

## MARSHALL HALL

BY NINA W. HOOKE AND GIL THOMAS, Published by Arthur Barker Limited, 1966 in London; pp. 277 and (index) 3 pp.

This new biography of one of the great advocates of the English Bar of the late 19th and early 20th centuries comes nearly forty years after that written by Edward Marjoribanks so soon after Marshall Hall's death in 1927. The authors now have the advantage, therefore, of being able to stand back and take a more dispassionate look at their subject. The opening chapter is particularly illuminating in its description of the world in which Marshall Hall lived and practised — a world so different from that of today that it is hard to appreciate the changes that have taken place in our social and legal life in just over half a century.

Unlike its predecessor, the new biography does tell us more of Marshall Hall's early private life and the tragedy of his first marriage. This is particularly helpful in giving an insight into the many sided character of the man. Through his own physical and domestic sufferings, Marshall Hall developed an understanding of human nature and a sympathy for his fellows which enabled him to enter so vigorously the many forensic battles he fought on their behalf. As the authors themselves say at page 7:

“ . . . when at the height of his powers he rose to deliver one of his famous speeches in defence of some poor wretch whom misfortune had brought to the dock, he was often so affected that his whole frame shook and tears ran down his cheeks. Those who knew him only distantly suspected this to be a histrionic trick laid on for the benefit of the jury. His close friends knew that the emotion was genuine.”

While of course the authors have a subject who is at all times energetic, enthralling, and turbulent, they are still to be congratulated in their presentation, which moves deftly from case to case in such a way as at all times to hold the attention of the reader whether he be a lawyer or not.

In the end the biographers leave the reader to his own assessment of Marshall Hall. Was he simply a great orator relying on his knowledge of human nature but really a poor jurist? This reviewer for one was made to re-examine this previously held view and left musing whether in fact Marshall Hall did not have a greater knowledge and understanding of the law than that which has been attributed to him.

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