

A  
BRIEF STATEMENT

OF THE  
CAUSES WHICH LED

TO THE

Dissolution of the Historical Society

OF

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

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BY A MEMBER OF THE LATE SOCIETY.

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“ Ut corpora lente aurescunt, cito extinguuntur ; sic ingenia studiaque  
“ oppresseris facilius, quam revocaveris.”

TACITUS.

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## BRIEF STATEMENT, &c.

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A BRIEF statement of the causes which led to the Dissolution of the Historical Society, and of the motives which influenced those who were instrumental in bringing about that event, the Public seem to have a right to demand—as well from the great national importance of the late Institution, as in order to settle the uncertainty of opinion occasioned by the contradictory and erroneous accounts given in the Daily Prints of the transaction. Individual feeling is also, in some degree, concerned in such an undertaking:—The interest which, not the College only, but the Country at large, had in the existence of the Historical Society was so great, that the *immediate* authors of its destruction can stand justified to the World, only by producing the strongest reasons in favour of the line of conduct adopted by them on the occasion. And as there have not been



wanting those who, either knowingly, or through error, have mis-stated the foundation of the Historical Society, and the principles upon which it was established, and have used such mis-statement to support the Paradoxical opinion of the incompetency of that Society to dissolve itself; it seems necessary to give a slight sketch of its origin and progress, together with a brief notice of that Institution, which was its immediate predecessor, and of which it may be considered but a continuation.

It appears that associations similar in their nature and object to that lately dissolved, are by no means a novelty in Dublin College. Among the Journals now in the possession of the Committee intrusted with the care of the late Society's property, is a volume of the proceedings of the Historical Club, instituted October 24th, 1753. This Club appears to have been established at first merely for the cultivation of Historical knowledge. However, in little more than a year from its foundation, a material improvement took place, by engrafting on the original plan, the monthly debate of a Historical Question. From the following extract from the proceedings of the Club, at its meeting, June 11th, 1757, it is evident, that the honour of being the



first Institution of the kind established in Dublin College, cannot be awarded to it.

“ A Committee sat, to take into consideration a  
“ scheme for incorporating with the *Old Historical*  
“ Club.

“ STOPFORD CHAIRMAN.”

**Resolved,**

“ That it is impossible for this Club, under their  
“ present circumstances, to incorporate with the above  
“ Club.”

What the circumstances were which prevented the proposed incorporation, and whether the new Historical Club bore to the Old one, the same relation that the Historical Society of 1794 bore to that established in 1770, we have no means of ascertaining.—The volume of the Journals of the Historical Club extant, brings down its proceedings to Saturday, October 29th, 1757, on which day the Club adjourned to November 1st of the same year. How much longer it existed, and whether the first Historical Society owed its origin to it in any degree, are equally unknown. The conjecture that it did, is favoured by the existence of the vo-



lume already-mentioned, which came to the late Society from that instituted in 1770.

For want of the 1st Volume of the Journals of the Society of 1770, we cannot state precisely the principles upon which it was established. In the statement of Facts published at the time of its secession in 1794, it is asserted, that "in 1770, several students observing the insufficiency of the Academical Course as a qualification for active life, obtained a grant of Apartments in College, for the purpose of devoting one evening in every week to the cultivation of those useful branches of the Belles Lettres, which were totally neglected in the under-graduate course." Of the nature of the grant of rooms \* thus asserted to have been made, we

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\* It would appear, from the following extract from its Journals, that the Historical Society, in the year 1783, held their room by a somewhat less precarious tenure than that of more modern times.

Wednesday, February 26th, 1783.

Mr. Secretary informed the Society, that the following message was sent, in order to be communicated to the Society.

The Bursar's compliments to the Historical Society : the Board requests the favour of the use of the Historical Room for a few days, as his



are left in ignorance. It cannot be supposed to have been absolute ; but what the conditions were, whether strictly defined, or tacitly implied, must be left to conjecture.

The objects of the Society of 1770 were precisely the same as those of that lately dissolved, and seem to have been prosecuted with an ardour and ability, fully proportioned to their importance.

Panegyric forms no part of the plan of the present statement, but for the information of those who have affected to consider the Historical Society, and all similar associations, as useless, considered with reference

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Excellency the Lord Lieutenant is to breakfast in the College on Monday next.

A Motion was made by Mr. Townsend, and seconded by Mr. Plunkett, that the Secretary do send a card to the Bursar, to the following purpose.

The Historical Society present their compliments to Dr. Usher : they feel much pleasure in complying with the request of the Board and have unanimously agreed to accommodate them with the use of their Room for a few days.

And the Question being put, it was carried in the Affirmative.—  
*Nem. Con.*



to the professed objects of their institution, as seriously interfering with the successful prosecution of studies strictly Academical; and, viewed with relation to their positive results, as merely nurseries for Sedition, or at best, hot-beds for the forced productions of talentless mediocrity, the following hasty list, which more accurate search would have considerably swelled, is submitted, of some of the Members of the Historical Society, from the year 1774 to the time of its secession in 1794, almost all of whom we find taking an active and distinguished part in its proceedings; and not a few obtaining the highest honours it had to give. Among its Members during the twenty years immediately preceding its secession, we find in the Church:—

DR. HALL, LATE BISHOP OF DROMORE. †

DR. WILLIAM HAMILTON. †

DR. STACK. †

DR. STOPFORD. †

THE DEAN OF ARDAGH. †

THE DEAN OF CORK. †

DR. MILLER. †

DR. USHER. †

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† Thus marked, are or have been Fellows of Trinity College.



DR. BURROWES. †

DR. PRIOR. †

DR. DAVENPORT. †

DR. KYLE. †

DR. SADLEIR. †

REV. JAMES DUNNE.

REV. J. JEBB.

LATE REV. MR. WHITELOW. &c. &c.

In the Senate and at the Bar :

THE PRESENT LORD ROSS.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE COURT OF  
KING'S BENCH.

LORD CHIEF BARON.

THE LATE JUDGE CHAMBERLAIN.

JUDGE DAY,

—— OSBORNE,

—— FOX, AND

—— MAYNE.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL.

SIR JOHN STUART.

SIR CHARLES ORMSBY.

RIGHT HONOURABLE W. C. PLUNKETT.

THE LATE PRIME SERGEANT BROWNE. †

THE LATE SERGEANT BALL.

MESSRS. P. BURROWES.

R. JEBB.

T. DRISCOL.

J. LLOYD.

J. S. TOWNSEND.

J. RADCLIFFE.

STOKES.

W. BALL.

LEFROY.

J. GREEN.

J. GABBETT.

E. & R. PENNEFEATHER.

RIDGEWAY.

&c. &c. &c.

In the profession of Medicine.

DOCTORS PERCEVAL,

THE LATE DR. PLUNKETT.

STOKES, †

CLEGHORN,

CLANCY,

&c. &c. &c.

Nor do the pursuits of the Historical Society seem incompatible with the subsequent acquisition of high



military renown. The late gallant and lamented GENERAL ROSS, was a Member, and filled the office of Treasurer in it.

Among those who opened and closed Sessions\* with Speeches from the Chair,—we find,

THE LATE BISHOP OF DROMORE. †

WILLIAM BALL, Esq.

THE LATE DR. WM. HAMILTON. †

JUDGE MAYNE.

SIR JOHN STUART.

JUDGE FOX.

PETER BURROWES, Esq.

J. W. STOKES, Esq.

THE PRESENT LORD ROSS.

\* The weekly sittings of the Historical Society commenced on the Wednesday succeeding the Michaelmas Quarterly Examination, and ended on the Wednesday succeeding the Trinity Quarterly Examinations. That interval was denominated a Session, and was subdivided into three smaller spaces, called Periods. A Member, generally the most distinguished for his talents and eloquence, was appointed to open and close each Session with a speech from the Chair of the Society. The speeches on these occasions, consisted principally in a brilliant display of the advantages of the Institution, and the excellence of the objects pursued in it.



RIGHT HON. W. C. PLUNKETT.

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL.

JONAS GREEN, Esq.

DR. MILLER. †

THE LATE EDWARD LYSAGHT, Esq.

&c. &c. &c.

It is foreign from the present purpose, to enquire into the conduct, or motives of those on either side, who were instrumental in separating from the University an institution at once so useful and ornamental to it; more especially, as the loss was so soon repaired by the establishment of a new Society, having the same objects of pursuit, and founded upon principles, which to him who speculated on the ordinary course of events, might seem to have insured its permanency. Of that Society we are now to speak,—its object, and the principles upon which it was established, are to be learned by a reference to its journals.

In the first page of the First Volume, the foundation of the Historical Society is thus recorded:

*Friday, December 19th, 1794.*

The following Resolutions, proposed by Mr. Lefroy,



and seconded by Mr. Torrens, were unanimously agreed to :—

*First.*—Resolved, that we, the undersigned, do hereby associate ourselves under the Title of The HISTORICAL SOCIETY of the University of Dublin, instituted for the Cultivation of HISTORY, ORATORY, and COMPOSITION.

“ *Second.*—RESOLVED, That we adopt, as the fundamental bond of our Union, the following Regulations, viz.

“ No person whose name is not on the College Books, shall be admissible into this Society.

“ No person shall be permitted to remain a Member of this Society, after he shall have taken his name off the College Books, *except* such Members as shall have obtained a Medal in the Society, or a Premium in the under-graduate course, and such are to continue Members *only*, till they are of Master's standing; also all Members of the late Historical Society may be admitted, and continue Members of *this* Society till said standing,

upon subscribing these Regulations, though they may not have obtained Medals or Premiums.

“ The Fellows of the College shall have a right to attend the meetings of this Society.

“ The Students shall attend the meetings of the Society in their gowns.

“ The books containing the proceedings of the Society shall be submitted to the Board whenever required.

“ No question of modern politics shall be debated.”

Among those who signed these Resolutions, we find, Drs. Davenport, Kyle, Sadleir; Mr. Kenny, Messrs. Lefroy, Jebb, &c. &c.

A Committee was appointed on the same night to notify to the Board the formation of the Society, which, with the Answer of the Board, we find thus recorded on the Journals of December 24th, 1794.



ADDRESS  
OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, T. C. D.  
TO THE BOARD.

“ WE, the Members of the Historical Society, associated within the University, are anxious to communicate to the Board our full and perfect acquiescence in their last regulations. We have adopted them as the bond of our union, and the fundamental principles of our institution.

“ We are convinced of the great utility of an institution for the more immediate cultivation of History, Oratory, and Composition ; and we are no less strongly impressed with the necessity of its dependence on the University for a creditable existence.

