

they were disposed to agree to my offers to purchase them. Only one could write, and at last it was agreed that he should copy the Selim, which copy, and the manuscripts which I had selected, were to be mine in exchange for a fixed sum in dollars, to which I added a present of rice, coffee, tobacco, and such other articles as I had to offer. Future visitors would escape the suspicions with which we were received, and might perhaps hear how warmly we had endeavoured to purchase and carry away the original Selim. Next we visited the Syrian convent, where similar suspicions were at first shown, and were overcome by similar civilities. Here I purchased a few manuscripts with Arabic translations. We then visited the two other convents, but found little of consequence. These manuscripts I presented to Mr. Tattam, and gave him an account of the small room with its trap-door, through which I descended, candle in hand, to examine the manuscripts, where books and parts of books, and scattered leaves, in Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac, and Arabic, were lying in a mass, on which I stood. From this I handed to Mr. Linant such as appeared best suited to my purpose, as he stood in the small room above the trap-door. To appearance it seemed as if on some sudden emergency the whole library had been thrown for security down this trap-door, and that they had remained undisturbed in their dust and neglect for some centuries.

About nine years after the visit of Lord Prudhoe, the Hon. Robert Curzon, jun., who has travelled much in the East to search for manuscripts (with considerable success), and in his travels has met with many curious and interesting adventures, which we could wish were made public, was also a visitor to these monks. We are indebted to him for the following account of his excursion:—

I am sorry to say that I cannot answer your letter in as satisfactory a manner as I could wish, for I have no papers by me here to refer to, and I have forgotten some things about the monasteries on the Natron Lakes which might have been interesting to you. However, as far as I remember, I will tell you. During the winter of 1837 I was in Egypt for the second time, and in the month of January or February I was engaged in a brisk chace after old books, particularly two which I had heard of at Nagadé—one a Coptic History of Egypt, which I had been told at Thebes was in the possession of the Bishop of Nagadé, who was reputed to be a great dealer in magic—the other a Coptic and Arabic Dictionary, said to be the most perfect and largest known. When I arrived at Nagadé, the bishop was in church; but certain men brought me a mat, whereon I sat in the shade of an old wall till the people came out of church, which they presently did, with the bishop at their head. The bishop sat down by me on the mat, and the congregation sat down in a ring; and after a long prologue of compliments, and coffee and pipes, and so on, we entered on the subject of manuscripts. The bishop told me that the Dictionary was gone to the palace of the patriarch at Cairo; and we were talking about the History, when suddenly there arose a great noise in the church, of howling and clanking of chains. We were all silent in consternation—and I expected that the episcopal magician had been raising a spirit;—when the church doors burst open with a crash, and in the dark porch there stood a tall figure in a priest's robe, waving a great brazen censer in his hand. This apparition stalked forward slowly, when I saw he had a heavy chain tied to his legs. He came up and sat down before me on the ground. "Who have you the honor to be?" said I. "Who, pray, are you?" said one of my men. Upon which he turned round and spat in the face of the man who had addressed him. This man, who was a negro, laid his hand upon his sword, when the other sprang upon his feet with a scream, and made a dash at the negro with the censer—a very efficient weapon when properly applied. He missed my man, and broke the censer on the stones. We all started up, and a general rush ensued against the bearer of the censer, who was with some difficulty secured and carried off. He was a son of the bishop; and, being a maniac, had been chained down before the altar of St. George—a sovereign remedy in these cases—only he pulled up the staples of his chain, and so came away with the censer before his cure was completed. But the end of the affair was that the bishop departed in the scuffle, and I heard no more of the History of Egypt. The other volume had been at Cairo, but was gone, when I made enquiries respecting it, to the monastery of Amba-Bishoi at the Natron Lakes. I went after it, and arrived there in the month of March; but although there were many Coptic manuscripts of Liturgies there in a room in a square tower, it was not among them. I then went to another monastery; I think it was called Baramous. There was nothing there but a few Coptic manuscripts on paper, and a prodigious multitude of fleas. I retreated from their attack to the church, where I went to sleep on the marble floor; but I had hardly shut my eyes when I was again attacked by so many of these monsters that I was forced to be off again; so I got up, and watched the moon over the desert till daylight. I then departed for the monastery of the Syrians, where I arrived in a short time. Here was a congregation of black Abyssinian monks, dressed in wash-leather and tallow, who were howling in honor of some Abyssinian saint, in a strange little room at the end of a garden, which was surrounded by the high fortified wall of the monastery. They had a library of which I have shown you a sketch, where the manuscripts hung upon pegs by long straps in a peculiar manner, different from the arrangement of any other library I have ever seen. Besides these black brethren, there were ten or twelve Copts. The superior was blind and very old, with a long white venerable beard, but very dirty. When I inquired for books he showed me the library in a high tower, in a little strong room, with stone niches in the wall. There were some very remarkable Coptic manuscripts—the finest I have ever seen. The latest of them, as I imagine, is that great quarto which you saw at Parham. Two others on vellum were lying on the top of an open pot or jar, of which they had formed the lid. There had been jam or preserves of some sort in the pot, which the books had been used to protect; but they had been there so long that the jam had evaporated, leaving some dubious-looking lumps of dirt at the bottom. I was allowed to take all the manuscripts on vellum, as they were too old to read, and of no use as covers for the vases of preserves. Among a heap of dusty volumes on the floor I found the manuscript Dictionary of which I was in search, but this they would not sell, but they sold me two other imperfect ones, so I put it in one of the niches in the wall, where it remained about two years, when it was purchased and brought away for me by a gentleman at Cairo. You say that Lord Prudhoe fed the monks, and so found the way to their hearts. Now I have found, from much practice, that the two species of Eastern and Western monks may be divided logically into the drinking and the eating kind. A Benedictine or even a Capuchin is a famous hand at a capon, and an oyster pâté or so has great charms for him on a fast-day—*probatum est*; but the monks of St. Basil are ascetics—they know nothing of cookery beyond garlic and red pepper, and such like strong condiments—howbeit they have a leaning to strong drink, and consider rosoglio as a merchandise adapted to their peculiar wants.

