

L A W S
OF
THE SPECULATIVE SOCIETY
OF
EDINBURGH:

INSTITUTED IN NOVEMBER 1764,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF
IMPROVEMENT IN LITERARY COMPOSITION

AND

PUBLIC SPEAKING.



EDINBURGH:

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FOR THE SOCIETY.

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Report of J. S. [unclear]

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L A W S, &c.

CHAP I.

CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY.

THE SPECULATIVE SOCIETY shall consist of Ordinary, Extraordinary, and Honorary Members.

SECT. I.

OF ORDINARY MEMBERS.

ART. 1. Application for admission into the Society shall be made by a petition, attested by two of the members. Application
for
Admission:

2. When the number of ordinary residing members amounts to 30, no more petitions can be received.

3. Whenever the number of petitions at one time shall exceed that of vacancies, the order of preference for a corresponding number of petitions shall be determined by lot, and those which are not then drawn for ballot

shall be entitled to a priority when vacancies again occur.

Voting on Petitions.

4. Every petition shall lie on the table till the next meeting after that at which it is presented. It shall then be determined on by ballot; and the concurrence of two-thirds of the members present shall be necessary to admit the candidate.

5. Two petitions cannot be received from any candidate in the same session, without an interval of eight weeks between the date of the 2d, and the rejection of the 1st; nor from any person in the same session in which he has been expelled.

Ticket of Admission.

6. Every member, on his admission, shall receive an attestation thereof, signed by the President of the meeting and the Secretary, and stamped with the Society's device; he shall then pay as entry-money a certain sum, to be regulated at the first meeting of each session.

Annual Quota.

7. Every ordinary member shall pay annually a certain sum to the Secretary for the use of the Society; the quota to be regulated at the first meeting of each session.

8. No demission shall be accepted from any member, unless the same be signified four ordinary meetings at least before it would have fallen to him to deliver a discourse.

Demission.

9. When an ordinary member is to leave Edinburgh, the Society shall grant him a privilege, by which he can resume his seat upon his return. Such non-residing privilege cannot take effect till after the actual departure of the member to whom it was granted, and until payment is made of any arrears due by such member to the Society's funds. If such member return to Edinburgh during the session of the Society, and do not appear to resume his seat, he shall forfeit the benefit of his non-residing privilege.

Non-residing Privilege.

SECT. II.

EXTRAORDINARY AND HONORARY MEMBERS.

ART. 1. Extraordinary members shall enjoy all the privileges of ordinary members, be eligible to all the offices of the Society, and at the same time be exempt from all its burdens. An ordinary member shall be entitled to request extraordinary privileges after three years attendance, and the punctual performance of

Extraordinary Members.

the business allotted him by the Society during that period. But, if he has been absent on a non-residing privilege, such absence, unless it exceed the period of one session, shall not preclude his claim.

The claim for extraordinary privileges shall be decided by ballot at the next ordinary meeting after that on which it is made, and it shall require the consent of two-thirds of the members present to confer them. Extraordinary privileges cannot be claimed by any member within four weeks of the time when it would have fallen to him to deliver a discourse, or while he is in arrear to the Society's funds. If his application be refused, it cannot be renewed that session.

Honorary
Members.

2. Honorary Members shall enjoy the same privileges with extraordinary members, and shall have precedence to all others on the roll.

The Society may raise any of its members to this rank on a motion to that effect. This motion shall be decided in the same way as a petition for extraordinary privileges. They shall receive a diploma, according to the form agreed upon by the Society; stamped with its device under its seal; and subscribed by at least two of the Presidents, and by the Secretary.

SECT. III.

Privileges of the members of the HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DUBLIN, in terms of the compact entered into by the Speculative Society with the Historical Society of Dublin, dated 24th November 1783, and recorded in the minutes. The members of that Society shall be entitled to the following privileges.

Members of the
Historical So-
ciety of Dublin.

ART. 1. Any member of the Historical Society of Dublin, upon producing the proper certificate, shall be admitted a member of the Speculative Society, provided he has never been formerly rejected.

2. He shall be capable of filling any office in the Society, and of speaking and voting on all literary business; and shall be required, in rotation with the ordinary members, to deliver discourses, and open questions.