“ We return our sincere thanks to the Board, for its kindness in devising regulations which we think will conduce to the permanent well-being of the Society, and we trust, that by our adherence to them, and by



the general propriety of our conduct, we shall continue to deserve the favour, and protection of the Board.

“ Signed by Order,

“ JOHN JEBB, SECRETARY.”

“ *December 20th, 1794.*”

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### ANSWER OF THE BOARD.

“ THE Senior Fellows have requested the Vice-Provost to signify to the Members of the Historical Society, that they highly approve of their Address presented to them this day, and signed John Jebb, Secretary: That they think very favourably of their characters and conduct, and assure them of every countenance and support of the Institution they are engaged in, which may be consistent with their duty, as Governors of the College.”

“ *December 20th, 1794.*”

Such was the foundation of the late Historical Society—such the essential principles of its Constitution—and from a view of these, it is evident that it was in the strictest sense of the term, a *voluntary association*, as



no compulsion was used in its formation, so could there be none employed for its continuance. The individuals who, on Friday December 19th, 1794, thought proper to associate themselves under a particular name, for certain specified purposes, were perfectly competent on the next, or any subsequent night, to dissolve the association for any cause they might deem fit, or for no cause, without being accountable to any superior authority whatever for such conduct. As long, indeed, as the association continued, the Members of it were under an obligation to conform their conduct and proceedings in it to those Regulations, which were the basis of its formation, and therefore stiled Fundamental—as well as to any new rules or ordinances which those appointed to govern the College, and preserve discipline therein, might think fit or necessary to impose for that purpose: but if they found either the Regulations to which they had themselves agreed, or those which might be subsequently imposed on them without their assent, inconvenient to be observed, they had a ready method of freeing themselves from the obligation of observing them, by taking away the foundation of that obligation—their bond of union. And the same right and power of dissolution which the Society possessed at its first establishment, it must have still continued to possess during the



whole period of its duration—since although in a state of constant fluctuation, and composed of continually varying sets of Members, yet at any given moment of its existence, it would be found to consist of individuals voluntarily associated under certain restrictions and regulations for a specific purpose ; and therefore, as before, competent to dissolve the association whenever they should see reason so to do. Thus much it seemed necessary to say with respect to the *right* of the late Historical Society, to dissolve itself, as that right has been questioned even by some of those, who, from regard to the Society, viewed with satisfaction the act of dissolution. But as the possession of a right, however it may in the view of law, yet in that of reason, and common sense, does not always justify the exercise of it—it will be shewn, that the motives which influenced the late Society in the exercise of their right of dissolution, were of no common or trivial nature ; and the conduct of those will be attempted to be vindicated, who are charged with having unnecessarily applied the extremest remedy to an ordinary case, and with having precipitately, and petulantly, and under the influence of passion, demolished an Institution, hitherto the pride of our University, merely because some slight unimportant alterations



were made in the mode of conducting its proceedings, which met not with its approbation.

The Historical Society, founded upon the principles already mentioned, during a period of eighteen years advanced with rapid but steady steps in the successful prosecution of the objects of its institution. A necessary reserve forbids the mentioning the names of those, who, during that time, by their exertions in its several departments, contributed to their own improvement and its splendour: some of these have already distinguished themselves in the Senate, in the Pulpit, and at the Bar.—The curtain which hitherto separated the greater part from general view, is now gradually drawing up; and they will all in turn exhibit on the great stage of public life those talents and acquirements which they who have witnessed their rehearsal in the Historical Society, can confidently predict, will meet with universal approbation.

It is not, however, unnecessary here to observe, in answer to those who are fond of asserting the incompatibility of its pursuits with studies purely Collegiate, that almost all those elected to the honourable station of Junior Fellows, since its foundation, have been them-



selves Members of the Institution; and that of these, some have attained to the very highest rank and honours in it. The answers of newly elected Fellows to the Addresses of congratulation presented to them by the Society, have been uniformly expressive of sentiments the most favourable of its principles, character, and objects. The late celebrated Richard Kirwan, in presenting to the Historical Society, copies of some of his works, took occasion more than once to express his unqualified approval of the Institution. But the tribute of approbation contained in the reply of the late Bishop of Ossory, to an address of congratulation from the Society on his promotion from the Provostship to that See—considering the person from whom it came, is so flattering and so just withal as to authorise the insertion of the letter in which it is contained, together with the address occasioning it, even in so brief a memoir as the present.



TO THE

*RIGHT REVEREND JOHN LORD BISHOP  
OF OSSORY.*

THE Historical Society beg leave, through us, to convey their congratulations to your Lordship, upon your promotion to your present dignified station, which, while it imposes more awful and arduous duties, renders talent more conspicuous, and allows a more ample range for the exercise of benevolence.

We return you sincere thanks for the continuance and support which our Institution, for a series of years, has derived from your Lordship.

Deeply impressed by these obligations, we have viewed with the warmest satisfaction, the reward of distinguished merit; and although fully sensible of the loss which the University has sustained, we cannot but congratulate our country upon the advancement of one whose claims were derived from superior zeal and su-



perior ability, evinced in the support of the cause of learning, of virtue, and of religion.

Signed,

WM. O. HAMILTON, AUD<sup>r</sup>. & CHAIR.

WM. SHERLOCK.

ROSS JEBB.

*College, March 1st, 1806.*

To which his Lordship returned the following answer:—

*To the Gentlemen of the Historical Society, Trinity  
College, Dublin.*

GENTLEMEN,

I receive a proud gratification from this honest and warm testimony of your partial opinion, I can claim in truth no positive merit, except this, a zealous attention to the morals, the learning, the reputation, and the peace of this College, has for many years monopolized my thoughts, and bounded my ambition.

Your Institution has ever appeared to me to be an useful and necessary addition to the excellent system of Academical Education, established in this University:



your weekly discussions are admirably adapted to interest the Scholar, in the management of those instruments of argument, which he must have prepared in the retirement of his closet ; and your Society is in my judgment, the best PALÆSTRA for the exercise and improvement of those talents that qualify the Student for active life.

I am at present preparing to leave this country immediately, to discharge serious duties in another ; but before we part, suffer me to request a favor, that you will permit my name to stand enrolled among the members of your Society, as a permanent pledge of my approbation of the Institution, and of zeal for its prosperity.

JOHN OSSORY.

March 1, 1806.

Mr. W. O. Hamilton, seconded by Mr. Jebb, moved that the Society do come to the following Resolution.

**Resolved,**

That in consequence of the intimation so flattering to the Society, conveyed by the Bishop of Ossory, of his wish to remain a Member of our Institution, the



name of John Lord Bishop of Ossory, do stand enrolled among the list of our permanent Members: and that the Auditor do acquaint the Right Reverend Bishop of Ossory, with this Resolution of the Society, and with the grateful sense which they entertain of the honour conferred on them by his Lordship's request.

Agreed to unanimously.

In the month of February 1807, the Historical Society received an accession to their property, of a very interesting nature—the Journals and records of the Society founded in 1770. This gift was the more valuable when considered, as an evidence of the estimation in which their Institution was held, by those best qualified to form an opinion, the remaining Members of that useful and splendid Association.

Thus supported by public opinion, by the protection and good-will of the Governors of the College, and by that weight and character derived from the brilliant voluntary exertions of Members in the pursuit of its honours, the close of the eighteenth Session saw the Historical Society flourishing in the most unexampled degree, and justifying in him, who judged from exter-



nal appearances, the hope of many successive years of a healthy and vigorous existence. But the commencement of the Nineteenth Session, the beginning of a new, short, but eventful epocha in its History, substituted for these seemingly well-founded expectations, the bitterness of disappointment. The faith upon which the Society had been established, was then broken. Those “\* regulations which were to be considered as its charter, regulations founded on long experience, and the result of deep reflection upon the relation which such a Society should bear to the College in which it is formed,” were, without any cause assigned, any blame imputed to the Society, or any necessity for the adoption of so strong a measure attempted to be shewn, then taken from it, and their place supplied by others, differing, in some respects materially from those upon which it was originally formed, and containing, in such difference, the seeds of ruin and dissolution.—The interference of Academic authority, from this period, becomes harassingly frequent. The new regulations produce the consequence foreseen, a tendency to disorder and irregularity, occasionally manifesting itself in acts

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\* Provost's Letter.



inconsistent with collegiate discipline.—The governing power again interferes to supply a remedy for the mischief its own measures had occasioned.—An order, peremptory in its tone, concise in its form of expression, but comprehensive in its effects, is sent for the Society's adoption. Convinced of its ruinous nature, the Society depute some of their Body to remonstrate with the Board,—and to shew the inevitably pernicious consequences of the enforcement of their order. Their remonstrance is disregarded,—The deputation censured, and the obnoxious regulations confirmed. The Society had then two lines of conduct out of which to chuse, either to receive the slow but certain poison offered under the semblance of medicine, for its acceptance, and drag on a lingering, contemptible, useless existence, ending, at no very distant period, in an ignominious, unlamented death,—or to free itself at once from the contempt and decay necessarily following a tame acquiescence, or the danger and disgrace that resistance to constituted authority would inevitably and justly have entailed on it, by one decisive step, which, at the same time, that it offered no violence to the respect and obedience due to the Governors of the College, effectually vindicated its own character, and preserved untarnished, a reputation which twenty years of useful and ho-



nourable labour in the fields of Literature, and of submission to the mandates of its superiors had contributed to establish. Embracing the latter part of the alternative, the Historical Society pronounced its own dissolution,—and he takes but a partial and limited view of the transaction, who sees in it, deserving of praise, only Firmness and Resolution. The Prudence, which in a situation so delicate and trying, adopted the only devisable plan for vindicating its own dignity consistent with the respect due to Collegiate authority, and the conduct conformable to Collegiate discipline, is far more worthy of consideration. Such is a rough sketch of the events which have characterised the proceedings of the Institution during the last two years. Let us go back a little, and trace them historically from their cause. On the promotion of the late lamented Dr. HALL \* to the Bishoprick of Dromore, Dr. ELRINGTON was ap-

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\* The Historical Society testified, in a very marked manner, their respect and regard for their late Provost, by appointing one of their Members to pronounce from the Chair a solemn oration on his Death. The Author of this Statement lamented his loss on more than Public grounds,—In him he had ever experienced the steady sincerity of a friend, united with the urbanity of the Gentleman.



pointed to the Provostship of Trinity College. The Historical Society, according to custom, presented an Address of congratulation to their new Provost, which, with his Answer, are copied from the Journals of December 11th, 1811.

