

## THE LORD CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND.

was asserted that a Mr. Wilde, when registrar of this court, was called upon to resign his office, owing to some irregularities therein, but that he refused to do so; upon which he was first of all threatened, and then informed that if he would resign at once and obtain a medical certificate, he should have a pension of £600 a year, although he was then in a good state of health. This he was induced to do, and the Chancellor signed an order for the pension. A Mr. Welch, said to be in a precarious state of health, succeeded Mr. Wilde, and appears to have paid for the office, to Mr. Richard Bethell, the Chancellor's son, one thousand pounds. It was further alleged, that it was agreed between these men that Mr. Welch should hold the office until the reversal of the outlawry of Richard Bethell, and then receive another appointment in London, which city he preferred to Leeds. The most damaging feature of the case was, that Mr. Miller, the chief registrar of the Court of Bankruptcy, a friend of the family, had prepared appointments to these two offices,—for Mr. Bethell at Leeds and Mr. Welch at London; and it added to the suspicions, that such a practice in filling up these appointments had never before prevailed. The documents, however, never were signed, as the Lord Chancellor, hearing of some misconduct of his son in Paris, or perhaps alarmed at the strong feeling which was evinced by the public with reference to the disclosures made in the "Edmunds case," which was increased by the indiscreet conduct of Richard Bethell, in stating at Leeds that he had received the appointment, absolutely refused to do so.

The Chancellor of course denied any knowledge of any bargain which might possibly have been made by Mr. Richard Bethell, (a disreputable character enough apparently,) with Mr. Wilde or Mr. Welch; but the desire for investigation was so strong that the government were obliged to acquiesce in a motion for a committee of enquiry, which was appointed, and subsequently brought in a report acquitting Lord Westbury from all charge in the matter except that of haste and want of caution in granting a pension to Mr. Wilde.

The public, however, were not satisfied, and the matter was again brought up on a motion of Mr. Hunt, which, with a condensed report of the discussion upon it, we copy from the public prints:—

"That the evidence taken before the committee of this House on the Leeds Bankruptcy Court discloses that a great facility exists for obtaining public appointments by corrupt means; that such evidence, also that taken before a committee of the House of Lords in the case of Leonard Edmunds and laid before this House, shows a laxity of practice and want of caution on the part of the Lord Chancellor in sanctioning the grant of retiring pensions in public officers over whose heads grave charges are impending, and in filling up the vacancies made by the retirement of such officers, whereby great encouragement has been to corrupt practices; and that such laxity and want of caution, even in the absence of any improper motive, are, in the opinion of this House, highly reprehensible, and calculated to throw discredit on the administration of the high officers of state."

The Lord Advocate contended that there was nothing in the case to warrant the severe censures which had been passed upon the Lord Chancellor, and moved an amendment to the effect that the House agreed with the report of the committee, but thought that a check should be put by law on the granting of pensions to persons holding legal offices.

Mr. Hennessey contended that this did not touch the Edmunds' case, which was embraced in Mr. Hunt's motion. Mr. Bouverie had given notice of an amendment, which he could not now move. If, however, the original motion were negatived, he should move his amendment on that of the Lord Advocate. He had no confidence in the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Hunt offered to substitute for his own motion the amendment of Mr. Bouverie, which was as follows:—

"This House, having considered the report of the committee on the Leeds Bankruptcy Court are of opinion that, while the evidence discloses the existence of corrupt practices with reference to the appointment of Patrick Robert Welch to the office of Registrar of the Leeds Bankruptcy Court, they are satisfied that no imputation can be fairly made against the Lord Chancellor with regard to that appointment; and that such evidence, and also that taken before a committee of the Lords to enquire into the circumstances connected with the resignation by Mr. Edmunds of the offices held by him, and laid before this House, show a laxity of practice and a want of caution with regard to the public interest on the part of the Lord Chancellor, in sanctioning the grant of retiring pensions to public officers against whom grave charges were pending, which, in the opinion of this House, are calculated to discredit the administration of his great office."