

THE LATE SIR GEORGE ESSEX HONYMAN.

commerce. The only legal firm to whom he was known, great in chancery and conveyancing, had little or no common law business to give him. Notwithstanding his abilities and his learning then, the odds in the great game on which he had ventured long worked against him. For seven years it remained doubtful whether the world would ever discover how profound a lawyer was eating his head off in obscurity and neglect, in a small room in Pump Court. But the time was not wasted. It was devoted to reading; chiefly the Reports, old and new. What he read, he read slowly and carefully; and as time went on a great mass of legal learning was accumulated, digested, and engraved in his extraordinary memory. As an accomplished pleader, he was early master of all that astounding lore which was resuscitated by the "New Rules" of Hilary Term, 1834, and which now, happily, lies dead as well as buried in the volumes of Meeson and Welsby; but his favourite study was that branch which was eventually to raise him to distinction—commercial law.

At the end of seven years, however, he had made but little way as a pleader, and he determined to try his fortune at the Bar. It was a wise step; it was the turning point of his career. He was called in 1849, and on joining the Home Circuit at once attracted the attention both of the leaders of the Bar and of the Bench. It was impossible to converse with him on any legal topic without discovering, not only that he was deeply imbued with the general principles of law, and ready in their application, but that he possessed an acute and subtle intellect, and had at his command, to reinforce his reasoning, an overwhelming amount of book learning and knowledge of cases. It was soon felt that a man of unusual power had joined the circuit, and this impression spread from the Bar to the other branch of the profession. The result soon followed. The Home Circuit counted, at that time, in the crowd of its members, Sir Barnes Peacock, Mr. Baron Bramwell, the late Mr. Justice Willes, Mr. Justice Lush, and the late Chief Justice Bovill. Promotion soon removed the first three; some years later, the two others; and much of the business thus cast adrift found its way

into Mr. Honynman's chambers. In 1853 he was one of the most rising men of the day; and thenceforth his career was marked with signal success. He soon became known as one of the first commercial lawyers of the Bar; and after he was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1867, his reputation and his business in commercial law continued to increase year by year until his promotion to the Bench. When, in 1873, Lord Selborne offered Sir George (as he had become, in 1863, on the death of his father), a vacant seat in the Common Pleas, the choice was not only ratified, it had been anticipated, by the general voice of the profession. Indeed, it was not the first time that he had been designated by that voice for the Bench.

At the age of 54 he seemed to have a long career of distinction and usefulness before him; but, alas! such hopes were soon doomed to sad disappointment. Though he was apparently a strong man, the seeds of a fatal disease appear to have already taken root in his constitution. Hardly had he entered upon the second year of his judicial life, when he was struck down by paralysis as he was summing up a heavy cause at Camarthen. The stroke was slight, and it was thought for some time that, after a brief period of repose, he would be able to resume the duties of his office. But, after some months, it became but too evident that his health was shattered beyond all hope. Last February he sent in his resignation, and in a few months more death mercifully closed a life which could no longer be but one of suffering.

Sir George Honynman never had a seat in Parliament. It was not that he was indifferent to politics; on the contrary, he entered fully into the great constitutional and economical questions which divided parties in his time. But he viewed them, as he viewed other questions, without passion or partizanship; and he shrank from those professions of faith which the practical politician who hopes to represent a constituency must submit to make. He shrank still more from contact with "the man in the moon," and other irregularities which have not yet been quite rooted out of our electoral usages and customs; and he used to shrug his shoulders at the thought of all the hand-shaking before