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DECREE OF STAR CHAMBER.

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A
DECREE OF STAR CHAMBER
CONCERNING PRINTING.



MADE JULY 11, 1637.



REPRINTED BY THE GROLIER CLUB, FROM THE
FIRST EDITION BY ROBERT BARKER, 1637.







PREFACE.



O the unprofessional reader, statute law is especially uninteresting. An explanation seems proper before the reprint of an English law which has been obsolete for more than two hundred years. But this decree has an exceptional interest. Although not the first nor the last of arbitrary laws for the regulating of printing, there is probably no other law in the English statute-book which so plainly shows the futility of meddling legislation.

The censorship of printing is almost as old as the invention of typography. Beginning

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ginning in 1486 with the mandate of the Archbishop of Mentz, who made fine and excommunication the penalties of unlicensed printing, repressive laws with more cruel penalties were soon after enacted by the legislators of every country in which printing was introduced. Although the uprooting of heresy was the object of these laws, it was soon found that the spread of heresy was not the only offense of the early press. Attacks against royal authority or patrician privilege were offenses quite as frequent, and even more irritating. But neither in England nor on the Continent were these offenses stopped by severity of punishment.

Believing that prevention would be better than cure, the legislators of England undertook to suppress seditious publications by making it difficult to buy books, or to have writings of any kind printed. It was expected by the framers of this decree, when it had been declared unlawful, without special authorization, to make, buy, or keep types or presses, or to practice the trade of a printer, publisher, or book-seller, or even to print unobjectionable

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able books, that printing would be found too full of risk to the politician or the patriot. Considering the limited number of printers who would be allowed to learn and practice the trade, it was believed that the fear of severe punishment on one side, and the hope of getting by favor lucrative patents or monopolies in printing on the other, would compel all printers to a careful observance of the laws.

From the thorough manner in which every loop-hole of evasion or escape is stopped up, this decree seems to have been modeled after a Spanish decree of 1550, which had been re-enforced by order of that great hunter of heresy, Philip II. of Spain. Compared with that, the English law is merciful. There are no penalties of burning alive or burying alive — no threats of torture or of maiming. The decree of the Star Chamber is an acknowledgment of a marked change in the temper of the English people. Excommunication had lost its terrors. It was not a humanitarian age, but even the legislators felt that there had been enough of burning alive during the reign of Mary. There
were

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were members of the Star Chamber who believed in the efficacy of torture, but they did not think it wise to specify torture as a penalty. Public whipping and the pillory were the severest corporal penalties that they dared name. The right to inflict more was veiled under the phrase, "and such other punishment as by this Honourable Court shall be thought fit." The people were not in a mood to be menaced by cruel punishment. Enough of indignation had been shown, in 1579, when Stubbs's right hand had been hacked off, and but a month before the enactment of this decree, when Prynne's ears had been cropped, to serve as a warning to legislators against the unwise provoking of a sudden rebellion.

The members of the Star Chamber saw this, but they could not wisely read other signs of the times. In the widespread popular discontent at laws which abridged the freedom of speech and of printing, the legislators saw only the rash actions of the few brave men who denounced the laws. They thought, or affected to think, that these men did not represent
one-tenth

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one-tenth of the people. That this belief would have been shaken, or destroyed, if printing had been free, cannot be doubted. If every Englishman could have had liberty to speak or print his thoughts, Charles and Laud and Strafford would have had forewarnings which might have saved them from the headsman's axe. Nowhere in history can one find an instance of sadder legislative folly than is shown in this decree. The people of England were boiling with discontent. Instead of trying to remove the causes that made the discontent, the ministers of Charles I. preferred to destroy its manifestations. Annoyed by a little hissing of steam, they closed all the valves and outlets, but did not draw or deaden the fires which made the steam. They sat down in peace, gratified with their work, just before the explosion which destroyed them and their privileges. In 1641, the Long Parliament brought the head of Strafford to the block, and the Court of Star Chamber was abolished; in 1645, Archbishop Laud was executed; in 1649, King Charles himself was beheaded.

This

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This decree is not of interest merely as a turning-point in the progress of civil liberty. In connection with the notes that follow, it may be read with profit by those who believe in the wisdom of laws that prevent or hinder the educating influences to be had from foreign books or works of art, or the transplanting of foreign ideas or beliefs; as well as by the trades-unionists who maintain that their trades would be improved and the public benefited by a restriction of workmen and of apprentices. We may rightfully smile at the folly and futility of many of the provisions of this decree; but it will be read to little purpose if it does not provoke the question — Will not the reader of the next century look on many of our meddlesome laws with as much wonder as we look on this decree of the seventeenth century?



A
D E C R E E
OF
Starre-Chamber,
C O N C E R N I N G
P R I N T I N G ,

*Made the eleventh day of July
last past. 1637.*



¶ Imprinted at London by *Robert Barker*,
Printer to the Kings most Excellent
Maiestie: And by the Assignes
of *Iohn Bill*. 1637.





In Camera Stellata coram Con-
cilio ibidem, vndecimo die
Iuly, Anno decimo tertio
CAROLI Regis.

