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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Crane
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Verne
Burroughs Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Curtis Homer Tolstoy Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato
Potter Zola Lawrence Stevenson Dickens Harte
Kant Freud Jowett Andersen London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
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A Book About Lawyers

John Cordy Jeaffreson

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A BOOK ABOUT LAWYERS.

BY

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW

AUTHOR OF

"A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS,"

ETC., ETC.

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CONTENTS.

PART I. HOUSES AND HOUSEHOLDERS.

- I. Ladies in Law Colleges
- II. The Last of the Ladies
- III. York House and Powis House
- IV. Lincoln's Inn Fields
- V. The Old Law Quarter

PART II. LOVES OF THE LAWYERS.

- VI. A Lottery
- VII. Good Queen Bess
- VIII. Rejected Addresses
- IX. "Cicero" upon His Trial
- X. Brothers in Trouble
- XI. Early Marriages

PART III. MONEY.

- XII. Fees to Counsel
- XIII. Retainers, General and Special
- XIV. Judicial Corruption
- XV. Gifts and Sales
- XVI. A Rod Pickled by William Cole
- XVII. Chief Justice Popham
- XVIII. Judicial Salaries

PART IV. COSTUME AND TOILET.

XIX. Bright and Sad

XX. Millinery

XXI. Wigs

XXII. Bands and Collars

XXIII. Bags and Gowns

XXIV. Hats

PART V. MUSIC.

XXV. The Piano in Chambers

XXVI. The Battle of the Organs

XXVII. The Thickness in the Throat

PART VI. AMATEUR THEATRICALS.

XXVIII. Actors at The Bar

XXIX. "The Play's The Thing"

XXX. The River and the Strand by Torchlight

XXXI. Anti-Prynne

XXXII. An Empty Grate

PART VII. LEGAL EDUCATION

XXXIII. Inns of Court and Inns of Chancery

XXXIV. Lawyers and Gentlemen

XXXV. Law-French and Law-Latin

XXXVI. Student Life in Old Time

XXXVII. Readers and Mootmen

XXXVIII. Pupils in Chambers

PART VIII. MIRTH.

XXXIX. Wit of Lawyers

XL. Humorous Stories

XLI. Wits in 'silk' and Punsters in 'ermine'

XLII. Witnesses

XLIII. Circuiteers

XLIV. Lawyers and Saints

PART IX. AT HOME: IN COURT: AND IN SOCIETY.

XLV. Lawyers at their Own Tables

XLVI. Wine

XLVII. Law and Literature

PART I.

HOUSES AND HOUSEHOLDERS.

CHAPTER I.

LADIES IN LAW COLLEGES.

A law-student of the present day finds it difficult to realize the brightness and domestic decency which characterized the Inns of Court in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Under existing circumstances, women of character and social position avoid the gardens and terraces of Gray's Inn and the Temple.

Attended by men, or protected by circumstances that guard them from impertinence and scandal, gentlewomen can without discomfort pass and re-pass the walls of our legal colleges; but in most cases a lady enters them under conditions that announce even to casual passers the object of her visit. In her carriage, during the later hours of the day, a barrister's wife may drive down the Middle Temple Lane, or through the gate of Lincoln's Inn, and wait in King's Bench Walk or New Square, until her husband, putting aside clients and papers, joins her for the homeward drive. But even thus placed, sitting in her carriage and guarded by servants, she usually prefers to fence off inquisitive eyes by a bonnet-veil, or the blinds of her carriage-windows. On Sunday, the wives and daughters of gentle families brighten the dingy passages of the Temple, and the sombre courts of Lincoln's Inn: for the musical services of the grand church and little chapel, are amongst the religious entertainments of the town. To those choral celebrations ladies go, just as they are accustomed to enter any metropolitan church; and after service they can take a turn in the gardens of either Society, without drawing upon themselves unpleasant attention. So also, unattended by men, ladies are permitted to inspect the floral exhibitions with which Mr. Broome, the Temple gardener, annually entertains London sight-seers.

