

generation, and each of whom was foremost in the career he entered (Lord Lawrence and Lord Kelvin being the other two.) In the House of Commons, though at first diffident and nervous, he soon proved himself a powerful as well as ready speaker, and would doubtless have remained in an assembly where he was rendering such valuable services to his party but for the weakness of his lungs and throat, which had threatened his life since boyhood. He therefore accepted, in 1867, the office of Lord Justice of Appeal, with a seat in the House of Lords, and next year was made Lord Chancellor by Mr. Disraeli, then Prime Minister, who dismissed Lord Chelmsford, then Chancellor, in order to have the benefit of Cairns' help as a colleague. Disraeli subsequently caused him to be raised to an earldom. After Lord Derby's death Cairns led the Tory party in the House of Lords for a time, but his very pronounced low-church proclivities, coupled perhaps with a certain jealousy felt toward him as a newcomer, prevented him from becoming popular there, so that ultimately the leadership of that House settled itself in the hands of Lord Salisbury, a statesman not superior to Cairns in political judgment or argumentative power, but without the disadvantage of being a lawyer, possessing a wider range of political experience, and in closer sympathy with the feelings and habits of the titled order.

For political success Cairns had several qualities of the utmost value—a stately presence, a clear head, a resolute will, and splendid oratorical gifts. He was not an imaginative speaker, nor fitted to touch the emotions; but he had a matchless power of statement, and a no less matchless closeness and cogency in argument. In the field of law, where passion has no place, and even imagination must be content to move with clipped wings along the ground, the merits of Lord Cairns' intellect shewed to the best advantage. At the Chancery Bar he was one of a trio who had not been surpassed, if ever equalled, during the nineteenth century, and whom none of our now practising advocates rivals. The other two were afterwards Lord Justice Rolt, and Roundell Palmer, afterwards Lord Chancellor Selborne. All were admirable lawyers, but of the three Rolt excelled in his spirited presentation of a case and in the lively vigor of his arguments. Palmer was conspicuous for exhaustive ingenuity, and for a subtlety which sometimes led him away into reasonings too fine for the court to follow. Cairns was broad, massive,