



Clarence Darrow: American Iconoclast

Andrew E. Kersten

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Clarence Darrow is best remembered for his individual cases, whether defending the thrill killers Leopold and Loeb or John Scopes's right to teach evolution in the classroom. In the first full-length biography of Darrow in decades, the historian Andrew E. Kersten narrates the complete life of America's most legendary lawyer and the struggle that defined it, the fight for the American traditions of individualism, freedom, and liberty in the face of the country's inexorable march toward modernity.

Prior biographers have all sought to shoehorn Darrow, born in 1857, into a single political party or cause. But his politics do not define his career or enduring importance. Going well beyond the familiar story of the socially conscious lawyer and drawing upon new archival records, Kersten shows Darrow as early modernity's greatest iconoclast. What defined Darrow was his response to the rising interference by corporations and government in ordinary working Americans' lives: he zealously dedicated himself to smashing the structures and systems of social control everywhere he went. During a period of enormous transformations encompassing the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, Darrow fought fiercely to preserve individual choice as an ever more corporate America sought to restrict it.

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