not all spent in an unprofitable warfare on one another's prices. Everything we sell should bear a reasonable profit. Adopt no gift business. Let goods be sold on their merits, and not on catch-penny schemes. Marble season is on now, and balls will soon be selling. Now, what's the good of supplying all the wants in these lines without profit? Why not have a mutual understanding with those in the trade? Fix retail prices on a paying basis. We did so here in Galt recently; all were

united, and the boys are better pleased and public confidence is secured. It strikes me that if you would print a scale of retail prices for the guidance of all retail traders in your valuable journal, and secure the co-operation of the wholesalers and their travelers, much could be done to have uniformity in retail prices on thousands of things booksellers, stationers and fancy goods dealers sell, and all would be benefited. Travelers could be instructed by their employers to advise with and get retailers to sign agreements to retail many staple and standard lines on a uniform price list. Shall it be tried? I think it should. Suppose a committee were selected of well-known retailers to draft an agreement for the trade to sign, and also compile a retail price list for many articles that there is every day sale for, there would, I am sure, be a general adoption of the prices suggested by all reputable dealers. I think you can, through your valuable journal, do much to promote unity of price and mutual confidence amongst retailers. Suppose you give us some prices for spring goods. First, retail prices for rubber balls in all sizes and kinds, marbles (we give to painted and 12 plain stone), croquet, tennis bats and balls, baseball goods, express wagons, hammocks, etc. In unity there is strength and profit as well.

Yours,

J. K. CRANSTON.

TWO LETTERS ON BOOK DUTY.

THE two following letters appeared in recent but different issues of the Montreal Star:

To the Editor of the Star:

SIR,—In a recent editorial in the Star you condemn the new specific duty of 6 cents a pound on books. The article states that such a duty is in favor of the rich as against the poor. On the contrary, the 6c. a lb. duty will enable the man of moderate means to occasionally indulge in an expensive book, as the new duty will so reduce the price as to bring it within his means. How much will the new duty be on, will we say, the 50 cent novel? About 3 cents a book. Who will pay this duty? Not the reader, but the retail bookseller. It will be a matter of cutting down his profit on the book about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents. No new novel is likely to be issued at less than 50 cents, as the author is now being paid for his work, since international copyright took effect, and the booksellers will not advance the price beyond the one fixed by the publisher. The change of duty, together with the fact that electrotypes of books can now come in free of duty, will help the Canadian publisher in his efforts to produce the books in this country. The publishing interest has so far had no encouragement given it. The raw material which it requires has been heavily taxed and the printed book has come in at a 15 per cent. duty. The country has been flooded

with cheap and objectionable books brought in at a valuation of from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. discount on the retail price. Give the Canadian publisher a fair measure of protection by keeping out a part of the stocks of cheap books that have been imported and he will engage that the Canadian reader will be given the latest and best of the new books in a readable form at the same price he is now paying for them. The Star should not abandon its policy of a moderate protection and in writing against the new tariff on books is making a mountain out of a mole hill. We believe that a specific duty is the only one that meets the call as far as books are concerned.

JOHN LOVELL & SON.

To the Editor of the Star:

SIR,—Will you kindly allow me space in your paper to reply to a letter signed "John Lovell & Son" in the Star regarding the new duty on books? They say that the public will not have to pay anything extra, that the bookseller will have to lose the duty imposed. I suppose they are right; the unfortunate bookseller will have to pay the duty, and I would ask you if it is right that the booksellers should suffer to benefit a few publishers. My opinion is that the publishers are sufficiently protected when they publish a book. All American editions are excluded from Canada under a very heavy penalty, and I should like to know what more they want in the shape of protection. The fact of the matter is that we have not reading population enough to make the publishing of books in Canada a paying business, and that the style of books our Canadian publishers do publish is just the sort of trash Messrs. Lovell & Son complain of being imported into the country, and it is for this style of book they want further protection. I agree with you that your strictures on the high specific duty now imposed on books were perfectly correct.

BOOKSELLER.

Kingston, April 16, 1894.

THE TARIFF ADOPTED.

ON April 22nd the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada came to the clause in the tariff which imposed a duty of 6c. per pound on books. About March 26th it had been announced in the budget speech and had gone into immediate effect. Nevertheless, according to constitutional usage, it had to be confirmed by Parliament. This confirmation took place on April 22nd, as we have said, and the majority decided that for twelve months at least the duty of 6c. per pound must be paid. There is no probability of a change. It is thought that the Government will enforce the Copyright Act or arrive at some understanding before the next session of Parliament, and that this change in duties is the first step in a course which will bring about a radical change in the book business of Canada.