

interest by the rest of us. This is a dispute over the validity of the Canadian copyright on Parkman's works. The owners of the copyright, Messrs. Morang & Co., are taking action to restrain The Publishers' Syndicate, Limited, from importing the United States edition. The latter claim that there is no copyright in Canada on Parkman's works. Of course, as the case is pending, we make no comments on or reference to the merits of the respective cases. The court will determine that.

We trust, however, that, for the convenience of the whole trade, the validity of the new law may be involved in these proceedings, so that we may get a judicial pronouncement on the new Act.

THE MONTREAL TRADE.

FROM THE BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER'S SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Montreal, December 1.

THE most unsatisfactory feature of the book trade in Montreal at the present moment is the cutting of the prices of what should be the 75c. current fiction. The ruling price now is 65c., and in certain newspapers one sees such books as "The Master Christian" advertised at 63c. Of course, this is no new evil, but its gaining ground is cause for lamentation. The departmental store theory of reducing prices has long been practised down town, and respectable bookmen on St. James and Craig and Notre Dame streets have been forced to sell at 65c. on account of departmental competition. But it is only recently that the St. Catherine street bookseller, who, being away from the departmental store, holds the book trade of the Montreal women in the hollow of his hand, has decided to yield to the temptation to cut. How a bookseller can expect to grow rich buying current fiction at 55c. and selling it at 65c. is long past finding out. Neither can the cutting be justified on the ground that it is a temporary loss, for the Montreal public has been introduced to the idea of 65c. literature, and it is altogether likely that it will not be willing to forego the acquaintance. It is truly unfortunate.

Much of the blame for reducing prices has been thrown on the departmental stores; this is one case in which they are not wholly accountable for the sin. The St. Catherine street merchants do nearly all the trade of the women, for the ladies do not go down town for their literature, and this section of the trade might have kept up prices to 75c. just as easily as it is now keeping them up

to 65c. Whether they will follow the big down-town store to 63c. is not yet decided.

It was with a great deal of satisfaction I read Mr. Chapman's advertisement in The Gazette some days ago; he spoke of Arthur Lawrence's book on Sir Arthur Sullivan, his life story, letters and reminiscences, illustrated, at \$2; appended was the remark: "By mail, 6c. extra." A little more of the spirit that wrote that advertisement is needed amongst Montreal bookmen. Most booksellers would have been glad to have sent that \$2 book post free. Mr. Chapman preserves his profit, and, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, does not lose his sale by charging his customer the full legitimate price.

To cut prices to undersell your neighbor is to act foolishly, and ought soon to become a proverbial fact, for, as sure as one dealer cuts, then his competitor will do likewise, and they are again both in the old position, only the bulk of the profit is gone. As a general rule, a reputation for being cheap is undesirable, anyway. A bookseller is in business to make a living, and the public will not deny him a reasonable profit, provided he does not deny it to himself.

One consequence of the slaughtering of the 75c. book may be that booksellers will push the cheap reading material. One dealer was heard to say that, as there is more money in the cheap novels than in the expensive books, he would push these for all he was worth. "I am in business to make money, and, if the publishers do not protect our profits by preventing these slaughter prices from getting books, then we shall have to force them to do so. We are now looked to by the publishers to inform the public of the latest books; we do a great deal of the selling for them, yet they do not protect us. Then, we must needs refuse to do our part, and I, for one, intend to push the cheap books."

The novel trade has not been brisk this month. Perhaps the weather has been against it, or perhaps the want of activity may be attributed merely to the fact that this is between seasons. There is no ragging book. The "Master Christian" is selling only fairly well; "Eben Holden" perhaps surpasses it so far as demand is concerned. "Eleanor," by Mrs. Humphry Ward, is also selling well. Mrs. Steel's, "Hosts of the Lord," Henry Harland's "The Cardinal's Snuff Box," Maurice Thompson's "Alice of Old Vincennes," M. E. Seawell's "House of Outrement," Knox Magee's "With Ring of Shield" and Joseph Conrad's "Lord Jim," all published by the Montreal News Co., are being called for to some extent. In better books, Lord Rosebery's

"Napoleon: The Last Phase," published by Harper's at \$3 is being talked of more than any other work. Another good holiday gift book is Harper's work, titled "Women of the Bible"; the type, illustrations, paper, and, in fact, the whole production, is beautiful; it sells at \$2.

A few copies of the special \$1 number of The Illustrated London News on The Transvaal War have come to hand and were eagerly pounced upon. The work is a compilation of Spencer Wilkinson's records of the war and the drawings of the great journal's many artists. Eight beautiful photogravures are also included. Altogether it is a fine piece of workmanship and one that will be dearly treasured by those fortunate enough to secure a copy, but, to draw perhaps an unjust comparison, it does not equal that great Jubilee number.

F. E. Grafton & Sons, the St. James-street booksellers, are preparing to make a great display during December. The second floor of the establishment, which is a large, airy, well lighted room, is to be decorated in holiday attire and is to have its walls covered with copies of Charles Dana Gibson's pictures. Several hundred of these are being brought from New York. But what will be the greatest attraction will be about 60 original Gibson sketches which Mr. Grafton has obtained permission to display. The copies will be sold at \$2. Productions of other American artists, such as Wensell, will also be on display. This will be a great feast for the art-worshipping public of Montreal and there is no doubt that they will warmly appreciate Mr. Grafton's enterprise in securing them such a treat. Mr. Grafton will likely be rewarded by a good sale of the pictures and also by a brisk demand for holiday books, for the class of trade who appreciate literature for holiday gift purposes will be attracted to his store by the art display.

Mr. Grafton has introduced another good feature into his holiday stock, in the shape of photographs of Montreal views mounted on cards bearing "Christmas Greeting." He intends that this should meet the wants, usually difficult to satisfy, of those who are continually crying for something essentially Canadian yet cheap and suitable for a Christmas present. The days when those red flowery German productions will suffice are past and the views seem to fill this place admirably. On this account also the "Souvenir Calendar," issued by the Grip Publishing Co., of Toronto, will be welcomed. It is sold in four styles; Canadian portrait calendar, Canadian stage calendar, Canadian college calendar, and Montreal calendar, each containing 13 views.

E.H.C.