

HISTORY
OF THE
BENCH AND BAR
OF
CALIFORNIA

BEING

*Biographies of many Remarkable Men, a Store of Humorous
and Pathetic Recollections, Accounts of Important
Legislation and Extraordinary Cases,*

COMPREHENDING

THE JUDICIAL HISTORY OF THE STATE

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EARL ROGERS.

Anyone who has taken notice of the principal criminal cases in Los Angeles county during the last four years, but is at the same time not personally acquainted with Earl Rogers, will be surprised to learn that he is a man so young in years as here portrayed, for his name has appeared in connection with almost every important criminal case in that county during this period.

Such is the case; Earl Rogers, thirty-two years of age, stands today easily in the first rank of his profession in the criminal courts of Southern California. His is a unique and interesting personality, and his methods of handling a case differ widely from those used by the ordinary criminal lawyer. It might truly be said that at the present time he stands in a class alone, not only in his skill in this respect, but also in the number of big crim-

inal cases he has had and has fought to a successful termination.

In the last three years Mr. Rogers has defended more than one hundred felony cases in the courts of this State; and from this large number there is only one of these defendants who has ever passed behind the doors of the State prison; a record that probably cannot be equaled in this or any other state. It will readily be presumed, however, and correctly so, that he does not undertake the defense of every case that is presented to him. Unless he believes that there is, as he terms it, "a fighting chance to win," he invariably refuses to take the case, but once in, he fights from the drop of the hat, and clever indeed must be the prosecuting attorney who gains



even a temporary advantage. Every step is fought with unyielding determination, and with every weapon to be found in the arsenal of the criminal law. Earl Rogers is a born fighter, and was never known to quit.

In addition to having the leading criminal business of Los Angeles county, he has a large amount of civil business, to which he attends with the same care and diligence that he gives to his criminal cases.

One of the contributing causes to his great success is the fact that he never goes to trial without the most thorough preparation, both on the law and the facts. It is rarely ever that the opposing counsel is able to give him a surprise in any step in the case.

Although born in the state of New York, Mr. Rogers has lived in California practically all the time since he was four years old, taking out the years when he was completing his classical education at Syracuse University, New York.

At the age of twenty-four he began the study of law in the office of the late Judge W. P.

Gardiner of Los Angeles, and was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court in October, 1894. He began the active practice of law for himself about one year later. For more than two years he worked and struggled as almost every young lawyer must, but at last his opportunity came, and when it came it found him ready for it. That was the Blackman embezzlement case, the most noted of its kind in recent years. In this case Mr. Rogers rose almost in a single day from the plane of a comparatively unknown young lawyer to a commanding position at the California bar, a position he has ever since held. After the Blackman case, one criminal case after another was brought to him, until without any original intention or desire on his part, but really against his purpose, he has been almost compelled to follow the criminal branch of the practice to a much greater extent than he has wished, and while he has not permitted this work to encroach upon his civil practice, it has been necessary for him to devote himself more closely to his profession than most attorneys find agreeable.

Among the many cases in which Mr. Rogers has been engaged may be especially mentioned the Alford, Crandall, Chaudfosse, Teresa Kerr, Mootry, Watson, Murray, Yglesias and Barboza cases, all murder cases of much public interest. Perhaps the most remarkable series of cases ever tried in the courts of Los Angeles county were those known generally as the Watson cases, from the name of Walter Watson, the chief defendant, and the one whom the police authorities tried hardest to convict. The history of these cases is fresh in the public mind. A very carnival of crime seemed to prevail in Los Angeles city. In the short course of three months over forty hold-ups and three murders from attempted hold-ups had occurred. All the efforts of the police to detect the perpetrators were fruitless. At last a young and industrious boilermaker named Walter Watson, and a number of his associates and friends were selected by the police as the parties upon whom the crimes were to be fastened. Every artifice known to the police department was made use of to convict Watson. He was tried on three separate charges, two for highway robbery and one for murder, and was triumphantly acquitted of all, in no case the jury being out more than ten minutes before returning a verdict of "not guilty." It may be said in passing that the actual criminals have never been arrested.

One of Mr. Rogers' strongest qualities is his readiness in the actual trial of a case. He is quick and alert, not a point either of weakness in the case of his opponent or of strength in his own escapes his immediate detection. Mr. Rogers is especially strong in cross-examination, in which his methods differ materially from those usually employed.

If it be true that "the law is a jealous mistress," but showers her choicest treasures upon him who gives himself entirely to her, then the future certainly has much in store for Earl Rogers.