

PREJUDICE AND JUDGMENT. By P. J. Grigg. (Cape; 15s.)

Among Sir James Grigg's many distinctions is that of having been told by Mr Churchill to go and boil his head; but possibly that is not unique. It is not an altogether unimportant event in this autobiography, however, for it brings out the essential quality of Sir James's service to the state, that of being a faithful watch-dog over our politicians. He was, at the time of the incident, private secretary to Mr Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he was bringing that very great man, the 'Leonardo and Michelangelo' of our times, as he calls him, down to the ground in the matter of international finance. For Sir James Grigg is a Brahmin of the Brahmins, one of those great Civil Servants whose name rarely appears in the news but whose intelligence and power are enormous. During long years at the Treasury he came in contact with many of the famous politicians of the inter-war period, and though Mr Churchill naturally outshines the rest, the portraits of Chancellors like Mr Snowden are very well done. There is a long and interesting interlude concerning the time when Sir James was Financial Member of the Viceroy's Council in India, and we then find him as Permanent Under-Secretary for War in the early days of 1939. While holding that office Sir James achieved what, I think, is a unique distinction, that of being promoted directly from Civil Servant to Minister, from the Undersecretaryship to being Secretary of State for War, in 1942. He remained in this position until 1945. The fact of the promotion is interesting enough, and Sir James's reflections on the differing roles of Civil Servant and Minister are exceedingly valuable; but still more important is that his tenure of the latter position sees the transformation of the War Ministry which produced the mighty invasion army of 1944, with the finest equipment, the most efficient and complex organisation, that a British army has ever had. In all this Sir James played an essential part, though not one in the limelight, and it is typical of the traditions in which he was nourished that even in this autobiography he underlines his own share in this in no way. At the end of the book he reprints six studies of the great soldiers who served under him and his selection is significant. Alexander and Montgomery are, of course, obvious choices, but he puts Lord Alanbrooke, the C.I.G.S. of this period, before them, and concludes with three names which were never in the limelight, Sir Bernard Paget, Sir George Giffard and Sir John Dill, the latter the only Englishman and perhaps the only foreigner to be accorded a National funeral by the U.S.A. in the Arlington Cemetery. These three names he commits to history, with confidence, for their due reward.

This is not an easy book to read in many places, but it is a very valuable and important one. Among its lessons for today is this: Sir James is the son of a carpenter who brought up his family on 30s. a week. He passed top into the Civil Service in 1913.

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