

CHIEF JUSTICE COCKBURN.

him prominently into the notice, not only of his own nation, but of Europe and America. Not the greatest and not the noblest of the many eminent men who have occupied the seat of Holt and Mansfield, he will probably be known in history as second only to those great light-bearers of British law and justice, though his talents were of a different order, and of a character less lasting in their force.

Sir Alexander Cockburn was born on the 24th December, 1802. His father was in the diplomatic service, and his mother was the daughter of the Vicomte de Vignier. He was descended from a Scotch family of antiquity; his ancestor, Sir William Cockburn, obtained a grant of the lands and barony of Langton, in 1595, and his family held lands of the Crown as far back as the time of David II of Scotland. He obtained distinction as a classical scholar at Cambridge; and, in after life, when presiding at the Tichborne trial, it is said that an application for a card of admission which had been made to him in vain, in English, was granted immediately, when it was repeated in classic Greek.

Mr. Cockburn was a member of the Middle Temple, and was called to the Bar in 1829, and went the Western Circuit and Devon Sessions. He subsequently acquired a large practice in London in railway and election cases. Although he did his best for his clients, he was careful that they should do their duty by him, and the story is told that on one occasion, when an election committee met, Mr. Cockburn, the counsel for one of the parties, was absent because his fee had not accompanied the brief, and the only message left was that he had gone to the Derby, with the remark that "a man might as well play for nothing as work for nothing."

In 1847 Mr. Cockburn entered Parliament, as a Liberal, and proved himself a debater of great oratorical powers. Justin McCarthy, in his interesting "History of our Own Times," thus refers to the famous speech delivered in 1850, which induced Sir John

Russell to make him his Solicitor-General:

"Of many fine speeches, made during this brilliant debate, we must notice one in particular. It was that of Mr. Cockburn, then member for Southampton. Never in our time has a reputation been more suddenly, completely, and deservedly made than Mr. Cockburn won by his brilliant display of ingenious argument and stirring words. The manner of the speaker lent additional effect to his clever and captivating eloquence. He had a clear, sweet, penetrating voice, a fluency that seemed so easy as to make listeners sometimes fancy that it ought to cost no effort, and a grace of gesture such as it must be owned the courts of law, where he had had his training, do not often teach us. Mr. Cobden observed that when Mr. Cockburn had concluded his speech, 'one half of the Treasury benches were left empty, while honorable members ran after one another, tumbling over each other in their haste to shake hands with the honorable and learned member.' Mr. Cockburn's career was safe from that hour. It is needless to say that he well upheld in after years the reputation he won in a night."

In 1851, on the elevation of Sir John Romilly to the Bench, he was appointed Attorney General. He was engaged in many important trials, among which may be named the libel case of *Achilli v. Newman*, the celebrated *Swinfen* case, in which the proceedings were stayed by an agreement made between the counsel, Sir F. Thesiger and Sir Alexander Cockburn, for a certain sum, in defiance, as was alleged, of the instructions to the latter by his client. In the well-known *Rugely poisoning* case, Sir Alexander acted for the prosecution, and the prisoner, Dr. Palmer, was found guilty and executed.

In 1856 Sir Alexander Cockburn was made Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in the room of Sir John Jervis; and, on 24th June, 1859, he became Chief Justice of England, on Lord Campbell's becoming Lord Chancellor. His career on the Bench is thus alluded to in the English *Law Journal*.