

**WARRINGTON'S
MANUAL.
A MANUAL**

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Warrington's Manual. A Manual by William S. Robinson

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WILLIAM S. ROBINSON

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FOR THE INFORMATION OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF
LEGISLATURES, CONVENTIONS, SOCIETIES, CORPO-
RATIONS, ORDERS, ETC., IN THE PRACTICAL
GOVERNING AND MEMBERSHIP OF ALL
SUCH BODIES, ACCORDING TO THE
PARLIAMENTARY LAW AND
PRACTICE IN THE
UNITED STATES.

BY

WILLIAM S. ROBINSON,

"Warrington,"

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF MASSACHUSETTS,
FROM 1823 TO 1873.

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PREFACE.

THE purpose of this Manual is to furnish to officers and members of legislative and other deliberative assemblies, and to societies of all kinds, a concise and practical guide in what is called "Parliamentary law." I have not thought it necessary, or even useful, to go into the history of this "law" in any respect, or to cite, to any extent, its precedents. The "law of Parliament" (to take the title of Mr. May's book) is indeed a different and far more important thing than "Parliamentary law," as the phrase is used. The "law of Parliament," being the Constitution as well as the law of England, the history of it and its principles and details become sometimes "law" in the highest sense. But in a country and in states governed by written constitutions, and where deliberative bodies are controlled by innumerable statutes and rules, often to the last degree unnecessary and useless for the end

they profess to subserve, this "law" is far less important. It has been customary to say that "rules" are for the protection of minorities. A better definition is, that they are for the speedy, fair, and orderly transaction of business, according to the will of the majority. This work, at any rate, is written upon the assumption that members of societies, orders, municipal bodies, and legislatures, are on an equality. If, to use the language of the Massachusetts Constitution (Art. IX. of the Declaration of Rights), "all elections ought to be free; and all the inhabitants of the commonwealth . . . have an equal right to elect officers and to be elected for public employments," it seems to follow that all members of legislative and deliberative bodies ought to be substantially upon an equality; at any rate, that the minimum, and not the maximum, of power and influence ought to be put into the hands of committees and presiding officers. This Manual is prepared upon that theory. The House of Representatives at Washington has tied itself up with rules so that its speaker, who should be its servant, and of little if any more importance than any other member, is in reality the *second or third officer of the government itself*. Probably in a few years, when Congress shall have relinquished the

attempt to make laws, not only for the National Government, but for states, cities, towns, and private corporations, or when it shall have put into hands of other bodies the duty of taking evidence and collecting facts on which to proceed in the making of statutes, the old practice will be resumed.

I have deemed it unnecessary and even a hindrance, to persons having occasion to use a book like this, to make a large volume. It has cost me a good deal of time and labor to make it small enough. But with the object I have already indicated, the plan on which it has been prepared has seemed to me a tolerably good one. It is a mixture of rule, advice, and "parliamentary" principle, founded on the experience and the obvious necessities of bodies governed by the "Parliamentary law." As everybody knows, an assembly may, if it pleases, make rules for itself diametrically opposed to this law or principle. Those "rules" are innumerable, and it is of no practical use to try to classify, illustrate, or mention them. Such of them as are based on correct principles will be found here. But, for the largest part, this book seeks to give the reasons for the ordinary and the best practice of the best ordered bodies. Given the *reasons*, and the practice adjusts itself; the assembly transacts its

work speedily and with proper regard to the rights of all ; and officers are prepared to meet objections and to answer questions with little or no hesitation. Without the *reasons*, members and officers have great difficulty in interpreting the rules, and in coming to just results without troublesome delays. The following, from an address delivered before the Literary Societies of Dartmouth College by Rev. Edward Everett Hale, will further illustrate the objects I have had in view. How well I have succeeded, the public must judge. Said Mr. Hale, —

“ It was my fortune, once, to sit for several days by the side of the late Governor Andrew of Massachusetts while, with skill and success which I will not pretend to describe, he presided over a large, excited assembly, which, but for his admirable gift, would have been stormy. When all was done, I ventured to felicitate him on his success. ‘ I think I have succeeded,’ said he, ‘ and I believe it is because, in all my life, I have only for three or four hours been in the chair of any assembly. I believe it is because I know nothing of the technics of parliamentary law. I mean,’ he added with earnestness, ‘ that I have been trying all through these days to apply the principles of justice, of truth and

common sense in the forms, which were of course familiar to me, of deliberative assemblies.'

"Gentlemen, I could not but contrast that verdict with the verdict of one of your own statesmen who stood with me one day in the gallery at the Capitol, as an acute parliamentarian, who has thus far never been anything but an acute parliamentarian, dissected some point of order to the bottom. 'I would not,' said your senator, 'know as much as that man knows of Parliamentary law, no, not if you gave me the world!' Take that as a not unfair contrast of the difference between principle and method, if, by any misfortune, either must be learned alone."

I wish only to say, in concluding this preface, what I have in the work itself tried to make clear, that wherever I have left it in doubt whether the principle laid down may be considered authoritative, it should, if approved, be provided for by rule. It is, of course, understood that it is necessary to make a rule whenever the principle is departed from. *The rule governs; but if the rule be obscure or contradictory, let it be tried by the principle.*

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