3. He shall be exempted from all ordinary subscriptions, and from all penalties, except such as he may incur by neglect of literary duty, or by disorderly behaviour.

4. Unless he has been elected a President, he shall not have the right of speaking and voting on private business.

CHAP. II.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY.

SECT. I.

Presidents.

ART. I. THERE shall be an annual election of Five PRESIDENTS at the third ordinary meeting of each session. The manner of electing them shall be by lists to be given in by each of the members present at the meeting.

2. The duty of President is to preserve order and decorum in the Society. He shall have the power to impose fines for unbecoming language or behaviour. He shall not censure any member, or rebuke him from the chair, for any opinions he delivers, without first receiving authority from the Society for that purpose; but he has a discretionary power of calling any member to order.

3. If the member does not pay attention to the President's injunctions, he is to impose fines as in cases of improper behaviour.

4. No enquiry or discussion is to take place, on the propriety or impropriety of the Presi-

dent's conduct, without the consent of two-thirds of the members present.

5. The President shall appoint the committees and extraordinary meetings judged necessary by the Society.

6. The sitting President shall not have a vote in any case, except when the manner of voting is by ballot, or where there is an equality.

SECT. II.

ART. I. A member of the Society shall be chosen SECRETARY, and shall continue in that office during the pleasure of the Society, or till he chooses to resign it. Secretary.

2. He shall keep regular ^{minutes} meetings of the Society's proceedings. He shall also have the management of their funds; and, at the close of each session, present a state of them for the inspection of a committee, who shall be empowered to discharge them.

CHAP. III.

TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING.

SECT. I.

Session.

ART. I. EACH session of the Society shall commence on the first Tuesday after the 12th of November, and conclude on the first Tuesday of May following.

2. The session may terminate sooner, if a motion for that purpose be agreed to by three-fourths of the members present at any ordinary meeting; provided previous notice has been given of such motion at a former meeting.

3. The Society, when they see cause, shall appoint an extraordinary meeting.

SECT. II.

Society's Hall.

ART. I. During the above period, the Society shall meet in their own Hall in the University of Edinburgh, once a week, on Tuesday evening, at 7 o'clock precisely.

2. The Hall built by the Society in the College, shall be solely appropriated to the purpose of their meeting, according to Act of Town Council, conferring the area on the Society, dated 21st June 1769.

CHAP. IV.

BUSINESS.

SECT. I.

ART. I. SEVEN members, of whom four at least must be ordinary members, shall constitute a quorum of the Society. Nevertheless, when it shall happen that there is not a quorum of the Society assembled at the ordinary time of meeting, it shall be in the power of the members present, after waiting till 8 o'clock, to adjourn; in which case the members who have not been present at the time of such adjournment, shall be fined in the ordinary penalties of absence.

2. No member can give his suffrage in any question, if he enters the Society after the vote has begun to be called.

If any member expresses his vote in terms different from the words of the question, his vote shall not be taken down.

In all cases, where it is not otherwise provided, a majority of votes shall determine.

SECT. II.

OF LITERARY BUSINESS.

Essays. ART. I. At each meeting the Society shall hear an essay read, and shall debate a question.

2. THE essays shall be delivered by the ordinary members, according to their seniority on the roll. The subject of each must be declared by the member who is to read it, on the two ordinary meeting next previous to its being delivered; and the two members next in order shall each night be also prepared, that the Society may be in no danger of being disappointed.

The essay, when read, shall be subjected to the criticism of the members present; and no member shall speak more than once in the course of the criticism, without special leave from the President.

Questions. 3. THE questions shall be opened by members in rotation, or as appointed. After the debate is ended, the sense of the Society shall be taken by a division, the result of which, with the numbers on each side, shall be marked in the minutes.

4. THE President shall appoint a committee of the six members next in rotation, to open the debates, to prepare lists of three questions each, to be given in to the next meeting; after these lists are received, he shall appoint a committee of three other members, to select from them six questions for debate, who shall report their selection to the meeting following.

The questions thus appointed shall be debated in the order in which they are entered in the minutes, unless any of them is set aside by unanimous agreement, after which a new one may be chosen by a majority.

