

OPENING OF THE NEW LAW COURTS OF ENGLAND.

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This interesting and imposing ceremony marks an era in the legal and judicial history of England second to none that has preceded it. But though the day of Westminster Hall, as a legal centre, has gone by, its traditions remain (to use the words of the Queen as she took the key of the building from the Home Secretary and handed it to the Lord Chancellor) in "the independence of the judges, supported by the integrity and ability of the other members of the profession of the law, which will prove in the future, as they have been in times past, a chief security for the rights of my Crown and the liberties of my people."

The judges assembled in the Princes' Chamber at the House of Lords, and then, in stately procession, passed through Westminster Hall, sacred with so many memories of the past history of the nation, to the carriages that waited to take them to the new Courts; the Queen, meanwhile, making her way to the same rendezvous through a crowd of loyal subjects, shouting their homage to the most worthy of the long line of rulers in whose name justice has been administered to a law-abiding people.

At ten o'clock the great Hall of the Court was thrown open to those who were either entitled to or had been invited to be present. The scene is thus described by the *Times*:

"Up the centre ran an open space for the Royal procession to pass from the Strand entrance to the dais raised for them at the further end, and on each side of the hall were ranged tiers of benches set apart for the different professions and corporations represented. The gathering at first was of a curiously mixed description. The full-bottomed wigs and robes of the Queen's Counsel, worn only on occasion of State or in the House of Lords, the lavish gold lace of levee dress, the scarlet and ermine of the Common Law and Equity Judges, the dark, heavily-bulioned robes of the Lords Justices of Appeal, the correct black of the Incorporated Law Society,

and the brilliant uniforms and orders of the Foreign Ambassadors, blended into one kaleidoscopic whole.

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Inside the hall the first sign of the approach of Royalty was the appearance in front of the dais of half a dozen Beefeaters, who formed not the least picturesque or the least pleasing feature of the scene. Their Elizabethan garb was a quaint suggestion of the olden time, all the more appropriate to the occasion from the fact that the roses of York and Lancaster, intertwined as the symbol of peace in their caps, are said to have been first plucked in Temple Gardens. The sun, too, as if to herald Her Majesty's coming, darted his rays with augmented force through the southern window, and filled the great hall with a crimson glory. At twenty minutes to twelve a blare of trumpets announced the entry of the civic procession—the Common Councilmen in their mauve cloaks, the Sheriffs and Aldermen in red, accompanied by the Macebearer and Swordbearer, the latter, with his curious fur cap, looking like a Tartar chief. The procession imported more colour into the already brilliant scene. Attention was now turned to the dais, where the Judges had begun to assemble. The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice entered together from the left, the one in the sombre but richly decorated robes which form the Chancellor's State dress, the other in the bright scarlet and ermine of the Common Law Bench. A score of other Judges followed, including Mr. Gladstone, who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, ranks as a Judge of the Supreme Court. The Prime Minister wore the heavy State robes of his office, resembling those of a Lord Justice of Appeal. Sir R. Phillimore appeared in plain black silk, and Vice-Chancellor Bacon, the last of his rank, in a distinctive robe of blue with a profusion of gold lace. Except for the presence of the Queen and her immediate attendants, and the Royal Family, the company in the great hall was now complete. Beyond the Diplomatic Body on the left sat Ministers and members of Parliament with their ladies, and beyond them again the various undistinguishable sections of 'society.' The stage was represented by Mr. Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry. Immediately after assembling on the platform, the Judges proceeded, two by two, down the centre of the hall to the Strand en-