## The Address.

MR. PROVOST,

The Historical Society beg leave through us, to offer you their sincere congratulations on your elevation to the high and important situation you have been selected to fill, while they observe that the selection has been caused by merit alone, unsupported by interest or party. Conscious as they are, that the prosperity of their Institution is intimately connected with that of the University, they are anxious to assure you of their desire to advance the interests of both, by promoting *Academic* education, by supporting *Academic* discipline, and by observing the fundamental laws of their Institution. Actuated by such motives, they hope for the favour and protection of a Provost, distinguished not only for scientific attainments, but for Classical Literature; certain, that with such countenance and sup-



port, they cannot fail to succeed in their efforts to advance the learning and reputation of this University. The Society have felt and do still feel, that they could not have approached you before with the same gratification to you or the same warmth of pleasure on their own part, suppressed as were their rising plaudits, and overcast their brightening hopes, by the sudden gloom of death, whose yet lingering, though lighter shades, temper their recommencing joy with reflection, and calling their attention to other sources of happiness than power and dignity, incline them not so much to congratulate you on the increase of wealth or the elevation of rank, as on the talent and virtue which have deserved and obtained them, still more on the opportunities now afforded for their further developement and wider exertion. In addition to these sentiments, which we express in the name and by the desire of the Historical Society, we are happy to have this opportunity of testifying the high respect in which we hold your talents and worth, and our anxious desire to deserve and conciliate your approbation.

(Signed) R. GRAVES, CHAIRMAN.  
JOHN MARTLEY, AUD.  
HENRY HARTE.



## Answer of the Provost.

GENTLEMEN,

I request you will be so good as to return my very sincere thanks to your Society for the expressions of compliment and of congratulation contained in the Address which you have been appointed to present. My thanks are due for the delicacy which forbore to mingle those congratulations with the recent regret for the loss of my highly valued friend, and allowed some interval to lament the talents, the learning, and the virtues that lie buried in his grave. Fully sensible of the influence which an association such as yours must have not only on the character of its own Members, but on the conduct as well the sentiments of the younger Students, I shall feel it my duty to watch continually over its concerns, while an earnest desire to assist and encourage ingenuous youth, engaged in the pursuit of liberal knowledge and the cultivation of elegant and of useful talents, will always make me anxious to promote its interests.

Impressed with these sentiments, I feel peculiar pleasure in receiving assurances of the Society's determina-



tion to observe *those Regulations, which may be considered as its charter, Regulations founded on long experience, and the result of deep reflection upon the relation which such a Society should bear to the College in which it is formed.* Be assured, Gentlemen, that I appreciate justly the value of those pursuits to which the leisure their Academic duties allow, is devoted by the Members of the Historical Society, that I shall always feel happy to hear of their progress, and always be ready to promote their welfare.

I feel an additional gratification in receiving an Address from a deputation so respectable for talents and character, and have to express to you, Gentlemen, personally my acknowledgements on the occasion.

(Signed)            THOMAS ELRINGTON.

The Address, it will be admitted, was not deficient in respectful, conciliating compliment, and the best friends of the Society could not have desired an answer more calculated to excite the hopes and allay the fears of those who entertained the opinion, that the new Provost felt not the warmest sentiments of regard for their Institution. The apprehensions which the promise of *continual watchfulness* over the concerns of the Society,



might have occasioned in over-timed minds, were converted into a feeling of satisfaction by the subsequent assurance that such vigilance was to be exerted in *assisting* and *encouraging* youth in the pursuit of those objects for which it was instituted. The *peculiar pleasure* felt by the Provost from the Society's determination to observe its Fundamental Regulations, which he was pleased to denominate its *Charter*, together with the cause of that satisfaction, namely, the intrinsic excellence of those Regulations, and their having been the result as well of *long experience* as of *deep reflection*, seemed to convey a strong assurance, that so far at least, as the Provost's influence or authority could avail to prevent it, no violation of that Charter, no wanton or needless charge in those Regulations would be attempted. And the general declaration contained in the concluding paragraph, of the Provost's *just appreciation* of the value of the Historical Society's pursuits, and of the interest he felt in its welfare and progress, seemed sufficient to justify the most sanguine hopes of those who looked upon this Answer, not as a mere set form of words put together for the occasion, but as conveying the genuine heartfelt expressions of sincere unaffected regard. These hopes received confirmation from the non-interference of the Provost or Board, in the



proceedings of the Society, during the remainder of the Session. The first night of the ensuing Session blasted all these fair expectations. It appears that the interval had been diligently employed in maturing and digesting a plan of *reform* for the Society, containing some material innovations on its original constitution. It appeared in the following Fundamental Regulations prescribed to the Historical Society by the Provost and Senior Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin.

Wednesday, the 28th October, 1812.

*First Night of its Nineteenth Session.*

I.

No person shall be a Member of the Society whose name is not on the College Books.

II.

No person who is not a Member, shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the Society.

III.

No Student, (Noblemen, Sons of Noblemen, and Baronets, excepted) shall be admitted a Member until he becomes a Junior Sophister.



## IV.

No Member shall be admitted to any meeting of the Society, except he shall come in his Academic Dress.

## V.

No question involving Modern Politics shall be debated, nor any allusion to Modern Politics permitted.

## VI.

The questions debated, and the laws enacted, shall, at the conclusion of each month, be reported to the Professor of Modern History.

## VII.

No composition shall be read in the Society unless signed by some member, not the Author, who shall be responsible for it.

## VIII.

The following obligation, and no other, shall be made, and signed by every member of the Society at his admission.—

“ I promise to observe the Regulations prescribed to the Historical Society, by the Provost and Senior Fellows; and I also promise to observe the laws of the Society, and to promote its interests.”



Immediately after these Regulations were read from the Chair, the following string of Resolutions was proposed, and a Committee appointed for the purpose of embodying them in the form of an Address to the Provost and Senior Fellows.

“That the Historical Society, grateful for the kindness of the Board to the Institution, beg leave to offer a few remarks to their consideration, and hope they will not consider the expression of their feelings, as a violation of that duty and obedience due to the Board, and uniformly paid them by the Society.

“That they beg leave to remark, that the Institution was revived in the year 1794, under certain Fundamental Regulations prescribed by the Board, and adopted by the Society.

“That those Regulations have ever since that period been uniformly observed, and their beneficial effects have been generally felt.

“That the Society look in vain for any change in circumstances, or any misconduct on their part, to render any alteration necessary.



“ That they have observed with regret, that the new Regulations this night prescribed by the Provost and Senior Fellows, tend to diminish the value of the rewards conferred on Members, by depriving them of the privilege hitherto enjoyed of attending its meetings.

“ That the new Regulations thereby deprive the Society of the advice and assistance of the oldest, and consequently the most experienced Members.

“ That the restrictions laid upon Compositions are at variance with some of the laws in that department.

“ That the declaration of secrecy being removed, is likely to injure the Society, and places new Members in a situation essentially different from the old.

“ That the Society hope the Board will take their case into consideration, and allow them to continue under the former Regulations, and extend to them that protection under which they have hitherto existed.”

This Committee, in their Address assert, that the alterations in the new Regulations proposed by them (amounting almost to their total repeal) are “essentially



and vitally necessary for the peace, the respectability, and perhaps the very existence of the Institution.' The result of their application, is thus reported on the Journal of December the 2d, 1812.

### RESOLVED,

That Dr. HODGKINSON having sent for the Committee appointed to negotiate with the Board, informed them that the Board did not see any sufficient reason for withdrawing the new Regulations, and at the same time assured them that they entertained no hostile feelings towards the Society.

(Signed)

W. PHELAN, *Chairman.*

JOHN O'DWYER.

RICHARD GRAVES.

Those who had foretold the pernicious consequences of the late alterations were not mistaken. The experience of only a single period, during which they had operation, evinced the truth of those predictions.—The\*

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\* On the last Night of each period, a Committee of seven shall be appointed to enquire into the state of the Society, as to its progress or decline in the objects of the Institution during said period, and submit to the Society any means of improvement which may seem to them necessary. Law 34th, Chap. I. of the Laws of the Historical Society.



Committee of enquiry into the state of the Society during that period, conclude their Report with the three following Resolutions.—

### RESOLVED,

“That your after debates\* this period, have not evinced that state of improvement which distinguishes those of the last Session. Disorder and irregularity have appeared on many occasions, particularly on extra nights; your chair, repeatedly insulted by threats of impeachment, has failed to command that respect, which, from the character of the Society, and of the Members who

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\* The debate on the regular question for the night, was called the prepared debate—those Members in general only taking a part in it who had prepared themselves by previous study of the question to do so. The discussion on all other matters was called the after-debate, as succeeding the prepared debate. The speaking on those latter subjects was *extempore*, and there cannot be imagined a much better school for the acquiring that quick and ready arrangement of ideas and arguments, and that facility of clothing them on the moment, in the most appropriate and expressive terms, which, useful in every walk, and profession in life, in the Senate, and more especially at the Bar, seem to be indispensable. The far greater part of this advantageous exercise of acuteness and ingenuity, was to have been done away by the operation of the order which caused the Society's dissolution.



filled it, 'twas entitled to: this conduct, if persevered in, must lead to your destruction.

### RESOLVED,

“That this alteration, in so short a period, can only be attributed to the untimely exclusion of many of our most distinguished Members, whose experience and character contributed so much to the preservation of order and regularity: of their advice we have been unhappily deprived, and to supply its place, every Member is called on to exert his influence, to restore order and consistency to our proceedings.

### RESOLVED,

“That from the experience of the last period, your Committee feel themselves bound, by a regard for the interests of the Institution, to recommend to the Society, to take such immediate steps as may procure the restoration of the old fundamental Regulations, under which the Society has flourished for a period of eighteen years.”

Though with small hopes of success, a Committee was appointed, pursuant to these Resolutions; and as their Address expresses very fully the feeling of the So-



ciety, with respect to the new Regulations, it is here inserted with the Answer of the Board.

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*TO THE PROVOST AND SENIOR FELLOWS.*

THE Historical Society, anxious to retain the good opinion of the Board, beg leave to reassure them of the respect they must ever entertain towards the Governors of the University. They trust it will not be deemed inconsistent with that respect, to submit to their consideration the following statement,

At the foundation of the present Society, certain fundamental Regulations were appointed—the charter of its existence—the rule of its conduct:—under these it continued for a period of seventeen years.

Upon the appointment of the present Provost to be head of the University, the Society received a renewal of their charter, with a promise of his support, so long as these regulations should be observed. They were strictly so, and the Society trust, that no misconduct on



their part, had called for any further restrictions, no violation of the old, for any new proof of obedience.

