

THE IMPERIAL COPYRIGHT BILL.

THE QUESTION OF COPYRIGHT IN NEWS.

THE text of the Imperial Copyright Bill, as amended by the select committee of the House of Lords, has been issued in London as a Parliamentary paper. The bill will come up for adoption next session. The bill is accompanied by a memorandum, signed by Lord Thring, which states that the bill relates only to literary copyright, leaving artistic copyright to be dealt with in a separate bill. The alterations made by the measure in the existing law are in the main based on the report of the Copyright Commission which was appointed in 1875 and reported in May, 1878.

Literary copyright is divided into three parts—(1) copyright, properly so-called, or the right of multiplying copies of books; (2) performing right, or the right of publicly performing dramatic or musical works; and (3) lecturing right, or the right of orally delivering lectures. The bill adopts the recommendation of the Copyright Commission and makes the term of copyright in a book to last during the author's life and 30 years after the end of the year in which he dies, and no longer. The term of copyright in dramatic and musical works is assimilated to that of books, as also is the term during which a lecture is proposed to be protected.

Clauses 7 to 12 of the bill contain special provisions as to anonymous and posthumous works, joint authorship, plurality of authors, copyright in encyclopædias, reviews and magazines, new editions, and newspapers. The noticeable proposed changes in the law are that, according to the recommendation of the Copyright Commission, a term of 30 years from the date of publication is, in the case of posthumous works, substituted for the term of 42 years under the existing law, and in the case of contributors of articles to periodical works their right to republish them in a separate form is much accelerated by providing that they may issue them in a separate form after two years from the time of their publication in the periodical work, instead of after the lapse of 28 years, as is the case under the existing law.

Clause 12, which deals with copyright in news, is as follows:

"The proprietor of any newspaper or news agency in the British Islands, who has obtained specially and independently news of any fact or event which has taken place beyond the limits of those islands shall be entitled for the space of 18 hours immediately succeeding its publication to the exclusive right of publishing such news, and any person in the British Islands who publishes the same without the assent of the proprietor who has obtained the news shall be liable to a penalty, to be recovered summarily or by action, not exceeding the amount of £1 for every copy in which he publishes the same, and not exceeding in the whole £50. Where two or more of such proprietors have obtained news of the same fact or event specially and independently they shall all have equal rights as against all persons who have not obtained the news, but all rights shall cease 18 hours after the first publication of such news."

It may be noted that in the chairman's memorandum the

penalty for breach of copyright under Clause 12 is stated to be £2 for each copy, and nothing is said about a maximum.

With respect to Clause 12, Lord Thring says:

"This clause adds to the law by making 'news,' independently of the form in which it is conveyed, the subject of copyright, and imposing an efficient penalty for its infringement. The whole subject is fully discussed in the evidence of Mr. Moberly Bell, given in 1898 (862-1,072), and of Mr. Whorlow, given in 1899 (1,639 1,690 and 2,545 2,680). A similar provision to that in the bill has been enacted in Natal, New Zealand, and Tasmania. There seems no reason why news acquired by the exercise of great ability on the part of special correspondents and at great expense, should not be protected by copyright as much as a letter or article commenting on the news so acquired."

It is interesting to Canadian publishers to observe that, while the proposed law as to copyright in books applies to Canada, the clause relating to copyright in news does not. It only covers newspapers and news agencies in the "British Islands."

THE OLD HAND PRESS FOR SALE

An old hand press for sale—old, but in perfect order, and able to do good work yet.—Georgia Exchange.

They're sellin' of the old hand press—that's what the papers say—
The press the editors have "pulled" until their locks were gray;
The press the "Old Subscriber" loved in days that are no more—
That printed all the country news from Jinks' to Jones's store.

They're sellin' of the old hand press. The office boy is old—
The last of all its editors has joined the heavenly fold;
No more 'twill welcome "Major Green and family to town,"
Or tell us of the melon crop from Billville up to Brown.

They're sellin' of the old hand press. Full many a breezy day
When they came to whip the editor we've seen him blaze away
With his double-barrelled shotgun—till they fled in deep distress
From the buckshot as they rattled round the old hand press!

It looks so lonely and forlorn! Oh, heartless auctioneer,
Be careful when you cry it out to read its title clear!
For though they have it up for sale I do not love it less,
For the editor has whaled me on the old hand press!

—Atlanta Constitution.

THE CIRCULATION BOOMER.

We have some cheerful circulation liars in Canada, but "the old folks at home" can beat us even in this. For nearly three days a London jury was occupied in hearing a charge of fraud against the owners of two weekly papers now defunct, *Anecdotes* and *Domestic Life*, who let advertising spaces therein to Messrs. H. T. B. Browne, Limited, receiving £92 1s. 2d. per month. Each month a guarantee was given of a circulation of 155,000 copies per week for *Domestic Life*. The first week 77,330 copies only were printed, and on May 7 and July 4 the numbers were 4,251 and 4,004, respectively. The sale of *Anecdotes* was certified at 245,000, while the actual numbers printed never exceeded 26,000.—Can. Mil. Gaz.

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISTS.

Seven hundred members and guests signified their intention to be present at the annual conference of the Institute of Journalists at Liverpool this month. The president of the year is Sir Wemyss Reid, L.L.D.; and Mr. Charles Birchall, the chairman of the Liverpool district, is actively assisted in the work of the reception committee by the two Liverpool journalists who are past presidents of the institute, Sir Edward R. Russell and Sir John Willox, M.P.