But, save on these and a few similar occasions and conditions, gentlewomen avoid an Inn of Court as they would a barrack-yard, unless they have secured the special attendance of at least one member of the society. The escort of a barrister or student, alters the case. What barrister, young or old, cannot recall mirthful eyes that,

with quick shyness, have turned away from his momentary notice, as in answer to the rustling of silk, or stirred by sympathetic consciousness of women's noiseless presence, he has raised his face from a volume of reports, and seen two or three timorous girls peering through the golden haze of a London morning, into the library of his Inn? What man, thus drawn away for thirty seconds from prosaic toil, has not in that half minute remembered the faces of happy rural homes,—has not recalled old days when his young pulses beat cordial welcome to similar intruders upon the stillness of the Bodleian, or the tranquil seclusion of Trinity library? What occupant of dreary chambers in the Temple, reading this page, cannot look back to a bright day, when young, beautiful, and pure as sanctity, Lilian, or Kate, or Olive, entered his room radiant with smiles, delicate in attire, and musical with gleesome gossip about country neighbors, and the life of a joyous home?

Seldom does a Templar of the present generation receive so fair and innocent a visitor. To him the presence of a gentlewoman in his court, is an occasion for ingenious conjecture; encountered on his staircase she is a cause of lively astonishment. His guests are men, more or less addicted to tobacco; his business callers are solicitors and their clerks; in his vestibule the masculine emissaries of tradesmen may sometimes be found—head-waiters from neighboring taverns, pot-boys from the 'Cock' and the 'Rainbow.' A printer's devil may from time to time knock at his door. But of women—such women as he would care to mention to his mother and sisters—he sees literally nothing in his dusty, ill-ordered, but not comfortless rooms. He has a laundress, one of a class on whom contemporary satire has been rather too severe.

Feminine life of another sort lurks in the hidden places of the law colleges, shunning the gaze of strangers by daylight; and even when it creeps about under cover of night, trembling with a sense of its own incurable shame. But of this sad life, the bare thought of which sends a shivering through the frame of every man whom God has blessed with a peaceful home and wholesome associations, nothing shall be said in this page.

In past time the life of law-colleges was very different in this respect. When they ceased to be ecclesiastics, and fixed themselves in

the hospices which soon after the reception of the gowned tenants, were styled Inns of Courts; our lawyers took unto themselves wives, who were both fair and discreet. And having so made women flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, they brought them to homes within the immediate vicinity of their collegiate walls, and sometimes within the walls themselves. Those who would appreciate the life of the Inns in past centuries, and indeed in times within the memory of living men, should bear this in mind. When he was not on circuit, many a counsellor learned in the law, found the pleasures not less than the business of his existence within the bounds of his 'honorable society.' In the fullest sense of the words, he took his ease in his Inn; besides being his workshop, where clients flocked to him for advice, it was his club, his place of pastime, and the shrine of his domestic affections. In this generation a successful Chancery barrister, or Equity draftsman, looks upon Lincoln's Inn merely as a place of business, where at a prodigious rent he holds a set of rooms in which he labors over cases, and satisfies the demands of clients and pupils. A century or two centuries since the case was often widely different. The rising barrister brought his bride in triumph to his 'chambers,' and in them she received the friends who hurried to congratulate her on her new honors. In those rooms she dispensed graceful hospitality, and watched her husband's toils. The elder of her children first saw the light in those narrow quarters; and frequently the lawyer, over his papers, was disturbed by the uproar of his heir in an adjoining room.

Young wives, the mistresses of roomy houses in the western quarters of town, shudder as they imagine the discomforts which these young wives of other days must have endured. "What! live in chambers?" they exclaim with astonishment and horror, recalling the smallness and cheerless aspect of their husbands' business chambers. But past usages must not be hastily condemned,—allowance must be made for the fact that our ancestors set no very high price on the luxuries of elbow-room and breathing-room. Families in opulent circumstances were wont to dwell happily, and receive whole regiments of jovial visitors in little houses nigh the Strand and Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill and Cheapside;—houses hidden in narrow passages and sombre courts—houses, compared with which the lowliest residences in a "genteel suburb" of our own time