The Society regret, that the Board were of a different opinion, and that they thought fit to prescribe new fundamental Regulations, to supersede those upon which the Society had been originally founded, whose advantage the experience of years had confirmed. Upon that occasion the Society presented an Address, most respectful and submissive, and they trust, not unworthy of those from whom it came, or of those to whom it was presented. To this, they regret, was returned (after a considerable length of time) only a verbal answer, far different from that which they hoped to receive.

The Society have to observe, that the new regulations have since been silently submitted to, and most rigidly enforced; and from this observance, have resulted consequences, not unforeseen by the Society, however unexpected by the Board, most prejudicial to that order and propriety, without which no well regulated Society can exist.

That the order and regularity of the proceedings of the Society, must in a great measure depend upon the



conduct of those who fill the Chair, must be obvious to any one who has attended its meetings; it is therefore necessary, that Members should be selected for that office, who, from experience, are acquainted with its forms and duties.

Without a Chairman of this character, anarchy and confusion must prevail, and such, the Society regret to state, has been too often the case during the last period.

But it is not the character of the President alone, which restrains the Society, that would be insufficient if deprived of the advice and assistance of others, who, with equal experience, can, by their influence and talent, insure the adoption of those measures which are most likely to promote the welfare of the Institution. In a far different situation was the Society placed during the last period. The young and inexperienced Members deprived of those lights which reflected such lustre on that body, from whence they emanated, have been too often involved in doubt and uncertainty.

The Society beg leave to state, that the value of College and Society honours, has been considerably dimi-



nished by depriving those who obtained them of one of their most valued privileges, the right of attending the meetings of the Society, till they had arrived at Master's standing. That the competition for the honours of the Society has considerably diminished, is a truth of which the Society are fully convinced.

The Board cannot but be aware, that they who devote themselves to the Academic course, cannot avail themselves of the advantages of the Institution, till after they have taken their degree, at which period they usually withdraw their names from the College Books: thus has the Society been deprived of many competitors for its honours, whose well known talents would have insured them success. The Society have to add, that considerable advantages have been derived from the custom of opening and closing each Session with a speech from the Chair. To perform this task has been the laudable ambition of the most distinguished Members: on these occasions have been displayed talents, which will ever be remembered with admiration and respect.

To whom to apply in future to perform this arduous undertaking, the Society confess they are entirely at a loss to know. They whose talents and industry may



hereafter fit them for it, consider themselves at present too young, too inexperienced; of those Senior Members, every way qualified, they are forbidden by the new regulations, to avail themselves.

The Society submit, that from the exclusion of their most distinguished Members, those evils which they have enumerated, have arisen, while, from their age and respectability, no danger can be apprehended from their readmission, either to the interests of the Society or of the University at large.

The Society are well aware that the Board can have no wish, except to promote the real interests of an Institution from which the Students of the University have derived so many advantages: they therefore, the more willingly submit to their consideration the difficulties they are involved in, and confidently hope the Board will not refuse the indulgence granted by the former regulations to the most distinguished and respectable of the late senior Members.

JOHN O'DWYER, AUD<sup>r</sup>. & CHAIR<sup>n</sup>.

RICHARD W. GREEN.

THOMAS HUDDART.

JOHN BOSWELL, TREASURER.

E. M. CLARKE.

CARROL WATSON, and

FREDERICK MOORE.



## RESOLVED,

That this Committee feel deep regret in being obliged to state, that the only answer the Board thought fit to make to this Address, was a verbal communication to the Auditor, "that they had determined not to comply with the request it contained."

(Signed)

JOHN O'DWYER, AUD<sup>r</sup>. & CHAIR<sup>n</sup>.

E. M. CLARKE.

FREDERICK MOORE, and

JOHN BOSWELL.

The disadvantages under which the Society and those deputed by them laboured in their endeavours to obtain the restoration of their charter, must be obvious to every one. It cannot be supposed that the new Regulations were a mere wanton exercise of Authority,—that the only object of the Board was to keep alive, in the mind of the Society, a sense of the high controlling power it possessed over their proceedings. The Board could have been justified to themselves in adopting so strong a measure, only by motives of necessity or of very great expedience. And yet, for the cause of that measure, the Society in vain sought, in its own proceedings or conduct. The interval between the accession of the



present Provost, and the promulgation of the new Fundamental Regulations was particularly marked by order and decorum. And certainly want of a proper feeling of duty for the Governing part of the College, could not be justly attributed to those, who, during that time, had testified their respect for the memory of their late Provost, by appointing a Member to pronounce from their Chair, a solemn oration on his death. Those therefore deputed to remonstrate with the Board against the new Regulations, and to endeavour to obtain their repeal, could only avail themselves of arguments derived from the Positive injury they must cause, and had already caused to the Society. They could not attempt either to remove the fears, by shewing them to be groundless, or to do away, by a full explanation, the misconceptions which must have weighed with the Board in inducing them to frame and promulgate their innovating code. The determination they exhibited, in adhering to their favourite order, is, therefore, the less to be wondered at; which, if not thus accounted for, might, perhaps, have merited another name than that of Resolution. Yet must it ever be matter of regret, that the (in a majority of cases,) necessary rigidity, with which the maxim, "*Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas*" is observed, which guides Academic Authority



in the issuing of its decrees, could not, in an affair of so much importance, and so intimately concerning the improvement and advantage of a very large portion of the Students of the University, be dispensed with, and that the Board did not vouchsafe to enter into any previous explanation with the Society, of their intentions. To suppose that the Board should assign a cause sufficient to satisfy every Freshman, of the propriety and utility of every Order they issue, would indeed be absurd. But when essential alterations in the Laws and Constitution of such a Body as the Historical Society,—a Body, which, however contemptuously those unacquainted with its Principles, and Practice, and System, may speak of it, yet in the opinion of those better qualified to judge, was sufficiently important to merit *some* consideration, were proposed to be made,—the inconvenience arising from a momentary descent from the dignity of Provost and Senior Fellow, for the purpose of consulting some of its Members as to the expediency of the measure intended to be adopted,—and enquiring whether others equally well calculated to produce the effect desired, without injury to the Institution, could not be devised,—might, perhaps, have been more than counter-balanced by the good consequences resulting from so rational and conciliating a measure. Perhaps



had such condescension on the part of the Board, been then exhibited, The Historical Society might at this moment exist, to continue to the present and future generations of Students, the advantages which twenty successive Classes have already derived from it, and to strengthen, by nearer and closer ties, those bonds which ought to unite, as far as is consistent with Academic Discipline, the Governors and the Governed, in the College. It would not, perhaps, at this moment, be the subject of vain regret to its friends,—of insulting triumph to its enemies,—the theme of declamation for the factious or narrow-minded tool of Party, who gives to every transaction, however indifferent in its nature, and abstracted from any thing like Political feeling, the sickly Complexion of his own jaundiced Mind.

All chance of a total repeal of the new Regulations had now vanished—yet it was thought that possibly the Board might be induced, upon a third application, to mitigate in some degree their severity, and deprive them of some small portion of their pernicious nature. Accordingly, more through a feeling of duty to the Society, than from any strong hope of success, a Committee was appointed, May 26th, 1813, for that purpose, and the humble, submissive, request on the one side, contrast-



ing so strongly with the brief authoritative refusal on the other, may serve as an antidote to the calumnies of those who are fond of representing the Society as factious and rebellious, and nourishing within it a principle hostile to discipline.

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### *TO THE PROVOST AND SENIOR FELLOWS.*

The Historical Society, grateful for the kind patronage and indulgence of the Board, and anxious to express their perfect submission to, and respect for all its orders, hope that they will not be deemed to act inconsistently with either, in deputing us to submit to the consideration of the Board, the expediency of admitting a few exceptions to one of the present Fundamental Regulations.

The regulation to which they allude is that which excludes from the meetings of the Society, "all who are not members" convinced as they are, that this regulation in general, is of the utmost benefit to the Institution, they yet conceive that to dispense with it in a particular instance would be attended with



much advantage to the Society. The estimation in which the Society is held by the University depending so much on the character of the speeches delivered from the Chair, it is most desirable that the persons selected for this important duty should be recommended by talent, seniority on the books of the Society, and experience in public speaking—requisites, the two latter of which can scarcely be obtained by a selection from the Society, limited as it is by the first fundamental regulation.

The Society would therefore suggest the expediency of permitting the Auditor to propose to them (for the purpose of delivering a speech from the Chair) any individual who had been a member of the Society, although his name should not then be on the College books, the concurrence of the Provost in such nomination being previously obtained.

That to promote still farther an object on which the character of the Institution so much depends, the Society would submit to the Board the necessity of holding out to the individual chosen to perform this arduous duty, every encouragement which may tend to render his exertions such as shall reflect credit on himself and on



the Society; and this they conceive, cannot be more effectually obtained than by ensuring him an auditory, whose approbation will be valuable from their numbers, their character and their talent.

They therefore beg leave to propose, that on such occasions, all individuals whose names are on the College-Books, and who appear in academic dress, should be permitted to attend, and also those who, not being of Master's standing, and having formerly been Members of the Institution, have obtained a premium in the under graduate course, or a Medal in the Society.

The Society hope that the Board will not consider the present application to arise from unwillingness on their part, to submit to any regulations prescribed by the Board, to which on all occasions, they are most anxious to pay entire and perfect obedience; but they conceive that a compliance with their present request will be attended with consequences most beneficial to the Society, and University, and not be in any degree subversive of the authority of the Board, from the restrictions with which the proposed regulations are accompanied. (Signed.)

JAMES W. I. LENDRICK, *Chairman.*

BINGM. WALKER HAMILTON, *Audr.*

RICHARD STACK.



To which the Provost returned the following verbal answer :—

“The Board have read and considered the foregoing address and cannot accede to any of the requests contained in it.”

*(Signed.)*

JAS. W. J. LENDRICK, *Chairman.*

This was the last effort made to obtain any alteration in the regulations of October 1812. It was now obvious to the most superficial observer, that the same presiding influence which was exerted in the first instance to induce the Board to acquiesce in their enactment, still operated to prevent any the slightest mitigation in them, and as long as it continued, must present an insuperable obstacle to any such attempt. The members therefore, contented themselves with silently submitting,—hoping on such submission, when a favourable opportunity should offer, to found a strong claim for the so much desired Repeal. But while they thus exhibited an example of patient acquiescence in the stern Mandates of inexorable authority, they were not unmindful of the more pleasing duties of gratitude and affection. In the elevation of Dr. Graves to the



Deanery of Ardagh, the public hailed with satisfaction, the promotion of a learned, pious, and liberal Divine. The Historical Society, viewed him in the nearer and more engaging relation, of a firm and stedfast friend, who had ever employed the weight and influence he possessed in College; to support the Institution in its original purity, and had steadily, though unfortunately without success opposed the measures, dictated by an unfounded and jealous suspicion—At such a time therefore, with feelings of more than ordinary regard, did the Society congratulate their former Patron on his promotion. And the answer of the Rev. Gentleman to their address, is at once so honourable to his own feelings, and contains so just and favourable a view of the objects and conduct of the Institution, that no apology is offered to him for its introduction here.

