

*See April 5, 1844*

# MEMORIAL.

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

THE undersigned, citizens of the United States, respectfully represent, that an effort is now making to induce your honorably body to pass a law entitled an "International Copy Right Law," for the protection of authors in Great Britain and the United States. The undersigned beg leave to present to Congress their views in relation to such a law, and to ask that the demand (for the language is not that of petition,) of those persons for this law may not be complied with.

Your petitioners do not think it necessary to go over the arguments of the demandants, but will only observe, what is plain to all, that in neither country is the perpetual right of an author to his published writings acknowledged, but that in both it is distinctly denied that they have any such right, and as your petitioners believe, with perfect justice.

In both countries the extent of the author's right is clearly defined and legally fixed by their respective governments. These facts being borne in mind, it will be seen that all arguments founded on the justice or right of the claim set up, are swept away at once. If in either country it were thought that the compensation of the author was not sufficient, the obvious remedy would be to extend the period of copy right at home. Ten years added to the term there, would add more to its value than any international law. It seems to your petitioners, then, that the ground of expediency is the only one on which this law can be urged. Is it for the advantage of the whole American people that this law should be enacted by Congress? Your petitioners say, decidedly, it is not. For how are we as a people to be affected by it? By far the greatest and best portion of the books read in the United States are, and it is presumed for many years will continue to be, the productions of the living authors of Great Britain. Their valuable works are scattered over our whole country as soon as they reach our shores, and sold at prices unparalleled for cheapness in any other part of the world; and from this source our people gain an amount of information that could be given them in no other way, and a taste for literature is created and fostered, alike beneficial to the reader and the American author and bookseller. To cut off this supply, as this law would entirely do, taking from our newspapers and journals the best portion of their contents, and destroying the great distribution of cheap books; and thus making the whole literature of England a blank to our people, would, in the opinion of your petitioners, retard the cause of popular education in our country more than all the efforts of government could do for its advancement in half a century. It seems to your petitioners that this subject is not to be considered as one between the authors and booksellers of Great Britain and the United States, but as between a great people and those who would deprive them of one of the most important rights incident to their position, for selfish ends; and they would look upon the passage of the demanded law as a great national calamity.

Your petitioners would further advert to the injurious effect the proposed law would have upon several important branches of business in the United States. The increased price of books consequent upon the passage of the law, would reduce the sales at least three quarters; and it can be seen at a glance how vitally this would affect the paper manufacturer, the printer, the type founder, the book-binder, and the various interests depending on them, in part at least, for support. In all the above named branches of business immense numbers of operatives are employed, a large proportion of whom are females. Thousands of these must inevitably be discharged and thrown upon the world for a precarious subsistence on the passage of the proposed law.

For the above reasons, of the many which might be given, against the passage of the said law, we would respectfully remonstrate against the prayer of the petitioners being granted.

<i>W. Johnson</i>	<i>James G. Smith</i>	<i>Platner &amp; Porter</i>	<i>Bentley</i>
<i>W. H. Chase</i>	<i>John P. Kelly</i>	<i>Joseph Chadwick</i>	<i>J. Bellinger</i>
<i>D. H. Colver</i>	<i>Edward Mathew</i>	<i>W. C. St. Leger</i>	<i>Henry J. Br</i>
<i>Compton</i>	<i>Chauncy J. Bliss</i>	<i>Franklin Sturgis</i>	<i>Carroll</i>