The old blind abbot had solemnly declared that there were no more books in the monastery besides those I had seen; but I had

been told by Mr. Linant, the pacha's engineer, who had accompanied Lord Prudhoe, that there were some ancient manuscripts in the oil-cellar. Nevertheless, the abbot denied the fact; but I got him into my room, with another father who always went about with him, and there I gave them some rosoglio which I had brought on purpose. It was very soft stuff I remember, pink, and tasted as sweet and pleasant as if there was no strength in it. They liked it much, and sat sipping figians—that is, coffee-cups—of it with a happy and contented air. When I saw that the face of the blind man waxed unsuspecting and wore a bland expression which he took no pains to conceal—for he could not see, and did not remember that those who could might read his countenance—I entered again upon the subject of the oil-cellar. "There is no oil there," said the old man. "I am curious about the architecture," said I: "I hear your's is a famous oil-cellar." "It is a famous cellar," said the other elder; "and I remember the days when it overflowed with oil. Then there were I do not know how many brethren here, but now we are few and poor; bad times are come over us; we are not what we used to be." This monk having become sentimental, and the abbot unsuspecting, "Well, let us go," said I, "and see this famous cellar, and we will have another bottle when we come back." This last argument prevailed. We went to the oil-cellar, which was under the great tower, and there were some prodigious pots which once held the oil of gladness, but which now sounded hollow and empty to the touch. There was nothing else here; but taking the candle from the hands of one of the brethren—for they had all followed us into this hole like sheep—I found a low door, and passed into a little vaulted room, which was full of loose leaves of Syriac manuscripts more than knee-deep. These are the famous volumes now deposited in the British Museum. Here I fumbled about a long time, and after a good deal of digging I pulled out four books; and two monks, struggling together, pulled out the great manuscript Evangelistarium, which you have seen. It was tied up with a string. "Here is a box," shouted the two monks, who were nearly choked with the dust. "A box!" echoed the blind abbot. "Bring it out—make haste—where is the box? Heaven be praised, it is a treasure." "Yes," screamed all the monks, "a treasure. Allah Akbar—a box—out with it—bring out the box." Out they all rushed with the treasure, and I issued forth into the dark (for they had run away with the candle in their anxiety about the box), with three octavos under one arm, and a quarto under the other. I found no more, except fragments. These I took to my room, and the abbot and the other brother soon came after me for the promised bottle of rosoglio, which they now much wanted to keep up their spirits, when they found the box of treasure to be only a great book. They mumbled and murmured to themselves between their cups; and when they were gradually getting comforted again, I began to say, "You found no box of treasure in the vault; but, behold, I am a lover of old books. Give them to me, and I will give you a certain number of piastres in exchange; and so you will have found a treasure, and I will go my way in gladness." "Ah!" said they, "how much will you give?" "How much do you want?" said I. And so we settled it over the rosoglio, which smoothed many difficulties. The Coptic manuscripts on vellum were ensconced in one side of a great pair of camel-bags. "Now," said I, "I will put these into the other side, and you shall take it out, and help to load the camels." All we could do we could not put all the books in; and the two monks would not let me have any extra parcel lest the other brethren should see it and smell a rat, and claim their share of the spoil—at least I suppose that was their reason. In this extremity I looked at each of the three octavos and the quarto, not knowing which to leave behind. At last, the quarto being imperfect, I left that, and great is my sorrow that I did so, for on looking at the manuscript again, I believe that very quarto is the famous book dated A.D. 411, now the great pride and treasure of the British Museum. However, I am glad that establishment is now possessed of it, and I hope it will be duly made use of. This is all I have to tell you of the manuscripts in the monasteries of the Natron Lakes.

