BOOK REVIEWS

LORD READING AND HIS CASES: The Study of a Great Career.

To the growing ranks of publications on contemporary lawyers has now been added the story of the legal career of Rufus Isaacs, more familiarly known as Lord Reading, whose services to the British Empire run the gamut from cabin-boy to Viceroy of India. In "Lord Reading and His Cases," Derek Walker-Smith narrates the tale of one of England's most prominent Jews, who, in early life abandoned educational pursuits to follow the sea, became a member of the Stock Exchange, only to undergo the trials of bankruptcy, then turned to the Bar, and there found such meteoric success that between 1887 and 1921 he progressed from junior counsel to leader, served as member of Parliament for Reading, from whence his title, and occupied in turn the offices of Solicitor General, Attorney General (the first of such to be admitted to the English Cabinet), Lord Chief Justice, the highest permanent legal position in England, Special Envoy and High Commissioner to the United States during the World War, and finally Viceroy to India.

Lord Reading is compared by the author with such men as Sir Edward Marshall Hall and Edward Carson, with and against both of whom he tried some of his most famous cases, and depicts his subject as being that intellectual, subtle, persuasive type of lawyer effective before courts rather than as possessing the emotional and demagogic style of his contemporary celebrities whose most effective work occurred before juries.

While not documented, the book discusses many of the English headline cases of the first part of the twentieth century in which Lord Reading played some role, including among them the Taff Vale Railway and Denaby Colliery Company cases, which strongly affected labor unions, the cases of Lever v. Daily Mail and Cadbury v. Standard, highlights in the law of libel, the Hartopp, Gordon, and Bryce cases in the field of domestic relations, and the prosecutions in the Liverpool Bank case, the Whittaker Wright collapse, the Sievier case, and the murder trial of the Seddons, in the criminal courts.
Of particular interest in the light of present conditions are the Taff Vale Railway and the Whittaker Wright cases. The former involved a suit by a railway corporation against a labor union seeking to recover from the union funds reimbursement for damage done by striking employees who were members of the union. Lord Reading contended that since the labor union was neither an individual, a corporation, nor a co-partnership, it could not be sued. The court held otherwise, however, and remarked, in summing up the evidence, that a strike could not be made effective without doing more than was lawful. As a result the union paid approximately $115,000.00 out of its treasury. To cure what he considered to be an injustice growing from this decision, Lord Reading, when a member of Parliament, labored for the passage of the Trades Disputes Bill of 1906, and the stronger measure of 1913, which in effect have placed the English trade unions outside, if not above, the ordinary courses of law.

The other case, that involving Whittaker Wright, growing out of the pyramiding and collapse of a series of interlocking investment trusts which fell in 1900 with an attendant loss of over $50,000,000, is comparable to the present Insull debacle in many respects. Wright fled from England, was ignominiously returned to stand trial, and charged with falsifying balance sheets. Rufus Isaacs was retained to prosecute him, since the Crown would not do so, and in a twelve-day trial demonstrated his own grasp of financial affairs, his genius as a cross-examiner, and his ability to analyze the case presented for the consideration of the jury. Needless to state, Rufus Isaacs was successful in the conduct of the trial, but an unusual circumstance described in the book, made it a Pyrrhic victory.

Very few of Lord Reading's cases had any appreciable effect on the state of the law, since in most instances the cases were important only to the participants, and very few decisions were carried up on appeal. In his varied career, however, he acted as counsel for both sides, alternating as prosecutor and defender, in almost every kind of litigation known to the courts, and many illustrations of his ingenuity and skill as a trial lawyer are provided by the author.

The book is not devoted to litigation alone, but contains con-
siderable material on political and governmental matters which came under Lord Reading's supervision, including his work as attorney-general in the investigation following the Titanic disaster, and the prosecution of the Suffragettes, and does not omit the criticism directed at Lord Reading growing out of the Marconi scandal, which charge is given in detail.

To his story of the lawyer, the author has added a selection of the cases tried before Lord Reading when acting as Lord Chief Justice, including the celebrated trial of Roger Casement for treason during the World War. His comment on the judge, however, does not reach the height of his enthusiasm for the advocate, in whose behalf he justifies the conduct of Sir Rufus Isaacs, when attorney-general, in the Archer-Shee controversy recently criticised by Edward Marjoribanks in his work "Carson the Advocate."