would appear capacious mansions. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that the married barrister, living a century since with his wife in chambers—either within or hard-by an Inn or Court—was, at a comparatively low rent, the occupant of far more ample quarters than those for which a working barrister now-a-days pays a preposterous sum. Such a man was tenant of a 'set of rooms' (several rooms, although called 'a chamber') which, under the present system, accommodates a small colony of industrious 'juniors' with one office and a clerk's room attached. Married ladies, who have lived in Paris or Vienna, in the 'old town' of Edinburgh, or Victoria Street, Westminster, need no assurance that life 'on a flat' is not an altogether deplorable state of existence. The young couple in chambers had six rooms at their disposal,—a chamber for business, a parlor, not unfrequently a drawing-room, and a trim, compact little kitchen. Sometimes they had two 'sets of rooms,' one above another; in which case the young wife could have her bridesmaids to stay with her, or could offer a bed to a friend from the country. Occasionally during the last fifty years of the last century, they were so fortunate as to get possession of a small detached house, originally built by a nervous bencher, who disliked the sound of footsteps on the stairs outside his door. Time was when the Inns comprised numerous detached houses, some of them snug dwellings, and others imposing mansions, wherein great dignitaries lived with proper ostentation. Most of them have been pulled down, and their sites covered with collegiate 'buildings;' but a few of them still remain, the grand piles having long since been partitioned off into chambers, and the little houses striking the eye as quaint, misplaced, insignificant blocks of human habitation. Under the trees of Gray's Inn gardens may be seen two modest tenements, each of them comprising some six or eight rooms and a vestibule. At the present time they are occupied as offices by legal practitioners, and many a day has passed since womanly taste decorated their windows with flowers and muslin curtains; but a certain venerable gentleman, to whom the writer of this page is indebted for much information about the lawyers of the last century, can remember when each of those cottages was inhabited by a barrister, his young wife, and three or four lovely children. Into some such a house near Lincoln's Inn, a young lawyer who was destined to hold the seals for many years, and be also the father of a Lord Chancellor, married in the year of our Lord,

1718. His name was Philip Yorke: and though he was of humble birth, he had made such a figure in his profession that great men's doors, were open to him. He was asked to dinner by learned judges, and invited to balls by their ladies. In Chancery Lane, at the house of Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, he met Mrs. Lygon, a beautiful and wealthy widow, whose father was a country squire, and whose mother was the sister of the great Lord Somers. In fact, she was a lady of such birth, position, and jointure, that the young lawyer—rising man though he was—seemed a poor match for her. The lady's family thought so; and if Sir Joseph Jekyll had not cordially supported the suitor with a letter of recommendation, her father would have rejected him as a man too humble in rank and fortune. Having won the lady and married her, Mr. Philip Yorke brought her home to a 'very small house' near Lincoln's Inn; and in that lowly dwelling, the ground-floor of which was the barrister's office, they spent the first years of their wedded life. What would be said of the rising barrister who, now-a-days, on his marriage with a rich squire's rich daughter and a peer's niece, should propose to set up his household gods in a tiny crib just outside Lincoln's Inn gate, and to use the parlor of the 'very small house' for professional purposes? Far from being guilty of unseemly parsimony in this arrangement, Philip Yorke paid proper consideration to his wife's social advantages, in taking her to a separate house. His contemporaries amongst the junior bar would have felt no astonishment if he had fitted up a set of chambers for his wealthy and well-descended bride. Not merely in his day, but for long years afterward, lawyers of gentle birth and comfortable means, who married women scarcely if at all inferior to Mrs. Yorke in social condition, lived upon the flats of Lincoln's Inn and the Temple.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAST OF THE LADIES.

Whatever its drawbacks, the system which encouraged the young barrister to marry on a modest income, and make his wife 'happy in chambers,' must have had special advantages. In their Inn the husband was near every source of diversion for which he greatly cared, and the wife was surrounded by the friends of either sex in whose society she took most pleasure—friends who, like herself, 'lived in

the Inn,' or in one of the immediately adjacent streets. In 'hall' he dined and drank wine with his professional compeers and the wits of the bar: the 'library' supplied him not only with law books, but with poems and dramas, with merry trifles written for the stage, and satires fresh from the Row; 'the chapel'—or if he were a Templar, 'the church'—was his habitual place of worship, where there were sittings for his wife and children as well as for himself; on the walks and under the shady trees of 'the garden' he sauntered with his own, or, better still, a friend's wife, criticising the passers, describing the new comedy, or talking over the last ball given by a judge's lady. At times those gardens were pervaded by the calm of collegiate seclusion, but on 'open days' they were brisk with life. The women and children of the legal colony walked in them daily; the ladies attired in their newest fashions, and the children running with musical riot over lawns and paths. Nor were the grounds mere places of resort for lawyers and their families. Taking rank amongst the pleasant places of the metropolis, they attracted, on 'open days,' crowds from every quarter of the town—ladies and gallants from Soho Square and St. James's Street, from Whitehall and Westminster; sightseers from the country and gorgeous alderwomic dowagers from Cheapside. From the days of Elizabeth till the middle, indeed till the close, of the eighteenth century the ornamental grounds of the four great Inns were places of fashionable promenade, where the rank and talent and beauty of the town assembled for display and exercise, even as in our own time they assemble (less universally) in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens.

