

court in the country. When the Judicature Acts came into operation, the universality of Sir George Jessel's legal knowledge stood him in good stead. Here, at least, was one judge who could decide off-hand upon the limitations of a crabbed settlement at one moment, and at another expound the obscurities of a bill of lading. * * * Sir George Jessel was not free from the faults to which great minds like his are liable. He was so quick that occasionally he was hasty, but the mistakes he made were not half so many as those of other judges who got through about a tenth of his work. He was also apt to be intellectually overbearing. He was fond of exposing the errors of others, but he never admitted a doubt of the correctness of his own opinion. His phrase, 'Of course all judges believe that they are right,' has passed into a byword; and Sir George Jessel was the mental antipodes of Lord Eldon, great lawyers as both were, and in some respects not unlike one another. History does not record that Sir George Jessel ever admitted he was wrong. When his attention was called to the fact that the Court of Appeal had overruled his decision, he said: 'That is strange; when I sit with them, they always agree with me.' This was generally true, as there were few judges whom the Master of the Rolls could not carry with him. Whoever sat with him the court was generally considered to consist of the Master of the Rolls."

The *Solicitor's Journal* says: "If uniformity can make a characteristic, the universality of regret which is called forth by the news of Sir George Jessel's death will characterize his life and fame. Nor did the scope, variety, and strength of his gifts fall short of the grief which attends their loss. As a judge he was at once so swift and so sure that the surprise which each quality called forth became nothing less than astonishment at the union of the two. When he reasoned, it seemed as though he could dispense with authority; when he quoted, his learning and research admitted of no comparison. No branch of law seemed unfamiliar to him. Whether he was construing, with vast knowledge guided by lucid common sense, the terms of an intricate will, or laying down the principles of patent law, or expounding mercantile usage, or settling the limits of public authority, or regulating the procedure of

the courts, he was alike clear, practical and profound. Such achievements could only have been possible to a man gifted with the swiftest apprehension and the most ample and tenacious memory. And in truth he seemed only to need to reach his hand in any direction to lay hold upon the keystone which at once fitted and completed the arch of legal reasoning upon any matter which was before him. It was precisely these faculties which enabled him to deal with such extraordinary sagacity, with facts however numerous and complicated, and to deliver occasionally those judgments which have been sometimes said to show the highest kind of excellence—judgments in which the statement of the facts gives at once the reasoning and the conclusion."

Equally eulogistic are the writers for the non-professional journals. The *Spectator* says: "Sir George was by common consent the ablest judge on the bench, and the ablest probably in the annals of English history, if, at least, the rapid despatch of business be taken into account, as well as the soundness of the judgments and the breadth of the legal principles embodied in them. * * * A more extraordinary intellectual engine than his brain has not been seen at work in our generation. Great as he was as a pure lawyer, he was still greater in the despatch of business; for the speed, and the marvellous accuracy on the whole with which he worked at so great a speed were certainly neither rivaled nor approached by any contemporary of his own. * * * He had usually mastered the drift of an argument before it was half out of the counsel's mouth, and had taken in the exact drift of a deed before any other man would have got at its general scope and tendency. * * * His appetite for work was something vast. Nothing pleased him better when he came to the end of one heavy task, than at once to undertake another which he might easily have declined. The spectacle of his last struggle with a mortal disease was something more than impressive. For many weeks he discharged every duty, not only in his court, but in relation to volunteer offices, for omitting which he could well have pleaded illness, and this when he was so dangerously ill that to take a step upstairs without assistance was impossible, and when at times it was an effort to him to speak at all."