

*THE JUDICIAL CHARACTER, AS MADE BY  
ENGLISH JUDGES.*

To a real lawyer this must be an absorbing subject. He generally desires and looks forward to the possibility of judicial service. If such promotion comes, apart from the fitness that must depend primarily upon his own qualities, exertions, and experience, he will find no better light for his path than that which shines from the lives of the great judges of the past. To condense some of this precious light within a narrow compass is the purpose of these comments. They consist of but passing a word as to most of the names mentioned, based upon reading not exhaustive, but perhaps sufficient to give at least a partial view of some of the great men of the English bench and to afford opportunity to learn something of the more obvious lessons of their lives.

As almost every lawyer did until more modern days, we begin with Coke. His will be a great name in the law always—certainly as long as the English common law is known and studied. The imperfections of his character, so apparent in his earlier life, were held more in restraint while he sat on the bench, and he exemplified much that a Judge ought to be. Nothing in his judicial life is more interesting than his encounter with James the First—that paradox of a monarch, whose own judicial discrimination was so exquisite, we are told, that he could taste of the water from the cauldron in which some poor wretch had been boiled to death and pronounce the unhesitating judgment: "This was a witch," or "This was not a witch." The incident is well known but is always worthy of repetition. In a case where his own interests were involved, the King sought to overawe the Judges of England and to commit them to a certain course in advance. The other Judges expressed compliance. Coke's answer was: "When the case happens, I shall do that which shall be fit for a Judge to do." It was the noblest illustration of the independence that marked his whole life. Yet, admirable as was Coke's conduct, it has many parallels in English judicial history. The time has not come often since those days