

LEGAL WIT.

was for many years in the greatest straits, hardly known as a lawyer, and unable to support himself by his profession. He was only continued in it by the liberality of a rich friend, who, hearing of his difficulties, allowed him two hundred pounds per year till he got into business.

Dunning (or Lord Ashburton), studied intensely; lived poorly—taking dinner and supper together to economize time and money, and yet for many years he remained unknown. But once in business, he soon became a leader at the bar, and died, at the age of fifty-two, worth one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. He was three years at the bar without receiving so much as a hundred guineas, all told. During the last twelve years of his life his practice brought in from fifty to sixty thousand dollars per year.

These and many other examples show what patience and industry are necessary, even to genius, to accomplish great results. Young men may treasure them as comforters in those dark hours which almost always precede the dawn of a great success.

We hear of the enormous fees and incomes of lending American lawyers, such as Webster, Choate, David Paul Brown, and others; but the practice of eminent British gentlemen of the long robe is more remunerative than even that of their American brethren. Sir Samuel Romilly realized an income of upwards of \$75,000 in the last years of his life; Sir Chas. Wetherell received \$35,000 for opposing the Municipal Corporations bill at the bar of the House of Lords; the late Lord Truro's retaining fee in an important cause was \$15,000; and these instances by no means stand alone. But, besides fortune, a good position at the bar brings with it an enviable place in the most intelligent and desirable society. Lawyers have been the best clubmen; and the clubs of London have become famous for their wit and wisdom, which they have, in times past, brought together under one roof. Even that exclusive old clique which called itself "The Sublime Society of Beefsteaks," with its "grid-iron of 1735 standing out in proud relief from the ceiling of the refectory," and its familiar conceited motto of "Beef and Liberty"—even this, the most snobbish and conservative of clubs, which had no less a man than a drunken and half-paralytic duke for its honored president, gathered its brightest members from the bar. Wilkes, Sergeant Prime (not witty himself, but the cause of wit in others), "Frog" Morgan—so called because he was in the habit of quoting constantly in his arguments in court "Croke Elizabeth, Croke James, Croke Charles," said *Croke* being a reporter who lived in those three reigns—Horne Tooke, and many others more or less famous, were among its members. Cobb was a lawyer, better known in his time as a play-wright, and the author, among others, of an Indian drama called "Ramah Drug," and an English opera, the "Haunted Tower."

"What a misnomer it was," said Arnold, a fellow "steak," to him, "to call your opera the 'Haunted Tower!' Why, there was no spirit in it from beginning to end."

"The drama was better named 'Ramah Drug,'" exclaimed another, "for it was literally ramming a drug down the public throat."

"True," rejoined Cobb, "but it was a drug that evinced considerable power, for it operated on the public twenty nights in succession."

"My good friend," said Arnold, "that was a proof of its weakness, if it took so long in working."

"You are right," retorted Cobb, "in that respect; *your* play (Arnold had brought out a play which did not survive the first night) had the advantage of mine, for it was so powerful a drug that it was thrown up as soon as it was taken."

The rallery of the Sublime Society was merciless. One Bradshaw was fond of boasting of his descent from the regicide of that name. To whom Churchill, the poet, said: "Ah, Bradshaw! don't crow; the Stuarts have been amply revenged for the loss of Charles' head, for you have not had a head in your whole family since." Sheridan was a Beefsteak, and introduced his brother-in-law, Linley, whose peculiarity was a fondness for telling jokes, of which he always forgot the *point*. He published a biography of his friend Leftly, which, coming up before the society for review, was found to open with the following Johnsonian passage respecting his hero's birth:

"His father was a tailor, and his mother a seamstress; a union which, if not first suggested, was probably accelerated, by the mutual sympathies of a congenial occupation." This, and another passage, excited general applause. The second was a sober truism, stated with admirable seriousness: It is a well-known fact that novelty itself, *by frequent repetition*, loses much of its attraction."

The study of the law does not seem favorable to purity or elegance of style, or exactness of expression. Poor Linley was not alone in his grandiloquence. Mr. Marryatt, a brother of the novelist, once addressing a jury, and speaking of a chimney on fire, exclaimed: "Gentlemen, the chimney took fire—it poured out volumes of smoke—*volumes* did I say?—whole encyclopedias!" "When I cannot talk sense, I talk metaphor," said Curran; and many of his brethren imitate him. Mr. (afterward Sir R.) Dallas exclaimed, in one of his speeches, "Now we are advancing from the *starlight* of circumstantial evidence to the *daylight* of discovery; the *sun of certainty* has melted the darkness, and we have arrived at the facts admitted by both parties;" and Kenyon once addressed the bench: "Your lordships perceive that we stand here as our grandmother's *de bonis non*; and really, my lords, it does strike me that it would be a monstrous thing to say that a party can now come in, in the very *teeth* of an act of parliament, and actually *turn us round*, under color