5. No essays or questions shall be admitted, touching the Christian religion, or the political topics of the day.

SECT. III.

OF PRIVATE BUSINESS.

ART. I. No part of private business, except the receiving and balloting petitions, shall be entered upon until the literary business of the night be finished.

Manner of preparing Questions.

Discussion of Private Business.

Protests.

2. It shall be competent to members to protest against any part of the Society's proceedings with which they are dissatisfied, and to give in their reasons of dissent at the next ordinary meeting, which must be inserted in the records of the Society, if not judged improper by three-fourths of the members present.

Motions
respecting the
Laws or Funds.

3. No alteration of the laws of the Society, nor unusual application of its funds, can be taken under consideration, except at an extraordinary meeting, moved for on a fortnight's notice for that special purpose, and agreed to by a majority; nor can they even then be made without the consent of two-thirds of the members present.

CHAP. V.

PENALTIES.

ART. I. Every ordinary member who comes into the Society after seven o'clock, shall be fined in one shilling; and after the opening of the debate, in one shilling and sixpence; unless a sufficient excuse can be offered, to be judged of by appeal, as is afterwards directed. If the member who is to deliver the discourse for the evening, comes in after the Society is constituted, he forfeits two shillings and sixpence.

Late Entrance.

2. EVERY ordinary member absent from an ordinary or extraordinary meeting, shall be fined in two shillings and sixpence; and no excuse can be sustained for absence, except sickness.

Absence.

Entire absence from three successive ordinary meetings shall be, *ipso facto*, expulsion; unless a sufficient excuse be intimated to the Society at such third meeting at farthest.

3. THREE fourths of the members present at an ordinary meeting, may grant to an ordinary

Dispensation
for
Absence.

member a dispensation from the penalties of non-attendance upon the Society, for a time not exceeding three months; provided a motion to that effect has been made at the preceding ordinary meeting. The manner of voting shall be by ballot. But no such dispensation shall on any account be granted, unless application for the same has been made four ordinary meetings at least before it would have come to his turn to deliver an Essay. Such dispensation shall not exempt the member so privileged from delivering an Essay and opening a Question in rotation.

Leaving
the
Society.

4. EVERY ordinary member who leaves the Society before the business is concluded, without permission from the President, shall be liable in a fine of one shilling and sixpence.

Every member whatever who leaves the Society when there is only a quorum present, shall be liable in a fine of five shillings.

Neglect
of
Literary Duty.

5. EVERY ordinary member who fails to announce the subject of his Essay, according to the regulations, shall be fined in two shillings and sixpence.—Every member who reads an Essay on a subject different from that

which he announced, shall be fined in two shillings and sixpence, unless he obtain permission to change it at the meeting immediately preceding.—Every ordinary member who fails to deliver a discourse, when required by the laws, or appointed by the Society, or who does not obtain another member to deliver one in his stead, shall forfeit ten shillings and sixpence. The member thus in fault shall be obliged to deliver a discourse, or provide a substitute, on the ordinary meeting next following his failure, under the same penalty: And such failure for three successive ordinary meetings shall be *ipso facto* expulsion; unless a sufficient excuse be intimated to the Society on such third meeting at farthest. If the two members next in order to deliver Essays, be not prepared when called upon by the Society, the first shall be liable in a fine of five shillings, and the second of two shillings and sixpence.

Every ordinary member who neglects to open a question, when required by the laws, or appointed by the Society, shall forfeit five shillings, unless he provide another member to do the business in his room.

Absence from Committees for Questions.

6. If any of the committees for preparing questions do not constitute as directed Chap. V. Sect. II. § 4., or if any of their members do not attend; all or each of the members thus in fault shall be fined in five shillings.

Officers of the Society.

7. If the President for the night be late or absent, he shall be liable in double the fines incurred by ordinary members; and he shall not be at liberty to leave his seat until the business of the meeting is finished, under the penalty of five shillings; unless, in the latter of these cases, some of the other Presidents be willing to officiate in his stead.

The Secretary shall be also liable in double the ordinary fines for being late or absent; unless he appoint another of the members to officiate, and furnish him with the books and papers of the Society.

Honorary and Extraordinary Members undertaking any Duty.

