

**A SUPPLICACYON FOR
THE BEGGERS. REPRINTED
FROM THE ORIGINAL
EDITION OF 1524**

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A supplicacyon for the beggers. Reprinted from the original edition of 1524 by Simon Fish

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SIMON FISH

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LONDON:
WILLIAM PICKERING.

1845.

*Arch. Bodl. A.
II. 92.*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including the names of the authors and the titles of their works. This list is organized in a vertical column on the right side of the page.

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and titles, including the names of the authors and the titles of their works. This list is organized in a vertical column on the right side of the page.





HERE is no book of the same period, which at the time of its publication occasioned greater remark, or was followed by more considerable results, than the *Supplication for the Beggars*. The chief historians of the Church of England speak of it, and how, to use Bishop Burnet's expression, it "took mightily." Sir Thomas More answered it in "The Supplicacyon of Soulys," i. e. in Purgatory, and his controversy with Tyndal was the consequence.

Yet, after all, there is little known of the real history of the book; which is shewn by the very evident errors into which Burnet and Foxe have fallen with regard to it. Burnet, in his loose way, places it under the date of 1534; and Foxe, in his account of the year 1530, making an apology however, that it should have come in six years before, and quaintly adding, "the missing of a few yeares in this matter breaketh no great square in our story."

story." This would bring back the date to 1524, but in the next paragraph Foxe says that it was probably written about 1528.*

But "*The Supplication*" must have been published as early as 1524, or at the latest in 1525: for in the year 1526 an injunction was issued by Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, calling in all English translations of the Scriptures: (Foxe, 2, 284. Ed. 1641: and Strype, Memorials 1, 165. Ed. 1721.) and strictly prohibiting about eighteen other books, at the head of which stands, in bad pre-eminence, "*the Supplication of Beggars.*" Wilkins, (Concilia, 3, 706) gives us this edict or injunction, issued by the authority also of Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury. Again, in the year 1530, a public instrument agreed upon, says Wilkins, (3, 728) in an Assembly of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Durham and others, by order of King Henry the Eighth, was put forth "containing divers heretical and erroneous opinions, selected from various books, which had been considered and

* Omissions and errors such as these would break, one might think, very great squares in History, though we may agree with Foxe, that in his story, an assertion more or less, and a confusion at one time worse confounded than at another, makes but little difference.

condemned."

condemned." One of those is from "*the Supplication*," and is the passage beginning, "There be many men of great literature, &c." and ending "in all holy Scripture." And, once more, in the same year, (Wilkins, iii. 737) or, with less probability, in 1529, (Strype, i. 165) a Royal Proclamation was published "for resisting and withstanding of most damnable heresies sown within this realm by the disciples of Luther, and other heretics, perverters of Christ's religion;" at the end of which, with some other books, "*the Supplication of Beggars*" is strictly prohibited.

Neither is it certain who was the Author: and when we ascribe it to Simon Fish, we have, it may be, many authorities with us in number, but in fact only the Editor of the Edition of 1545, and perhaps Foxe.* It is true that there is not much evidence to support his statement, and upon the other hand, it must be acknowledged, even much less to contradict it. An account of Fish is given in Wood (*Athenæ Oxon.* i. 59. Ed. 1813) and it is supposed that he died of the plague about 1530. The Authorship of such a book as "*the Supplication*"

* Compare also a passage in Sir Thomas More's *Apology*, (*Works*, Lond. Fol. 1557, p. 881) cited by Dr. Bliss, in his additions to the *Athenæ*. i. 59.

was not, in those days, an honour which a man would rashly claim, or which would be attributed to any one without some reason.

Having been so rigidly suppressed, we cannot wonder at the extreme rarity of this tract : so rare indeed is it, that the copy from which the present is reprinted, is the only one which, after much enquiry, the Editor can trace. About the year 1545, it was published in a volume with another book of the same sort, "the Supplication of the poor Commons : " copies of which are in the Bodleian and the British Museum libraries : Foxe also has reprinted it.

There are several stories told how it was introduced to the notice of Henry the Eighth ; and, although these may not be entitled to much credit, yet, the fact seems well authenticated, that the king did read, and at first was well pleased with it. Henry, no doubt, would be pleased with any thing which might forward his immediate purpose. No stories, however exaggerated, no lies, however palpable, came amiss to him about the Monks and Clergy of his day, when his exchequer was exhausted, and the Abbey lands lay almost within his grasp, but still as yet, beyond it, for want of pretext. Some say that Anne Boleyn gave him
him

him the book : others, that one of the copies which were thrown about the streets was brought to him, and Foxe gives us a very circumstantial account, sufficiently curious to be related here, whether true or false. He says, (ii. 280) " One Edmund Moddis, the King's Footeman, being with the King in talk of religion, and of the new bookes which were come from beyond the seas, said, if it might please his grace to pardon him, and such as he would bring to his grace, he should see such a booke, as was marvele to heare of. The king demanded what they were. He said, two of your Merchants, George Elyot and George Robynson. The King pointed a time to speake with them. When they came before his presence in a privy closet, he demanded what they had to say or to shew him. One of them said, that there was a booke come to their hands, which they had there to shew his grace. When he saw it, he demanded if any of them could read it. Yea, said George Elyot, if it please your grace to heare it. I thought so, said the King, for if need were, thou canst say it without booke. The whole booke being read out, the King made a long pause, and then sayd, if a man should pull downe an old stone wall, and begin at the lower part, the upper part thereof
might