*ANSWER OF THE DEAN OF ARDAGH,*

TO THE

ADDRESS

OF THE

HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN,

“I receive with the most heartfelt satisfaction, and shall always recollect with the sincerest



gratitude this most honourable proof of the esteem and affection, with which the Historical Society regards me. Fully aware, how greatly they have overrated my talents and my exertions, I feel the more deeply the very kind partiality, which has led them thus to think of me. In one point only they have judged of me strictly as I deserve, they have not overrated the estimation in which I hold the Historical Society, or the interest I shall always take in its well-being; on this subject the impressions of my youth, have been confirmed by the fullest experience, and the matured reflection by which I am clearly convinced that your institution, conducted according to its original principles, as I am persuaded you will always conduct it, forms a most effective school for completing your academic education, by adding to Scientific and Classical erudition, which form the only solid foundation of intellectual pre-eminence, those literary attainments which adorn the private gentleman, and by cultivating that manly eloquence which supplies the best preparation for the Pulpit, the Senate, and the Bar, as such its effects I trust will continue to prove not only useful to yourselves, but honorable to the university, and conducive to the true interests of our country.

If at any time my Advice or my best Exertions in



any other way, can assist in promoting these objects; the Historical Society will have a right to command them. I am bound alike by reason, by affection, and by gratitude, to promote its interests, and shall always most sincerely rejoice at witnessing its prosperity.

I must be permitted to add, that for the peculiarly kind terms, in which you, Gentlemen, have conveyed to me the sentiments of that body, I return my peculiar acknowledgements: the approbation of the Historical Society must acquire additional value, when expressed in such a manner, and by such Men,

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, with  
the highest Respect and Regard, your most  
Obliged, and most humble Servant,  
RICHARD GRAVES.

In the mean time, that constant vigilance of which the Provost had made mention in his answer to the congratulatory Address, began to be exercised in a way fully justifying the conjectures of those who had viewed with suspicion the promise to which, as the event has proved, their fears gave too true an interpretation.— Until the period at which the present Provost acquired that authority in College, of which he has made so



large an expenditure, the Historical Society had uninterruptedly exercised the privilege of leaving their door open, for the purpose of permitting those Students, not being Members, who chose it, and who conducted themselves there with propriety, to listen to the debate on the question for the night. This courtesy on the part of the Society, (for in no other light could the permission be considered, and on the request of the most Junior Member in it, the door was necessarily obliged to be shut) was not without its advantages—nor were any ill consequences, either to the College or the Institution, ever asserted to have followed from it. The Provost being informed of the existence of this custom, to which so long a prescription seemed to have almost given the character of a right, saw in it something that met not his approbation, and sent a peremptory order for its discontinuance. This order was without a murmur obeyed, and the door of the Society thenceforward closed to all but Members, at every hour of the night. In the spirit of the same watchfulness, the Society was not entrusted with the enforcement of its own laws, and an Officer of the College was sent to punish any deviation in the Members from the extreme punctilio of Academic dress. Frequent messages were sent, containing severe censures on the Society, for de-



bating questions, some of them involving in their consideration, the first principles of the British Constitution, and which, as such had been discussed without interruption, ever since the foundation of the Institution. These censures were conveyed in letters from the Provost, often of considerable length, which were uniformly received by the Society, with the utmost respect, and regularly entered on its Journals. This \* unprecedentedly frequent interference of Academic authority, in its proceedings and concerns, could not, it may well be supposed, have been very agreeable to the Society. Every rising feeling, however, was stifled by a sense of duty to its Superior, and regard for an Association evidently viewed with no partial eye by the power in whose hands the issues of its existence were. The obligation to the most perfect submission in such circumstances, became doubly indispensable. The new Fundamental Regulations continued to be silently acquiesc-

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\* It is no exaggerated assertion to make, that the instances of the interference of Academic authority, from October, 1812, to the time of the dissolution of the Society, in its concerns, are far more numerous than those which occurred for the 42 years preceding the former date, from the foundation of the first Society in 1770, to October, 1812, inclusive.



ed in, but their injurious effects could not fail to attract the notice of those who compared the state of the Society, under their operation, with its flourishing condition before their enactment. The attendance at its former meetings of those Members whom superior talents or industry, whether exercised in the College course or in that of the Institution, had privileged above their fellows, had ever been productive of the best consequences. In the company of persons so much their superiors in every particular, the petulance and forwardness into which youthful inexperience might naturally lead some of its Members, was awed into silence. In the Chair, the respect which the mere circumstance of their long standing in College acquired for them, added a weight to their authority, essentially promotive of that order and decorum which should mark the proceedings of every liberal association—when more actively engaged in its business, these Senior Members, accurately acquainted by long habit, with the rules and customs of the Institution, and unbiassed by strong attachment to any party in it, brought to the discussion of the most interesting questions, a degree of coolness and temper, that effectually checked any tendency to that dangerous asperity and personality which the ardor of youthful emulation, unrestrained by



judgment, might possibly generate. Add to all this, that the Junior Fellows were much more frequent in their attendance on the Society, when they had the agreeable prospect of meeting there some of their earliest, and perhaps, most valued College acquaintance and friends, whom the diversity of their pursuits kept from their view at other times. How much this contributed to the preservation of order and decorum in the proceedings of the Society, must be obvious to every one. If such were the advantages derived from the attendance of Senior Members, under the restriction of the Regulations upon which the Society was founded, it required not much of the spirit of prophecy to foretell what the consequence of annulling those Regulations would be. The event verified the prediction. A tendency to forwardness in some Members—to puerility of conduct in more—to asperity and warmth of expression in the discussion of questions remotely interesting the feelings, occasionally leading to acts inconsistent with, and subversive of Collegiate discipline, and calling for the interference of the governing powers,—Such were the natural and necessary consequences of the absence of the Senior Members. The first of these more serious violations of order and propriety, was a personal difference which occurred between two Members in the month of



January, 1814. The Board taking cognizance of the affair, after an examination into the particulars of the case, sentenced the parties to have their names privately removed from the College Books. This was a sentence strictly consistent with justice. Two individuals had been proved guilty of a breach of Academic discipline, and they suffered a merited Academic punishment.— The next transaction of a similar kind, occurred in the June following. On this occasion, one \* Member of the Society had grossly insulted another. The Board, as before, took the business into their own hands, deliberated on it, and in the end, pronounced no opinion as to the nature of the affair, or the conduct of the parties concerned in it. This lenience of the Board towards the Individual, was cruelty to the Society, by setting a very dangerous example of the possibility of highly indecorous and un-academical conduct occurring in it, coming to the knowledge of the Board, and being by it dismissed with impunity, thereby rendering a more frequent repetition of such conduct probable, than if the individual offending had been visited with even an inadequate punishment. We are now fast approach-

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\* The Member who offered the insult made subsequently an ample and satisfactory apology to the Gentleman he had insulted.



ing the last scene of the Tragedy, and the patient, yet dignified submission, which we have seen the Society evince in all the various perplexing and harassing situations in which it has been placed, cannot but excite in us an anxious hope that its deportment in the trying moment of dissolution, may not disgrace a long existence of useful and honourable exertion. The opinion of the Historical Society, as to the highly injurious nature of the Regulations of October, 1812, has been already seen. But there were some Members who even at that early period, looked upon them as but the messengers sent to prepare the way for its entire dissolution.—Not that they imputed any such pre-formed intention to the Board;—but when they saw those Regulations under which their Institution had so long flourished, taken away—Regulations most happily combining that necessary controlling power on the part of the Governors of the College, with that degree of free agency and power of regulating its internal concerns on the part of the Society, so essentially requisite to give life, and spirit, and interest to its proceedings,—When they could trace this measure only to the influence which the newly appointed Provost possessed at the Board,—When they knew that he was far from being decidedly friendly to the principle of their association—that hav-



ing never been a Member of the former Society, he could feel no paternal regard for its immediate descendant—that, for the same reason, he was not the most competent, justly to appreciate that degree of restraint, which, completely ensuring all the desirable ends of Academic control, would not offer violence to the feelings of the Members, or deaden that spirit of emulous exertion, which is the life of such a Society—that he was known to be fully as much characterised by the determination with which he followed up his plans, as by the prudence and judgment with which he formed them—and that if, when the Society presented no cause of complaint, he had imposed on it such injurious restrictions, it was more than probable, if it chanced to be guilty of any deviation from that line of conduct which he had marked out in his own mind as the fittest for its adoption, he would have recourse to the extremest measures—they felt that the Institution was shaken from its foundation—that wanting the confidence of the Provost and Board, it wanted that which alone could insure its stability—and they heard with almost the same feelings of anxious apprehension, the rumour of the arrival of every new “order,” as if they had been in daily expectation of the death-warrant of the Association. But though impressed with these forebodings,



they endeavoured, as Students of the College, as well as Members of the Society, to render them fallacious, by inculcating on the Junior Members the necessity of obedience to the decrees of their Academic superiors.— Happily their efforts were not unavailing—every new instance of authoritative interference on the part of the Provost and Board, only served to furnish a new example of the patient and dutiful submission of the Society; until, at length, the moment so long dreaded arrived, when Regulations quite incompatible with its useful or creditable existence, were imposed. The only alternative seemed to be either a full and entire acceptance of the obnoxious restrictions, or an immediate resistance to the Authority that enjoined them. The Historical Society extricated itself from the perplexing dilemma, by a measure, which, while it violated not that respect due to itself, and to its own character, gave a decisive and convincing proof of the reality and strength of its principles of submission to Academic authority, by a sacrifice to those principles, the greatest in its power to make, the sacrifice of its own existence. The facts of this event are briefly these. On the evening of January 25th, 1815, just after the Society had broken up its sitting, a personal difference, of a serious nature, occurred between two Members. Its determination, in



the most decisive way, was fixed on—a message sent, and time and place of meeting appointed. In the mean time, information of the circumstance having been given, the Sheriff interfered, to prevent the proposed meeting, and the Board became acquainted with the quarrel.—On the succeeding Wednesday, February 1st, the following letter was laid before the Society:—

*To L. FOOTE, Esq. Auditor of the  
Historical Society.*

SIR,

I AM directed, as Register, to communicate to you, that the Board having heard with great concern, that altercations, destructive of College discipline, have taken place in the Historical Society: and feeling it necessary to consider what measures they may be compelled to adopt respecting the Society itself, direct that the names of Mr. ———, and Mr. ———, be struck out of the list of the Members; and that the Society, do not, in any respect, discuss the circumstance of their quarrel.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

R. PHIPPS, *Register.*

*Trinity College, Dublin,*

*January 31st, 1815.*



The Society, as may well be supposed, were rendered not a little anxious and apprehensive by this communication; however, the orders contained in it were strictly complied with. All suspense ceased at their next meeting, February 8th, 1815, when their Auditor laid before them the following Order of the Board, transmitted to him the same day by Dr. PHIPPS.

