

*TRAINING FOR THE BAR AND BENCH.*

[Concluded from p. 235.]

"Passing from this subject to another, in which I fear the comparison is still more unfavourable to you, with your brethren of the East, I must first deprecate your censure by saying that this is mainly attributable to their superior opportunities. I allude now to literary attainments, outside of the profession. The law has in all times been called one of the learned professions. The members of the profession have received that consideration which the possession of such learning deserves; not mere technical learning in the law, but learning in the more liberal sense of scholarship, or some general acquaintance with what, in Doctor Johnson's day, would have been called polite literature. The lawyer, therefore, who is deficient in this, falls to the extent of that deficiency, below the true standard of his profession, and, permit me to add, has the scope of his usefulness correspondingly restricted.

"Let me, however, be clearly understood in this matter. I am not advocating a collegiate course as a prerequisite to the study of law, or admission to the bar. Least of all do I attach the importance which so many classical scholars do to proficiency in Greek and Latin languages, or familiarity with the classics of those tongues. On the contrary I am a strong believer in the rapidly growing opinion, that in the accelerated pace at which modern human beings are propelled, under the influence of railroads, telegraphs and the press, it is, in nine cases out of ten, absurd to spend the usual period of four collegiate years in the study of dead languages and theoretical mathematics. Nor do I intend to say that a lawyer either should or can, unless he is one of those learned prodigies of whom we all read but whom none of us imitate, become a proficient in the natural sciences, or in any of them. But independent of this, it is within the reach of every man, without using time which belongs to professional pursuits, to acquire some general knowledge of the map of the heavenly spheres and the laws which govern their movements; some idea of the classification and quality of trees, shrubs, and flowers; some acquaintance with the more fundamental principles of geology and the laws of the electric fluid.

"If, however, circumstances should place the natural sciences wholly beyond his reach, there can be no reasonable excuse for entire ignorance in any man who can read, of the history of his own race. To one who claims to be ranked as a member of a liberal profession, Marathon and Thermopylae, Thrasymene and Pharsalia, Leonidas and Alexander, Hannibal and Cæsar ought to represent something more definite than mythical ideas of successful warriors and renowned battle-fields. And no lawyer can by any means be excused, who does not know something of the personal history of the two great representatives of the profession in the days of republican Greece and Rome—Demosthenes and Cicero. For let it be understood that while these men are most frequently thought of and spoken of as orators, and as senators and statesmen, it is very sure that the highest efforts of their genius, which have been transmitted to us, were delivered in the character of advocate, in the prosecution or defence of some individual on trial before a tribunal competent to punish or vindicate. Who does not wish to know the circumstances under which Cicero prosecuted the tyrant Verres, or defended his friend Milo? Or can appreciate Demosthenes without some knowledge of the Phillip whom he denounced in a manner that has given the name Phillipics to that kind of oratory for all time?

"But apart from the pleasure and profit which such learning affords in a general way, and aside from the illustrations which history gives of the motives, the passions, the vices and virtues that move and control men in all ages, and under every variety of circumstances and character, there is to the lawyer a peculiar value in the cultivation of general literature. I allude to his own improvement in the use of language.

"I am prepared to admit, of course, that words without ideas are of little value to the lawyer, or any one else. But there is, sometimes, a charm in the mere use of words, in their orderly and symmetrical arrangement, in the melody of their musical sound, which, with a very small modicum of vigorous thought, is still quite pleasing. It is not of this I speak now. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the most profound reasoning, the most vigorous thought, the most pleasing