



Case Western Reserve Law Review

Volume 3 | Issue 2

1951

The Hon. Sir William Robert Grove

Vanity Fair

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Recommended Citation

Vanity Fair, *The Hon. Sir William Robert Grove*, 3 W. Res. L. Rev. 95 (1951)
Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/caselrev/vol3/iss2/3>

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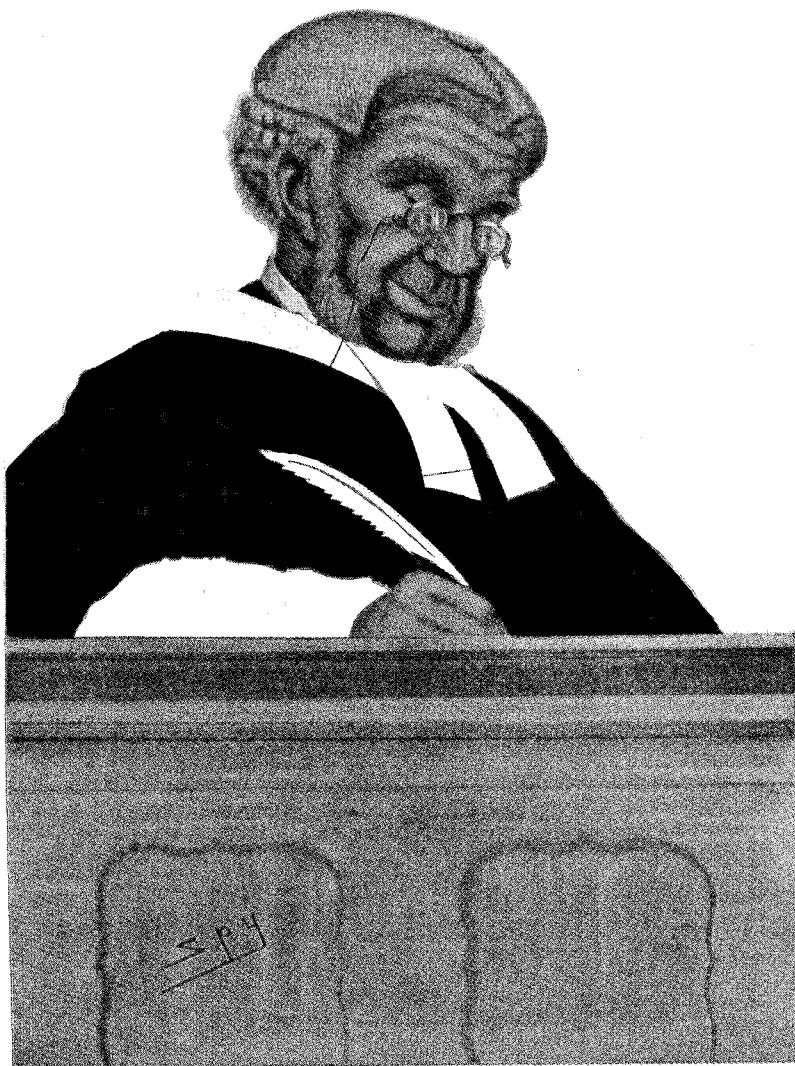
JUDGES No. 19.

THE HON. SIR WILLIAM ROBERT GROVE.

SEVENTY-SIX years ago there was born to a worthy Justice of the Peace at Swansea an embryo Judge of the High Court, whose name they called William Robert. As to the details of his early years the oldest history is silent, but we know that he took an Oxford degree some twenty years later, and that he was called to the Bar in 1835. From that time Mr. Grove's career was rendered brilliant, first by galvanic electricity, and later by scientific exposition of the law on behalf of commercial clients. Soon after he entered upon his profession his health took an indifferent turn, by reason of which he was led away for a time from the strait paths of law to the more fascinating studies of electricity and chemistry, with the happy result that he gave to the world the evil-smelling battery which bears his name. This was a great step towards scientific fame, and Mr. Grove now became a Professor, a Fellow of the Royal Society, a President of the British Association, and an authority on the decomposition of water, the continuity of natural phenomena, the correlation of physical forces, and many other high-sounding luxuries of the scientific world. It was now time for Mr. Grove to return to his first love; which he did, very shrewdly making of his scientific fame a very excellent stepping-stone to Knighthood and the Bench. In those days science was an unknown quantity in the forum, for none of its frequenters had any; but Mr. Grove changed all that, and soon proved to the satisfaction of the litigating public that no patent or other case which might involve any scientific or chemical process was complete without him, a fact which the Government realised in the course of years, and so placed him upon the Bench in 1871—some fifteen years later than he should have been placed there.

Mr. Justice Grove thenceforth proceeded to dispense a mixture of equal parts of science and law to an ordinary public, with considerable discrimination and some success, and his dispensation was continued until last month, when he retired from public life full of honours and of years. He might have been a better Judge had he been made one earlier in life, but it is no fault of his that this was not the case. He has always been noted for his industry, and for an amount of imperturbable good humour which has made him a general favourite with the Bar, and kept him so, even when his faculties had become slow and his science old-fashioned.

Sir William is a very nice, agreeable old gentleman of the olden school, who has outlived most of his contemporaries, and everyone now wishes him to enjoy his well-earned repose. With one possible exception, he has never been known to make an enemy, but he has plenty of friends, and deserves them all. It is doubtful whether his name will live longest in law or in science; but it is a fact that all his science never enabled him to master the intricacies of the Judicature Acts. By his retirement he has shown himself to be possessed of much sound sense.



The Hon. Sir William Robert Grove

"galvanic electricity"

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