

THE TEMPLE OF JUSTICE IN ENGLAND.

SELECTIONS.

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Few persons appear to recognize the exquisitely allegorical character of our New Law Courts. On arriving at the principal entrance, the would-be litigant immediately experiences a sensation of being "stranded" (this immodest quip is inevitable) upon a bleak, stony, and inhospitable shore. In front and on either hand of him there stretches the most irregular, heterogeneous, complex, monstrous and irreconcilable aggregation of ins and outs conceivable by the mind of man. Yet is the complexity of the exterior "a light affliction" compared to the windings, passages, labyrinths and mazes of the still more wonderful interior.

Porta adversa ingens, solidoque adamante columnæ. The main portal is wide—wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto litigation. It is, moreover, cavernous, and thrust backward and inward after the manner of the mouth of the octopus. It suggests the abandonment of hope, and umbrellas upon the very threshold.

Cardine sacræ panduntur portæ. The great gate of this great Temple leads directly to the Great Hall. Here again all is full of allegory. How symbolic of our whole legal system are the extreme narrowness and interminable length of this stately chamber! It is full of detail, it is costly, it is of the smallest possible use. Most persons on gaining access to the hall expect to find an easy approach to the courts by turning to the right or left. Such expectations are vain. If the unwary one ventures through the arches on either hand, he plunges straightway into total darkness, falls up the hardest of stone stairs, and wanders disconsolate in the very corridors of time.

Inextricabilis error! No, the way to approach the actual courts themselves is through catacombs at the further end of the hall, the which catacombs are dim, mysterious, and full of unexpected ramifications. It is alleged that handsome

young barristers are wont to bring their pretty cousins down into these gloomy vaults for reasons which older heads do not readily understand, there being little to see and great difficulties in the way of being seen. Perhaps their impressions of the mysteries of the law would not be complete without this adventurous initiation.

The question now is—*superas evadere ad auras.* Hereabout is a choice of doors, which lead upwards to the Court floor above. Let us choose the one at the foot of a spiral stone staircase possessing the peculiarity of enfolding another and smaller staircase within its corkscrew turnings—*sinu labens circumvenit atro*; a detail again highly symbolic, signifying the delight of the legal mind in twistings within twistings, and darkness over all. Now, as touching the Courts proper, to which we have emerged on the upper floor, they all possess certain features in common. First and foremost they are not in the least like what Courts ought to be. They rather resemble the chapels which border the larger cathedrals. They are small, they are dark, they are draughty, they are incomprehensibly inconvenient. The winds of heaven compete briskly for possession of them, and perfumes of all sorts, excepting those of Araby the blest, delight to linger within the jurisdiction. We anticipate, however, that Baron Huddleston will one day commit them, if they unwarily let him catch them. On ordinary days it is possible to wriggle into them at the trifling sacrifice of the integrity of one's hat, coat-tails, or such like little outlying appurtenances, together with a proportionate sweetening of temper; but on Motion days he who aspires to present himself before Her Majesty's Judges must be content to carry life itself in his hand. It is a crush as if the Arab spearmen were upon us, and we were in momentary expectation of being crumpled up.

Before leaving the Court corridors let us take note of some of the parties to the contests going on, their witnesses and friends. Behold the plaintiff, who has won when he ought to have lost, and is half exultant, half frightened, being somewhat uncertain as to the Judge's direction in the matter of costs. Observe the hopeless astonishment of the defendant in the