

holiday, which he usually spent in the hunting-field. The long vacation generally found him on the moors of Scotland. After his elevation to the bench it was again in the interest of his health that he took up his residence at Bournemouth, and it is well known that the same consideration made it necessary for him to resign the Conservative leadership in the House of Lords. As a compensation for this lifelong drawback his powers matured quickly and his opportunities came early. He was a Queen's Counsel at the age of thirty-seven, and Her Majesty's Solicitor-General before he was forty.

The place which history will assign to Lord Cairns will probably be that of the greatest lawyer on the English bench of his generation. The late Mr. Benjamin, whose capacity for passing a judgment and impartiality in the matter will not be questioned, pronounced Lord Cairns the greatest lawyer before whom he had ever argued a case, and Lord Bramwell is known to have a very high estimate of his powers. The attribute in which Lord Cairns excelled was lucidity. The most complex legal problem presented no difficulty to him, and it passed out of his hands placed by his mere statement in so simple and clear a light that the wonder was why there could ever have been any difficulty about it. Readers of his judgments are like those who look for the first time on a simple mechanical contrivance producing great results :—

The invention all admire, and each, how he  
To be the inventor missed ; so easy it seemed  
Once found, which yet unfound most would have  
thought  
Impossible.

Lord Cairns made no display of a depth of reading like that of a Willes or a Blackburn, although he was far from deficient in learning. Case-law a man of his powers could afford to despise, and even when at the bar he was in the habit of citing no cases until he had exhausted the principles of the argument, when he would mention the names of the authorities illustrating his proposition. Much of the logical precision which distinguished him in the statement of legal propositions was due to the fact that, in the chambers of the late Mr. Thomas Chitty, at

I King's Bench Walk, he was well grounded in the practice of common law pleading, a training of which students at the present day are unfortunately deprived. Lord Cairns on the bench was not like the late Sir George Jessel, fond of bringing his own individuality to the front, or of exposing in his judgments the processes by which he arrived at them. In delivering judgment, he was like an embodiment of the voice of the law, cold and impersonal, and suggested an intellectual machine upon which no sophism could make any impression, and which stamped the seal of the law upon what was obviously reasonable and just. Perhaps Lord Westbury was his equal in penetration and in clearness of expression ; but either from his matter or his manner he did not carry the same inexorable conviction. An example of the high estimate he had of the dignity of judicial proceedings was supplied at the time of the addition of the lords of appeal to the House of Lords. One of the new lords of appeal had acquired in a Court, in which speed was considered rather than orderliness, the habit of interrupting the arguments by questions in the nature of "posers." On his reverting to this habit in the House of Lords, Lord Cairns interposed from the woosack before the question could be answered, with the words : "I think the House is desirous of hearing the argument of counsel and not of putting questions to him." The interposition was made by Lord Cairns in a voice not musical, like that of the late Chief Justice Cockburn, but possessing with his the quality that it could not be gainsaid. Lord Cairns is said to have had no humour, but it was rather that he did not show it on the bench, where he considered it out of place. On occasion he could use all the weapons of rhetoric in Parliament, and when anything occurred to melt his cold, impassive exterior, he showed that the true fire of the orator was within him, but usually repressed. It is remarkable, but not unprecedented, that a man who succeeded so admirably as a speaker should have begun with a constitutional diffidence. So impressed was he with his deficiency in nerve, that at the beginning of his career at Lincoln's Inn he considered himself fit only for chamber practice, and actually for some