When ladies and children had withdrawn, the quietude of the gardens lured from their chambers scholars and poets, who under murmuring branches pondered the results of past study, or planned new works. Ben Jonson was accustomed to saunter beneath the elms of Lincoln's Inn; and Steele—alike on 'open' and 'close' days—used to frequent the gardens of the same society. "I went," he writes in May, 1809, "into Lincoln's Inn Walks, and having taking a round or two, I sat down, according to the allowed familiarity of these places, on a bench." In the following November he alludes to the privilege that he enjoyed of walking there as "a favor that is indulged me by several of the benchers, who are very intimate friends, and grown in the neighborhood."

But though on certain days, and under fixed regulations, the outside public were admitted to the college gardens, the assemblages were always pervaded by the tone and humor of the law. The courtiers and grand ladies from 'the west' felt themselves the guests of the lawyers; and the humbler folk, who by special grant had acquired the privilege of entry, or whose decent attire and aspect satisfied the janitors of their respectability, moved about with watchfulness and gravity, surveying the counsellors and their ladies with admiring eyes, and extolling the benchers whose benevolence permitted simple tradespeople to take the air side by side with 'the quality.' In 1736, James Ralph, in his 'New Critical Review of the Publick Buildings,' wrote about the square and gardens of Lincoln's Inn in a manner which testifies to the respectful gratitude of the public for the liberality which permitted all outwardly decent persons to walk in the grounds. "I may safely add," he says, "that no area anywhere is kept in better order, either for cleanliness and beauty by day, or illumination by night; the fountain in the middle is a very pretty decoration, and if it was still kept playing, as it was some years ago, 'twould preserve its name with more propriety." In his remarks on the chapel the guide observes, "The raising this chapel on pillars affords a pleasing, melancholy walk underneath, and by night, particularly, when illuminated by the lamps, it has an effect that may be felt, but not described." Of the gardens Mr. Ralph could not speak in high praise, for they were ill-arranged and not so carefully kept as the square; but he observes, "they are convenient; and considering their situation cannot be esteemed to much. There is something hospitable in laying them open to public use; and while we share in their pleasures, we have no title to arraign their taste."

The chief attraction of Lincoln's Inn gardens, apart from its beautiful trees, was for many years the terrace overlooking 'the Fields,' which was made *temp.* Car. II. at the cost of nearly £1000. Dugdale, speaking of the recent improvements of the Inn, says, "And the last was the enlargement of their garden, beautifying with a large tarras walk on the west side thereof, and raising the wall higher towards Lincoln's Inne Fields, which was done in An. 1663 (15 Car. II.), the charge thereof amounting to a little less than a thousand pounds, by reason that the levelling of most part of the ground, and raising the

tarras, required such great labor." A portion of this terrace, and some of the old trees, were destroyed to make room for the new dining-hall.

The old system supplied the barrister with other sources of recreation. Within a stone's throw of his residence was the hotel where his club had its weekly meeting. Either in hall, or with his family, or at a tavern near 'the courts,' it was his use, until a comparatively recent date, to dine in the middle of the day, and work again after the meal. Courts sat after dinner as well as before; and it was observable that counsellors spoke far better when they were full of wine and venison than when they stated the case in the earlier part of the day. But in the evening the system told especially in the barrister's favor. All his many friends lying within a small circle, he had an abundance of congenial society. Brother-circuiteers came to his wife's drawing-room for tea and chat, coffee and cards. There was a substantial supper at half-past eight or nine for such guests (supper cooked in my lady's little kitchen, or supplied by the 'Society's cook'); and the smoking dishes were accompanied by foaming tankards of ale or porter, and followed by superb and richly aromatic bowls of punch. On occasions when the learned man worked hard and shut out visitors by sporting his oak, he enjoyed privacy as unbroken and complete as that of any library in Kensington or Tyburnia. If friends stayed away, and he wished for diversion, he could run into the chambers of old college-chums, or with his wife's gracious permission could spend an hour at Chatelin's or Nando's, or any other coffeehouse in vogue with members of his profession. During festive seasons, when the judges' and leaders' ladies gave their grand balls, the young couple needed no carriage for visiting purposes. From Gray's Inn to the Temple they walked—if the weather was fine. When it rained they hailed a hackney-coach, or my lady was popped into a sedan and carried by running bearers to the frolic of the hour.

