

APPENDIX TO VOL. XXIII.

MEMOIRS.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, Baron Lyndhurst, LL.D., High Steward of the University of Cambridge, F.R.S., &c., was born at Boston, "in his Majesty's North American Colonies," on the 21st of May, 1772. His father was John Singleton Copley, the distinguished artist, who, emigrating from Ireland, had sought fortune in the Colonies, not foreseeing the revolution which was destined to drive him, with many other loyalists, back to their mother country. The family did return and settle in London in 1774, and in due time the younger Copley was sent to attend the lectures of Reynolds and of Barry. He had not, however, any vocation for the career of an artist, and at the age of nineteen he was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he greatly distinguished himself by his proficiency in mathematics, taking high honours, and eventually becoming a Fellow of his college. He also cultivated, to a degree little known and appreciated at that time, his taste for chemistry and mechanics, in both of which he was subsequently considered an adept, and his knowledge thus acquired was eventually of signal assistance to him in his legal career. From the lectures of Professor Farish he had imbibed great taste for practical mechanical construction, and even after his elevation to the woolsack, his box of tools afforded frequent amusement for his leisure hours.

He was called to the bar by the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn on the 8th of June, 1804, went the Midland Circuit, had chambers in the Temple, and soon attained the reputation due to his talent and severe training. In 1813 he became a Serjeant-at-law, and soon after a well-known case respecting a patent for making lace, in which Mr. Heathcote, M.P., was interested, brought out his scientific acquirements, and at once established his forensic reputation.

In 1818 he took his seat in the House of Commons, as Member for the Borough of Yarmouth, in the Isle of Wight. In the same year he was appointed Chief-Justice of Chester, and in 1819 he became King's Serjeant, and speedily afterwards Solicitor-General,

and received the honour of Knighthood. Previously having, with Sir Charles Wetherell, defended some of the political criminals in the Thistlewood trials, it became his duty to prosecute his former client, Thistlewood, for the Cato Street conspiracy, a task which he performed with singular tact. It was also his duty to take a part in the proceedings against Queen Caroline, and by his judgment and moderation he contrived to escape the censure which was freely bestowed on some of his colleagues. Subsequently he sat for Ashburton and for the University of Cambridge, taking, on several occasions, marked positions in public events, and affording considerable assistance to his colleagues in the House.

In 1826 he became Master of the Rolls, and in 1827 he attained the position of Lord Chancellor, and was created Baron Lyndhurst. In the Upper House his calm and dignified elucidation of any subject under debate was fully appreciated, and he very soon made himself known in the House of Lords as a political notability.

His legal career has been described by Lord Campbell in the 'Lives of the Chancellors,' his political life has still to be written, when the ancient distinctions of Whig and Tory shall have entirely disappeared. His official life was unusually long, and at its close, when he naturally assumed the position of the Nestor of the House—"the old man eloquent,"—his opinions, when untrammelled by party views, were respected by all. His fame arose from his brilliant wit, his matchless irony, his terrible invective, his apt quotations, his polished style, and perfect diction. His oratory was the result of careful preparation, his articulation was melodious, and his voice perfect, clear, and silvery. His statement of a case was as clear as his perception of it. He carefully avoided giving offence by his manner, and he won golden opinions by his never-failing tact and urbanity. His long public life was appropriately brought to a close on the 5th of July, 1859, by his magnificent speech on the National Defences, when, in spite of the mental and physical wear and tear of eighty-eight years, he exhibited unrivalled brilliancy of eloquence and undiminished clearness of reasoning; whilst the "*Væ victis*," with which that great monition concluded, has found an echo in the tramp of the Volunteers and the thunder of the hammers on our iron-plated ships; and by all parties it is admitted that John Singleton Copley deserves the highest niche in the temple of legal statesmen, in respect of brilliant oratory, profound learning, varied accomplishments, generous disposition, and unquestionably pure patriotism.

Lord Lyndhurst was elected an Honorary Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers "because of his attachment to engineering pursuits, and his knowledge of mechanical science," June 28th, 1842, and his decease occurred October 12th, 1863.