

[BILL-CHAMBER.]

May 12, 1804.

ADD. MEM.—THE COMPOSITORS  
AGAINST  
THE MASTER PRINTERS OF EDINBURGH.

RICHARD CLEGHORN, AGENT.

[LORD CULLEN Reporter.]

# ADDITIONAL MEMORIAL

FOR

DAVID GEORGE, ALEXANDER COWIE, JAMES ANDERSON, WILLIAM  
AITKEN, and WILLIAM FLEMING, for themselves, and the other  
COMPOSITOR-PRINTERS of the City of Edinburgh;

AGAINST

MR. DAVID RAMSAY, Printer in Edinburgh, for himself, and in  
Behalf of the other MASTER-PRINTERS in Edinburgh.

**T**HE journeymen compositors regret extremely the acrimonious temper with which their conduct is misrepresented in these papers. They began this discussion with their masters in amity; they have with the greater number of their masters lived since in the best understanding; every master individually disclaims all wish to excite prejudice against them or their cause; and yet they are treated with a degree of severity and ill temper which is almost unprecedented. This temper of litigation, however, will not influence your Lordships in considering the merits of the cause; and therefore the memorialists shall not trouble you with any other refutation, than by referring to the letter of their agent, printed in the appendix to the additional memorial for the masters; and by reminding your Lordships, that they

they are a body of unconnected men, acting not with all the rapidity and unity of design of a single litigant, or even of a corporate body, like their masters. The memorialists shall as concisely as possible correct some misstatements of their antagonists.

I. In answer to the statements on the 6th and 7th pages of the masters' first memorial, it may be observed, that although the pur-~~suers~~ have uniformly admitted the rise of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 1000 letters on book-work in the year 1792, they have uniformly denied, (and repeatedly called for explicit proof of the contrary) that any other rise than this has ever taken place. The masters have pretended that the more fashionable way of printing with blanks and spaces has given an advantage to the memorialists. But the effect of this is in truth scarcely perceptible. This fashionable mode of printing is often accompanied, your Lordships will observe, with head-lines and directions, which are now common in every book. To take an example from a work which is in the daily course of printing, and in every body's hands, the Edinburgh Review; the head-line consists of the title of the book reviewed, as,

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Mounier, *De L'Influence de Philosophes, &c.*

Oct. 1802.

or,

Jan. 1803.

M. Anquetil *Oupneckbat.*

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And in the same way with most books that are printed. These make full lines, or, if the title be short, the blanks are filled up with types. And in the same way the direction-line at the foot, though consisting only of a single capital letter in the middle of the line, and a catch-word at the end of it, is composed precisely in the same way with every other line in the page. If no allowance is made for these, there are two lines in every page, or in every sheet of 8vo 32 lines, for which no allowance is made to the compositor. Even supposing this allowance to be granted, and it is one of the rises contended for, on magazines, or book-work of the same size, it would amount only to a 26th part, or 7d. on 13s. 6d. and on session-work to a 21st part, or 4d. on 7s. 2d.

But the most important averment is, that there has been a rise of one-third on the wages of compositors, and that the increase of wages has fully kept pace with the increased rates of the articles of living. It is here that the whole case turns, and the memorialists think they shall disprove the position beyond the possibility of doubt, even by the evidence already in process.

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By the excerpts printed in the appendix to the defenders memorial, pages 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31, it is proved beyond the possibility of cavil, that this assertion is untrue. Thus in the year 1773, 30 years ago, (appendix to defenders memorial, p. 28), three journeymen, in the service of Murray and Cochran, made, one 57l. 17s. 10d. another 53l. 15s. 2d. and the third 42l. 9s. 1½d. The average of these is 51l. 4s. 7½d. The last average stated by the masters (appendix to additional memorial, No. I.), is only 51l. 14s. 6d. so that within these 30 years there has been no increase.

Again, in the year 1786, 1787, five years previous to the 1792, it appears from the excerpts from the books of the deceased Mr. William Smellie (appendix p. 24), that two journeymen earned, the one 61l. 16s. 5d. and the other 54l. 15s. 10d. or averaged between them 58l. 8s. 7½d.

