

Authors Memorial.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:

THE undersigned, Men of Letters, and Citizens of the United States, interested in many ways in the cause of Literature, petition your honorable bodies for the passage of a law for the proper regulation of the copy-right of books. Having considered the matter in all its various aspects, and under all the light shed upon it by the repeated discussions of the last few years, they beg respectfully to represent,

That the tenure of literary property in this country is an anomaly among the tenures of every other kind of property, for which no good reason has been or can be assigned; which is unjust in the very nature of it, and extremely injurious in its practical operations.

That the author of a book is the sole and exclusive owner of it, as much as the farmer is of his land, or the merchant of his bale of goods; and that, whether he be a native of this country or of a foreign country, the Republic is bound, by the recognized morality of every enlightened and christian people, to guarantee and defend his property against invasion, as much as it is bound to protect the ordinary commodities of commerce.

That the American government, by denying to foreign authors the copy-right of their books, while it is grossly unjust towards them, inflicts an irreparable injury upon its own authors, by compelling them to enter the market under a system of the most disadvantageous competition; and thus fills the channels of circulation with an unpaid and often corrupt foreign literature, to the partial exclusion, if not to the entire extinction, of all sound and healthful native products.

That the reading of the American people does not, at this time, harmonize with their just desires, their wants and their institutions.

That American authors who can best satisfy these, some of whom have grown gray in the honorable service of the country, and others entering upon what they hoped might be a useful career, will be and are crowded aside, not only from lack of remuneration, but from want of general sympathy in their pursuits, into other pursuits from which they cannot be recalled.

That the business of book publishing, which is one of vast public consequence, has become an irregular and uncertain traffic, discouraging to the employment of sound mercantile industry and skill.

That American authors, while they deprecate a merely dollar and cent discussion of this question, —as they desire, nothing more, the good will and affection of their countrymen, would at all times desire that books should be furnished to them at such rates as to secure the widest circulation and most general usefulness.

That a native literature may be said, without disparagement to other and more generally recognized branches of the public service, to be of at least as much national consequence as the navy, the army, the public beacons, and the establishment of public highways and means of intercommunication.

That experience, which has been long and ample, teaches us that there is no other rectifying influence of a sufficiently potent character to amend these evils and justify the good results hoped for, but the law now sought.

For these considerations, for every consideration of Right, of Honor and National Self-respect, your memorialists ask at your hands a bill to equalize all copy-rights, native and foreign, of books printed and published, originally or simultaneously, in this country and abroad. They ask this bill now, of the Congress now in session; and they ask instant and careful heed to their prayer, for they aver that upon your decision hangs in no humble measure something of the better and higher life of the Republic, not seen yet strong beyond account, for good or evil, impalpable to the ~~eye~~^{senses}, yet filling the future with shapes of apprehension or joy, as your honorable body may find it in you to determine.

New York December 28. 1843.

New York.

International Synopses
Action of Albert Gallatin,
William Cullen Bryant,
Graham C. Verplanck,
Nitz Green Halleck,
A. P. Willis, Orville
Dewey & other Citizens
of New York

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C. J. Ingersoll
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Feb 19. 1844

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J. Burritt Curtis.

Wm. D. Bartbridge
Clinton Hoar

Edmund Rogers

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