

opprobrious epithets. With respect to the case before the dean of Arches, was it necessary, even supposing the thing to be true, that opprobrious terms should be applied to any individual, and that in the course of civil transactions, persons should be aspersed, as happened in the case in question? No man could wish such offences to pass with impunity.

Sir *J. Nicholl* said, in the case alluded to, a lady had been called a common whore and a strumpet at more than one meeting, and she was proved by witnesses to be of good character.

Sir *S. Romilly* thought very considerable improvement necessary, or rather loudly called for, in the present state of the ecclesiastical law. The law was, in fact, such that the judge, however correct his intentions, must pronounce an exceptionable decision; for if any man should venture to describe a woman as she deserved, and as it might become necessary too (for instance in a case of bankruptcy, where the prodigality of an improper woman might be the cause of that bankruptcy) the person so describing her would be liable to the visitation of the ecclesiastical law for defamation, and it would avail nothing to the accused to prove, or be able to prove, the justice of the accusation. In fact, the justification of the judge in these cases consisted in the condemnation of the law; but the inquiry in such cases ought, in his opinion, to be sent to a jury, as was the practice in certain cases in the court of Chancery; or rather he should think it a great improvement to take away altogether the jurisdiction of spiritual courts in cases of defamation. Indeed, the expence attending the progress of such cases in these courts was such as to justify this proposition. The hon. and learned gentleman concluded with declaring his intention to move, upon bringing up the Report, that certain qualifications should be granted to judges in the Consistory court, with regard to the power of referring facts to the investigation of a jury, and also that the time for bringing actions in the ecclesiastical courts should be limited.

Mr. *W. Smith* dwelt upon the case of a woman who had been confined eleven years at Nottingham, because she refused to admit that she was not a married woman, which case he had, on a former occasion, mentioned in that House. But the radical fault of the ecclesiastical law was, that the accused must submit to indefinite

punishment, or confess guilt, whether the statement to which the accusation applied were true or false. Thus a court, professedly religious, was professedly indifferent to truth, and often demanded the declaration of a falsehood, as the only means of escaping from punishment.

Mr. *Stephen* vindicated the conduct of the ecclesiastical courts, but confessed that, in his judgment, in all charges of defamation it should be allowed to produce evidence as to the truth of such charges, although he was not prepared to grant impunity to the use of certain terms of abuse against women, whether deserved or not.

The House then resolved itself into a committee, when

Sir *S. Romilly* proposed two new clauses, one enacting that no person should be appointed a judge of any consistorial court, who had not practised as an advocate in the court of Arches, or who, if a barrister, had not practised three years in the courts of Westminster-hall; and the other, that after passing the said Bill no action for tythes should be brought, nor any suit instituted in any civil court unless brought within six years after such tythes should have become due.—Both clauses were agreed to; the Report brought up, and the Bill ordered to be read a third time to-morrow.

REPORT ON THE ACTS RESPECTING COPYRIGHT.] Mr. *Davies Giddy* presented the following

REPORT.

The COMMITTEE appointed to examine several Acts passed in the 8th year of Queen Anne, and in the 15th and 41st years of his present Majesty, for the encouragement of Learning, by vesting the Copies of printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies, and for other purposes therein mentioned; and to report, whether any and what Alterations are requisite to be made therein, together with their Observations thereon, to the House;—

“Have, pursuant to the order of the House, proceeded to consider the said Acts; and have received various statements, and examined several persons connected with the printing, the publishing, or with the sale of books; and after much attention bestowed on the subject, they beg leave to observe,—

“That although great changes have taken place in the literary systems of this country, since the first of the laws referred to them was enacted, on which the others depend; yet they conceive that the substance of those laws is proper to be retained; and in particular that, continuing the delivery of all new works, and in certain cases of subsequent editions, to the libraries now entitled to receive them, will tend to the advancement of learning, and to the diffusion of knowledge, without imposing any considerable burden on the authors, printers, or publishers of such works. But that it will be expedient to modify some of the existing provisions,—As to the quality of the paper, which may fairly be reduced from the finest sort and largest size, to that used in the greater part of an edition;—by substituting a delivery on demand, after due and proper notice has been given of the publication, to a distribution in the first instance:—and by affording an alternative with respect to subsequent editions in certain cases.

“Your Committee would however suggest one exception to these rules, in favor of the British Museum; this national establishment, augmenting every day in utility and importance, ought, in the opinion of your Committee, to be furnished with every publication that issues from the press, in its most splendid form.

“Having presumed to advise certain regulations with the view of lightening as much as possible the pressure, whatever may be its amount, on all those connected with the publication of books, your Committee would be wanting in the discharge of their duty, were they not to recommend a strict enforcement of such obligations, as for useful purposes remains to be discharged: by annexing suitable penalties to the neglect of performing them; and perhaps in some cases by adding the forfeiture of copyright.

“The attention of your Committee has naturally been directed to the late decision in the court of King's-bench, ascertaining the true interpretation of the statute of queen Anne; and they find, that, previously to that decision, an universal misapprehension existed as to the real state of the law; and that works were undertaken, and contracts made on the faith of long established usage. Your Committee are fully aware, that in expounding the law, no attention can be paid by courts of justice to the hardships that may incidentally be produced; but it will deserve the

serious deliberation of parliament, whether all retrospective effect should not be taken away from a construction, which might be thought to bear hardly on those who have acted on a different understanding of the law.

“Lastly; your Committee have taken into their consideration, the subject of Copy Right; which extends at present to fourteen years certain, and then to a second period of equal duration, provided the author happens to survive the first. They are inclined to think, that no adequate reason can be given for this contingent reversion, and that a fixed term should be assigned beyond the existing period of fourteen years.”

Ordered to lie on the table.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Friday, June 18.

[EAST INDIA COMPANY'S AFFAIRS.] The Earl of *Buckinghamshire* stated that the Resolutions received from the Commons being now on the table, it was his intention to move on Monday for the House to go into a committee upon them on that day.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* deprecated proceeding upon this most important question, without the requisite information being before the House. He had moved for papers several days ago, the production of which was essential to the right consideration of the question, because their object was to show how far it was practicable for the East India Company to go on by means of the remittances from India without applying to parliament for aid. He trusted, therefore, a delay of a few days would be allowed.

The Earl of *Buckinghamshire* admitted that the papers moved for by the noble earl were of importance, but it was essential that no time should be lost in going into the consideration of this question. He had heard nothing of any intention on the part of the Company to apply to parliament for aid.

Earl *Grey* urged the impropriety of going into the discussion of this question at so late a period of the session, without the requisite information before them, and without the possibility of giving it that due consideration which its great importance demanded. Was this the manner in which a question of such vast importance, involving the commercial interests of the country, the welfare of our posses-