

"DEVILS" OF THE ENGLISH BAR.

To become a J. P., ought to be an object of honourable ambition amongst county families. If a condition were imposed that none but barristers should be appointed to the commission, those socially eligible for the post would probably lose no time in qualifying themselves. The examination for call to the Bar is no longer merely nominal. Without entailing a very long or severe course of study, it secures at least a fair knowledge of general principles, and certainly any one who has passed it would be much better prepared to partake intelligently in the administration of justice, than one absolutely without legal education. He would have acquired, if little else, something of what is known as a "legal mind."

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Considering the antipathy which any experience of the law excites among suitors, it is wonderful what fascination it seems to exercise over some of its exponents, or rather over its would be exponents. We refer to that numerous class of young barristers who pursue the avocation of "devils." To the uninitiated we will explain what is meant by a devil. The picture is not to the lay mind a very attractive one, and yet there are a good many young gentlemen at the Bar who would give one of their ears to be in the shoes of a more fortunate friend who occupies the proud position of devil to a leading junior. In the first place, a devil has no work of his own; if he had he could not properly exercise his demoniac functions. His duties consist in getting up masses of papers, and in holding the less interesting of the briefs of another barrister who has got more work than he can get through; in getting abused by the solicitor who does not approve of the work being done by a deputy, and who, if the case is lost, puts it down to the incapacity of the deputy aforesaid, and if it is won never dreams of awarding any thanks, still less briefs, to the winner. And the odd part of it all is that not one groat does the devil receive. He has to keep up chambers, a share of clerk, and himself, and to be constantly at the beck and call of his patron, for he knows if he is not, or if the work be carelessly done, there are

seven, or, indeed, seventy others, worse or better than himself, as the case may be, ready to seize on the post with avidity. Another odd feature of the profession is, that the devil really enjoys his work until he gets tired of it. In no other profession that we know of is there presented the spectacle of one man doing another's work for nothing and really liking it. He is not always, to the non-legal mind, a very interesting person to meet in general society, for his conversation is apt to confine itself to recent cases, and the "points" taken or not taken therein, interspersed with choice legal anecdotes, which are about as suitable at an ordinary dinner party as Mr. Bob Sawyer's illustration of the removal of a tumor from a gentleman's head, by means of a quatern loaf and an oyster knife, was at Dingley Dell. Of all shop—and shop of any kind is wearisome—legal shop falls the flattest on the ordinary diner-out.

The advantages which are gained, or are supposed to be gained by deviling are, firstly, that the young barrister gets experience, and what is of most importance, something to do during the weary years of waiting which tail off so many; secondly, that he is supposed to have opportunities for making friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness in the shape of solicitors who, when the leading junior to whose skirts the devil clings, passes into the smooth harbour of "silk," will bestow on him the briefs which they formerly showered on his patron. Too often the hope is a delusive one, and after having served so many years for the Rachel of practice, the legal Jacob sees her pass into the arms of a whiskerless stripling just out of his pupilage, who is the son or the nephew, or more often the son-in-law of a solicitor. It is no new discovery that there is a block in all professions, and that in no profession is there anything like the block that there is at the Bar. It is no exaggeration to say that there is work for ten and a hundred to do it. No man without interest should in these days dream of going to the Bar unless he is possessed of exceptional abilities, and even then he must be sure that they are the right sort of abilities.