

distinguishes a sergeant from the other members of the Bar.

The real coif, which is described by Chief Justice Fortescue, as the "principal and chief insignment of habit wherewith sergeants-at-law on their creation are decked," in its original state was of white lawn or silk, forming a close-fitting head-covering, in shape not unlike a Knight Templar's cap; and as on the top of the white coif the old fashion had been for the Judges and sergeants to wear a small skull cap of black silk or velvet, the *peruquiers* of the last century, when the fashion of powdered wigs in lieu of natural hair reached Westminster Hall, contrived the round patch of black and white as a diminutive representative of the coif and cap. The coif has always represented, like the coronet and the mitre, distinct rank and dignity, and has from time immemorial been conferred with much form and ceremony, and the members of the order had the special privilege of remaining covered even in the presence of the Sovereign.

As far back as the records of our law extend the Order seems always to have had great power in the state, and they were bound by a solemn oath to give counsel and legal aid to the King's people. The great meeting place of the sergeants many centuries ago was the "Parvis" in St. Paul's Cathedral, where they might have been seen daily, wearing their distinctive costume, the robe and the coif, always ready to receive those who sought their aid, to give counsel *pur son donant* to the rich, and gratis to the poor suitor, and to give assistance when called upon in the judicial business of the King's Courts.

As the Roman advocates paced up and down the Forum, waiting for their clients, so the old sergeants were to be found at the Parvis of St. Paul's with the same object, or engaged at their allotted pillars in consultation with their clients after the rising of the Courts. The Parvis, or Paul's Walk, was in days long gone by, the great place of general resort. Strictly speaking the Parvis was only the Church porch, but in the case of St. Paul's Cathedral, it included the nave, or middle aisle of the old cathedral. St. Paul's, however, was not the only church in those days where lawyers and their clients congregated to consult and dispose of legal affairs. As late even as the reign of James I. we are told that the Round of the Temple Church "was used as a place where lawyers received their clients, each occupying his own particular post." Ben Jonson in the "Alchemist" refers to such business in the Round of the Temple Church. Chaucer in the "Canterbury Tales" refers to the practice which prevailed of lawyers using St. Paul's as a place for transacting legal business.

"A sergeant of the law, ware and wise,
That often hadde ben at the parvis,
Ther was also, full rich of excellence,
Discreet he was and of great reverence.
He seemed swiche; his wordes were so wise,
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patent, and by pleine commissiun;
For his science and for his high renown,
Of fees and robes had he many on."