

publish any heretical, schismatical, or OFFENSIVE books; and the act of 13 Car. II. c. 33, "for preventing abuses in printing, &c." copies that decree without any material variation, except, that by the decree, offenders are to be punished, as by the honorable Court of Star-chamber, or the High Commission Court shall be thought fit, and by the act, by disability to exercise their profession, and such further punishment, not extending to life or limb, as the Courts of King's Bench, or of Oyer and Terminer, shall think fit. This act of Charles II. was last continued by 1 Jac. II. c. 17; for seven years from 1685, but "being incompatible" (says the learned and constitutional editor of the Statutes at large) "with the noble principles of the revolution, it has never since been, and it is hoped never will be, renewed."

It is remarkable that the preamble to this decree of the Star-chamber (which by the bye is so scarce, tho' it is supposed there is only one copy extant,) takes notice of divers decrees and ordinances made for regulating printers and printing, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, which are said to have been defective in some particulars, but which I do not know where they can be referred to, and rather believe they have not come down to us at all. Hence we may see what early attempts were made to restrain this invaluable liberty. So intolerable is the nature of power, wherever lodged, that they who have loudest exclaimed against such restriction, as a badge of slavery, were no sooner invested with full sway, than they began to work on the same principles of oppression. About the year 1644; the Parliament made ordinances for restraining the press, which were framed on the plan of the above Star-chamber decree, and against which Milton published a treatise called Areopagita. Thus Charles the I, the Parliament that dethroned him, Charles the II. and James the II. all acting on different and contradictory principles, adopted the same arbitrary and tyrannical means of putting down offensive writings.

I shall feel obliged to any professional gentlemen who will give me (in a private letter) the titles of whatever acts either of the British parliament, or provincial legislature, are considered to be in force in Canada, as relates to libels. L. L. M.

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