But, not to descend to more particulars, it appears from the state (appendix, p. 32), made up from the excerpts produced by the masters, shewing the average of 25 compositors prior to the year 1792, that each of them made 53l. 8s. 1d. Now, what do the journeymen make at present, or 12 years since the 1792, during which, the masters allege, the journeymen wages have "advanced at least one-sixth" over and above the gradual rise on the other articles." From the excerpts of the journeymen (appendix to their memorial, No. 5, 6, and 7), it does appear, that, notwithstanding all the boasted advantages arising from a "fashionable mode of printing," the wages have *decreased one-fourth*, instead of *increasing one-sixth*. Even a decrease appears from the general average of the earnings of 45 compositors for the year 1803, taken by the masters (appendix to additional memorial, p. 1.): that average is only 51l. 14s. 6d. being 1l. 14s. 6d. *less* than the average previous to the year 1792; but, lest the masters should complain that the additional 20 more, taken in the year 1803, reduces the average below what it would have been in the 25, the number previous to the year 1792, let 25 of the number for 1803 be taken, on the left-hand column of the state referred to, and the 1st on the right, there are just 25, and the average of the wages of these amounting in whole to 1240l. 18s. 5½d. is just 49l. 12s. 9d. or 2l. 9s. 1d. under the masters general average 1803, and 3l. 15s. 4d. under the general average prior to the year 1792.

Farther, to corroborate the absolute necessity there now is for a rise of wages, it will not be forgot, that as far back as the year 1785, 19 years ago, the journeymen compositors thought they were intitled to an advance. They were unsuccessful indeed; but will the masters attempt

attempt to say that the times are not changed since ; or that the same reasons for withholding an advance of wages exist now as then : they may try to do so ; but no person who knows any thing about the price of living at these different periods, will either believe or listen to them.

Passing over many unjust reflections and misstatements relative to the conduct of the memorialists, they feel themselves called upon to notice one passage. At the top of page 15 of the memorial, it is said to be a " certain fact, which admits " to be established in the clearest manner by proof, that it is only " the more diligent and industrious part of them who work five days " in the week, and that even in those days they rarely commence " work before nine or ten o'clock throughout the winter season, and " do not work seriously till after dinner." The irregular nature of a journeyman compositor's employment has been already explained, so that they cannot be likened to any tradesman whose hours are fixed and regular. In some houses they frequently stand idle waiting for work, or, when there is no work, or none expected, indulge themselves in a walk. For six months in the year in session-houses they are late up at night, so cannot be expected to rise very early too. But it is a certain fact, which could be instructed if necessary, that it is no uncommon thing for compositors to work 18, 24, 30, nay 36 hours at a stretch, and even to encroach on Sunday. In the house of Messrs. Neils last session the compositors wrought almost regularly to 11 or 12 at night, Saturdays included ; Mr. Willison's men wrought the same way, and always breakfasted in the office ; and the same thing has uniformly been done in all the other houses in Edinburgh when necessity required it. In short, a compositor's labour during a great part of the year is at the rate of 16 or 18 hours out of the 24, being exactly the same period of labour that convicts are said to be forced to endure at Amsterdam when condemned to work at the saw-mills. It is by such uncommon exertions only that the high wages earned by some are acquired ; but such exertions soon wear out a man's constitution, and the gainings thereby made are no sufficient recompense for such sacrifices. It is therefore most ungenerous in the masters to state as facts arising from laziness or want of inclination, which are the result alone of the fluctuating and irregular nature of the profession ; and it is a very unfair way of judging of wages to take them as in reference to the ordinary period of labour in other professions.

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Having submitted these observations, correctory of facts improperly assumed by the masters, the pursuers shall now proceed to shew that the observations made by them on the abstracts submitted by the pursuers, and printed in the appendix to their memorial, are either inexplicable, or do not apply.

There seems to be no fault found with the abstracts Nos. 5 and 6. It is only to the abstract of the weekly wages of 50 compositors, No. 7, that any objection has been stated.

The first is, "that this abstract has not the merit of accuracy even in summation." Where this inaccuracy lies, however, has not been pointed out; but until this is done, the pursuers must be pardoned for saying they will not take the matter on the bare word of the defenders. The pursuers have not taken the "total" to which the wages there stated amounts, and divided them by the number of weeks; they took, as will be seen from looking at it, the number of weeks each man had wrought, the sum he gained in these weeks, and then stated what each week's gain was on an average. From these an average of each house was made, and from these averages, thus struck, a general one was made, which amounts to 15s. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. But the pursuers shall not dispute with the defenders about the 1s. 3d. Even 16s. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is far under what 25 journeymen compositors earned prior to 1792, which was 11. os. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d, being a difference of 3s. 8d.

The next objection is, that out of the first class, viz. those in the house of Mundell and Son, only *three* of the whole men who so wrought are put down for a full twelvemonth, from which it is alleged the data are erroneous and unsatisfactory; but the reason of this is plain. There were only 3 out of 22 men who has wrought 52 weeks. They had either not entered to the service, had left it before the 12 months expired, were absent from sickness, or had got permission to go to the country. Of these last were Black, Burns, and George, who have been many years in the service of Mundell and Son. Black was confined by indisposition 2 weeks, Burns 3, and George was absent in the country 9. If the pursuers had stated these persons at a full year each, when Black had only wrought 50, Burns 49, and George 43, the masters would have had reason to complain. The fair way clearly was, to state only the number of weeks each had wrought, and from thence to strike the average; and the pursuers must maintain, that is the only fair way in which the average can be taken.

