

ANGLO-AMERICAN COPYRIGHT.

The following Memorial of British authors on the subject of copyright in the United States of America was sent to the Right Hon. Earl Granville on Friday, April 19, by Mr. William Gilbert, the hon. secretary :

"Looking forward with satisfaction to the prospect of harmonious relations being happily established between the United States and the United Kingdom, we, the undersigned, hope for a reconsideration of the policy in virtue of which authors, as authors, enjoy no rights which American citizens are bound to respect. Letters from influential Americans—one of them a leading New York publisher—which have recently appeared here, joined with the approval of them expressed in the journals of the United States, show the desire of the Americans for the conclusion of a Copyright Convention between their country and ours. We understand that the demands of publishers in this country have hitherto been the most formidable obstacles to the negotiation of a Copyright Convention. We are of opinion that the interests of our publishers in American copyrights are quite independent of the just claims of British authors, and that the latter may be fully admitted without recognition of the former. We think it would be a grave error if the settlement of this matter were retarded, or rendered impossible, in consequence of two classes of claims, which, in essence, are wholly distinct, if not antagonistic, being regarded by negotiators representing this country as identical and inseparable. Americans distinguish between the author, as producing the ideas, and the publisher, as producing the material vehicle by which these ideas are conveyed to readers. They admit the claim of the British author to be paid by them for his brain work. The claim of the British book manufacturer to a monopoly of their book market they do not admit. To give the British author a copyright is simply to agree that the American publisher shall pay him for work done. To give the British publisher a copyright is to open the American market to him on terms which prevent the American publisher from competing. Without dwelling on the argument of the Americans that such an arrangement would not be free trade, but the negation of free trade, and merely noticing their further argument, that while their protective system raises the prices of all the raw materials, free competition with the British book manufacturer would be fatal to the American book manufacturer, it is clear that the Americans have strong reasons for refusing to permit the British publisher to share in the copyright which they are willing to grant to the British author. We venture to suggest, therefore, that, responding to the cordial feeling, recently expressed by Americans on the subject, and duly appreciating the force of their reasons for making the above distinction, future negotiations should be conducted with a view to secure a copyright on the conditions they specify. Without making it the foundation of a formal claim for reciprocity of treatment, we mention the fact that American authors may, if they please, secure all the advantages of copyright in the United Kingdom which are enjoyed by native authors.

(Signed) The Rev. Edward Henry Bickersteth, Sir John Lubbock, Bart., M.P., Thomas H. Huxley, F.R.S., Thomas Hughes, M.P., the Rev. Dr. T. Guthrie, the Rev. Wm. Arthur, Philip James Bailey, J. E. Hilary Skinner, J. B. Leicester Warren, the Rev. Harry Jones, the Rev. J. Martineau, Andrew Edgar, LL.D., W. Durrant Cooper, F.S.A., Joseph Dalton Hooker, M.D., F.R.S., Harriet Martineau, John Percy, M.D., F.R.S., George Scharf, F.S.A., Thomas Birchard Curling, George Augustus Sala, Robert Buchanan, Henry Labouchere, Augustus W. Franks, Vice-President Society of Antiquaries, Richard A. Proctor, Blanchard Jerrold, Herbert Spencer, G. H. Lewis, John Stuart Mill, Helen Taylor, J. A. Froude, T. Carlyle, John Ruskin, John Morley, W. F. Rae, C. Tabor, Eliza Tabor, William Black, Edward Denny, James Caird, William Gilbert, Sheldon Amos, Edwin Pears, James Paget, Archibald Forbes, J. C. Parkinson, W. J. M'Callagh Turrena, M.P., Charles Darwin, Erasmus Wilson, Shirley Brooks, Tom Hood, Justin M'Carthy, John Tyndall, F.R.S."

A reply to the above memorial has been received as follows:

"Foreign-office, May 2, 1872.

"Sir,—I am directed by Earl Granville to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 19th ult., enclosing a memorial of British authors on the subject of copyright in the United States, and his lordship desires me to state to you that the subject will receive the careful attention of her Majesty's Government.—I am, yours &c.,

"William Gilbert, Esq.

"Enriled."