

LIFE SKETCHES ⁰⁷

OF

EMINENT LAWYERS,

AMERICAN, ENGLISH AND CANADIAN,

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THOUGHTS, FACTS AND FACETIÆ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

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JOSEPH PHILO BRADLEY, NEW JERSEY.**(1813-1892.)**

Twenty-two years Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Born at Berne, New York, March 14, 1813; died at Washington, January 22, 1892, aged seventy-eight. He was the eldest of eleven children of a poor farmer and a shrewd, sweet-tempered mother. Taught from sixteen till twenty-one. Graduated from Rutgers at twenty-three, with Theodore Frelinghuysen, Cortlandt Parker and Governor W. A. Newell. Completed a course in theology, but abandoned it and read law with Archer Gifford, of Newark, and was admitted at twenty-six. He was thirty years in practice, appearing in the most important causes. He was noted for his knowledge of law and skill in its application. Was appointed Associate Justice by President Grant, February 7, 1870, succeeding Justice Grier. He received the degree of LL.D. from Lafayette in 1859.

Among his most important trials were the Meeker will case, the Passaic bridge case, the New Jersey zinc and the Belvidere land cases, and the Hardin

and the Donnelly murder cases. His intellectual distinction was thoroughness. He was always at work. Said: "All I ever did was done by dogged and unyielding perseverance." He had the three elements of greatness—wisdom, integrity of purpose and simplicity. Was learned in common law, equity, admiralty, civil and patent law, and the jurisprudence of the world, ancient and modern, and proficient in mathematics, the natural sciences and astronomy, making abstruse calculations for forty centuries ahead, and his general attainments covered a wide range. He was pronounced by one of his associates "the most learned man he ever knew;" by George Harding, "unsurpassed as a patent lawyer, if ever equaled;" and by Cortlandt Parker, "the most deeply informed man I ever met on subjects foreign to his profession." His decisions, in nearly sixty volumes (9 Wall.—141 U. S.), 475 in number, with 93 dissents, are couched in pure, undefiled English, vigorous but elegant. He was simple, unassuming and kind, and an honorable Christian gentleman.

Judicial Insight.

“Some men seem to be constituted by nature to be masters of judicial analysis and insight. Such were Papineau, Sir Matthew Hale and Lord Mansfield, each in his particular province. Such was Marshall in his. They seemed to handle judicial questions as the great Euclid did mathematical ones, with giant ease.”

The Accomplished Lawyer.

“In order to be an accomplished lawyer, it is necessary, besides having a knowledge of the law, to be an accomplished man, graced with at least a general knowledge of history, of science, of philosophy, of the useful arts, of the modes of business, and of everything that concerns the well being and intercourse of men in society. He ought to be a man of large understanding; he must be a man of large acquirements and rich in general information; for he is a priest of the law, which is the bond and support of civil society, and which extends to and regulates every relation of one man to another in that society, and every transaction that takes place in it.”—From an address before the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania, 1884.

Three Great Lawyers.

“Three men in our generation have died in judicial harness whose names will be as imperishable as the law itself—Jessel, Miller and Bradley.”—John G. Johnson, of Philadelphia bar.

Blackstone.

“There is nothing to compare with the Commentaries of Sir William Blackstone, in completeness of scope, purity and elegance of diction, and appositeness, if not always absolute accuracy, of definition and statement.”—*Idem*.

One Book.

“Perfect familiarity, perfect mastery, of any one good book is a mine of intellectual wealth, not merely not so much for the matter which is thus made one’s own, as for the vocabulary, the diction, the style and the manner of expression which is mastered and indelibly fixed on the mind.”—*Idem*.

Great Reader and Studied Theology.

He read nearly everything in his uncle’s circulating library, and while at college completed a course in theology, but before graduation gave up the idea of becoming a minister and decided to study law.

Library and Knowledge of It.

His law library numbered upwards of 5,000 volumes, and his general library was still larger. He was a reader of novels and extremely fond of poetry. He made a special study of Shakespeare in late years. In history, biography and genealogy he seemed to know something of the personal details of almost everybody that was ever heard of.

His Learning of the Alphabet.

When he learned the alphabet from his mother he asked, "Is that all?" He was not content with the assurance that that was all, but took down a book nearly as large as himself and went through from page to page in search of other letters.

Scientific Scholar.

He applied himself to scientific investigation, to problems of the higher mathematics, astronomy, physics and mechanics. Was thoroughly familiar with the principles of botany, chemistry, geology and kindred sciences, and he kept pace with the new discoveries being made in each of them.

Biblical Scholar.

He studied foreign languages, reading many great authors in the originals. Became one of the most accomplished Biblical scholars in the country. Always kept beside him a copy of the New Testament in the original Greek, which at church he never failed to consult. He delivered in various places just before coming to the bench, lectures upon the English Bible.

Broke in Bookcase.

Judge Bradley had a violent temper, and, although a consistent member of the church, would swear at inanimate things when enraged. On one oc-

casian, upon going to his office to get two or three books to take to Trenton, whither he was going to argue a case in the State Supreme Court, he found to his dismay he had changed his pants and left his book-case key behind. Says a student then reading in his office: "He was so much put out that he took an old hatchet lying near by and broke in the fine doors, saying, as was his habit: 'There, I'll teach you to be locked, d—n you.'"

Cut into Shreds a New Pair of Breeches.

Upon another occasion, (by the way, he was very unconcerned about his dress), he was about to go away to appear before some important tribunal, and Mrs. Bradley persuaded him to change his breeches, which were out at the knees and in the seat, for a new pair which she had gotten unknown to him. He hurried to the station, only to find he had been left. When he returned to the house he took off the pants, took out his knife and cut them into shreds, saying as he did so: "There, d—n you, I'll teach you to make me miss my train."

A Very Learned Man.

"No man ever sat upon the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States who, in the extent and variety of his knowledge, has surpassed Mr. Justice Bradley. He was a very learned man."—Frank W. Hackett.

Paid \$1,400 for His Neglect to Protest and Collect a Note.

When busy one day writing out a brief, some client came bustling into his office and said that he wanted that \$1,500 note protested, laying it down; that the maker was insolvent, but the indorser was good, and he wanted to hold him. "All right," said Bradley, who was a man of few words, "I'll 'tend to it." With this he shoved the note under his desk-pad and went on with his work. In a few days the owner of the note called to see if Bradley had collected the money on his note. "O, yes," said Bradley, at the same time taking out his check-book and handing him a check for \$1,400, the amount of the note, less his fee. The fact is, the note had been forgotten and was then lying under the pad right where Bradley had put it. But he would not admit his carelessness to his client, and thus paid \$1,400 for his forgetfulness.

Taken by a Philadelphia Janitor for a Visitor.

When Bradley first went to Philadelphia to hold court, he was accosted, upon entering the building, by one of the janitors, who taking him for a casual visitor, assumed to show him over the various floors. Coming to the Judge's Chambers, Bradley inquired what room it was. "Oh, this is for the Judges; but they haven't arrived yet." Laying aside his umbrella and taking off his coat and hat, he quietly remarked: "One of them has."—April, 1892, Green Bag.

Being Drawn for a Justice's Juryman in Washington.

When he went to Washington to take his place as Associate Justice upon the United States Supreme Bench, he was walking along Pennsylvania avenue when a constable looking for a juryman on the street, summoned him as one of the six. Bradley went almost to the justice's court before asking the constable if he was in the habit of putting Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States in his jury box. Bradley said he had a good mind to go into court and carry the joke still further.