(To be continued.)

Punch.

LEGAL "AT HOMES."
THE LEGAL SOLEFEGGIO.



The greatest excitement has been created in the public, but particularly in the forensic, mind, by the announcement of the intended cultivation of music by the legal profession. Barristers are seen hurrying about with flutes concealed in the folds of their gowns, rolls of music interspersed with their briefs, and fiddles poked into their wig-boxes. Everything in the forensic world wears the aspect of a musical festival. We should not be surprised—as there is a fashion for amateur performances—if we were to hear of a charitable concert having been got up by some of the ornaments of the Bar, upon which occasion some learned Queen's Counsel and others may "kindly consent" to sing certain popular ballads.

"THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL FOR THIS NIGHT ONLY!" would be a tremendous line in a musical programme.

Unfortunately, however, the musical mania has seized chiefly on the briefless, as illness usually exhibits itself first, and rages most furiously in poor neighbourhoods. Several shocking cases have broken out in the "three pairs" all over the Temple. We have heard frightful screams, interspersed with low moanings, issuing from an attic in Hare Court, and frequent bleeding, by a musical attendant, has been copiously resorted to. The patient, it is said, has commenced a course of treatment for his malady—or, as he insanely calls it, his melody—which makes his condition much worse instead of improving it.

We regret to say that the juniors have been seized by scores in the upper districts of the Temple. There were at one time alarming symptoms in Inner Temple Lane, for moanings were distinctly audible; but it turned out to be a temporary attack of "Old Clothes!" which, we are happy to say, got speedily subdued by resorting at once to a regimen of porter.

Nothing is more disagreeable than a singing in the ears, and to this, unless a stop is put to the mischief at once, all the inhabitants of the Temple will be liable. The great difficulty is, how to deal with the malady; for as the patients are chiefly adults, the phlogistic treatment, usually so efficacious in juvenile instances, cannot here be resorted to.

If, however, music is to be cultivated by those members of the profession who have one bar's uninterrupted rest—for want of occupation, either professional or otherwise—we recommend for their own sakes that something profitable should be made of it.

Some time ago we proposed a series of legal evenings, little thinking that such a project might, in consequence of the musical turn taken by the gentlemen of the Bar, become really feasible. We therefore have the pleasure of submitting to those gentlemen whose leisure allows them an opportunity of giving legal entertainments a *la* Matthews, the following programme of an

AT HOME; OR, LAW AND LAUGHTER.

The curtain should rise and discover a table spread over with a green cloth, a decanter of spring water, a couple of lamps, and a variety of blocks for the wigs belonging to the different characters. The forensic performer should then proceed [something in the following fashion:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen—I appear before you this evening as a humble imitator of the late lamented Mr. Matthews, whose Table-Talk some of you may remember, though others may have forgotten. Talking of Mr. Matthews, reminds me that my introduction must be brief; and talking of briefs, suggests to me the first document of that kind I ever received. If you will allow me, I will embody the circumstance in a song; and if you will excuse my stooping down for one moment—(*stoops under the table*)—I shall be able to show you the costume in which I appeared on that memorable occasion. (*He rises in his barrister's wig and gown.*) Here, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am—(*mimicking*)—Gentlemen of the Jury—a-hem—(*strikes up the following song*):—

As in my chambers, all alone,
At silent eve I sat,
Indulging a despairing groan,
I heard a rat-tat-tat.
I started up—I wiped my eye;
I would not show my grief.
What do I see—what do I spy?—
A client with a brief.
I seize it in my eager hand;
He bids me look within,
That I may shortly understand
The cause I faint must win.
I did so—how my lips I bit,
With rage, despair, and grief?—
There was a copy of a writ
Folded inside the brief!

