

"It was no primrose path which he had chosen for himself in this study of the law, but a steep and thorny track. There was nothing in the legal London of the eighteenth century of the well-ordered academic life to which he was used at Oxford; no system of professional training. The age of moots and readings was past and that of 'pupilizing' had not begun. This is how he sketches the novitiate of the law student of his day. 'We may appeal to the experience of every sensible lawyer whether anything can be more hazardous and discouraging than the usual entrance on the study of the law. A raw and inexperienced youth in the most dangerous season of his life is transplanted on a sudden into the midst of allurements to pleasure, without any restraint or check, but what his own prudence can suggest; with no public direction in what course to pursue his inquiries—no private assistance to remove the distresses and difficulties which will always embarrass a beginner. In this situation he is expected to sequester himself from the world, and by a tedious, lonely process to extract the theory of law from a mass of undigested learning, or else by an assiduous attendance on the courts to pick up theory and practice together sufficient to qualify him for the ordinary run of business.' We have changed all that now, thanks very much to Blackstone himself. The law student of to-day has his director of studies, his student's library, his lectures, his prizes, his moots and debating societies. Had Blackstone himself enjoyed the last advantage—practised declamation in a debating society—he might have won his way to professional distinction earlier; for as his biographer admits, he was 'not happy in a graceful delivery and a flow of elocution, and so acquired little notice and little practice.' Well was it, however, for the world that he did not, for as a busy junior he could never have laid the foundations of that wide legal learning which shines forth in the Commentaries. We, looking back, can see this, but Blackstone only saw that he had been waiting vainly on Fortune, the fickle goddess, for nearly seven years after his call (1746), and he made up his mind to woo her smiles no longer, but to retire to his fellowship at All Souls.