

ILLUSTRATED COVERS.

Though it has passed into an adage that a book is not to be judged by its cover, it is probably a fact that the cover does more to promote or retard the sale of certain classes of books among certain classes of readers than in general does the reputation of the author or any other circumstance. Particularly is this true of cheap editions of novels intended merely for passing perusal, not for preservation on one's shelves, and of other works of fiction whose title gives no keynote to the nature of their contents. The first, which are published for the trade of a single season, must commonly be offered for sale in districts where nothing is known of the author; all other embellishments that will be likely to foster and stimulate the demand are therefore usually employed. On the covers of paper-backed novels which have a colorless title, a design that is illustrative or symbolic of some leading feature or character in the story is of use to all classes of readers to determine them for or against purchasing. Very often the person most widely conversant with current literature has little else to go upon than the prepossessions that are formed by the picturesque outside of a book. Hence it is generally better for a publisher to run the risk that the design will repel than to trust to a bald title on an unadorned cover. The picture of a streak of jagged lightning playing across a black sky, illuminating for a moment some dread spectacle on a weird seashore or other uncanny spot, may not be elevating, may not be art, but it will win readers where a blank would not, and will estrange no more readers than a blank would, the title and the reputation of the author being both out of the consideration.

The cover, therefore, is not an entirely superficial test, from the seller's point of view at all events. It ought to have something on it to prefigure or give a clue to the nature of the story. This helps to make the sale of the book independent of the literary knowledge or ignorance of the purchaser. The assumption that everybody knows something about authors and about books puts on a very precarious basis the business of selling transient works. There are so many authors of such books that even the best read people cannot claim to know something about the writer of every book that appears. New writers are always cropping up, and good ones are sometimes long in the field before their merit is recognized. There is no doubt that some of them could be helped into fame more rapidly by the expedient of a fittingly designed cover to their works.

The novels in the Red Letter Series of the National Publishing Co. have always had the advantage of individuality in this respect, the original and appropriate designs on the covers being a factor on the side of the book seller in furthering the sale of them. Mr. A. M. Irving, whose clever pencil sketched the

designs for these covers, has shown in that work great felicity of judgment and taste, as well as fertility of ideas. The constant draft on him for conceptions has not had the effect it might be expected to have, of causing overstrained or far-fetched handiwork; simplicity characterizes his work all the way through. He seizes upon salient points in the story, and there is something very graphic as well as simple in the lettering, or in such pictures as an overflowing ink-bottle, a pair of stirrups, a spider web, an office file, etc. which not only ornament the cover, but throw a strong side-light on the title.

AMONG THE WHOLESALEERS.

Messrs. Gage & Co have been altering and improving their offices.

R. J. Berkinshaw, the Canadian agent of Funk & Wagnalls, is removing from Bay street to more commodious premises at 11 Richmond street west.

Most of the fancy and sporting goods houses are sending out their travellers on their journeys with spring goods, and until orders begin to roll in, trade is naturally quiet.

The new series of Drawing Books issued by the Canada Publishing Co., seems to be very good. Numbers one, two and three have been issued, and four, five, and six will appear next month.

The sporting goods season has arrived and among the many handlers of these classes of goods Messrs. H. A. Nelson & Sons have an abundant stock of first class goods, especially in cricket supplies.

Messrs. Copp, Clark & Co. have issued a catalogue of Spalding's goods, footballs and croquet sets. They have all Spalding's latest novelties, such as their New Patent Sun Protecting Mask and their new special League Mitt.

Bushnell's Letter Copying Book, by which copying is done without a press, is a new article for travellers or small business men, which is sold by Brown Bros. It is cheap and very convenient as well as efficient. This house has also a very pretty line of wedding stationery, of which the styles are new and attractive, also a nice variety of ball programmes.

A very nice line of celluloid balls, and a good variety of standard celluloid-bound mouth organs are about to be placed on the market by Hickson, Duncan & Co. This firm is also showing a beautiful line of sticks with buckhorn and oxydized silver handles, also many new varieties in spring goods, such as Claphaw's cricket goods, hammocks, lacrosse, &c.

The "Bisley" pencil, a novelty in the form of a cartridge, and a silver pocket-pencil in the form of a wire-nail made in two sizes, are two of the latest notions placed before the trade by the Copp, Clark Co. This firm have been making some improvements in their

games, Periwinkle, Louisa and Obstacles, by making the boxes stronger and heavier. They are also preparing new lines of various other games, such as Upper-Ten, Cuckoo, Tonsil, Chivalry, Zenobia, Snap, Lotta, and Backgammon. Their new school scribbler, May flowers, is very neat.

PRICES OF TORONTO DAILIES.

The following communication was sent from the St. Catharines Booksellers' Association to each of the Toronto daily papers in reference to their combine rates:

ST. CATHARINES, JAN. 18, 1892.

The Booksellers' Association of this city desire to call your attention to one point in the "code" of prices lately adopted by the Toronto publishers, which they consider very unfair to the newsdealer.

We do not object to the yearly subscription for the daily Globe being raised to \$6, nor to the commission of \$1 allowed newsdealers on yearly subscriptions, but we strongly object to being charged 2c. per copy (equal to \$6.26 per year) when the subscription price is only \$6.

You will perhaps say we can provide for our yearly subscribers by collecting from them in advance and paying in advance, retaining our commission, but we find that when the newspaper trade is combined with a stationery business, our customers will not pay more than the published subscription price for their papers, and a large proportion of them will not pay in advance. The newsdealer must therefore either supply the paper at a loss of 26c. a year or pay a half year's subscription in advance, and take chances on collecting in three, six, nine, or twelve months. When monthly settlements are made promptly as we know they are in our own cases, it is practically a cash transaction, and as we stand between the publishers and the public, bearing all losses in collections, we contend that for papers supplied on monthly settlements the prices as should be so arranged to leave a fair margin, say 20 per cent. to the dealer.

We submit the following statement of the prices charged by a few of the leading papers in the United States in support of our contention. You will notice that they are more liberal to the dealer.

	per copy.	amounting to per year.	yearly subscription.
Buffalo Express	1 1/2	\$5.43	\$8.00
Buffalo Courier	1 1/2	5.43	8.00
New York Herald	2 1/4	7.04	8.00
New York World	1 1/4	5.43	6.00
Toronto Globe	2	6.26	6.00

The New York Herald and World give full credit for unsold copies, thus saving the dealer from loss in that way.

We hope you will reconsider this matter, and as the newsdealer stands between the publishers and the risks and annoyances of the retail trade, will arrange prices so that they will have some encouragement and satisfaction as well as profit in handling newspapers; otherwise we will be compelled to keep our supplies down to the very lowest point in order to save ourselves from loss.

Signed

GEO. TAIT,
D. W. BINBY,
B. C. TANFIELL,
M. Y. KEATING.