

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

the jury were decidedly of opinion that there had been clear vindictiveness, and assessed the damages at £3,000; the verdict was reversed by the presiding judge who entered judgment for the defendant with costs.

This is a skeleton survey of the details of the case which has set the whole world talking about Mr. Justice Manisty in one tone, which tone is unfavourable to his Lordship. There is no doubt that he has opened himself to the imputation of partiality, and in fact, he has been accused of this failing in more than one quarter. Yet there is not on the whole English Bench a man more scrupulously impartial and laboriously painstaking than Mr. Justice Manisty, and there can be no doubt that he gave his ruling as calmly in the case of Lord Coleridge's son as if the libel had been published by a grocer's assistant. In ordinary cases, too, this practice of allowing the jury to give a verdict before deciding upon the question of privilege may be more or less commended in tending to put a stop to litigation, or rather, to curtail the proceedings in a suit once begun. But Mr. Justice Manisty erred in failing to see that the case was exceptional, and that it was a matter of essential importance to follow the ordinary rules with exceptional rigour. Nor, on the whole, was his conduct of the whole case entirely satisfactory. He was evidently extremely distressed at the character of the circumstances, and it is undoubtedly a sad thing to see the dirty linen of the Lord Chief Justice's family washed in public; but the linen was not, after all was said and done, very dirty, and there is a strong feeling that the presiding judge was not justified in flinging in open court at the plaintiff's head a suggestion that the case should be referred to a private person of eminence for settlement. Mr. Adams preferred the verdict of a jury, and the result shows that his judgment was prudent.

There is apparently a considerable prospect of a reform in the law so far as it affects sentences. For some time past all, except deep-dyed humanitarians, have been complaining that offences against the person are punished far too lightly, unless they are accompanied by robbery. The judges themselves deplore their inability to cope with ruffianism when it is not mercenary; and when assaults are followed by theft the application of the lash has become an almost invariable rule. In addition to this the press clamours that the judges ought to be endowed with a wider discretion in the assignment of punishment, and the public is of the same opinion.

The place amongst the Benchers of the Inner Temple, vacated by the death of Mr. Justice Watkin Williams, is filled by Mr. A. R. Jelf, Q.C., a man who has made for himself a considerable, if not a very great name as a lawyer, and who is also the best of company, which, from the Benchers' point of view, is naturally important. I am not aware that there is any other piece of personal news to be detailed, except that by the death of Judge Longfield the Irish Bar has suffered a loss for which it refuses to be comforted, even by the advent of Mr. Healy, M.P., who has just been called to the Irish Bar amid a flourish of rather small trumpets, any one of which would cost at least a dozen of champagne, if brought home to him at any English circuit mess.

London, November 29th.