

It is announced in *The Book and News Dealer* (New York, February) that L. C. Page & Co. of Boston have withdrawn from the Publishers' Association, despite numerous efforts on behalf of publishers and booksellers to induce them to change their minds. They believe "that their best interests will be conserved by issuing their books independent of the Publishers' Association." The paper named above goes on to say:

"The publishers who are protecting the retail prices of their books are particularly anxious to know whether retail dealers will buy and put on sale the books of a publisher who withdraws all protection and issues his books under such conditions that the retail price may be cut without limit." What do librarians say?

At the annual meeting of the American Publishers' Association, the request of the Booksellers' Association that fiction be issued hereafter at net prices and the period of protection extended to two years, was referred to the Directors for report.

Attention is called to *The Book and News Dealer*, of which, by request of this committee, sample copies have been sent to all members of the A. L. A. Note particularly the lists of protected books, and items of information bearing on the net price system.

In a recent editorial *The Evening Post* (New York, Jan. 20,) thus dwells on the lack of low-priced serious literature as follows:

"It is one of the weaknesses of our Anglo-Saxon civilization, that whereas the price of newspapers, of magazines, and of fiction has steadily tended downwards, such has not been the case with what may be described conveniently as serious literature—literature that ranges from poetry through history to philosophy. How this affects our national position may be shown by a comparison with France. That country has a standard price of publication, 70 cents a volume, at which the bulk of current literature, both light and serious, is produced. Bourget's latest novel and Henri Houssaye on Waterloo appear on the book stall side by side and at the same price. And to say that this is simply because French serious literature is better written than ours is an exaggeration. A few years ago a London publisher set out to produce a translation of the complete works of Nietzsche. The first volume met with little encouragement;

the second was accompanied by a slip from the publisher stating that unless the public responded better he would have to abandon the enterprise; the third has never appeared. In France, all of Nietzsche's works have long since been translated, and the least sold had run some years ago into several thousands.

"Here we have not a question of style, but of price; not of the positive value of Nietzsche, but of intellectual curiosity. And we get a rough demonstration that in France, with less than forty millions of people, there are probably from five to ten persons who buy serious books to one in the English-speaking countries with nearly four times the population. If that is only approximately so, it is a terrible reproach to our civilization; and it is partly the result of the inflated prices charged for new works of serious literature. It should not be forgotten that the class of the community which buys, or might buy, such books, is one that feels very keenly the difference between paying less than a dollar or from two to six dollars. In Paris the publisher who should raise his price would lose his public; in London or New York the publisher who should lower his price would find the public unprepared and irresponsible. From the publishers there is little to hope save cheap reprints of works out of copyright; but might not an endowed press, working with steady policy over a course of years, help us? By inflexibly demanding adequate literary expression, by standardizing its prices at a low figure, by giving unknown authors a chance on their merits, by supporting scholars in difficult but little-trodden paths, it might serve a great national purpose."

We have yet no endowed press, but we have endowed and tax-supported public libraries.

Can not they do something to make the American public less "unprepared and irresponsible" to efforts in behalf of serious literature?"

An instance of the way public libraries help publishers in spite of what has been said to the contrary. Anjou, P. O. Box 812, N. Y., says that almost 500 public libraries subscribe to his American Record series, the first volumes of which are the Probate records of Ulster County, New York. Books appealing to a wider audience would naturally get even more library subscribers than did this.

The Copyright Conference met in final session at Washington on March 13th, and approved the measure regarding the importation of copyright books that was agreed upon between the representatives of the A. L. A. on the one hand and the Publishers' Association on the other. Particulars in No. 23.

Address inquiries and suggestions to any of the Committee. Arthur E. Bostwick, Chairman, N. Y. P. L., 209 W. 23; John Cotton Dana, Newark (N. J.) F. P. L.; Bernard C. Steiner, Enoch Pratt, F. L., Baltimore, Md.