

generally his searching questions, and the sort of pressure he applied so cut down the issues of fact that there was little or nothing left in controversy regarding which it was necessary to examine the evidence in detail, since the counsel felt that there was no use in putting before him a contention which they could not sustain under the fire of his criticism. Then Jessel proceeded to deliver his opinion and dispose of the case. The affair was from beginning to end far less an argument and counter-argument by counsel than an investigation directly conducted by the judge himself, in which the principal function of the counsel was to answer the judge's questions concisely and exactly, so that the latter might as soon as possible get to the bottom of the matter. His interruptions, unlike those of some judges, were neither inopportune nor superfluous. Thus business was despatched before him with unusual speed, and it became a maxim among barristers that, however low down in the cause-list at the Rolls your case might stand, it was never safe to be away from the court, so rapidly were cases "crumpled up" or "broken down" under the blows of this vigorous intellect. It was more surprising that the suitors, as well as the Bar and the public generally, acquiesced, after the first few months, in this way of doing business. Nothing breeds more discontent than haste and heedlessness in a judge, but Jessel's speed was not haste. He did as much justice in a day as others could do in a week; and those few, who, dissatisfied with these rapid methods, tried to reverse his decisions before the Court of Appeal, were very seldom successful.

"In dealing with facts, Jessel has never had a superior, and in our days, perhaps, no rival. He knew all the ways of the financial and commercial world. In his treatment of points of law, every one admitted and admired both an extraordinary knowledge and mastery of reported cases, and an extremely acute and exact appreciation of principles, a complete power of extracting them from past cases and fitting them to the case in hand. He had a memory which forgot nothing, and which, indeed, wearied him by refusing to forget trivial things. When he delivered an elaborate judgment it was his delight to run through a long series of cases, classifying and distinguishing them. His strength made him bold; he went further than most judges in readiness to carry a principle somewhat beyond any decided case, and to overrule an authority which he did not respect. The fault charged on him