*February 6th, 1815.*

“ At a Board held this day, it was ordered, that after the present Session,\* Junior Sophisters shall not be admitted into the Historical Society.

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\* It may be satisfactory to know, that the opinion of the Historical Society of 1793, completely coincided with that of the late Society, as to such a Regulation.

FRIDAY, *February 1st, 1793.*

Mr. Townsend's motion (for the exclusion of Junior Sophisters) being then resumed and put from the Chair, it passed in the negative, *nem. con.*

Mr. J. R. Galbraith, seconded by Mr. H. Townsend, moved that the Society do come to the following Resolutions :—



“ That a Committee of *five* shall be elected forthwith for the purpose of regulating the private business of the Society.

“ That a Committee so elected, shall continue in Office till the appointment of a new Committee, which shall be on the first night of meeting after the Summer Vacation, on which night the election of the Committee shall always, in future, be held.

“ That vacancies occurring in the Committee during

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#### RESOLVED,

“ That the above proposition, tending to limit the sphere of the Election of Members, is not only contradictory to the spirit of its existing Laws, but must, *in its operation, tend to the gradual dissolution of the Institution.*”

#### RESOLVED,

“ That this Society do consider the above motion, as one of so dangerous a tendency, as calls upon them for their most hearty reprobation, as being *a measure aiming at its very existence.*”

Both Resolutions passed in the affirmative, by large majorities.

*Vide IVth Vol. of Journals of old Society.*



the year, shall be filled up by co-optation—that the elections and co-optations shall be by ballot.

“ That there shall be no appeal to the Society from the decision of this Committee—that the sittings of the Committee shall be private, and all applications made to it shall be in writing.

“ That the Society shall adjourn exactly at *eleven* o'clock every night of meeting.

“ That the Chairman's authority shall continue till all the Members, except the Committee, shall have departed—that the Committee shall sit from *eleven* till *twelve* o'clock, on every night of meeting—three to be a Quorum for transacting business.

By Order of the Board,

R. PHIPPS, *Register.*”



The Society had not promised themselves much gratification from the receipt of the communication promised them in Dr. PHIPPS's letter of January 31st. The Order of the 6th of February, exceeded the forebodings of the most desponding of its Members. The Committee of *five*, however, was appointed pursuant to that Order, with instructions to wait upon the Provost and Board, to obtain from them the precise signification they attached to the phrase, *private business*, and to remonstrate with them against the new Regulations—and the Society, in strict consistence with their uniform submission to the mandates of the Board, adjourned at the hour ordered. The Committee of *five* lost no time in obeying the instructions of the Society, and sent in, through the Register, the following remonstrating Address to the Board, on Saturday, February 11th, 1815:—

*To the PROVOST and Senior Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin.*

WE, the undersigned Members of a Committee, appointed on last Wednesday night, pursuant to an order of the Board, transmitted by the Register, and bearing date February 6th, 1812, beg leave, with that respect



and decorum, becoming individuals bound, from their Situation, to a deference to Academic Authority, and consistent with our uniform principles and practice, to express our decided opinion, and that of the Historical Society at large, with respect to so much of the said order as we clearly understand, and to request that the Board will favour us with an explanation of that part, the meaning of which, to our apprehension, is not so obvious.

The *first* clause of the Order referred to, from and after the first night of the next Session, excludes from admission into the Historical Society, Students of the class of Junior Sophisters. The operation of the above clause, from the moment it begins to take effect, must be the speedy annihilation of the Society. The undersigned cannot allow themselves to suppose, that such an effect could, for a moment, have been contemplated by the Board as possible, (pledged as all its Members have been collectively, and not a few individually, to its support,) at the time they agreed to issue such an Order: they therefore feel it incumbent on them to lay before the Board the Proofs of their Assertion. The current expences of the Society are considerable; the funds for answering these expences are derived from two Sources,



—Monthly Subscriptions and Admission Fees. The former is barely sufficient to provide the refreshments of tea, coffee, &c. required by the custom of the Society, ever since its foundation. The grand expences of the institution, the providing Medals,—furnishing the Library,—paying the Salaries of their Servants, &c. are defrayed from the latter source. These expences are so great, that the commencement of a Session not unfrequently finds the Treasurer in a considerable arrear of debt. For the liquidation of this arrear, and the support of the Establishment in its various branches, the Treasurer has to look only to the Admission Fees of the incoming Members. If this source of supply be stopped, Bankruptcy, within a certain period, must inevitably follow, and its necessary consequence, the destruction of the Society. But supposing that the deficiency in their Funds, occasioned by the enforcement of this Order, could be made up by any other means; it can be shewn that such a measure is but a temporary expedient, and can only put off for a time, not ultimately prevent, the dissolution of the Society. By the Fundamental Regulations prescribed by the Board in October 1812, (to which injurious as they have ever been deemed, the Society has uniformly paid implicit obedience, and any alteration in which it had fondly hoped, would not have been on



the side of Severity,) all Members of the Historical Society, without exception, cease to be such, on the removal of their names from the College Books. This event, in a majority of cases, takes place previously to the long Vacation, immediately succeeding to the taking out the degree of A. B. By the Order of the Board, of February 6th, Junior Sophisters are excluded from the Historical Society,—thus the majority of the Members of the Historical Society, will, in future, continue in it but for a Session and a-half. If the period for the developement and exertion of their talents and industry is to be so very limited, is it very consistent with probability, that many individuals would be found willing to incur even a more trifling expence than their entrance into the Historical Society would entail on them? and are not the Undersigned warranted in expressing their decided opinion, that with perhaps one or two exceptions, the entire Class of those qualified by the late Order to be Candidates for admission into the Historical Society, (supposing its existence to be protracted to the period of their qualification,) would neglect to seek admission into an Institution from which they could expect to reap so little entellectual intertainment or practical improvement. The undersigned do not presume to determine the motives which influenced the Board in is-



uing the late Order,—if it was intended to prevent the recurrence of any occasional breach of decorum in the proceedings of the Historical Society, they feel themselves bound respectfully to declare their conviction, that the defect for which it is intended as a remedy, has its origin in one of the Fundamental Regulations prescribed by the Board in 1812 :—That at the first promulgation of that regulation, the committee did seriously apprehend that a tendency to disorder and irregularity in the Junior Members would be the consequence of the non-attendance of those whose character and standing in the Society would be sufficient to repress any such spirit,—that the experience of two Sessions and a-half, during which these Regulations have had effect, has ripened those conjectures and apprehensions into certainty. That whatever of irregularity they have observed during that period, they have traced to the operation of those regulations as a cause, and that they therefore very humbly suggest, that the removal of the cause, the doing away the objectionable Regulations, would be the most effectual remedy for the defect. It has been also suggested, that possibly the Board has been influenced in the issuing of the present Order, by an opinion, that the attention of Junior Sophisters has been, by attendance in the Society, drawn off from their



more weighty and more important Collegiate Duties.—  
The Undersigned are not aware of any very striking instances that can be produced in confirmation of such an opinion; but if Junior Sophisters have been more forward than formerly, to take a part in the Proceedings of the Society, (an opinion, the truth of which, to a certain degree, the Undersigned cannot but admit,) they must still trace this tendency to the Regulations of 1812 as a cause, which, by shortening the period in which the value of Society honours was felt, from the weight and character in the Institution attached to the individuals possessing them, rendered their early acquisition an object of more importance; and by excluding from attendance on the Meetings of the Society, Members held in respect for their Seniority and attainments in it, removed that salutary restraint which timidity had otherwise set to the crude effusions of inexperience. Previous to the enactment of the Regulations of 1812, the Junior Sophisters of the Historical Society were proverbially silent. Attendance on the Meetings of the Society was to them not a business, but a relaxation from business. They took no active part in the proceedings, they were, in the truest sense of the term, lookers on, unbending their minds from the severity and strictness of Mathematical and Scientific researches, by



weekly excursions into regions of a more diversified and less serious complexion,—and silently and imperceptibly acquiring a knowledge of, and a value for those rules of decorum, the advantage and necessity of which, their observation rendered them capable of appreciating. Thus were they prepared by Habit and Experience, when the strictness of Collegiate Duties ceased, to enter on that course of more ornamental and elegant, but far from unuseful acquirements, to which the Historical Society invites, with advantage to themselves, and benefit to the Institution at large. If the state of things is altered,—if premature exertion is to be observed, and the Junior Sophisters to be found in the list of competitors for Society honours,—the Fundamental Regulation of 1812 is the only cause the Committee can assign for the alteration, and in their judgement, is a cause fully adequate to account for the effect. The Undersigned, with all deference and respect, beg to direct the attention of the Board to the considerations which naturally presented themselves to their minds on their weighing the necessary tendency of the first clause of the late Order,—these reflections are the result of considerable experience, and accurate personal observation of the character of the Historical Society, and the causes which influence that character, and which, there-



fore, without meaning any thing disrespectful, they presume to say, may have escaped the consideration of the Board, occupied as it is by so many and so important avocations, and not possessing the same advantages of personal observation; and they must conclude their remarks on this part of the late Order, by repeating their opinion, that the enforcement of it must be the ruin of the Historical Society.