T*His day Sir IOHN
BANKES Knight,
His Maiesties At-
tourney Generall,
produced in Court a Decree
drawn and penned by the aduice
of the Right Honourable the
Lord Keeper of the great Seale
of England, the most Reuerend
Father in God the Lord Arch-
A 3 Bishop*

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Bishop of Canterbury his Grace,
the Right Honorable and Right
Reuerend Father in God the
Lord Bishop of London Lord
high Treafurer of England, *the*
Lord chiefe Iuftices, *and the*
Lord chiefe Baron, *touching the*
regulating of Printers and
Founders of letters, whereof the
Court hauing consideration, the
said Decree was directed and
ordered to be here Recorded, and
to the end the same may be pub-
lique, and that euery one whom
it may concerne may take notice
thereof, The Court hath now
also ordered, That the said De-
cree shall speedily be Printed,
and

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and that the same be sent to His Maiesties Printer for that purpose. Whereas the three and twentieth day of Iune in the eight and twentieth yere of the reigne of the late Queene Elizabeth, and before, diuers Decrees and Ordinances haue beene made for the better gouernment and regulating of Printers and Printing, which Orders and Decrees haue beene found by experience to be defectiue in some particulars; And diuers abuses haue sithence arisen, and beene practised by the craft and malice of wicked and euill disposed persons, to the preiudice of the publike;

A Decree of, &c.

*like; And diuers libellous, se-
ditionous, and mutinous bookes
haue been vnduly printed, and
other bookes and papers without
licence, to the disturbance of the
peace of the Church and State:
For preuention whereof in time
to come, It is now Ordered and
Decreed, That the said former
Decrees and Ordinances shall
stand in force with these Addi-
tions, Explanations, and Alter-
ations following, viz.*

Imprimis,



In Camera Stellata coram Con-
cilio ibidem, vndecimo die Iulii,

Anno decimo tertio CAROLI

Regis.

I*mprimis*, That
no person or per-
sons whatsoeuer
shall presume to
print, or cause
to bee printed, either in the
parts beyond the Seas, or in
this Realme, or other his Ma-
iesties Dominions, any seditious,
scismaticall, or offensive Bookes

B or

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or Pamphlets, to the scandall of Religion, or the Church, or the Government, or Governours of the Church or State, or Commonwealth, or of any Corporation, or particular person or persons whatsoever, nor shall import any such Booke or Bookes, nor sell or dispose of them, or any of them, nor cause any such to be bound, stitiched, or sowed, vpon paine that he or they so offending, shall loose all such Bookes & Pamphlets, and also haue, and suffer such correction, and severe punishment, either by Fine, imprisonment, or other corporall punishment,

or

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or otherwise, as by this Court, or by His Maiesties Commissioners for causes Ecclesiasticall in the high Commission Court, respectiuely, as the severall causes shall require, shall be thought fit to be inflicted upon him, or them, for such their offence and contempt.

II. *Item,* That no person or persons whatsoever, shall at any time print or cause to be imprinted, any Booke or Pamphlet whatsoever, vnlesse the same Booke or Pamphlet, and also all and euery the Titles, Epistles, Prefaces, Proems, Preambles, In-

B 2 troductions,

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roductions, Tables, Dedications, and other matters and things whatsoever thereunto annexed, or therewith imprinted, shall be first lawfully licenced and authorized onely by such person and persons as are hereafter expressed, and by no other, and shall be also first entred into the Registers Booke of the Company of Stationers; vpon paine that euery Printer offending therein, shall be for euer hereafter disabled to use or exercise the Art or Mysterie of Printing, and receiue such further punishment, as by this Court or the high Commission Court respectiue, as
the

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the feverall caufes fhall require,
fhall be thought fitting.

III. *Item,* That all Bookes concerning the common Lawes of this Realme fhall be printed by the especiall allowance of the Lords chiefe Iuftices, and the Lord chiefe Baron for the time being, or one or more of them, or by their appointment; And that all Books of Hiftory, belonging to this State, and prefent times, or any other Booke of State affaires, fhall be licenced by the principall Secretaries of State, or one of them, or by their appointment;

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And that all Bookes concerning Heraldry, Titles of Honour and Armes, or otherwise concerning the Office of Earle Marshall, shall be licenced by the Earle Marshall, or by his appointment; And further, that all other Books, whether of Diuinitie, Phisicke, Philosophie, Poetry, or whatfoeuer, shall be allowed by the Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, or Bishop of *London* for the time being, or by their appointment, or the Chancellours, or Vice-Chancellors of either of the Vniuersities of this Realme for the time being.

Alwayses prouided, that the
Chan-

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Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor, of either of the Vniuersities, shall Licence onely such Booke or Bookes that are to be Printed within the limits of the Vniuersities respectiuely, but not in *London*, or elsewhere, not meddling either with Bookes of the common Law, or matters of State.

IV. *Item*, That euery person and persons, which by any Decree of this Court are, or shall be appointed or authorized to Licence Bookes, or giue Warrant for imprinting thereof, as is aforesaid, shall haue two feuerall
written

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written Copies of the same Booke or Bookes with the Titles, Epistles, Prefaces, Proems, Preambles, Introductions, Tables, Dedications, and other things whatsoever thereunto annexed. One of which said Copies shall be kept in the publike Registries of the said Lord Arch-Bishop, and Bishop of *London* respectiuey, or in the Office of the Chancellour, or Vice-Chancellour of either of the Vniuersities, or with the Earle Marshall, or principall Secretaries of State, or with the Lords chiefe Iustices, or chiefe Baron, of all such Bookes as
shall

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shall be licensed by them respectively, to the end that he or they may be secure, that the Copy so licensed by him or them shall not be altered without his or their priuitie, and the other shall remain with him whose Copy it is, and vpon both the said Copies, he or they that shall allow the said Booke, shall testifie vnder his or their hand or hands, that there is nothing in that Booke or Books contained, that is contrary to Christian Faith, and the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of *England*, nor against the State or Gouvernement, nor contrary to good life,

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or good manners, or otherwise, as the nature and subiect of the work shall require, which licenſe or approbation ſhall be imprint- ed in the beginning of the ſame Booke, with the name, or names of him or them that ſhall autho- rize or licenſe the ſame, for a teſtimonie of the allowance thereof.

