

**THE REMINISCENCES OF THE  
RIGHT HON. LORD O'BRIEN  
(OF KILFENORA) LORD  
CHIEF JUSTICE OF IRELAND**

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The reminiscences of the Right Hon. Lord O'Brien (of Kilfenora) lord chief justice of Ireland by  
Georgia O'Brien

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**GEORGIA O'BRIEN**

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*Stonier*

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THE REMINISCENCES  
OF THE RIGHT HON.  
LORD O'BRIEN  
(OF KILFENORA)  
LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF IRELAND

EDITED BY HIS DAUGHTER  
HON. GEORGINA O'BRIEN

WITH PORTRAIT

NEW YORK  
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1916



## INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of sincere regret to me that an *apologia* for inadequacy should preface this volume, which, as an autobiographical work, is incomplete and fragmentary. I acted as my father's amanuensis, and each evening used to bring him the manuscript, saying, "Shall we work a little to-night?" To which request, when we first undertook the book, he would assent. Alas! as the days passed by, the answer, "Not to-night, I am too tired," became more and more frequent, until at last there came an evening when he said: "You will have to complete the book alone, unaided by me; I can work no more. I have every confidence in you."

I had hoped that the writing of his reminiscences would provide him with an interesting pastime, instead of which it soon became evident that speaking of his early days saddened him. For one who had been so full of life and buoyancy, so vigorously alive, it was a sore trial to spend the days in an arm-chair, enfeebled by age and ill-health, conscious that the tide of life was slowly ebbing. Truly has Dante said:

"Nessun maggior dolore  
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
Nella miseria."



Very reluctantly, and with many misgivings as to my qualifications for the work, I took up my pen to finish what was to me a sorrowful task.

Many years before this book was begun I suggested to my father that he should begin an autobiography, but without success. He was indolent about writing, and invariably wrote the shortest of letters. I have heard it said that on the Bench he rarely made notes; he was able to pigeon-hole, as it were, the facts of a case in his brain, and I have been told that he never forgot any point whatsoever that had any bearing on it. Absolutely devoid of intellectual arrogance, he was ever willing to listen to the opinions of others, provided they were clearly and intelligently stated. Sometimes he would read the evidence in a case to a member of his family, and then ask an opinion on it, in order to ascertain the view which a non-legal mind would take of the evidence, so that he might fully understand the difficulties which would present themselves to a jury. One day he called me into his study and gave me a brief to read. When I had done so he asked: "Now, what is your view of the case?"

I gave him my view, which he seemed rather to deride, and asked me on what grounds I based my opinion. Feeling very small, I stated my reasons as best I could. He took a totally different view of the case.

"Now, might not the evidence be read in such a way?" he said, representing other views of the case.

"I have given you my opinion, such as it is," I replied.

He smiled, as he said: "Well, I have been endeavouring to urge my views on you to make you see things in the same light as I do, but it is only fair to say that there is a great deal to be said in favour of your opinion. Judge — takes exactly the same view as you do. I fear there'll be a disagreement."

A distinguished Judge thus wrote of him: "He and I were thrown much together all through our professional careers, and nothing ever interrupted our mutual regard and attachment. It was a joy to be with him in a case, he was so undaunted, and so thoroughly master of all the resources of advocacy. As an antagonist there was no one whom I feared more. With unerring instinct, he always directed his powers against one's most vulnerable point of defence. As a Judge, he displayed those great qualities which won for him his great position. Fearless, wise, strenuous to make justice and right prevail, and with extraordinary power of getting at the honesty of a case and penetrating false evidence, it is a comfort and satisfaction to have been comrade at the Bar with such a loyal friend, dauntless advocate, and admirable Judge."

G. O'B.

LONDON,  
*October, 1916.*