The next objection is a little more critical. Though Reid, prior to the 1792, George, Anderson, and Davie, prior to the 1803, may  
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have earned more in proportion than they did in the 1803, it does not necessarily follow, either that the abstracts are unfair; or that "the habits of industry" of these people are not "equal to what they were formerly." Reid is an older man by 19 years than he was prior to 1792, of course his activity cannot be so great; and it has been already mentioned, George was absent 9 weeks out of the 52. Some species of work also are less gainful than others, and the difference may be in that way accounted for, without any other reason whatever.

It is objected, that some persons are included whose average are taken only from a few weeks labour. But it will be recollected, that the pursuers are calculating at a general average for a profession, in which this interrupted employment is a peculiar feature, and which ought never to be lost sight of in the present question. It clearly does not take a man from "among the industrious," that he cannot get constant work in one house. But, if he cannot get it, what is he to do? He must go "about from one house to another," until he gets a permanent situation. No man will change often, who can get constant employment in one place.

Before leaving this part of the memorial, it is necessary to take notice of the discrepancy charged against the journeymen's excerpts, when compared with those of the masters.

The discrepancy in Mundell's house, is in these articles—Black is stated as earning 50l. 12s. 10d.; he states himself only 49l. 15s. 5d. difference, 17s. 5d. Burns, again, the masters make less than he himself states, by 1l. 10s. Davie they make 64l. 4s. 10½d.; he states himself at 62l. difference 2l. 4s. 10½d. George is stated at 39l. 12s. he makes himself 41l. 5s. 6½d. difference, 1l. 13s. 6½d. Mason is stated 53l. 12s. he makes himself 44l. 17s. 10d. difference, 8l. 15s. 2d. Again, the masters make Johnston only 46l. 9s. 10½d. he states himself 49l. 13s. 0½d. difference 3l. 4s. 1d. The total difference in this way arising, is 5l. 9s. 10d. against the journeymen, or that sum more than they admit to have earned. This difference must have arisen, from different periods having been taken either for the commencement or closing of the bills, for the journeymen are sure the excerpt from Mundell and Son's books must be correct.

The next class of workmen mentioned in the additional memorial, are those of Lawrie and Company, which, from its being a new house, can afford, it is said, no data for a fair average. The masters mean, no doubt, the wages would not be high enough to suit their purpose. But it deserves to be mentioned to the honour of these

these gentlemen, that whenever there was any deficiency of work, the men got a weekly allowance, sometimes 5s., sometimes less, to enable them to live comfortably. These additions are made to their weekly bills, so that on this ground, the masters have nothing to complain.

The next class of men are Mr. Willifon's, as to whom it is said, similar observations occur as to the first class; the same answers therefore apply which have been given to that first class, with this addition, that the certificate alluded to, extends to no more than 36 weeks out of the 52, all the high wages being taken, and all the low weeks left out. Still that there are discrepancies the memorialists are not to deny. They are these,—Robertson is stated by the masters as having earned 54l. 1s. 7d., states himself as having earned only 51l. 9s. 4½d., or a difference of 2l. 12s. 2½d. In the same house, Wright earns 52l. 3s. 7½d., he gives himself up at 49l. 2s. 3d., difference 3l. 1s. 4½d. Fleming, L.60, stated only 56l. 5s., difference 3l. 14s. 11d. Murray 44l. 0s. 11d., difference 15s. 11d., making a total difference between the statement of the masters and of the journeymen of 10l. 4s. 5d. Mr. Willifon's honour and accuracy are unimpeachable, and the journeymen are certain he would not do an unfair thing. The difference therefore must, as in the case of Mundell and Son, arise from the journeymen having begun at another period than Mr. Willifon.

The last class, Mr. Brown's men, it is alleged, might have earned more money, but they did not choose to work for it. This is a pretty extraordinary assertion, but without inquiring from what individual case this general assertion is made, it is plain, that even if true as to some of Mr. Brown's men, the whole were not idle, and the evidence given of Aitkin having gained 55l. 15s. 1d. contradicts the assertion as to the whole.