V. *Item*, That euery Mer- chant of bookes, and perſon and perſons whatſoeuer, which doth, or hereafter ſhall buy, import, or bring any booke or bookes into this Realme, from any parts be- yond the Seas, ſhall before ſuch
time

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time as the fame book or books, or any of them be deliuered forth, or out of his, or their hand or hands, or expofed to fale, giue, and present a true Catalogue in writing of all and euery fuch booke and bookes vnto the Lord Arch-Bifhop of *Canterbury*, or Lord Bifhop of *London* for the time being, vpon paine to haue and fuffer fuch punishment for offending herein, as by this Court, or by the faid high Commiffion Court refpectiue-ly, as the feuerall caufes fhall require, fhall be thought fitting.

VI. *Item*, That no Mer-
C 2 chant,

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chant, or other person or persons whatfoever, which shall import, or bring any book or books into the kingdome, from any parts beyond the Seas, shall presume to open any Dry-fats, Bales, Packs, Maunds, or other Fardals of books, or wherein books are; nor shall any Searcher, Wayter, or other Officer belonging to the Custome-house, vpon pain of loosing his or their place or places, suffer the same to passe, or to be deliuered out of their hands or custody, before such time as the Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, or Lord Bishop of *London*, or one of them
for

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for the time being, haue appointed one of their Chaplains, or some other learned man, with the Master and Wardens of the Company of Stationers, or one of them, and such others as they shall call to their assistance, to be present at the opening thereof, and to view the same: And if there shall happen to be found any seditious, schismaticall, or offensive booke or bookes, they shall forthwith be brought vnto the said Lord Arch-bishop of *Canterbury*, Lord Bishop of *London* for the time being, or one of them, or to the High Commission Office, to the end that as well

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the offendor or offendors may be punished by the Court of Star Chamber, or the high Commission Court respectiuey, as the feuerall causes shall require, according to his or their demerit; as also that such further course and order may be taken concerning the same booke or bookes, as shall bee thought fitting.

VII. *Item*, That no person or persons shall within this Kingdome, or elsewhere imprint, or cause to be imprinted, nor shall import or bring in, or cause to be imported or brought
into

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into this Kingdome, from, or out of any other His Maiefties Dominions, nor from other, or any parts beyond the Seas, any Copy, book or books, or part of any booke or bookes, printed beyond the feas, or elfwhere, which the faid Company of Stationers, or any other perfon or perfons haue, or fhall by any Letters Patents, Order, or Entrance in their Register book, or otherwife, haue the right, priuiledge, authoritie, or allowance foly to print, nor fhall bind, ftitch, or put to fale, any fuch booke or bookes, vpon paine of losse and forfeiture of all the faid bookes,
and

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and of such Fine, or other punishment, for euery booke or part of a booke so imprinted or imported, bound, stitched, or put to sale, to be leuyed of the party so offending, as by the power of this Court, or the high Commission Court respectiuely, as the severall causes shall require, shall be thought fit.

VIII. *Item*, Euery person and persons that shall hereafter Print, or cause to be Printed, any Bookes, Ballads, Charts, Portraiture, or any other thing or things whatsoever, shall thereunto or thereon Print and set his and their owne name or names,
as

of Starre-Chamber.

as also the name or names of the Author or Authors, Maker or Makers of the same, and by, or for whom any such booke, or other thing is, or shall be printed, vpon pain of forfeiture of all such Books, Ballads, Chartes, Portraitsures, and other thing or things, printed contrary to this Article; And the preffes, Letters and other instruments for Printing, wherewith such Books, ballads, Chartes, Portraitsures, and other thing or things shall be printed, to be defaced and made vnseruiceable, and the party and parties so offending, to be fined, imprisoned, and haue such other

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corporall punishment, or otherwise, as by this Honourable Court, or the said high Commission respectiue, as the feuerall causes shall require, shall be thought fit.

IX. *Item,* That no person or persons whatsoever, shall hereafter print, or cause to be printed, or shall forge, put, or counterfeit, in, or vpon any booke or books, the name, title, marke or vinnet of the Company or Society of Stationers, or of any particular person or persons, which hath or shall haue lawfull priuiledge, authoritie,

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ritie, or allowance to print the same, without the consent of the said Company, or party or parties that are or shall be so priuiledged, authorized, or allowed to print the same booke or books, thing or things, first had and obtained, vpon paine that euery person or persons so offending, shall not onely loose all such books and other things, but shall also haue, and suffer such punishment, by imprisonment of his body, fine, or otherwise, as by this Honourable Court, or high Commision Court respectiuely, as the feuerall causes shall require, it shall

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be to him or them limited or adiudged.

