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Lord Reading and His Cases

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Lord Reading and His Cases. By Derek Walker-Smith. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1934. Pp. xii, 400. \$3.50.

The same publishers have already favored us, in recent years, with two other biographies of great recent advocates at the English bar. The first, under the title of "For the Defense," dealt with the career of Sir Edward Marshall Hall, one of the most successful of English defenders since the days of Erskine. The other, "Carson, the Advocate," had Lord Carson, of Ulster fame, as its subject. The publishers invite their readers to consider this as the third in an informal series. The earlier ones were by the gifted Edward Marjoribanks, who was cut off in the beginning of a career that seemed equally promising in authorship and in the law, as he was himself a rising barrister. Mr. Walker-Smith has, therefore, to follow a fast pace-maker. It must be said that he has to a great extent succeeded in doing this.

At the outset, it should be mentioned that the present volume is not a biography, to date, of Lord Reading. Unlike the volume on Carson, which deals in almost too great detail (at least for American readers) with Carson's Parliamentary activities, which is simply another name for his activities in Irish politics, the present volume is confined to Lord Reading's legal work, as barrister and judge. It holds as outside its scope those perhaps even more interesting periods when he was the war-time British high commissioner to the United States and when he was serving as viceroy in India. Perhaps it is a pity that the author has chosen so to narrow his field, but that is his privilege, and in any event the field chosen is at least a definite one.

The cases picked for description are, no doubt, well balanced, so as to appeal to the interests of as wide a circle of readers as possible, and hence the choice should be called a successful one. Yet the legally-minded readers will inevitably be slightly disappointed. So much of interest is mentioned but not brought forth in the account of those great contests, *Allen v. Flood* and the *Taff Vale Case*. And so much space is given to the sordid details of perfectly common-place divorce cases. One of these, in which Carson was also a participant, and which Marjoribanks does not even mention, gets an entire nineteen page chapter in the present book. But whatever one's individual reaction may be to the difficult question of choice and relative space for the cases selected, they all move across the stage vividly and in a manner that catches and holds the reader's interest. This catalogue of a great lawyer's great battles is in any event not a dull book. In that regard it certainly will not be found disappointing.

Minor criticisms suggest themselves. The book is not so nearly free from errors in text as we have learned to expect from its publishers. It displays that incalculable English use of capital letters that surely cannot be based on any rule (the reviewer notices that where common stock is spoken of, it is "ordinary shares," but where that aristocrat, preferred stock, is named, it is "Preference Shares" in capitals). The meticulous reader will not enjoy the author's repeated use of "try and," and the author apparently thinks, like so many others, that "avocation" is merely a longer word meaning the same thing as "vocation." Finally the reviewer is happy that it was not an American who put Mr. Lloyd George in the index under "G," as "George, Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd." But all this does not alter the fact that here is an interesting picture of a splendid career at the bar.

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