

## LAW STUDENTS AND DEBATING SOCIETIES.

in public, the discussion of questions of higher and more general importance, is too often discouraged, because, perhaps, it is thought that his training is such as to preclude him from knowing anything about questions of higher and more general importance; and too many in truth mistake their vocation, and had better be content with a less ambitious career, where their hands may be as much brought into play as their heads. To try and persuade some men in the profession that their students should exercise themselves in public discussion, and that a debating society is the proper place for such exercise, would be a hopeless task. They are apt to despise the cultivation of oratory as a weakness. They almost contemplate with horror a young lawyer with a taste for polite literature, and prophesy for him a melancholy future. They are prone to advise their young friends to depend entirely upon Practice Reports, and deeds of settlement, for intellectual refreshment. They remind one of the Fellow at Cambridge, who pictured to himself the seventh heaven as a region of pure mathematics.

But though there are some people of the class just alluded to, there are others with more liberal views; and, encouraged by them, the writer ventures to assert that Debating Societies offer the best, and, in truth, the only school, for that early practice in speaking, which is so essential to an advocate. Such societies tend to enlarge and freshen the minds of those whose daily pursuits have a tendency directly the reverse. They encourage and foster the three habits, which, according to the old saying of Bacon, should go to form a lawyer: the habit of reading, which makes a full man; of writing, which makes an accurate man; and of speaking, which makes a ready man. It is the habit of speaking, of course, in which the element of association is es-

pecially needful. Few men can become speakers by private exercise. In learning to speak, the student wants the extrinsic aid of an audience and an opponent. You may guide his attention to the best models of eloquence; you may impress upon him the necessity of diligent study of these models; you may assist him with many a hint. But he must teach himself to address numbers without hesitation; he must teach himself to think upon his legs; to detect in an instant the fallacy of an argument, and with equal readiness to expose it. A Cicero, or a Pitt may, after private study and observation, appear before the world as finished orators. Average mortals can only hope to become speakers after repeated efforts, and many failures in a public arena. "A Debating Society," says a Barrister, writing of an advocate's training, "is the only school for a beginner. An assembly of men met for the purpose of business, will not endure to be made the subject of a tyro's first steps in talking, and it would be an impertinence on his part so to use it. He must take his lessons for some time amongst those who meet with the same object, self-instruction; each enduring the others that he may be endured in turn. There he may venture to fail and dare to try again."

At a meeting lately held in Dublin of the Law Students' Debating Society, there were present the Lord Chancellor, and most of the prominent lawyers in Ireland. Mr. Butt, Q. C., proposed a resolution "that this Society deserves the support of the Benchers, the Bar and the Law Students," and spoke in eloquent terms of the aims, utility and success of the Society. The Lord Chancellor expressed his gratification at being present at the proceedings of a Society which, he believed, to be a most valuable adjunct to the education of young men intending to go to the Bar. He agreed with Mr. Butt that one great advantage of the So-