



Marshall Hall: A Law Unto Himself

By Sally Smith

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Sir Edward Marshall Hall KC saved more people from the hangman's noose than any other known barrister. In an age of inadequate defence funding, minimal forensic evidence, a rigid moral code making little allowance for human passion and a reactionary judiciary, his only real weapons were his understanding of human psychology and the power of his personality. His charismatic oratory and film star profile made him an Edwardian celebrity. Jurors collapsed and judges wept at the overwhelming power of his performances. Thousands congregated to await the verdicts in the trials in which he appeared for the defence. Curtains were brought down in West End theatres to announce the acquittals he secured. His famous trials included the Camden Town murder, Seddon the Poisoner, the Brides in the Bath, the Green Bicycle Murder and the Murder at the Savoy. As a result of his oratory in these he was adulated as an entertainer, his performances greeted with the same relish as those by the great actors; but he was also loved as a champion of the underdog, who almost single-handedly introduced compassion in to the Edwardian legal system. No other barrister in any age can claim such celebrity, nor such public adoration and affection. Meticulously researched, *Marshall Hall: A Law unto Himself* is the first modern biography of a complex and influential man and, as a result of access to new material: *Sets the legendary barrister in his social, historical and political context. *Reveals the sensational private life of the man behind the public figure, the two turbulent marriages, and the mistresses. *Tells the full story of his first wife's death. *Examines his magnetic oratory and extraordinary fame from a modern perspective.

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Marshall Hall: A Law Unto Himself By Sally Smith Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #943554 in Books
- Published on: 2016-05-12
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 6.42" h x 1.18" w x 9.29" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 302 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

'Sally Smith more than does justice to the extraordinary life of this complex man, with its ups and downs, its stresses and strains, its triumphs and occasional disasters. Her book is not only the portrait of a man, but also of an age and a profession the like of which we will never see again. There have been and will be other great advocates, but the raw battle for the life of an accused in the shadow of the noose is something that now belongs to history. It was a battle at which Marshall Hall excelled.' Paul Magrath, ICLR Review 'Her book is real-life crime history at its best, enhanced by her expert insight into guilty men and women, crafty solicitors, procedural intricacies, legal costs and fees, tabloid sensationalism and human nature at its grubbiest. This is a tip-top book of its kind.' From a review by Richard Davenport-Hines in the Oldie. 'She seeks to explain this forensic phenomenon and with zip and vivacity she succeeds.' From a review by Alan Moses in The Times Literary Supplement. 'A fascinating book that should hold any reader in its grip.' From review in The Law Society Gazette.

About the Author

Sally Smith has been a barrister since 1977 and a QC since 1997. She practised in crime for ten years before specialising in medical law.

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