"This little anecdote, though simple in itself, illustrates, to a very great extent, the truth of some remarks that are commonly made upon the ungentlemanly conduct of a certain portion of the profession.

"Some years ago, in the infancy of my professional career, when every guinea was of consequence, I had reason to be deceived in an early client. The first shock the feelings receive in law is as potent as the original rebuff they experience in love. I had plighted my professional faith to this client: I had in fact—though I know I am risking my reputation for professional correctness in this avowal, for nobody else does it—oh, no!—nobody else, of course—I had, in fact, permitted my clerk, the ever-memorable Thompson—of whom more anon—to keep an account with him. One evening I was sitting in silent melancholy at my chambers, pondering over the vanity of human wishes, and other little matters to which I am in the habit of devoting my leisure hours, when a knock came at the door, to which my heart responded by a gentle palpitation. I heard the voice of the 'false client,' tendering a brief. I rushed forward, and seizing that precious lyre which had been the solace of so many briefless hours, I struck up the following strain, into which I threw alternate bursts of pathos and indignation, though I must confess the latter was very likely to predominate. It is arranged to the beautiful air of—

'TAKE BACK THY GIFT.'

Take back thy brief: it is a token
Of many a still-unsettled fee;
And since your word is long since broken,
Thy brief's not worth one rap to me.
Though once I thought with life alone
Brought business to restore,
Oh take it back, for now, I own,
You lumbung me no more.—
Take back thy brief,

[Spoken.—Thompson, give it him back immediately.]

For now, I own,
You lumbung me no more."

The above is a short specimen of such an entertainment as we propose to write for any forensic vocalist who has the gift of telling anecdotes, as well as the happy accomplishment of singing songs. Further particulars may be known on application at the *Punch* Office.

NAVAL INTELLIGENCE.

Great alterations have been made in the uniforms of the Navy, such alterations having been duly gazetted. The senior officers are to have all sorts of epaulettes, gold loops, and gold lace. Really this is giving the enemy a premium to fight with additional courage; for a line-of-battle-ship will now be made doubly valuable by the bullion of her officers. To be sure, they will have an added sense of property about them, and fight accordingly; hence, should there be an American war (which there will not), the carnage will be dreadful. A very capital improvement has been made in the midshipmen's uniforms—though no account of it has been published. They are, however, to have the number of years they may have passed for lieutenants, every year worked in white worsted in their collars, in order to refresh the memory of any visiting Lord of the Admiralty.

A VERY CLOSE SHOT.

Paris has not yet illuminated in celebration of the glad event, but it is now certain that, at last, the French have killed Abd-el-Kader's—horse. Thus, campaign after campaign, they are getting closer to the Emir. In another seven years, we may now fairly expect that they will kill Abd-el-Kader himself! So far, however, it is very encouraging to have shot his grey horse.

EFFECTS OF FRIGHT.

The Peers have resolved, at a meeting of the Clarendon, to oppose by every means the progress of the Corn-Law Bill. The British Lion is so frightened that he has sent to Van Amburgh, applying for a situation.

Music and Musicians.

MR. RAVAC'S CONCERT.

The second Concert under the direction of this distinguished violinist, took place at the Old Court House, on Wednesday evening last; and though the company was more numerous than on the first night, yet it fell very far short of what was anticipated, as many objections were made on the former occasion to attending the City Theatre. The pleasing variety of performances on the present occasion appeared to give very general satisfaction; but the great lion of the evening was Mr. Ravac, whose brilliant performances on the violin drew forth the most enthusiastic applause from all parts of the room. We still hope to see much better attendance as his fame gets spread abroad, which it evidently must do, from the enthusiasm which manifested itself on Wednesday evening. The great press of other matter prevents our going more fully into detail in the present number.