The *next* clause in the late Order, which has engaged the attention of the committee, is that which states, that all the private business of the Society, shall in future be transacted by a committee of *five*. In the view of their laws, all business is equally public, for every member has an equal right to be informed concerning it; or equally private, for every person not a member is equally excluded from any knowledge of or participation in it. But "private business" as a technical expression, is unknown to their laws; nor from the present Order, nor from any communications with which they have been formerly honoured by the Board can the Committee form any reasonable opinion of the meaning intended to be affixed by the Board to the expression. In this uncertainty, as to the intended meaning,



recourse was had to conjecture. Some conceived that it was intended, that if ever, unhappily, any personal difference should occur between two Members, its decision should be taken from the Society, and entrusted to the Committee of five.—But this interpretation was rejected from a consideration, that this Committee was by the words of the order, to continue during the entire session, and to transact business for the space of one hour, every night of meeting; and it could not be supposed that one, or more personal disputes, every night, could have been in the contemplation of the Board, events which are happily of very rare occurrence:—besides that it must have occurred to the Board, that in such cases, no individuals would abide by the decision of a Committee of five, but suspecting its members of partiality, would involve them in their personal differences. A second conjecture was, that by private business was meant such business as was not of regular, ordinary, occurrence, as forming part of the routine, stated in that law of the Society relating to the course of its business, and to which therefore, the Board, conceiving they could have no notice of its existence, did apply the term private. But if by private business, the board understand such, of the existence of which they can have no notice,



the Undersigned must beg leave to state, that such is of most rare occurrence. Until the regular business has been disposed of, none other can be brought forward; it has not happened within the memory of the committee, that the regular business has been disposed of before eleven o'clock, after which hour, no non-regular motion can come forward with certainty unless at least a week's previous notice has been given, and entered on the Journals. A reference to the Journals does therefore give the Board, or any Member of the Board, notice of all business, not in the ordinary course, (as *e. g.* a motion, to appoint a committee to address a newly elected Fellow;) and therefore in this view of it, no business is private; and therefore if this interpretation be correct, the appointment of the committee of *five*, they humbly submit, can be readily dispensed with. The third and last conjecture, which has been formed as to the application of the expression, "private business," is that of those who consider it as referring to some portion of that, of which, under the title of regular business, a list is given in the fifth law, of the Historical Society. The committee, though shrinking with more than common reluctance from such an interpretation, an interpretation which, if correct, would represent the Order, as an instrument intended to change, not the former only,



but the substance, and essence, and constitution of the Historical Society, to disorganize and subvert all those laws, and customs, and regulations, the collected experience of twenty years, which had not long since been reduced to one connected, well arranged, harmonious system; and which, if they had not obtained the sanction, had at least escaped the censure and disapprobation of many successive Provosts and Boards, yet conceiving that something similar to this interpretation may, by possibility, have been in the contemplation of the Board, they feel it their duty to notice such a conjecture, and in so doing to state the inevitably ruinous consequences of any such plan, to the Society, of which they are yet Members. They indeed scarcely feel themselves authorised in thus interpreting an expression which seems not rationally applicable to the regular transactions of the Institution. The Historical Society was instituted for the cultivation of History, Oratory, and Composition—this is no private, no partial object, and there is not one single portion of its regular business as laid down in the 5th law, Chap. 1, which does not relate directly or indirectly to this leading primary object, which was not intended to further improvement and perfection in these three branches of elegant and useful acquirement, and which the experience of every



session has not convinced the Undersigned, has really answered such intention. Can it have been in the contemplation of the Board to take from the Society the decision on matters, which in however slight a degree they may appear to the Board, referable to the objects of the Institution, yet the Undersigned, from personal knowledge, can assert to materially influence, and affect its character, its estimation and prosperity? And to whom is the decision of such matters to be entrusted? To a committee to which no parallel can be found in the laws of the Society or the precedents on its Journals—a directory of five—whose authority is to continue for an entire Session—who, are unaccountable to the Society for their conduct—from whose decision, however contradictory to their Laws, to justice, or to common sense, there lies no appeal, and applications, to whom on matters of the utmost importance to the Society, are to be impeded and delayed by the forms of its proceedings. The committee would be doing a violence to their own feelings, did they not thus, strongly express their sense of the ruinous consequences to the Society, of any plan, such as they have been imagining.—If this latter interpretation of the clause under consideration be correct, the first part of the late Order gives them comparatively but little pain; *that* went to lop off from the



Institution, an important and essential branch, which contained within it the rudiments of its future existence.—Though enfeebled by the loss, the parent stock might for a year or two, have survived the mutilation. The clause they now consider, (supposing the latter interpretation correct) lays the axe to the root of the Establishment. Who will enter the lists of competition, and become candidates for Society honors, which by the operation of such an arrangement, as the Undersigned now contemplate, must, from the influence it will possess, be at the disposal of an absolute unaccountable committee, consisting of five individuals, liable to human prejudices, and yet possessing for an entire Session; the uncontrolled dominion of the Society? or if any should start in the race of honor, the Undersigned can not but look with feelings of apprehension to the possible consequences resulting from the anguish of the disappointed, attributing in all probability erroneously their ill success, to the partial influence, exerted by one or more Members of this absolute Committee.

But which ever of these conjectures, if any, be correct, the cognizance of official character and official conduct, must come either directly or indirectly, before the Committee, in almost every question they



consider; the subject of all others, the least proper for the decision of the few. The law of opinion, from its very nature, requires the sanction of almost the whole mass of Society to render a verdict respectable: and that the *secret* decision of five young men, upon what the Society are to think of certain men, and certain things, will meet with respect and obedience, is a paradox almost in terms; they will unavoidably be looked upon as a species of inquisition, and their proceedings, in the eyes of the Society, become both odious and contemptible; nor is this all; however the Members of this Committee, while the Society is sitting, may violate the written laws of the Institution, or the acknowledged rules of order and decorum, they can never incur the punishment they may deserve, as the only appeal would be to themselves; nor will it be of any avail, that the Members of the Committee should scrupulously avoid any such violation, as the mere idea, that there are five Members in the Society, whose conduct they dare not canvas, either by discussion or complaint, is of itself sufficient to render them a mark for suspicion and distrust: indeed it is so painful to the feelings of the present Committee to enter into a dark investigation of *the conduct* of their Fellow-Students, to pronounce decisions, and issue forth decrees, that must from their



very nature, render their *own conduct* invidious, that they know not how to reconcile it to themselves to continue to act, and they have but too much reason to fear that it will be very difficult to find Members willing to place themselves in so disagreeable a situation.

The Undersigned will dwell no longer on the contemplation of so painful a subject, but respectfully request the Board to explain what they are to understand by private business; and whether the apprehensions it has excited in some, are imaginary or founded in reality. The last part of the late order, limits the duration of the meetings of the Society to the hour of eleven o'clock; on this the Undersigned have only to observe; that, if things are to remain upon their former footing, the cutting off one hour from the time hitherto allotted for transacting the business of the Society, must materially injure it, by causing a considerable arrear in such business. But if the fears expressed with regard to the possible object of the Committee of five be real, they will offer no further observation, on even so fundamental an alteration in the conducting of the Society's business, which they must in that case deem comparatively too unimportant to be considered by them as an evil.



The Undersigned cannot conclude without respectfully assuring the Board, that if they have expressed themselves strongly on any of the subjects treated of in this address, such strength of expression has proceeded not solely from their regard for, and their sense of duty to that Society of which they are members, but also from a sense of the duty they owe to the Board and to the College at large, to both of which they hesitate not to declare as their opinion, the Society has made no small return for the protection it has hitherto experienced, by the degree of reputation and character it has acquired to itself, some portion of which has naturally reflected to those bodies thus immediately and necessarily connected with its existence, and regarded by the public as its patrons; sufficient evidence of this, they apprehend, exists in the invitation sent to them, some time since, from similar Societies, in the Sister Universities, to unite, and with the members of the three, form a central one in the metropolis of the Empire. The Undersigned did therefore feel it their bounden duty to state their conviction, that a perseverance in the first part of the late order, as clearly expressed, or in the second part according to the last interpretation which they have mentioned, (an interpretation they still hope to find erro-



neous,) will equally cause the destruction of the Institution, and therefore materially affect in public opinion not merely the character of the individuals at present composing it, but also possibly that of the Body, which has so long been looked upon as its natural guardian and protector.

HERCULES HENRY GRAVES, *Chairman.*

BINGHAM WALKER HAMILTON.

WILLIAM BROOKE.

LUNDY FOOT,

CHARLES WOLFE.

*February 11th, 1815.*

The remonstrance of the Committee of *five*, details with sufficient fulness, the injurious consequences to the Society of the Order of February 6th.—A topic on which it would not have been so politic for its Members at that time to touch, the very novel species of equity displayed by the Board in the proceeding, merits some consideration. Two Individuals, Members of the Historical Society, were convicted of a gross breach of Academic discipline, meriting, as it would seem, the severest Academic censure. The Board, in testimony of their disapprobation of their conduct, order the names



of the offending Members to be taken off the Books of the Society. This was the utmost extent of the punishment inflicted on the only censurable or guilty parties on the occasion—the Individuals concerned, if indeed it could be called a punishment to be deprived of the right of attending the meetings of a Society, which, after the promulgation of the Order the Board had it then in contemplation to issue, few would have been found very anxious to frequent. But that vengeance, of which the really guilty experienced so small a share, was reserved to fall with accumulated weight upon the innocent and unoffending. The professed cause of the Order of February 6th, was the private quarrel already alluded to. That quarrel was occasioned by a difference of opinion between two Members, as to the striking or not striking of the College clock. The matter was purely of a personal nature—the honour or the feelings of no body, or set of men, were interested in the dispute. It was therefore vainly enquired, what relation subsisted between such a dispute, and the entire class of Junior Sophisters, (to which the Individuals concerned did *not* belong) that could warrant the exclusion of so large a portion of the Students from the benefits of an Institution, which their predecessors ever since its foundation, had enjoyed? And still more fruitless were the



attempts to reconcile with the ordinary notions of reason and justice, the visiting the breach of Academic discipline of two Students of the College, on a Society, of which they chanced to be Members, by entailing on that Society the ruin inevitably consequent on Bankruptcy. The endeavours, by tracing any connection between this unlucky dispute, and that admirable school for *extempore* eloquence, which the After-debate in the Historical Society furnished, to account for, or justify the doing-away the greatest and most important part of that After-debate—and the depriving the Society of their right of judging and deciding on the conduct of those on whose good behaviour its own prosperity, perhaps existence, necessarily depended, were equally unsuccessful. And though it could not be denied that the striking of the College clock was the immediate cause of the quarrel, it seemed somewhat more reasonable that an appropriate punishment, as cutting out its tongue, should be inflicted on the real offender, the aforesaid clock—than that one hour of the time allotted to the Society, wholly innocent in the affair, for transacting its business, should be taken from it, to its great and manifest prejudice. Those who considered the matter in this point of view—who were unable to trace the un-academic conduct of two Students to the Historical



Society as its cause, and who felt strongly on the punishment (and so severe a punishment, amounting to no less than its utter destruction) of such conduct being visited on that unoffending Institution, seemed to be almost justified by their reasoning on the subject, in the opinion, that the quarrel of Individuals served but as an occasion for the completion of a system, a partial development of which had already taken place, the object of which was to remove from Trinity College that long established and admirable Institution, the Historical Society, not by the exertion of a single act of power, but by the no less certain, though more gradual operation of injurious Regulations and restraints. If it were allowable to argue from the effect to the cause, the opinion has been fully established.

