

BOOK-SELLING—A DANGEROUS TRADE.

Every lover of books ought to read the communication from the Book-sellers' Association of Adelaide which we are glad to print below. If its statements are true, and we have no reason to doubt them, they reveal a very serious danger, nothing less than the eventual closing up of the better-class book shops of Adelaide.

At the best of times high-class book-selling ought to be reckoned among the dangerous trades. To begin with most of the book-sellers' stock comes from thousands of miles away. He has no chance of seeing it before he buys it, for if he waits for a sample copy before ordering in bulk he is left hopelessly behind. No doubt, he has a London buyer. But the buyer is probably not an Australian, and a book that will be a success in England may be a complete failure in Australia. Even if the buyer is an Australian, unless he is constantly revisiting his native land he soon loses touch. Then, too, school books and technical books, scientific, theological, medical, are quickly out of date. A new school-master or professor comes along and his order is to "scrap the lot." The sweet-seller knows that he cannot go wrong with chocolates or ice creams. But the book-seller sees himself left with a large stock to be got rid of below cost price.

No doubt it is very tempting to order a big expensive book that one knows one will need direct from Home. Somehow or other real book-lovers are usually hard up and the book-seller understands and does not mind.

What he does object to is when an Association, or Institution, or a Government Department makes a business of this sort of thing and does it regularly and on a large scale. If these bodies make use of their privileged position to undersell the book-sellers there can only be one end. For the time being indeed certain favoured people would get good books more cheaply. But the end would be that high-class book-sellers would disappear. And we have high-class book-

sellers in Adelaide, men who look on their work as a vocation, as it really is, men who are trying to help us in Adelaide to justify our rather lightly-given title of the City of Culture. In these days at any rate culture is impossible without books, most of all in a country so spiritually and intellectually isolated as Australia is.

Every reader knows what a price-less boon it is to be able to browse among the books on a counter and to "look before one leaps" instead of having to order from England a book that one has never seen. But it is only possible to do this because the book-seller has the courage to order an expensive book with a limited appeal on the chance that someone may buy it.

Perhaps it will be said that the book-seller marks his books too high. We confess to having thought so ourselves at times! We have pictured the great profits that he makes. But the facts do not seem to point that way. When some famous Melbourne book-sellers moved from Collins Street and amalgamated with another firm it has been freely said that the best book shop in Melbourne could not pay the rent which the tea-shop that took its place was glad to do.

Here in Adelaide two well-known booksellers have given up the trade and two other firms have amalgamated. It does not look as tho' there is a fortune in the business! We appeal to all lovers of good books who are convinced of what they need here to put their convictions into practice and for the sake not merely of the book-sellers but of sound learning to make up their minds to resist all temptations to order their books in any other way than through the local bookseller. By so doing they will only act justly to a body of men who, on the whole, are trying to live up to the best traditions of an honourable calling and to keep us in far away Australia in touch with what the world is thinking to-day.

FROM THE BOOKSELLERS' ASSOCIATION.

In Adelaide there are Bookselling Institutions subsidised by the Government, Heads of Institutions paid out of the pockets of local people, who import large quantities of books through agencies in England, and by so doing are able to sell these books to the public at a lower price than the local Bookseller, who has to pay

local taxes, maintain staffs, meet high overhead charges and take big risks in stocking books whose sale is frequently very uncertain.

These unfair competitors incur no risks, have no heavy business expenses such as are born by the shopkeeper and carry no stocks at their own personal responsibility. They compete in this unfair way with the legitimate trader who is anxious to provide the best and most comprehensive range of books and who is prepared to take big risks in providing for the book-buying public.

Lifting the question from the merely commercial basis to higher grounds, there is a wider and nobler reason why this nibbling prices should be discounted. It is the educational influence that well-conducted bookshops have on the community—the opportunity they extend for stimulating thought and the desire for knowledge. It is no exaggeration to say that the members of our Association have this continually in view. Whether their stocks consist of theology, technical and industrial books, or represent the wider fields of science, art and letters, they are all contributing to this end, entirely at their own individual risk. When it is known that the net incomes from first-class bookshops are incomparably smaller than those of second-rate sweet-shops, can it be only for the sake of profit that booksellers continue as such? The idea is simply ridiculous; the more so when the disparity in capital is considered.

If any further evidence for the educational necessity for the existence of bookshops be sought, we venture to attach an extract from the important document issued by H.M. Stationery Office, on "The Teaching of English in England." Of the Commission which held the enquiry and furnished the report, Sir Henry Newbolt was chairman, and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch was a prominent member. The extract reads:—

"An educated bookseller is in a position to render a great service to the community; and we believe that the English teachers of the near future will, in turn, be glad to lend such a benefactor all the assistance in their power, by encouraging their pupils to become his customers. In every town the bookseller's shop should become what in university cities and in one or two other favoured spots it is already, a centre of literary and artistic interest and enlightenment; a place where the best books, new and old, can be inspected at leisure."

These words may well be left to speak for themselves. We venture only one more thought in this connection, viz., that so far as our public teachers are concerned for the intellectual prestige of the community wherein they labour, and from whom they derive their incomes, to that extent should they give all the support in their power to the bookshops in their midst.

