

LORD ABINGER AND THE NORTHERN CIRCUIT—CURIOSITIES OF ENGLISH LAW.

assigned to different leaders of the circuit. One of them, "by Mr. Brougham," is—

"The case, my lords, is closed but ponder well—
For, if you don't, I'll pitch you all to h—l."

Another "by Mr. Holt," is—

"The gods decide against me—stupid boobies!
I'll have a writ of error *coram nobis*."

A capital eclogue, written by the late John Leycester Adolphus, was read out by the Attorney-General at Liverpool in 1839. It was assumed to have been spoken by Sir Gregory Lewin and Joseph Addison, both well-known members of the circuit. The scene is the banks of Windermere, and the time sunset. We have only space for a few couplets—

ADDISON.

How sweet, fair Windermere, thy waveless coast!
'Tis like a goodly issue well engrossed.

LEWIN.

How sweet this harmony of earth and sky!
'Tis like a well concerted *alibi*.

ADDISON.

Pleas of the court are coarse and spoil one's tact,
Barren of fees and savouring of fact.

LEWIN.

Your pleas are cobwebs, narrower or wider.
That sometimes catch the fly, sometimes the spider.

ADDISON.

Thoughts much too deep for tears subdue the court,
When I *assumpsit* bring, and godlike waive the *tort*.

LEWIN.

Tell me the difference first—'tis thought immense—
Betwixt a naked lie and false pretence

ADDISON.

Change we the venue, Knight—your tones bewitch;
But too much pudding chokes, however rich.
Enough! enough! and surplussage the rest;
The sun no more "gives colour" to the west.
And one by one the pleasure-boats forsake
Yon land with water covered called a lake.
'Tis supper-time—the fun is somewhat far
Dense are the dews, though bright the evening star,
And wightman might drop in, and eat our char.

The two swains were congratulated in one guinea each on their success in buccolic poetry.

At the grand Court at York, held in March 1849, the theme of the Attorney-General's wit was the difficulty felt by the Lord Chancellor in deciding upon the numerous claims for a silk gown made by leaders of the Northern Circuit. Some, of course, were disappointed, and amongst others, Ingham, who was said to have suddenly disappeared; and on the door of his chambers in the temple was found, written in chalk, the following epitaph:—

"The Chancellor he did me bilk;
He said, 'No!' when I asked for silk.
Enquire within for Robert Ingham,
Who lies interred in stuff and gingham."

SELECTIONS.

CURIOSITIES OF ENGLISH LAW.

RELIEF AGAINST PENALTIES AND FORFEITURES.

If Sir Samuel Romilly had lived in these days he might perhaps have modified the contemptuous opinion he held of the capacity of Lord Chancellors in the matter of Law Reform. Law Reform has of late been in the ascendant. To have "views" on that subject has now become a necessary constituent element of the complete lawyer. Even those treatises which only profess to impart the rudiments of legal knowledge to the youthful student, endeavour, with a courageous disregard of the mere exigencies of examinations, to instil some notion of the law not only as it is, but as it ought to be. We all dabble in Law Reform, from the Lord Chancellor to the Law Student. Whether even in these days the highest legal dignitaries are the most efficient law reformers is a question that may perhaps admit of doubt, but there can be no doubt whatever that Lords Westbury, Cairns, Hatherley, and Selborne, and above all, Lord Justice James, have displayed much zeal in the cause of Law Reform. There is indeed some difference of opinion as to whether the latest manifestations of judicial zeal in that direction have been altogether well considered, but no one can deny that the late sweeping enactments betoken a stirring of ideas in high places that to Lord Eldon and the worthies of fifty years ago would have seemed nothing less than portentous. While the Judicature Acts have effected a great revolution in matters of practice, the changes in substantive law have been few and comparatively unimportant. This is a somewhat anomalous state of things. Much remains to be done in the latter department of Law Reform, and the spirit of the time would seem to afford a favorable opportunity for the discussion of certain doctrines which, although established on what was once considered the firm basis of a long line of decisions, have, as we venture to think, very little except their antiquity to recommend them.

There is, perhaps, no part of our judicial system which has been more often made the subject of panegyric than the