

Galway Election Petition debate; his apostrophe on the same occasion to the Archbishop of Tuam,—“I tell thee, proud prelate of the West,” etc.; his management of the Judicature and Corrupt Practices Act; his reply to Mr. Goschen on the second reading of the Franchise Bill of 1884, and his speech in the course of the Home Rule debates in 1886,—render intelligible the doubt which Sir Henry James' friends have all along entertained whether his proper place was the Cabinet or the Bench, and explained the ready credence accorded in 1880 to the rumour that he was going to the Home Office as Secretary of State.

Now, Lord Halsbury's reputation is not parliamentary. He has engineered several important measures, but so in their day did Baron Huddleston and Sir John Coleridge. Perhaps the incident best known in the Chancellor's political career is the delay in his admission to the House of Commons in 1877, caused by the writ certifying his election having been misplaced! Neither is Lord Halsbury an eminent lawyer in the strict sense of the term. No conscientious biographer would put him on the same plane with Sir Richard Webster or Mr. Henry Matthews, not to speak of even greater names than theirs. He has never done, and could not do, such splendid judicial work as Sir James Hannen has quietly achieved in his dingy and ill-ventilated court. Lord Halsbury, his official position notwithstanding, must ever be third best in a tribunal to which the Earl of Selborne and Lord Bramwell belong.

Again, the Lord Chancellor's reputation is not derived from any triumphant victory over early difficulties. He was neither a Scotsman nor a poor clergyman's son. He was not called upon to write paragraphs for newspapers, or to haunt the theatres as a dramatic critic, or to “coach” idiots for a profession which they will only bring into contempt. We must seek elsewhere for the sources of his eminence. Lord Halsbury has risen to the woolsack from the Old Bailey. He has never been Attorney-General; and he was engaged in nearly every *cause celebre* tried in the English Courts from 1864 to 1885.

It may be interesting to run rapidly over the chief incidents in the Chancellor's forensic career. In 1864 Franz Muller was tried for the murder of an English gentleman, Mr. Briggs, on the North London Railway. The excitement to which the case gave rise can still be faintly traced in the pages of the “Annual Register,” where the best account of it is to be found. Muller escaped to New York, was promptly arrested on his arrival, brought back to England, tried, condemned, and duly executed, in spite of the foolish efforts of a German Protection Society and of the King of Prussia (who telegraphed to Queen Victoria, requesting her personal intervention) to procure a reprieve. Now, in this case Mr. Hardinge Giffard, along with the Solicitor-General, Sir R. P. Collier, and Mr. (now Sir James) Hannen, conducted the prosecution.

Two years later, “the London tailors”—Druitt, Partridge, and the rest—were tried before Baron Bramwell for picketing and intimidation during the great strike. Mr. Coleridge, Q.C., the present Lord Chief Justice, Sergeant Parry, and Hardinge Gifford, defended the prisoners; but the law was too strong for the advocates, and a conviction followed. “I lay it down,” said Baron Bramwell to the jury, “without hesitation, that whenever two or more persons