

THE PROMOTION OF LORD CAIRNS.

Government; his chief opponent was Lord Selborne, and the battle, therefore, was one of giants. If the issue was determined, as such issues commonly are, under a system of party government, by numbers quite as much as by argument, the contest between the two leading disputants was yet a keen and close one, and Lord Cairns showed throughout an unusually protracted address the courage of a statesman and the acumen of a consummate lawyer. It is both natural and according to precedent that when a great policy has been brought to a successful issue the national approval should find expression in the honours which are the proper and usual reward of statesmen. Every one will rejoice, therefore, that a proper meed of public approbation should fall to the share of the Lord Chancellor. He has fairly won his honours, and we must hope that he may long be spared to enjoy them.

The career of a great lawyer almost necessarily divides itself into two distinct parts, and the early brilliancy of the advocate is often eclipsed in the mature fame of the judge. It is well known that when Brougham first became Lord Chancellor he considered himself to have suffered in political prospects as well as in personal fortune by his enforced retirement from the Bar. It may have been in part owing to his premature promotion, as well as to temperament, that he never quite succeeded in sinking the advocate in the judge, nor the politician in the statesman. There has been no such abrupt solution of continuity in the career of Lord Cairns. He was elevated to the Bench and subsequently to the Woolsack, not so much for political reasons as on grounds of personal fitness, universally acknowledged without distinction of party. It hardly needs to be said that he had served his party ably and faithfully in Parliament; but it may be added that he had won the esteem of his opponents and the confidence of the public by his judicial temper and sagacity long before he quitted the Bar for the Bench. It is so long since he first became a Judge, that men have almost had time to forget his earlier career at the Bar and as a member of the House of Commons. They will recollect, however,

that no lawyer on either side was more highly esteemed than Sir Hugh Cairns; and if the fame of the Lord Chancellor has surpassed that of the former Solicitor and Attorney-General, it is not so much because the latter was insignificant as because Lord Cairns has continued to advance in public esteem. As Lord Chancellor in two Administrations he has more than fulfilled the promise of his earlier career, and his services both to his profession and to the State are fitly rewarded by his advancement to the rank of an earl.

The promotion of a Lord Chancellor to the higher ranks of the peerage is by no means a matter of course. From the Revolution in 1688 down to the year 1850 there were eighteen Lord Chancellors, several of whom held office more than once. But of these only eight in all became earls, and only seven by actual creation. The great Lord Somers, whom Horace Walpole described as "one of those divine men who, like a chapel in a palace, remain unprofaned while all the rest is tyranny, corruption, and folly," never became an earl, though the title was subsequently acquired by his descendants of a collateral branch. He was succeeded by Lord Cowper, who was created an earl in 1718. Lord Chancellor Harcourt only achieved the rank of viscount. Parker, the last Lord Chancellor who was impeached, became Earl of Macclesfield in 1721. Philip Yorke, who was Lord Chancellor from 1737 to 1756, was created Earl of Hardwicke in consideration of his long service to the State. "He valued himself," says Lord Chesterfield, "more upon being a great Minister of State, which he certainly was not, than upon being a great Chancellor, which he certainly was." But he was a man of great sagacity and uprightness, and, as another of his contemporaries said of him, when he rose in debate it seemed like public wisdom speaking. He was succeeded by Lord Henley, who ultimately became Earl of Northington. The mediocre Bathurst, who owed his promotion chiefly to his respectable mediocrity, became an earl by succession, not by creation. Like his successor, Lord Thurlow, he had to smart under the caustic sarcasm of the incorrigible John