

REASONS Humbly Offer'd for the BILL for
Encouragement of Learning, and for Securing the Pro-
perty of Copies of Books to the Rightful Owners
thereof.



It seems very reasonable, that a Gentleman who has spent the greatest part of his Time and Fortune in a liberal Education, should have all the Advantages that may possibly be allowed him for his Writings; one of which is the sole and undoubted Right to the Copy of his own Book, as being the Product of his own Labour and Ingenuity, either to be preserved for the Benefit of himself, and his Posterity, or to be Assigned by others at his Discretion, which all Authors 'till lately have Enjoyed; and the Lord Chief Justice *Coke* was certainly of Opinion, that the

Author and his Assigns had, by Law, the sole Right to the Reprinting of Books, and no other, else he would not, as he really did, reserve to himself, and by his Will Devise to his Posterity the Right of Reprinting all the Books which he Writ, which were many and useful, as all the Learned in the Law well know.

Nor is it in *England* alone that this Copy-Right is observ'd, but in all other Countries whatsoever where Printing is Exercis'd: And it is but a few Years, since the Copies of Mr. *Henry Wetstein* of *Amsterdam* were sold for several Thousand Guilders.

If some good Law be not soon made to prevent the Corrupt Practices, now much used by Persons, who Reprint Books without the Consent of the Authors or Proprietors of the Copies; the Consequence will be, That no Person can afford to give an Author any Consideration for the most Valuable Copies of Books; and if the Author undertakes to get it Printed at his own Expence, he will be a very great Sufferer, for not one Book in Twenty does produce the prime Cost, if Printed well, and on good Paper, in less than four or five Years: And there are very few Books but what Cost 100*l.* Printing, and some above 1000*l.* And who will hazard such an Expence, if others be admitted to Reprint such Book without the Proprietors Leave; By which means Learned Men will be wholly Discouraged from Cultivating the most useful Parts of Knowledge and Literature, and Purity of Printing be in time totally Destroyed.

Some think that the Right of Copies of Books already Printed ought not to be preserved to the Proprietors any longer, as supposing they have made sufficient Profit of them, and that it may be reasonable to preserve the Property to the Owners of those hereafter to be Printed only for some short time, which will produce many Inconveniencies, even the Ruin of many Families, there being above 6000 People whose whole Dependance and Subsistence is upon the Trade of Printing, Book-binding, and Book-selling. All, or most of the Copies of Books of any Value now extant, or some Shares thereof, are Vested in the Authors, or their Posterity, or in others who have paid great Sums for them, and are settled as Estates on Marriages, and other good Considerations, the Owners deeming they had undoubted Right so to do, and intending them as Provisions for their Posterity: Many of those Books have not yet brought in sufficient to pay the first Charge, and some can afford to Print any Books of Value hereafter to be Compos'd, unless the sole Right be reserved to them.

If it be imagined that any Inconveniency may arise to the Subject by this Bill, as ill Printing, or on bad Paper, or that some Persons that may have Copies of useful Books, should, when such Books grow scarce, refuse to Reprint them; It may be reasonable, that the Persons in whom the Power shall be Lodg'd by this Bill, to settle the Prices of Books, may have also Power to Hear and Determine all Matters of Complaint, touching Paper and Printing, and to call before them the Proprietor and Author of any Copy of any Book grown scarce, and to Order such Book to be forthwith Reprinted by such Person or Persons as they shall think fit, in case of the Proprietors and Authors refusal to Reprint, or suffer any other to Reprint the same upon reasonable Terms.

This Bill doth not tend to settle a Monopoly, as some would Insinuate, since it doth not hinder any from Writing or Printing any other Book upon the same Subject; but to prevent the Corrupt Practices of those who Pirate other Mens Copies without giving any Encouragement to the Authors, who best deserve it; and will, if well Considered, be a general Good to all, except the unfair Dealers, who will ever be Discountenanced by all that wish well to this Nation, which now abounds in Learning, but will soon feel the fatal Effects of such ill Practices, if not Remedied by the Wisdom of this Honourable House.

There is nothing in this Bill, as is humbly conceived, that may be Prejudicial to the Publick; And since the Prices of Books are to be settled by such, in whom this Honourable House shall please to Lodge the Power, the Subject can't be imposed upon. And surely, if a Profit is to be made, none hath more Right to it than the Author or Owner of the Copy.

Note, If any Author has a Mind that the Right of his Copy should not be wholly Vested in the Printer, he may oblige the Printer not to Register the Copy in the *Stationers* Company's Book: Then the Property, as the Bill now stands, is not Vested in the Printer, and any other Person may be at Liberty to Reprint the same.