It is time to relieve the anxiety that must be felt to learn what success attended the exertions of the *forlorn hope*, the Committee of *five*. The Members of it received a summons to appear before the Board on Wednesday, February 15th. They accordingly attended at the hour appointed, when after receiving, by the mouth of the Provost, a very decided expression of the Board's disapprobation of their Address, on the ground of its



being *deficient in\* respect*, they obtained the following answer to it, and no other:—"By *private business* is meant all business relating to the conduct of Individuals in the Historical Society." It appeared then that the Board were perfectly satisfied with the ruin of the Society resulting from their new Order, as set forth in the remonstrance, and that they entertained no idea of making even the slightest mitigation in it. The Chairman of the Committee of *five* reported to the Society at its meeting the same evening their proceedings, and received for them the sanction of the Society—immediately after which, four of the *five* Members withdrew from the Committee. The Debate on the Question for the night proceeded as usual, and shortly after its conclusion, the following Resolution, moved by Mr. Hamilton and

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\* It must be matter of sincere regret that the Board should have viewed the Address of the Committee in such a light. To disclaim any intentional deficiency of respect on the part of its Members, would be superfluous. The supposition that a number of Individuals, endeavouring to obtain a favour, should convey their wishes to that effect, in terms wilfully disrespectful to the Body they Address, is an absurdity too great to obtain belief. The limited time they had for preparing their Address (not quite two days) must be the excuse of the Committee, for any apparent want of respect in its form—and with the candid, will be a full sufficient one.



seconded by Mr Foote, Senior Auditor, was agreed to by the Society, (fifteen only voting in the negative,) at one of the fullest Meetings that had taken place for some time previous, “ That a Committee of seven be appointed for the purpose of resigning, for the present, into the custody of the Provost and Board, the rooms hitherto appropriated to the use of the Historical Society ; the late Regulations of the Board being, in the opinion of the Society, inconsistent with the successful prosecution of the objects for which it was instituted,— and that this Committee be empowered and directed to take such steps as to them may appear most effectual for the securing the property of the Society, until a favourable opportunity occur, for the revival of an Institution, the utility of which the experience of twenty years has so satisfactorily evinced.” This motion being agreed to by a \* decisive majority, the Committee

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\* It was a custom in the Historical Society, when the disproportion between the Members who voted on different sides of the same question was very great, and the time for telling very limited, on account of the near approach of the hour of adjournment, only to count the numbers of that side on which the fewest voted, and to make a rough guess, generally very considerably under, of those who voted on the other. This method was adopted in telling the numbers on each side, on the question of Dissolution. The Tellers on that occasion reported the Ayes (by guess,) to be 50, the



was appointed, and the Society adjourned *sine die*. Such were the circumstances occasioning and attending the dissolution of the Historical Society. After the detail which has been already gone into, the justification of the measure may be comprised in a few words. The Individuals who proposed that measure had signed their names to a Statement, asserting that the consequence of the operation of the new Order of the Board, must be the ruin of the Historical Society. This opinion was not one rashly or unadvisedly formed,—it was the result of mature deliberation, and expressed from the deepest conviction. A voluntary dissolution would therefore, but anticipate this expected event, and seemed to be, in some important respects, preferable. It rescued a great number of individuals from the harassing and degrading necessity, the enforcement of the new

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Noes, (accurately,) 14. It is unfortunate that greater accuracy was not observed. Even the Minority on the motion for Dissolution, admit the number of those who voted on the Affirmative, could have been very little under 70, and was probably above it. But the hour of eleven fast approached, when, by the Order of February 6th, the sitting of the Historical Society was to cease, and it was determined that the last moments of its existence should exhibit nothing inconsistent with a long life of continued submission and obedience.



Order would have imposed on them, of submitting the decision on their conduct as Members, to an obligarchy of their equals, armed with absolute power, for the exercise of which they were to render no account, and which it was therefore possible might be perverted to serve the purposes of party or of interest; and it seemed to lay the foundation for a hope of the revival, however distant the period, of the Historical Society, upon those original principles, under the beneficial operation of which it had so long and so eminently flourished. This latter and more important consideration, which weighed with those who proposed and supported the measure, deserves to be more fully explained. These persons considered that the effect of the Order of the Board of February 6th, would be the destruction of the Society, but by slow, and, except to near observers, insensible steps.—By the necessary progress of that consumption, the principles of which the new Regulations would have implanted in it, that spirit of generous competition and emulous exertion, the good effects and fruits of which had fixed public attention and expectation on the Institution, and obtained for it the approbation and support of the discerning and liberal minded in the College, would have gradually decayed. It would have ceased to excite interest or to obtain respect,



either without or within the walls,—and in due process of time, would have sunk into oblivion unnoticed and unregretted. In the course of conversation among Collegemen, in after-times, the remembrance that such an Institution as the Historical Society once existed, might perhaps be occasionally revived, with an observation or two, that while it lasted “it was not a bad sort of thing of its kind, that however it gave the Board some trouble at times to manage it; and that therefore, as it was found the College could go on very well without it, its non-existence was by no means to be deplored.” These, or some such reflections, might have been called forth by the casual mention of an Institution, which had for nearly fifty years adorned the University and benefited the country,—and those who had viewed with dissatisfaction its existence, might have congratulated themselves on the successful application of that slow, subtle, insinuating poison which, in the end, produces on its victim the same effect that the more speedy, but obnoxious method of a Public Execution would have occasioned. Viewing thus the *ultimate* consequences of the Order of February 6th, an immediate Dissolution of the Historical Society appeared to be highly desirable, because the suddenness and unexpectedness of the event would occasion surprise and excite inquiry; the atten-



tion of those interested in its existence, both in College and out of College, would be directed to investigate the causes of that Dissolution,—the result of such investigation would be a knowledge of the original foundation of the Institution, of the excellence and utility of the objects for which it was established,—of the great practical benefit that had followed from their pursuit,—and of the degree of Academic control sufficient to ensure the preservation of College Discipline, without materially restricting that free agency, so necessary to excite exertion in the Members of a voluntary Association.—In short, from the measure of Dissolution, it was expected, would result all those advantages derived from the free and candid enquiry of any subject—and though none were so sanguine as to hope for the immediate restoration of the Institution, yet the revival, within a certain period, upon sure principles, seemed by no means an impossible consequence of the measure of Dissolution. Such were the motives of those who proposed and voted for that measure—their opinion of its propriety and experience has not experienced any the slightest alteration; and did the Historical Society exist at this moment, under the same circumstances as on February 15th, the very same line of conduct, and no other, would they feel themselves bound to pursue. But there



were some at the time who, without denying the right of the Society to dissolve itself at pleasure, or pronouncing any opinion as to the expedience of the measure, under the circumstances of the case; yet objected to the manner in which that measure had been carried, even so far as to question the validity of the act. Precipitancy and irregularity in the carrying it were the grounds of those objections. It was asserted that each Individual Member of the Society should have been summoned on the occasion, and at least, a week's formal notice of the intended motion for dissolution have been given. These objections are specious, and if the Historical Society had been free to act according to the dictates of its *unbiassed* judgment, would be altogether unsurmountable. But that such would have been the case, seems not in the remotest degree reconcilable with probability. Would it have been very consistent with that decided tone and conduct which the Board had latterly adopted towards the Society, to have permitted the Members to be summoned, and a special meeting convened for the purpose of formally and seriously debating whether the restraints and Regulations imposed by the Board, were not of so galling, injurious, and oppressive a nature, as to render the dissolution of the Society a measure almost of necessity? Would not the



Board have sent a peremptory message forbidding the Society's entertaining the question of dissolution in any shape—with, perhaps, a strong censure on those who proposed such a discussion, as contumacious and excitors of rebellion in the College? Or if any should suppose that the Board would scruple to have recourse to a measure so strong—would not the equally effectual, though less open means of that influence which the Members of the Board necessarily possess in College, have been employed, to bias the judgment of the Society, and prevent its coming to a decision, which would have reflected, in a greater or less degree, on their own prudence, liberality, and justice?—Those who are best acquainted with College proceedings, are the most capable of satisfactorily answering these queries. The conviction on the minds of those who were friendly to the dissolution of the Society, that a formal notice of their intention of proposing such a measure, would be the surest method of defeating such intention, was so great, that they were compelled to make a sacrifice of those abstract notions of propriety and regularity—of the importance of which, they were fully aware, to the imperious necessity of the case. In point of *fact*, however, the dissolution of the Society is complete. The alterations in the Constitution of the Historical Society,



contained in the Order of the Board of February 6th, were too great to admit the supposition that they could fail to call forth some very decided expression of the Society's feeling on the subject; and though no regular notice was given, yet there was a secret understanding among the great mass of the Members, that some very strong measure, equivalent to a motion for dissolution, would be proposed; the expectation of which, on the night on which it was carried, produced a much more crowded attendance than had taken place for many nights previous.

Much might yet be said in justification of those who were principally instrumental in promoting this dissolution, if more were deemed necessary, but this sketch has already swelled to a size far beyond the writer's intention. His object was to rescue a large portion of the Students of this College from the imputation flung upon them, of having acted contumaciously towards their Superiors, foolishly with respect to themselves, and unjustly with respect to those who were to come after them, in dissolving, under the momentary influence of pique and passion, an Institution of such national utility, as the Historical Society; by shewing the unavoidable necessity that compelled them to adopt such a measure, and tracing that necessity to its true



real, effective cause—the infringement on its Charter, the alteration in its Fundamental Regulations, which took place in October, 1812. Feeling as the writer did, and still does strongly on this subject, it was impossible for him to avoid some degree of strength in the expression of his sentiments on it; but any intentional disrespect towards those who originated that unfortunate alteration, he must disclaim. The hurried manner in which these sheets have been written, must apologize for the numerous instances of incorrectness, with which, no doubt, they abound. If, however, the object of the writer be attained—if the conduct and motives of the Individuals who composed the Historical Society be successfully vindicated—and above all, if he shall have contributed, in any the slightest degree, towards the revival of that Society, upon its *original principles*, by any enquiry into the nature of those principles, which his imperfect hints may have suggested to those who have but to speak the word and it will be done—he will not regret any time or trouble he may have employed on the subject, and will laugh at the folly of the Critic who would condescend to throw away his acuteness and wit on the clumsiness of his Composition.

Trinity College,  
March 17th, 1815.



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any enquiry into the nature of those principles, which  
he suspected that may have suggested to those who  
have but to speak the word and it will be done - he  
will not regret any direct trouble he may have en-  
ployed on the subject, and will laugh at the folly of  
the Critic who would condescend to throw at him  
scoundrels and wit on the character of his Countrymen.

Trinity College,  
March 17th, 1815.