WINTER IN CANADA

Comparison with Adelaide

SLEIGH-RIDES POPULAR

(By Dr. H. Heaton)

Recently the cables from Australia spoke of little but heat waves and fierce bush fires. Illustrated weeklies from Melbourne depicted scenes of bathing belles, and a particularly pithy, picturesque letter from an Adelaide friend condemned Capt. Cook to the eternal fires for "stealing Australia from the blacks, for whom alone it is a fit habitation."

When I show the bathing pictures to Canadians they just gasp, recall from the memories of long-distant geography lessons that winter here is summer south of the Equator, and remark either that Australia would be too hot for them or ejaculate the fashionable exclamation "For pity's sake!"

Strange how little one half the world knows about the other half!

Since Adelaide letters suggest that the writers imagine us sitting with frozen noses and shivering limbs on top of an iceberg or a snowdrift, or fishing through a hole in the ice on the lakes, let me try to describe what a Canadian winter is like.

Since the end of November the thermometer on the verandah has only for short spells been above freezing point. The damp air and nasty, slushy snow of those spells make one pray that the thaw will soon end. At times the mercury takes a headlong plunge below zero, and one famous day it dipped down to minus 24, which, being interpreted, means 56 degrees of frost. But such cold snaps are rare and of short duration: just as 109 degrees in the shade in Adelaide means that a cool spell will soon turn up.

A very cold day here presages a week of warmer weather. You watch these waves of warm or cold sweep over the continent. They start at the foot of the Rockies, and day by day you follow their eastward progress, until at last they reach Eastern Canada. Today, for instance, we are getting a snow wave which put the snow-ploughs to work in the West three days ago.

Great Social Season

On the roofs across the street snow lies nearly a foot thick. From the guttering hang festoons of icicles, some of them six to eight feet long, while down in the street the motors plough along at a pace little quicker than that of their great rival, the sleigh.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY.

Though life is made up of mere bubbles
It is better than many aver,
For while we've a whole lot of troubles,
The most of them never occur.

—Waterman.

Sleighs are the normal way of getting along the roads, and they provide a transport service for every purpose. Your coal, milk, bread, groceries, meat, and even your Christmas parcel mail, all come by sleigh. Today a party of my students has gone on a sleigh-ride across the lake to the United States side to look at a huge paper-making factory. No children's birthday party is complete unless it includes a sleigh drive in its programme. There are few things more attractive than the constant jingle of sleigh bells in a quiet street.

Ask a young Canadian which he prefers, winter or summer, and his reply in ninety cases out of a hundred will be winter. For although summer means baseball, fishing, canoes, and a cottage in the woods or on the lakeside, winter is the wonder season for the young. The cold means nothing in terms of discomfort unless it sinks too far below zero. Your houses are constantly warm, and you wear lighter clothes indoors than you would indoors in an Australian winter.

For the outdoor life you wrap up warmly—I have not been out without goloshes, muffler, gloves, and greatcoat since November—and then the tingle of the crisp air and the brilliance of the sunshine make you want to run or walk hard for a few miles.

Secret of Canadian Charm

That bright sunshine is the secret of the charm of Canada. Without it five months of white ground and leafless trees would be unbearable. But given the sun one must get out of doors, lured by the blue sky reflecting itself and making the snow look a transparent blue, while the shadows of the trees stand out in rich black relief. Canadian art is riotous in color, the red of the fall and the blue and white of the winter. I would like to see one or two Canadian canvases in the

Youngsters here do not bother about art. They are too keen on skating, skiing, ice hockey, and tobogganing. Every hill becomes a toboggan slide, and every open space a battle-ground for a snow-ball fight. As for skating, the Canadian babe seems to learn to skate so soon as he learns to walk.

Civic authorities, Rotarians, and the other similar organisations with which this country is infected spend much money fitting up outdoor skating rinks on the schoolgrounds or in the parks, while there is always the lake nearby. So the boys and girls live much of their spare time on the ice. They are swift, sure-footed, full of tricks and fancy swerves, graceful, and unconcerned. Later on the boys will become expert in that fastest of all games, ice hockey, a sport which for agility, speed, and skill is to football what an aeroplane is to a tractor.

For the less energetic grown-ups winter is the great social season. With storm windows up, every crevice packed, and a good fire in the central heating furnace, the cold loses its terrors, although at a price in fuel bills that would drive an arbitration court judge to despair. We have never yet had cause to light a fire in the grate. So the winter evenings fly past in a round of bridge parties, dances, concerts, dinners, suppers, or quiet spells of reading.

Australian Butter Used

The Canadian party is an affair of infinite resource and sagacity, with the most unexpected devices for adding to the enjoyment of one's guests, with salads (that taste like desserts) eaten with a fork, with scones that are called "tea biscuits" and just now are spread with Australian butter, with feed water and icecream in the depth of winter. But there is no claret cup, for this is a dry province and the average University teacher cannot afford the luxury of keeping a bootlegger.

To all this life, outdoor and indoor, we have found it easy to adapt ourselves. Canada and Australia are much alike in their lack of snobbish reserve and in their open-hearted hospitality, even although Canadians do not offer you tea at every hour of the day. They offer coffee instead, but some of our new friends are showing a suspicious tendency to stroll in accidentally at hours when they know that there is something in the teapot.

When our young kangaroos dash round the skating rink like experts within a week of first putting on skates, when one of them comes home covered in snow, and explains that he has been making pictures of angels by lying on his back in the snow and working his arms up and down on the surface, you realise that children are very adaptable things, and that between the kangaroo and the bear there is little difference.