X. *Item*, that no Haberdasher of small wares, Ironmonger, Chandler, Shop-keeper, or any other person or persons whatsoever, not having bene seven yeeres apprentice to the trade of a Book-feller, Printer, or Book-binder, shall within the citie or suburbs of London, or in any other Corporation, Market-towne, or elsewhere, receive, take or buy, to barter, sell againe, change or do away any Bibles, Testaments, Psalm-books, Primers, Abcees, Almanackes, or
other

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other booke or books whatfoeuer, vpon pain of forfeiture of all fuch books fo receiued, bought or taken as aforefaid, and fuch other punifhment of the parties fo offending, as by this Court, or the faid high Commiffion Court refpectiuely, as the feuerall caufes fhall require, fhall be thought meet.

XI. *Item*, for that Printing is, and for many yeers hath been an Art and manufacture of this kingdome, for the better incouraging of Printers in their honeft, and iuft endeauours in their profefion, and preuention

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of diuers libels, pamphlets, and seditious books printed beyond the seas in English, and thence transported hither ;

It is further Ordered and Decreed, that no Merchant, Bookseller, or other person or persons whatsoeuer, shall imprint, or cause to be imprinted, in the parts beyond the seas, or elfwhere, nor shall import or bring; nor willingly asist or consent to the importation or bringing from beyond the seas into this Realme, any English bookes, or part of bookes, or bookes whatsoeuer, which are
or

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or shall be, or the greater, or more part whereof is or shall be English, or of the English tongue, whether the same book or bookes haue been here formerly printed, or not, vpon pain of the forfeiture of all such English bookes so imprinted or imported, and such further censure and punishment, as by this Court, or the said high Commission Court respectiue-ly, as the feuerall causes shall require, shall be thought meet.

XII. *Item,* That no stranger or forreigner whatsoeuer, be suffered to bring in, or vent here, any booke or bookes printed

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beyond the seas, in any language whatsoever, either by themselves, or their secret Factors, except such onely as bee free Stationers of *London*, and such as haue beene brought vp in that profession, and haue their whole meanes of subsistence, and liuelihood depending thereupon, vpon paine of confiscation of all such Books so imported, and such further penalties, as by this Court, or the high Commission Court respectiueley, as the severall causes shall require, shall be thought fit to be imposed.

XIII. *Item*, That no person
or

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or persons within the Citie of *London*, or the liberties thereof, or elsewhere, shall erect or cause to be erected any Presse or Printing-house, nor shall demise, or let, or suffer to be held or vsed, any house, vault, feller, or other roome whatsoever, to, or by any person or persons, for a Printing-house, or place to print in, vnlesse he or they which shall so demise or let the same, or suffer the same to be so vsed, shall first giue notice to the said Master and Wardens of the Company of Stationers for the time being, of such demise, or suffering to worke or print there, vpon paine of imprisonment,

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fonment, and fuch other punifhment, as by this Court, or the faid high Commiffion Court refpectiuely, as the feuerall Caufes fhall require, fhall bee thought fit.

XIV. *Item*, That no Ioyner, or Carpenter, or other perfon, fhall make any printing-Prefse, no Smith fhall forge any Ironworke for a printing-Prefse, and no Founder fhall caft any Letters for any perfon or perfons whatfoeuer, neither fhall any perfon or perfons bring, or caufe to be brought in from any parts beyond the Seas, any Letters
Founded

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Founded or Cast, nor buy any such Letters for Printing; Vnlesse he or they respectiuey shall first acquaint the said Master and Wardens, or some of them, for whom the same Presse, Ironworks, or Letters, are to be made, forged, or cast, vpon paine of such fine and punishment, as this Court, or the high Commisison Court respectiuey, as the feuerall causes shall require, shall thinke fit.

XV. *Item,* The Court doth declare, that as formerly, so now, there shall be but Twentie Master Printers allowed to haue the

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vse of one Presse or more, as is after specified, and doth hereby nominate, allow, and admit these persons whose names hereafter follow, to the number of Twentie, to haue the vse of a Presse, or Presses and Printing-house, for the time being, *viz. Felix Kingstone, Adam Islip, Thomas Purfoot, Miles Flesher, Thomas Harper, John Beale, John Legat, Robert Young, John Haviland, George Miller, Richard Badger, Thomas Cotes, Bernard Alsop, Richard Bishop, Edward Griffin, Thomas Purslow, Richard Hodgkinsonne, John Dawson, John Raworth, Marmaduke Parsons.*

And

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And further, the Court doth order and decree, That it shall be lawfull for the Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, or the Lord Bishop of *London*, for the time being, taking to him or them six other high Commissioners, to supply the place or places of those, which are now already Printers by this Court, as they shall fall void by death, or Censure, or otherwise: Provided that they exceed not the number of Twentie, besides His Maiesties Printers, and the Printers allowed for the Vniuersities.

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XVI. *Item*, That euery person or persons, now allowed or admitted to haue the vse of a Presse, and Printing-houfe, shall within Ten dayes after the date hereof, become bound with sureties to His Maiestie in the high Commisision Court, in the sum of three hundred pounds, not to print, or suffer to be printed in his houfe or Presse, any booke, or bookes whatsoever, but such as shall from time to time be lawfully licensed, and that the like Bond shall be entred into by all, and euery person and persons, that hereafter shall be admitted, or allowed to print, before he or
they

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they be suffered to haue the vse of a Presse.

