

HUMOURS OF THE LAW.

"a purse-milking nation, a clamorous company, gowned vultures, thieves, and seminaries of discord . . . irreligious harpies, ramping, griping catchpoles," and have dipped their pens into the same gall and rung the changes upon Burton's phrases. Who can say how many of those who threw so much vinegar into their remarks had reason to remember the heavy hands of the servants and ministers of justice—the queen of all virtues—whom they so abused?

Mr. Browne has produced a book of elegant extracts, and, with the aid of his publishers, an elegant book of elegant extracts. At times he introduces the quotation with such words as may be necessary to enable the reader the better to appreciate it, and sometimes adds notes of illustration, suggestion or protest. He quotes Aristophanes, Terence, Ammianus, Marcellinus, Juvenal, Horace, Martial, and others of the ancients; Quevedo from among the Spaniards; Montaigne, Napoleon, LaFontaine, and others of the writers of France, while he takes tribute from over a hundred of the chief authors of England and America. We are favoured with poetry and prose, and translations both from and in these two great divisions of literature.

In his eight chapters Mr. B. gives us the views of, i. the dramatists; ii. the novelists; iii. the moralists, essayists, historians, and satirists; iv. the poets; and v. the epigrammatists. Then we have, vi. songs, odes, and burlesques; vii. curious imaginary trials; and lastly, viii. something about law clerks and students.

Our author does not quote from Shakespeare, believing that every one knows his bard of Avon as well as Macaulay did his kings of England, (an erroneous supposition we fear), and instead of the trial scene in the Merchant of Venice we have a clever burlesque of it by Mr. Esek Cowen, of Troy, N.Y. *Apropos* of Dickens, another member of the Trojan bar gives an account of the "proceedings and resolutions of the attorneys and solicitors of London upon the death of

Sampson Brass, Esq., late of Bevismarks." When referring to the suggestion of Cowper, that law reports should be in rhyme, as thereby they would be more likely to be remembered, he quotes the poet as saying, "and, lastly, they would, by this means, be rendered susceptible of musical embellishments, which . . . could not fail to disperse that heavy atmosphere of sadness and gravity which hangs over the jurisprudence of our country;" and then our author cleverly shows how the technical machinery of the law might be made to conform to such a state of things: "In choosing the key, judgments upon the rights of infants would be set in the *minor*, and courts-martial would be conducted in the *major*. Causes involving small amounts of money should be dashed off in a *presto* movement; but large estates, especially where the costs come out of the fund, should be inquired into at the deliberate pace of an *adagio*. Personal actions, such as slander, assault and battery, and particularly breach of promise of marriage, ought to be treated in *fluts*. Musical terms might be used to describe legal process and remedies. For instance, an order appointing a receiver might appropriately be indicated by a *bold*; a stay of proceedings by a *rest*; an order of arrest by a *slur*; while a re-argument might properly be called a *repeat* or *da capo*—back to the beginning. The fund in litigation would generally be *diminuendo*, and the costs *crescendo*—to the end. The course of some litigations, in which one judge enjoins another, would be described by a passage full of *accidentals*. Famous music already written could be adapted to the necessities of the law. Thus an argument on the law of descent could well be illustrated by the music of the opera of 'Orpheus'; a trial for murder by poisoning could be preluded by the strains of 'Lucretia Borgia'; a bill of discovery would be adequately set to an air from 'La Somnambula,' in which groping in sleep and darkness is so thrillingly described; those pleas of insanity which inevitably accompany