Of course the notes of the preceding paragraphs of this chapter are but suggestions as to the mode in which the artistic reader must call up the life of the old lawyers. Encouraging him to realize the manners and usages of several centuries, not of a single generation, they do not attempt to entertain the student with details. It is needless to say that the young couple did not use hackney-coaches in

times prior to the introduction of those serviceable vehicles, and that until sedans were invented my lady never used them.

It is possible, indeed it is certain, that married ladies living in chambers occasionally had for neighbors on the same staircase women whom they regarded with abhorrence. Sometimes it happened that a dissolute barrister introduced to his rooms a woman more beautiful than virtuous, whom he had not married, though he called her his wife. People can no more choose their neighbors in a house broken up into sets of chambers, than they can choose them in the street. But the cases where ladies were daily liable to meet an offensive neighbor on their common staircase were comparatively rare; and when the annoyance actually occurred, the discipline of the Inn afforded a remedy.

Uncleanness too often lurked within the camp, but it veiled its face; and though in rare cases the error and sin of a powerful lawyer may have been notorious, the preccant man was careful to surround himself with such an appearance of respectability that society should easily feign ignorance of his offence. An Elizabethan distich—familiar to all barristers, but too rudely worded for insertion in this page—informs us that in the sixteenth century Gray's Inn had an unenviable notoriety amongst legal hospices for the shamelessness of its female inmates. But the pungent lines must be regarded as a satire aimed at certain exceptional members, rather than as a vivacious picture of the general tone of morals in the society. Anyhow the fact that Gray's Inn [1] was alone designated as a home for infamy—whilst the Inner Temple was pointed to as the hospice most popular with rich men, the Middle Temple as the society frequented by Templars of narrow means, and Lincoln's Inn as the abode of gentlemen—is, of itself, a proof that the pervading manners of the last three institutions were outwardly decorous. Under the least favorable circumstances, a barrister's wife living in chambers, within or near Lincoln's Inn, or the Temple, during Charles II.'s reign, fared as well in this respect as she would have done had Fortune made her a lady-in-waiting at Whitehall.

A good story is told of certain visits paid to William Murray's chambers at No. 5, King's Bench Walk Temple, in the year 1738. Born in 1705, Murray was still a young man when in 1738 he made

his brilliant speech in behalf of Colonel Sloper, against whom Colley Cibber's rascally son had brought an action for *crim. con.* with his wife—the lovely actress who was the rival of Mrs. Clive. Amongst the many clients who were drawn to Murray by that speech, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, was neither the least powerful nor the least distinguished. Her grace began by sending the rising advocate a general retainer, with a fee of a thousand guineas; of which sum he accepted only the two-hundredth part, explaining to the astonished duchess that "the professional fee, with a general retainer, could neither be less nor more than five guineas." If Murray had accepted the whole sum he would not have been overpaid for his trouble; for her grace persecuted him with calls at most unseasonable hours. On one occasion, returning to his chambers after "drinking champagne with the wits," he found the duchess's carriage and attendants on King's Bench Walk. A numerous crowd of footmen and link-bearers surrounded the coach; and when the barrister entered his chambers he encountered the mistress of that army of lackeys. "Young man," exclaimed the grand lady, eyeing the future Lord Mansfield with a look of warm displeasure, "if you mean to rise in the world, you must not sup out." On a subsequent night Sarah of Marlborough called without appointment at the same chambers, and waited till past midnight in the hope that she would see the lawyer ere she went to bed. But Murray being at an unusually late supper-party, did not return till her grace had departed in an over-powering rage. "I could not make out, sir, who she was," said Murray's clerk, describing her grace's appearance and manner, "for she would not tell me her name; *but she swore so dreadfully that I am sure she must be a lady of quality.*"

Perhaps the Inns of Court may still shelter a few married ladies, who either from love of old-world ways, or from stern necessity, consent to dwell in their husbands' chambers. If such ladies can at the present time be found, the writer of this page would look for them in Gray's Inn—that straggling caravansary for the reception of money-lenders, Bohemians, and eccentric gentlemen—rather than in the other three Inns of Court, which have undoubtedly quite lost their old population of lady-residents. But from those three hospices the last of the ladies must have retreated at a comparatively recent date. Fifteen years since, when the writer of this book was a beard-