XVII. *Item*, That no allowed Printer shall keepe aboute two Presses, vnlesse he hath been Master or vpper Warden of his Company, who are thereby allowed to keep three Presses and no more, vnder paine of being difabled for euer after to keepe or vse any Presse at all, vnlesse for some great and speciall occasion for the publique, he or they haue for a time leaue of the Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, or Lord Bishop of *London* for the time being, to haue or vse one, or

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more about the foresaid number, as their Lordships, or either of them shall thinke fit. And whereas there are some Master Printers that haue at this present one, or more Presses allowed them by this Decree, the Court doth further order and declare, That the Master and Wardens of the Company of Stationers, doe forthwith certifie the Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, or the Lord Bishop of *London*, what number of Presses each Master Printer hath, that their Lordships or either of them, taking vnto them six other high Commissioners, may take such

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such present order for the suppressing of the supernumerarie Presses, as to their Lordships, or to either of them shall seem best.

XVIII. *Item,* That no person or persons, do hereafter reprint, or cause to be reprinted, any booke or bookes whatsoever (though formerly printed with licence) without being reviewed, and a new Licence obtained for the reprinting thereof. Always provided, that the Stationer or Printer be put to no other charge hereby, but the bringing and leaving of two printed copies of the book to be
F printed,

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printed, as is before expressed of written Copies, with all such additions as the Author hath made.

XIX. *Item*, The Court doth declare, as formerly, so now, That no Apprentices be taken into any printing-house, otherwise then according to this proportion following, (*viz.*) every Master-Printer that is, or hath bene Master or vpper Warden of his Company, may haue three Apprentices at one time and no more, and every Master-printer that is of the Liuerie of his Company, may haue two Apprentices at one time and no more,

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more, and euery Master-printer of the Yeomanry of the Company may haue one Apprentice at one time and no more, neither by Copartnership, binding at the Scriueners, nor any other way whatfoeuer; neither shall it be lawfull for any Master-Printer when any Apprentice or Apprentices, shall run or be put away, to take another Apprentice, or other Apprentices in his or their place or places, vnlesse the name or names of him or them so gone away, be raced out of the Hall-booke, and never admitted again, vpon paine of being for euer disabled

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of the vse of a Presse or printing-houfe, and of such further punishment, as by this Court, or the high Commiffion Court respectiuelly, as the feuerall causes shall require, shall be thought fit to be imposed.

XX. *Item*, The Court doth likewise declare, that because a great part of the secret printing in corners hath been caused for want of orderly employment for Iourneymen printers, Therefore the Court doth hereby require the Master and Wardens of the Company of Stationers, to take especial care that all Iourneymen

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men-printers, who are free of the Company of Stationers, shall be set to worke, and imployed within their owne Company of Stationers; for which purpose the Court doth also order and declare, that if any Iourneyman-Printer, and free of the Company of Stationers, who is of honest, and good behauour, and able in his trade, do want imployment, he shall repaire to the Master and Wardens of the Companie of Stationers, and they or one of them, taking with him or them one or two of the Master Printers, shall go along with the said Iourney-

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man-Printer, and shall offer his service in the first place to the Master-Printer vnder whom he serued his Apprentiship, if he be liuing, and do continue an allowed Printer, or otherwise to any other Master Printer, whom the Master and Wardens of the said Company shall thinke fit. And euery Master Printer shall bee bound to imploy one Iourneyman, being so offered to him, and more, if need shall so require, and it shall be so adiudged to come to his share, according to the proportion of his Apprentices and imployments, by the Master and
War-

of Starre-Chamber.

Wardens of the Company of Stationers, although he the said Master Printer with his Apprentice or Apprentices be able without the helpe of the said Journeyman or Journeymen to discharge his owne worke, vpon paine of such punishment, as by this Court, or the high Commission Court respectiue, as the feuerall causes shall require, shall be thought fit.

XXI. *Item,* The Court doth declare, That if the Master and Wardens of the Companie of Stationers, or any of them, shall refuse or neglect to go along

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with any honest and sufficient Journey-man Printer, so desiring their assistance, to finde him imployment, vpon complaint and prooffe made thereof, he, or they so offending, shall suffer imprisonment, and such other punishment, as by this court, or the high Commission Court respectiue, as the severall causes shall require, shall bee thought fit to bee imposed. But in case any Master Printer hath more imployment then he is able to discharge with helpe of his Apprentice or Apprentices, it shall be lawfull for him to require the helpe of any Journey-man, or
Journey-

of Starre-Chamber.

Journey-men-Printers, who are not imployed, and if the said Journeyman, or Journey-men-Printers so required, shall refuse employment, or neglect it when he or they haue vndertaken it, he, or they shall suffer imprisonment, and vndergo such punishment, as this Court shall thinke fit.

XXII. *Item,* The Court doth hereby declare, that it doth not hereby restraine the Printers of either of the Vniuersities from taking what number of Apprentices for their seruice in printing there, they themselues shall thinke fit. Prouided al-
G wayes,

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wayes, that the said Printers in the Vniuersities shall imploy all their owne Iourney-men within themselues, and not suffer any of their said Iourney-men to go abroad for employment to the Printers of *London* (vnlesse vpon occasion some Printers of *London* desire to imploy some extraordinary Workman or Workmen amongst them, without preiudice to their owne Iourneymen, who are Freemen) vpon such penalty as the Chancellor of either of the Vniuersities for the time being, shall thinke fit to inflict vpon the delinquents herein.

XXIII. *Item,*

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XXIII. *Item,* That no Master-printer shall imploy either to worke at the Case, or the Presse, or otherwise about his printing, any other person or persons, then such onely as are Free-men, or Apprentices to the Trade or mystery of Printing, vnder paine of being disabled for euer after to keep or vse any Presse or Printing-houfe, and such further punishment as by this court, or the high Comission Court respectiuely, as the feuerall causes shall require, shall bee thought fit to bee imposed.

