

THE CLOSING CHAPTER. By ALFRED THOMSON, LORD DENNING.
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ON 29 September 1982, an institution retired from the English bench. Lord Denning was wont to say that he had all the Christian virtues, except resignation. But on that date he stepped down as Master of the Rolls. Of all judges, living or dead, it is probably fair to say that Lord Denning is the one most familiar to the public.

This book, with the rather melancholy title of "The Closing Chapter", is a sequel to Lord Denning's earlier books, "The Discipline of Law" and "The Due Process of Law". It is also in a way a continuation of his autobiography told in "The Family Story". In actuality, "The Closing Chapter" is two books: one on the law, and one on Lord Denning.

As one might expect, the book is written in the simple straightforward style that Lord Denning adopted for his judgments. There is no pretension to literary greatness, no pronouncements *ex cathedra*, none of the pomposity which one might expect of a great judge. It is a simple story simply told.

The tale is one of touching naivety in places. In recounting his many brushes with the Lords and with the press, Lord Denning tells his side of the story with simplicity and without the obvious self-justification that a lesser man might stoop to. In his long life and distinguished career, Lord Denning was party to many controversies, legal and non-legal. He acquired a reputation, not entirely undeserved, as a breaker of legal icons. Here he tells of the motives which actuated him, and recounts simply and unemotionally the circumstances surrounding many of those controversies. It is a fascinating tale. In telling it, Lord Denning casts no stones in anger at his detractors; though one might detect a hint of self-satisfaction perhaps in his citation of the many commentators who came out in support of him.

The latter part of the book is devoted to various areas of the law that Lord Denning thought important or controversial. He discusses his philosophy of statutory interpretation, his view of the new dichotomy between private and public law, the vexed question of trade union power, and takes the reader through other leading cases in which he played a part. The value of this discussion lies not in the actual exposition of the law, but in the insight that it provides into the character of the man. Although it is stated in the introduction that the author "had principally in mind the students of the law", the law student will not find much that is of actual help in his studies. The view of the law presented is inevitably the author's own. Such citation of the law as there is tends to be that of cases decided by Lord Denning. As a text on the law, this book is certainly not adequate. Be that as it may, the student of law will find it profitable to read the book through. Not indeed for finding out where the law stands, but rather to discover how it got there.

Throughout the book the personality of the author shines through. It is an attractive personality, unpretentious, eager to do justice,

Christian and straightforward. If there is a hint of pride now and then when the many accolades that have been heaped upon him are described, the author might perhaps be forgiven for a minor vanity. All in all, this is a book well worth reading. One can only hope that the title of the book is a misnomer; and that Lord Denning may produce more chapters yet.

WALTER WOON