

Copy right Memorial

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled,

The Undersigned Citizens of New York humbly petition your Honorable Bodies to extend your protection to American Literature and believing the subject of their prayer to be at least of equal importance with the usual topics of Legislation they ask a respectful hearing.

They shew that an International Copy right Law is demanded by the plainest principles of justice both to foreign and American Authors.

In the absence of such a law foreign Authors are deprived of all the profits arising from the sale of their works in this Country; American Authors are deprived of a large part of the profits which would otherwise accrue to them at home, and generally of the entire proceeds arising from the publication of their books in England, which will be secured to them by an existing Act of Parliament whenever similar protection shall be extended to English Authors by the United States.

That the character of our Literature has already suffered from these causes. That many of our older writers are left to poverty and neglect, and younger talent languishes for want of support. That the Book publishing business, an important branch of our Manufactures and Commerce, from its wide extent and the tastes and knowledge belonging to the craft is in a sickly and irregular condition, and that American Literature cannot reasonably be expected to flourish, while its producers have no foreign market for their works, and must contend at home without protection against a most unequal competition.

Your Memorialists shew that the best and higher interests of the Country at large demand the passage of such a law since the want of it has tended to place us in a state of mental dependence upon Great Britain derogatory to our dignity and which should no longer have continued when ceasing to be her Colonies, we became a sovereign people and as the Literature of a Nation has a wider and deeper influence than its laws it is not difficult to understand that we may be still insensibly but really ruled by Monarchies beyond the sea.

That there is no need for such disgraceful dependence upon our part, America has herself sound thinkers and able writers who with a fair field and equal protection can to a far greater extent than at present supply their Countrymen with books suited to their wants.

That the unfavorable influence exerted by an indiscriminate foreign Literature may be seen in the growth of new and strange doctrines adverse to the spirit and the stability of our Republican Institutions and in the wide spreading of licentious books, the more dangerous from their cheapness flooding the whole land with pollution.

That it becomes not our Government ever professedly free and just to neglect the true interests of American Literature or to refuse to its own Authors that simple protection which they ask and which a foreign Monarchy has offered to reciprocate not only in regard to books but to Patents prints and designs of all kinds useful or ornamental.

Your Memorialists therefore for these among other reasons do respectfully and earnestly ask for the passage of a law that shall place foreign and American Authors on an equal footing and secure to the latter these advantages in other Countries to which they will become entitled by such action on your part.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

John Jay

Geo. Fred. Dean

Saml. D. Cochran

New York,

Memorial of John Jay & other
Citizens of New York for an In-
ternational Copyright Law.

1844 March 26.

Presented by H. Fish

Before the ~~Foreign~~ ~~Committee~~
on International Copyright

W. Fish.