

“Lord Thurlow, when Chancellor, had asked me if I did not think that a wooden machine might be invented to draw bills and answers in Chancery?† Many years after this, when he had ceased to be Chancellor, and I was Attorney General, a bill was filed against his friend, Macnamara, the conveyancer, — and Lord Thurlow advised him to have the answer sent to me to be perused and settled. The solicitor brought me the answer; I read it. It was so wretchedly ill-composed and drawn, that I told him not a word of it would do — that I had not time to draw an answer from beginning to end — that he must get some gentleman to draw the answer, from beginning to end, who understood pleading, and then bring it to me to peruse. I went down to the House of Lords the same day, to plead a cause at the bar there. Lord Thurlow was in the House, and came down to the bar to me, and said, ‘So I understand you think my friend Mac’s answer won’t do.’ ‘Do!’ said I, ‘my Lord, it won’t do at all: it must have been drawn by that *wooden machine*, which you formerly told me might be invented to draw bills and answers.’ ‘That’s very unlucky,’ says Thurlow, ‘and impudent too, if you had known the fact — *that I drew the answer myself.*’”

† Mr. Babbage is said to have taken from this the idea of his “calculating machine.”

Campbell’s Lives of the Lord Chancellors and Keepers of the Great Seal of England

Life of Lord Eldon

Campbell Vol.VII ,1847, chapter CXCVI pages 127-128

Note: Lord Eldon was appointed Attorney General in 1793.

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