8. EVERY honorary and extraordinary member who accepts of any office in the Society, or who undertakes to deliver an essay or to open a question, shall be subject to the same penalties for neglect of duty as ordinary members.

Expulsion and Degradation

9. A majority of members may expel an ordinary member, and may expel or degrade to an inferior rank an extraordinary or honorary member. The motion for expelling an ordinary member must be made at least three weeks, and the motion for expelling or degrading an extraordinary or honorary member at least four weeks, before it can be determined on. The Secretary is also to take care that the motion for expulsion or degradation be inserted in the minutes of the meeting at which it is made. In every case, notification of such motion must be immediately given by the Secretary to the member against whom it is made. The manner of voting on motions of expulsion or degradation shall be by ballot.

Arrears.

10. A list of the arrears shall each night be read over by the Secretary, and fixed on a conspicuous part of the Society's room.

No member, who has been for more than a fortnight indebted to the Society in any sum whatever, shall be allowed to vote on any question, to claim any privilege, or be entitled to the use of the library. A list of those who are a fortnight in arrear, shall each meeting

be laid before the President, that he may enforce the above regulation.

Appeals.

II. WHEN any member thinks himself aggrieved by any fine imposed, either by the operation of the laws, or by the Presidents, he may appeal from the same to the Society. If the reasons of appeal are sustained as sufficient by two thirds of the members, the penalty shall be remitted; if not, it shall become final, and the appellant subjected to a farther penalty of two shillings and sixpence. All penalties shall become final, if not appealed from, either the same evening in which they are imposed, if the member offending be present, or at the first meeting after at which he is present.

CHAP. VI.

LIBRARY.

SECT. I.

THE Library instituted by the Society shall be appropriated solely to the use of the members. A part of the Society's income shall from time to time be assigned as a fund to the library, according to the report of the Secretary, to be made at the first meetings of December and March, of what sum can be spared for that purpose.

Library.

SECT. II.

ART. 1. The Presidents for the session, and the Secretary, shall be a standing committee for management of the library fund.

Committee
of
Management

2. THE Secretary for the time being, shall also have the charge of the books as librarian.

3. A book shall be kept in the Hall, in which the members may mark down any books they choose to recommend to the committee.

4. THE committee of management shall, at the first meetings of February and April, report the application of the sums voted to their disposal, and also the books presented to the library by any of the members; to which reports the Secretary, as librarian, shall subjoin a certification of the books having been received by him, and inserted in the catalogue.

5. THE Secretary shall pay the books purchased by the committee, and shall get regular discharges for the whole of them.

6. THE accounts of the Secretary, as treasurer to the library fund, and the state of the books under his charge as librarian, shall be inspected at the close of each session, by a committee who shall be empowered to pass and approve them.

SECT. III.

ART. I. The librarian shall give out and receive books at each meeting, during the session, and during the vacation, on the first Tuesday of every month, from 7 to 8 in the evening.

Distribution
of
Books.

2. EVERY member who borrows a book, shall give a receipt for it in a book to be kept for that purpose by the librarian, or send a signed note specifying the books wanted, which, with the entry by the librarian, shall be as binding as a receipt.

3. No member shall be allowed to have the use of more than 8 volumes at one time.

4. No member shall be allowed to retain any books longer than four weeks, under the penalty of 1 s. for each volume, and 1 s. per volume for every week till they be returned; nor shall he be allowed to receive any books from the library, till those retained beyond the proper time be returned, and the fines paid.

5. If any member applies for a book that is out, he shall receive from the librarian an official notification to be presented to the person that has the book, who shall, under the penalties above mentioned, return it to the library at the next meeting, during the session; and during the vacation, deliver it to the member who presents the notification, within one

Distribution
of
Books.

week, provided always that in both these cases he shall have the liberty of retaining it a fortnight from the date of his receipt.

6. THE member who obtains an official notification for the purpose of getting a book from another member, without its being first returned to the library, shall immediately give the librarian a receipt for such book ; and the notification shall be taken by the librarian as a sufficient voucher for marking out the receipt of the member who first borrowed it.

7. ANY member may, if he chooses, immediately borrow again the books he returns to the library, provided they are not asked for by any of the other members, who shall have a prior claim for them at that time.