XXIV. *Item,* The Court
G 2 doth

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doth hereby declare their firme resolution, that if any person or persons, that is not allowed Printer, shall hereafter presume to set vp any Presse for printing, or shall worke at any such Presse, or Set, or Compose any Letters to bee wrought by any such Presse ; he, or they so offending, shall from time to time, by the Order of this Court, bee set in the Pillorie, and Whipt through the Citie of *London*, and suffer such other punishment, as this Court shall Order or thinke fit to inflict vpon them, vpon Complaint or prooffe of such offence or offences,

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ces, or shall be otherwise punished, as the Court of high Commission shall thinke fit, and is agreeable to their Commission.

XXV. *Item,* That for the better discouery of printing in Corners without licence; The Master and Wardens of the Company of Stationers for the time being, or any two licensed Master-Printers, which shall be appointed by the Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*, or Lord B. of *London* for the time being, shall haue power and authority, to take vnto themselues such assistance as they shall think need-

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full, and to search what houfes and fhops (and at what time they fhall think fit) eſpecially Printing-houfes, and to view what is in printing, and to call for the licence to ſee whether it be licenſed or no, and if not, to ſeize vpon ſo much as is printed, together with the ſeueral offenders, and to bring them before the Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*, or the Lord Biſhop of *London* for the time being, that they or either of them may take ſuch further order therein as ſhall appertain to Juſtice.

XXVI. *Item*, The Court
doth

of Starre-Chamber.

doth declare, that it shall be lawfull also for the said Searchers, if vpon searck they find any book or bookes, or part of booke or books which they suspect to containe matter in it or them, contrary to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of *England*, or against the State and Gouvernement, vpon such suspition to feize upon such book or books, or part of booke or books, and to bring it, or them, to the Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, or the Lord Bishop of *London* for the time being, who shall take such further course therein, as to their Lordships, or either of them shall seeme fit.

G 4 XXVII. *Item,*

A Decree

XXVII. *Item*, The Court doth order and declare, that there shall be foure Founders of letters for printing allowed, and no more, and doth hereby nominate, allow, and admit these persons, whose names hereafter follow, to the number of foure, to be letter-Founders for the time being (*viz.*) *Iohn Grismand, Thomas Wright, Arthur Nichols, Alexander Fifeild.* And further, the Court doth Order and Decree, that it shall be lawfull for the Lord Arch-bishop of *Canterbury*, or the Lord Bishop of *London* for the time being, taking unto him or them, six
other

of Starre-Chamber.

other high Commifioners, to fupply the place or places of thefe who are now allowed Founders of letters by this Court, as they fhall fall void by death, cenfure, or otherwife.

Prouided, that they exceede not the number of foure, fet downe by this Court. And if any perfon or perfons, not being an allowed Founder, fhall notwithstanding take vpon him, or them, to Found, or caft letters for printing, vpon complaint and prooffe made of fuch offence, or offences, he, or they fo offending, fhall fuffer fuch punifhment, as this Court, or the high Com-

H miffion

A Decree

mifision court refpectiueely, as the feuerall caufes fhall require, fhall think fit to inflict vpon them.

XXVIII. *Item*, That no Mafter-Founder whatfoeuer fhall keepe aboue two Apprentices at one time, neither by Copartnerfhip, binding at the Scriueners, nor any other way whatfoeuer, neither fhall it be lawfull for any Mafter-Founder, when any Apprentice, or Apprentices fhall run, or be put away, to take another Apprentice, or other Apprentices in his, or their place or places, vnleffe the name, or names
of

of Starre-Chamber.

of him, or them so gone away, be rased out of the Hall-booke of the Company, whereof the Master-Founder is free, and neuer admitted again, vpon pain of such punishment, as by this Court, or the high Commifion respectiue-ly, as the feuerall Causes shall require, shall be thought fit to bee imposed.

XXIX. *Item,* That all Iourneymen-Founders be imployed by the Master-Founders of the said trade, and that idle Iourneymen be compelled to worke after the same manner, and vpon the same penalties, as in case of

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the Journeymen-Printers is before specified.

XXX. *Item*, That no Master-Founder of letters, shall employ any other person or persons in any worke belonging to the casting or founding of letters, then such onely as are freemen or apprentices to the trade of founding letters, save onely in the pulling off the knots of mettle hanging at the ends of the letters when they are first cast, in which work it shall be lawfull for euery Master-Founder, to employ one boy only that is not, nor hath bene bound to the trade of
Founding

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Founding letters, but not otherwise, upon pain of being for euer disabled to vse or exercise that art, and such further punishment, as by this Court, or the high Commission Court respectiuey, as the feuerall causes shall require, be thought fit to be imposed.

XXXI. *Item,* That euery person or persons whatfoeuer, which shall at any time or times hereafter, by his, or their confession, or otherwise by proof be conuicted of any of the offences, by this, or any other Decree of this Court made, shall before

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such time as he or they shall be discharged, and ouer and aboue their fine and punishment, as aforefaid, be bound with good fureties, neuer after to transgreffe, or offend in that or the like kinde, for which he, or they shall be so conuicted and punished, as aforefaid; And that all and euery the forfeitures aforefaid (excepting all seditious schismaticall Bookes, or Pamphlets, which this Court doth hereby Order to bee presently burnt). And except such Bookes, as the forfeitures are already granted by Letters Patents, shall be diuided and disposed

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posed of, as the high Commision Court shall find fit. Alwaies prouiding that one moitie be to the King.