The critical remarks made on the earnings of Black and Boyle, contained on p. 4 of the additional memorial, are completely out of this question. In the *first* place, these earnings apply to the year 1792, and not to the year 1803; in the *second* place, in striking their average, the journeymen have followed the example set them by the masters, in making those who earned high bills "communicate the effects of their industry" with those who earned not so much, either from want of such good work, or by reason of inferior abilities, only the journeymen's average are taken by weeks instead of years, as much the surest way. Thus, in the average of wages earned prior to the year 1792, do not the masters make Reid, who earned 64l. 5s. 9d. communicate with Geddes, who earned only 39l. 4s. or little more than one half, to make up their average of 53l. 8s. 1d. And, again,

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do not the masters, in making up their average for the year 1803; make M. M. who earned 72l. 18s. 4d. communicate with Gardner, who earned only 35l. 8s. to make up their average of 51l. 14s. 6d? Can the masters point out a difference between these sums stated as a total, and divided by the number of weeks, and the whole stated yearly, and divided by the number of hands, if the yearly average is again divided by 52, the number of weeks in a year?

But another general objection is, that to make a fair report three requisites should be observed, equal and proper time, the same species of work, and the same industry. In any class of workmen where is this to be found? or have the masters observed it in their last abstract? The first is impossible, and the last has been shamefully overlooked. The view of the masters has uniformly been, not to give a fair average, though they had it in their power to give one of the whole journeymen in Edinburgh. Such classes of men for a full year, "which embraced both session and vacation," the journeymen have given. It is No. 6. of the appendix to their memorial, and comprehends four men out of each of four of the principal session-houses in Edinburgh. The masters have not dared to state any objection either to it or to No. 5. The highest of these averages is 17s. 11½d. of the other 13s. 9d. The masters have directed their whole force against No. 7. shewing the weekly wages, though, as already pointed out, the distinction attempted to be made is without a difference.

The masters say, that in making out their new average, "they have taken care the journeymen shall have no pretence for saying that these 45 are picked men." But the pursuers aver that these 45 are picked men. They are the highest in Edinburgh, and if higher could have been found, the pursuers have not the least doubt they would have been exhibited. It is even incorrect; for, 1<sup>st</sup>, from the house of Messrs. Neils, four of their hands are repeated to make up the 45, viz. Walker, Paul, White, and M'Pherson. The number of men is made to be 12, but the real number in the excerpts from Messrs. Neils is only 8. 2<sup>dly</sup>, John Turnbull exhibits his overseer as a compositor at 11. 1s. which is besides stated weekly wages; and shews that a good compositor will at any time take permanent wages of that extent to the chance of making a third more. 3<sup>dly</sup>, The excerpts from the house of Chapman and Company are unintelligible and cannot be corrected, yet are plainly not correct. And, 4<sup>thly</sup>, as to the King's house, the fact most unquestionably is, that four of the highest have been culled out of the number there engaged. To have made it any thing like a fair view, the men should have been taken alternately,



alternately, for there are two hands there, Bennel and Robertson, who earned in one year, from 30th April, 1803, to 24th March, 1804, the first only 42l. 9s. 2d. and the last 37l. 16s. 6½d. Besides, the highest wages earned in that house arises more from the nature of the work than any thing else. It is constant and lucrative, being chiefly jobs from the public offices.

In short, this boasted excerpt of the defenders is not only uncandid, but grossly incorrect. It is impossible to make more correct excerpts than the pursuers have exhibited; and it is not to be expected that the journeymen and their masters will ever agree as to an average of the wages. If the cause is to turn upon a very minute investigation of this point, a remit must be made to an accountant to examine the whole bill-books in Edinburgh, and make up a fair average, to be binding on both parties. But the memorialists submit it as sufficiently established for the purposes of this question, that there has been no rise on the wages of journeymen-compositors for nearly half a century, and that they cannot now earn more than they could have done 30 years ago. This, it is believed, cannot be said of any occupation in Edinburgh, they only excepted; and it is believed also that it can be said of them only in this city. Not only in England has an increase been allowed, but in Aberdeen compositors receive 4d. per 1000 letters for book-work, which is ½d. above what the pursuers at present generally receive; and in Glasgow head-lines and directions are paid for. In these provincial towns, therefore, the journeymen are better off than the pursuers. Even in Edinburgh 4d. is at present paid by Messrs. Murray and Cochran and Messrs. Lawrie and Company, and 4d. and 4½d. by Mr. Stewart, for all their book-work. Messrs. Neils, too, at the commencement of this process, offered to pay 4½d. for original works, being the sum the pursuers demanded, and to give a proportional rise on session.

Should your Lordships require any answer to the letters founded on by the defenders in their additional memorial, the pursuers beg leave to refer your Lordships to the appendix of this paper.

*In respect whereof, &c.*

GEORGE JOS. BELL.