

No. 59.—HON. JAMES
COCKBURN, Q. C.,
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
COMMONS.

In the galaxy of eminent men whose portraits grace the spacious corridors surrounding the chamber in which Her Majesty's faithful Commons House of Parliament in Canada holds its deliberations, Mr. Cockburn will take honourable rank. He was chosen to preside over its sittings at a time when the Speaker's duties were exceptionally arduous. Under the new Constitution the limits of Parliamentary jurisdiction had been greatly enlarged, and the number of members correspondingly increased. Gentlemen of experience in the Legislatures of the Maritime Provinces found themselves unfamiliar with former Canadian practice, and the increase of representation from Ontario necessarily added a corresponding increase of inexperienced members, so that the duties of the Speaker of the first House of Commons of Canada were obviously rendered exceptionally onerous. Legal acumen, Parliamentary experience, and suavity of manner were qualifications essential to the satisfactory performance of the duties, and these were happily united in Mr. Cockburn. His selection by the Government for the office of first Speaker of the first House of Commons under the new Constitution gave very general satisfaction, as was proved by his unanimous election, and his rulings have always commanded the ready and respectful assent of the House, his bearing being strictly impartial to both sides, and lenient towards individual members, while his decisions have been based upon the merits of the points of order raised. The latter have neither been few nor always unimportant, and doubtless his judgments, recorded in the journals, will be frequently consulted hereafter in relation to the practice of Parliament.

Jas. Cockburn was born at Berwick-upon-Tweed on the 13th February, 1819, so that now-a-days he may be considered an Englishman, though the time was when the natives of the same place could scarcely determine whether they were English or Scotch, and also when they were neither; that border-keep asserting, in those days, an individuality of its own. Mr. Cockburn, we should judge, however, is an Englishman in sentiment, preferring the associations of the South to those of the North of Tweed, but as he emigrated, with his family, to Canada, when in his fourteenth year, his sympathies for the ancient nations on either side of that historic stream may be regarded as purely sentimental, and all the practical ties and associations of his life as thoroughly Canadian as if he had been born in the land consecrated to the beaver and the maple leaf. His education, begun at Berwick, was finished at Upper Canada College, Toronto; and having devoted himself to the study of the law, he was called to the Bar of Upper Canada in 1846. He practised his profession in the thriving town of Cobourg, where he now resides; and at the general election in 1861 he was returned for West Northumberland by a very narrow majority over the Hon. Sidney Smith, the then Postmas-

OUR CANADIAN PORTRAIT GALLERY.



THE HON. JAMES COCKBURN, Q. C., SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY NOTMAN



VIEW ON THE RIVER THAMES, NEAR WOODSTOCK. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY STARKER.

ter-General in the Cartier-Macdonald Cabinet. This circumstance indicates a temporary estrangement from the political party with which he has since been associated; but from 1854, when the coalition was formed, up to 1861, when the second general election was held under its auspices, it was found that the formation of the "Moderate party"—then so called—which sustained the Ministry, led, throughout Upper Canada, to another coalition—that of extreme Conservatives with extreme Reformers. The Candidates returned through the last named alliance were generally classed as "independent," to distinguish them from the regular party supporters of the Ministry and the Opposition. Practically, they were the enemies of both the old parties, as constituted by the arrangement of 1854, and the most prominent Reform member in their ranks was the Hon. J. S. Macdonald, the present Premier of Ontario, who was returned to that Parliament against the strenuous efforts of the regular Opposition, though Mr. Cockburn—for the reason that he opposed a Minister—had its undivided support. The election of 1861 should be ever memorable for the rout it made of mere party men: the Hon. George Brown himself was defeated, and from that circumstance alone, the supporters of the Government felt—many of them, we have reason to believe, without regret—that its days were numbered. The *été noir* had been killed and the fears of followers could no longer be operated on. The vote on the Col. Lyson's Militia bill in May, 1862, proved the altered state of party allegiance. With the compact party phalanx against the Government which the general election of 1857 had created in Upper Canada, that bill, or any other, would have been accepted by the Lower Canada majority rather than that the country's destinies should have passed into the hands of the Opposition. But when only men from whom nothing was to be feared stood on the left of the Speaker, then down went the Government, though both Messrs. Sandfield Macdonald and Cockburn voted for the second reading of the extravagant measure of which Ministers had assumed the paternity. A change of Government followed, and the Macdonald-Sicotte Cabinet held office for a year, when another general election in July, 1863, took place. The *réplutrage* effected after the adjournment of Parliament, and before the election, did not meet with Mr. Cockburn's approval, and he appealed to his constituents a second time on a ticket still more decisively "independent." He was returned by acclamation, and in the session of '64 voted generally with the Opposition. When, on the 30th March, 1864, the Macdonald-Dorion Ministry—the leaders disgusted by the faint-heartedness of their supporters—resigned, and the old Coalition, under the name of the Taché-Macdonald Government, returned to power, Mr. Cockburn was gazetted as Solicitor-General for Upper Canada in the new Cabinet, and continued to hold this office up to the going into effect of the Union Act. He was, as a matter of course, a mem-