XXXII. *Item,* That no Merchant, Master, or Owner of any Ship or Veffell, or any other person or persons whatfoeuer shall hereafter presume to land, or put on shore any Booke or Bookes, or the part of any Booke or Books, to be imported from beyond the seas, in any Port, Hauen, Creek, or other place whatfoeuer within the Realme of *England*, but only in the Port of the City of

H 4 *London,*

A Decree

London, to the end the said Bookes may there be viewed, as aforefaid: And the feuerall Officers of His Maiefties Ports are hereby required to take notice thereof.

XXXIII. *Item*, That whereas there is an agreement betwixt Sir *Thomas Bodley* Knight, Founder of the Vniuersity Library at *Oxford*, and the Master, Wardens, and Afsistants of the Company of Stationers (*viz.*) That one Booke of euery fort that is new printed, or reprinted with additions, be sent to the Vniuersitie of *Oxford* for the
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of Starre-Chamber.

vse of the publique Librarie there; The Court doth hereby Order, and declare, That euery Printer shall referue one Book new printed, or reprinted by him, with additions, and shall before any publique venting of the said book, bring it to the Common Hall of the Companie of Stationers, and deliuer it to the Officer thereof to be sent to the Librarie at *Oxford* accordingly, vpon paine of imprisonment, and such further Order and Direction therein, as to this Court, or the high Commission Court respectiuely, as the feuerall causes shall require, shall be thought fit.



APPENDIX.

PREAMBLE.



BEFORE the reign of Charles I. the liberty of the press had been jealously curtailed. No one could print or make a book without the express permission of authorities appointed by the King. From the time of Edward VI. the custom of licensing printers was universally followed. The reasons for these restrictions appear, from the preambles and text of the various statutes and patents and from contemporary annals, to be, first, to prevent the unlimited production of books and pamphlets, as well as casual handbills and broadsides, wherein persons of position might be criticised and satirized, and affairs of state

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state unduly commented upon; and, secondly, in later times, to furnish a means for suppressing the printing of seditious works by the Puritans, who often established secret printing offices in various parts of the kingdom. As was further intended by the government, the monopolies thus created served also, though with indifferent success, to promote domestic skill and to aid English workmen, the prohibitory character of the various enactments preventing competition from abroad, where the art of printing, from the first, had been making rapid strides.

The list of licensees, though these devoted themselves rather to publications concerning public affairs and polity, as distinguished from lighter works, shows how limited the number of skilled printers continued to be. Grafton, Cawood, Jugge, and the Barkers, in the times of Mary, and Elizabeth, and James I., Norton, and Bill, and the Barkers again, licensed by Charles I., were officially, at least, at the head of their guild; yet one looks in vain among precious exemplars of the art produced during that period, to discover the books which should entitle them, or indeed any English printers, to take rank with the famous printers of the Continent.

This decree was re-enacted in the sixteenth, and again in the eighteenth, year of the reign of King Charles II., and a third time, for seven years, in the fifth year of the reign of James II.

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While it was in force, knowledge of affairs was being diffused only by means of shabby periodicals, scarcely larger than a sheet of letter-paper, and printed only on one side. Yet from this beginning, a craving for news, a desire for freedom of discussion, and a popular interest in current events grew apace; the final result of which was the disappearance from the statute-books of all legislation of this obnoxious character. The event was doubtless hastened by the unjust conviction of William Anderton, a printer, on the charge of high treason. His offense was the alleged printing of two political pamphlets, and for this he was beheaded and quartered soon after his trial, June 3, 1693.

In 1695 a bill to continue the Licensing Act in force was defeated in Parliament,* though patents continued to be granted for special objects, such as the publication of the statutes, etc., and the custom still continues.

VI.—VII.

THE sixth section was, in effect, in furtherance of the effort to regulate the character of the national literature. Together with the section

* Macaulay says that this and civilization than the repeal of the license laws Great Charter or Bill of “has done more for liberty Rights.”

following,

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following, it seems to have originated in the time of Henry VIII. For half a century prior, statutes had been in force which, though restraining aliens from working at the trade in England, provided that foreign books and prints might be freely imported. During the reigns of Edwards V. and VI., Richard III., and Henrys VII. and VIII., spurred on by competition from abroad and freed from injurious restraints at home, English printers succeeded in producing work which was equal to the best foreign efforts. About the time when the fruits of this wise policy were becoming manifest, a new statute (25 Henry VIII., Ch. 15) established a duty of six shillings and eightpence each upon foreign books. The attempt was also made to legislate in favour of the purchaser by giving to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, and the Lord Chief Justices, or to any two of them, the absolute right to fix the prices at which domestic books should be sold, and to inflict a fine of three shillings and fourpence for any book sold too dear. Thus, as it will be seen, by the removal of that competition which had theretofore served as a healthy stimulus, a strong incentive to excellence was taken away ; and, by fixing prices in accordance with an arbitrary caprice which might be exercised without regard to actual values, the master printers' profits were made to depend upon the whims of those who, by constituting themselves
censors,

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censors, could indirectly compel the withdrawal from the market of any book that was displeasing to them. The history of that period contains too many instances of so arbitrary a power unworthily exercised for us to believe that this provision continued to be a dead letter. From this time onward, the laws relating to English printing continued to impose great hardships upon those who practised the art, and to discourage progress in literary taste and cultivation.

