

Humbly offered to the Consideration of the Honourable

# House of Commons,

Relating to the Bill,

## For Securing Property in Books, &c.

**P**rinting, Binding and Selling Books, is become a considerable Manufacture of this Kingdom; so, that it is Worthy the Care of this Honourable House, to provide for the Improvement of a Trade, which is of so great Importance to the Publick; but the Misfortune of it, hath been the Perpetual, and too Successful Endeavours of some Mercenary, and Self-ended Men, to engross the chief Branches, of the whole Trade into their Hands by way of Patents, and thereby raise Exorbitant Profits to themselves; to the Prejudice of the Nation in General, and all Persons concerned in Printing, Binding and Selling Books.

The Gros of the Manufacture of Books, consists of such Books as are in Use for the Service of God, as the *Bible, Testament, Common-Prayer, Singing Psalms, &c.* or such as are in Use in Schools, as *Primers, Psalters, Grammars;* and so on to the *Classick* Authors, or such sound Pieces of Practical Divinity, as have obtained a General Reputation, such as the *Whole Duty of Man, the Practice of Piety, &c.* As to *Bibles, Testaments, &c.* they are Monopolized by a Patent to some particular Persons; School-Books, &c. are Monopolized by the Company of Stationers; and these Patentees have made it their constant Endeavour, to get Clauses inserted in Laws made for other Purposes, to fortifie their Patents, that under such Protection, they might with Impunity, impose what Extravagant Rates they pleased on their Books; which I doubt not will plainly Appear to have been very prejudicial to the Kingdom in general, and all other Traders in Books, but themselves.

Nothing will plainer prove this, than a Review of those Times in which the Act for Printing was in Force: The Patentee for *Bibles, &c.* took 2 s. 6 d. for ordinary *Bibles*, which they now sell for 16 d. The Company of Stationers sold 150 *Primers* for 20 s. which considering the Cheapness of Paper in those Days, was full two Thirds more than their prime Cost; and 8 d. per Book for *Psalters*, which was very near 4 times the prime Cost, and which they have sold since for 4 d. and do now for 6 d. and so generally in all other Patent-Books: The Consequence of which Extortion was, that the Trade of the Nation was Discouraged, the Poor oppressed and forced to give Treble the Value for such Books, as were absolutely necessary for the Education of their Children; which no doubt contributed to the Increase of Ignorance, and all its Consequences.

As to Trade, these Practices had this Effect: The *Dutch* Printed prodigious Numbers of *Bibles, Testaments, Common-Prayers, Psalters, &c.* And by them was the remote Parts of this Kingdom, *Scotland, Ireland,* and all Our Forreign Plantations supply'd, while our Own Printers (being thus deprived of so large a Part of their Trade) were reduced to Poverty; and great Numbers of Binders of Books, either wanted Employment, or being Tempted by their Necessities, to Bind such Forreign Printed Books, have had them Seized in their Hands, and have been Ruined by the Penalty of that Act, and the Clandestine Contrivances of the Patentees.

As for Property, it is Secured by Law already; and those Persons that complain of want of Security, have it in their Power to secure themselves, and benefit the Nation, by taking Just and Moderate Prizes for their Books; and if they will not do so, it is hoped they will never be Incouraged in their Extravagant Extortions by a Law.



As I hope I have (with Submission) given clear Instances of their Extortion, so the Evil Consequences of it plainly appear by this, when *Bibles* were Sold at 2 s. 6 d. per Book, Multitudes were brought hither from *Holland*, but now they are but 16 d. per Book, Double the Quantity is Sold at Home, and scarce a Dutch *Bible* to be seen or heard of.

It is alledged to be a great Injury to Reprint any Copy, that another Person hath given a Valuable Consideration for, and Run the Risque of Printing first; and indeed so it is, and it is reasonable People should be restrained from it: But with humble Submission, this is not the Case of the Patentees above-mention'd, they do not run the Hazard a Bookfeller does in Printing a private Copy, which sometimes Sells so Dull, as not to Reinburse him his Charges: Whereas those they Claim, are Books of Publick, and Perpetual Use; of which many Thousands are Vended every Year.

The Company of Stationers, have often acknowledg'd their Patent was granted to the end, the Subjects of this Kingdom might be supply'd with such Books fairly Printed, at Moderate Prizes; but contrary to what they acknowledge was the Intent of their Grants, they have Sold many Impressions of Books, which have been Printed in such Unworkman-like Manner, and on such Coarse Paper, that they were scarce Legible to expert Readers.

It would be an Intrusion on your Patience, to recite the Intreagues of these Patentees, and the Mischiefs thereof to the whole Nation in general; and as to this Bill, it may safely be averred, the Inconveniencies it prevents, are but Trifling to those it may cause: There are but few Instances, if any, of any considerable Dammage done to any Person in their Private Property; and would all Persons who have useful Copies in their Hands, be so Just to the rest of Mankind, as to dispose of them for Moderate Profit, there would be no Reason to fear it; but from the Experience of former Times, there is too much Reason to fear the End of this Bill is to enable Patentees, and Others, to Extort what they please for their Books: Which as in many Others, so in this Particular, will be a great Disadvantage to Scholars, and all Ingenious People, who will be made Pay double as much for Books, as their real Value is; to prevent which, it is Humbly Prayed, that a Clause may be added to this Bill, That all Patentees may be obliged to Sell their Books for 6 s. 8 d. in every Pound Profit, above the Prime Cost, and may be liable to a Penalty, if they presume to take more.

Note, Whereas it is constantly the Plea of the Company of Stationers, That they give 200 l. per Annum, out of the Profits of their Patent, toward the Support of Poor Members of their Company, they are desired to inform the World, what is done with the remaining Part of 3000 l. per Annum, which by a Modest Computation it is supposed they raise by their Patent, &c.