

SUCCESS IN THE BOOK TRADE.

From The Publishers' Weekly.

It is thought by many that the conditions now confronting the book trade are of recent development, but the older members of the trade can look back fifty years and hardly ever find a year when authors, publishers and retail dealers did not have grievances and thoughts and talks about the good old times.

Seeing the name of Herbert Spencer prominent in the correspondence relating to free copies of new books to five privileged libraries, which has recently appeared in The London Times, specially brought up the fact that since 1852 this philosopher has firmly and steadily opposed legislation in the interest of either author, publisher, or bookseller, always claiming that left to the individual, with freedom guaranteed to all, the old rule of survival of the fittest will work out for the best good of the largest number.

Mr. Marston has been doing some figuring, the result of which is startling to the English publisher. His figures are only approximate, but no one seems to think that they are an underestimate. He estimates that the number of volumes that the British publisher has presented to the British Museum, and the four other public libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Dublin, during the past eight years, is 250,000 volumes, which, if taken at an average of 5s., amounts to the prodigious sum of £62,500. Estimating on the sixty years of Queen Victoria's reign, the British publisher has given 1,500,000 books, representing £375,000, to these libraries.

Mr. Spencer claims the gift to libraries during the past eight years has come from the authors. "In the publisher's accounts," he says, "the author is debited with the five copies, as he is with all gratis copies distributed on his behalf. The tax is levied by the nation on him whether he makes anything by his book or not, and no less when it entails on him a loss. During the first twelve years of my literary life every one of my books failed to pay for its paper, print, and advertisements, and for many years after failed to pay my small living expenses—every one of them made me the poorer. Nevertheless, the forty millions of people constituting the nation demanded of the impoverished brain-worker five gratis copies of each. There is only one simile occurring to me which at all represents the fact, and that in but a feeble way—Dives asking alms of Lazarus!"

Mr. Marston in a second letter explained that he used the word "publisher" because it was the word used in the Act, but what he was really concerned about was the principle, not whether the burden would be borne by

author or publisher. Then came Mr. Lecky to say that, in his opinion, any change that made the great libraries less complete than at present would be "a serious calamity to literature." Again a new point of view—the reader's.

And as it is in one question it is in all. The great point is to learn to discuss things fairly, and to respect the opinions of all; to

differ with good feeling and to keep always in mind that the secret of success, even in the book trade, will sooner or later be traced to personality, to the extent to which an author, publisher or retailer can make himself liked, and personally attract those from whom he must make his living. It is a good creed that almost all men really think they are doing right!

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