XIV.

IT has been said that this decree is the first record of the separation of the art of type-founding from that of printing. Makers of so-called seditious books had found it necessary to cast their own fonts in secret, lest the importation of types should expose them to a greater risk of detection.

The earlier printers at first practised the various departments of their art themselves,—making the presses, casting the type, and preparing the inks. With wider knowledge and a greater demand for books, and with the consequent enlargement of the facilities for producing them, came a division of such labours. This began in the foundries of France and the Netherlands.

From

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From these countries types were sent abroad, and here the most skillful makers were found.

XV.

THIS section seems to be a re-enactment of a former statute (28 Eliz.), which likewise limited the number of printers to twenty. The subsequent statutes, passed after the Restoration, contained similar provisions, and were substantially re-enactments of the same statute.

The attempt to limit the number of printers was a signal failure. From a paper, published October 23, 1666, called "The Case and Proposals of the Free Journeymen Printers in and about London," it appears that there were then in that city only one hundred and forty workmen who had served regular apprenticeships. This paper was a protest against the employment of "foreigners" in the trade. The "foreigners," so called, were persons who had not served an apprenticeship, and who were depriving the others of employment.

The privilege given to the masters and workmen by this section was of no benefit to the public. Nor in effect was it of any benefit to the trade itself. A few favoured ones obtained patents or monopolies for the printing of nearly every

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every book that was salable. The unfortunate many could find but little work to do. Books were dear, incorrect, and badly printed. No English printer of the seventeenth century stood in repute on the Continent.

XVII.

THIS prohibition struck at the very root of intellectual progress. If all the printers were juniors, then forty presses only were allowed; even though all were master printers, or upper wardens, the limit was sixty. Outside of the universities and the office of the King's printer, the number of presses in all England could be, at the most, only four times as many as there were in 1475 at a single establishment in Antwerp—that of Christopher Plantin.

These presses were worked by hand, by pulling a lever which turned a screw. Impressions were made slowly and laboriously. Two thousand impressions were rated as a fair day's work, but, as it took four impressions to perfect on both sides a sheet of folio, the actual performance of a press was about five hundred sheets a day. Size of sheet considered, this performance is about one-fortieth of that of the slowest form of modern book printing press.

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XX.

PROBABLY, none of the many to us absurd provisions of this decree had a more stifling effect upon national and individual endeavour than that which compelled the employment, by a master printer, of as many superfluous journeymen as the Company of Stationers might impose upon him. This provision substantially deprived the master printer of the power of selecting the best workmen; for even those, who from their own incompetency were out of employment, could, for this very reason, either displace their skilled competitors or entail a grievous burden upon employers. A premium was thus placed upon demerit, and the idle, whatever the reason for their idleness, obtained the preference.

The language of the concluding portion of the section, "although the said Master Printer with his apprentice or apprentices be able *without* the help of the said journeyman or journeymen to discharge his own work," exhibits a remarkable lack of foresight. The Robert Barker who printed this decree, though he enjoyed as sole licensee a favour which no one else shared, though he possessed a special monopoly which was upheld by all the power of the Crown and the judiciary, is said, notwithstanding, to have passed the last years of his life and to have died a poor debtor
in

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in the King's Bench Prison.* It is uncertain how long, prior to his death, his incarceration began, but Ames, in his "Typographical Antiquities," says that it had endured for ten years.

XXVII.—XXVIII.

AS might have been expected, so it turned out, that even if these type-founders had possessed the skill, they did not have the means to supply the whole Kingdom. It was chiefly due to this restriction that the best types were imported from Holland, with scarcely any home competition, for the next century and a half.

By no means the least harmful effect was the neglect displayed by the four monopolist type-founders of the needs and requirements of printers. One notable result of this neglect was

* One of Barker's patents was the printing of the Bible, for correcting the translation of which he paid out £3500. But in 1632, he (in special partnership with Martin Lucas) printed an edition of the book in which the word "not" was left out of the seventh commandment. For this offence the Star Chamber fined Barker £3000. This was but one of the many "egregious blasphemies and damnable errata" of the licensed printers. The payment of this fine was the beginning of Barker's downfall.

that

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that the University of Oxford found it necessary to collect the sum of £4000—a large amount for that time—for the purpose of purchasing on the Continent types which could not be procured in England. The English founders made Roman, Italic, and Black-letter, but to get good cuts of Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Oriental types it was necessary to go to Holland, France, or Italy. The domestic types were often of a low grade; and not only in the seventeenth, but also during the eighteenth century, English types were held in slight esteem. Those who could do so imported even the common forms from Holland or France. This very decree seems to have been printed with French types, as appears from the frequent use of the character VV in place of W, the latter being a letter not used in the French language, and not found in French fonts. Hansard says that the glorious works which immortalized the reign of Queen Anne were printed in Dutch types, and that Dutch founders were active competitors on English soil even to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The attempt to keep the art of type-founding still a mystery was not only another impediment in the way of progress, but was indeed a partial failure. To those who believe in the wisdom of a regular apprenticeship as the only fit introduction to the practice of a trade, it may be of
interest

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interest to know that the most eminent English founders were self-taught. Moxon (1659–1683) says that he served no apprenticeship to letter-cutting, and that he did not know any expert at punch-cutting who had been an apprentice to the art. The first Caslon was self-taught; so were Baskerville and Alexander Wilson.



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