

# John Rogers

*February 19, 1866 — November 19, 1939*

Dr. John Rogers was identified with the Cornell University Medical College from its beginning in 1898 until his death on November 19, 1939. He was born in New York City on February 19, 1866, the son of John and Harriet Moore Rogers. His father was the noted John Rogers, sculptor of the story-telling “groups,” of which the replicas ornamented so many American homes of the Victorian era.

Dr. Rogers graduated from Yale College with an A.B. in the class of 1887 and immediately, with a rather unusual appreciation of the value of fundamental training, returned to Yale and entered the Sheffield Scientific School for work in the sciences essential to the study of medicine. He earned the Ph.B. degree in 1888. During that year, under Chittenden and Smith, he developed that interest in the scientific side of medicine which characterized his work throughout his life.

At Yale he was a member of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and of Skull and Bones. He was captain of his class crew and chairman of the junior promenade committee. In his senior year he was captain of the varsity crew, and he was crew coach for three years following his graduation. Those activities of his undergraduate years gave evidence of characteristics which distinguished his whole life—broad interests and qualities of leadership—thus early appreciated by his fellows.

Dr. Rogers took his medical degree at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1891 and then served as intern in the New York Hospital. He married Elizabeth S. White of New Haven, Connecticut, on November 27, 1895. She survives him, with two of their three children.

As was the custom of ambitious young medical men at that time, Dr. Rogers opened an office. He taught as a demonstrator of Anatomy at Yale, and he worked in the dispensaries and clinics of the city hospitals of New York. From the beginning his professional interests were based upon human interests; at Gouverneur Hospital the suffering of numbers of children from the effects of intubation after diphtheria moved him to a deep interest in the surgery of the larynx. His interest in the thyroid grew out of his concern for his own wife during a protracted illness. His later interest in epilepsy was derived from the care of one of his relatives.

Nor were his efforts limited to an interest in the physical ills of his patients. A kindly humanitarianism was shown in his constant successful effort to obtain money from his wealthier patients to aid the unfortunates whom he

was treating professionally in the public dispensaries. He did this long before the foundation of the hospital of the Salvation Army—the Booth Memorial Hospital—with which he was intimately connected from the day of its foundation to the day of his death.

Dr. Rogers was visiting surgeon to Gouverneur Hospital (1896-1909), surgeon to St. Francis Hospital (1902-1921), and visiting surgeon to Bellevue Hospital (1909-1921). He was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and a member of the New York Academy of Medicine and of the New York Surgical Society. He belonged to the University Club and the Boone and Crockett Club.

His connection with the Medical College of Cornell University was a threefold one, as teacher, as administrator, and as one actively engaged in research. With the founding of the college in 1898 Dr. Rogers became identified with the faculty, first as an instructor in Surgery and assistant demonstrator in Anatomy, then as an instructor in Clinical Surgery, as professor of Clinical Surgery after 1909, and as professor emeritus after 1926. He was secretary of the faculty from 1898 to 1908, during a period when the duties of that office included admissions to the school.

Dr. Rogers's interest in the thyroid gland led to some of the earliest work on the function of that organ and to the development first of a serum and then of extracts of the gland which have ever since been standard extracts for the treatment of thyroid disease. For nearly thirty-five years, with funds independently raised, he supported laboratory work in the Medical College along the various lines in which he was interested, chiefly the study of the thyroid.

In this day, when extracts of about every organ of the body are being used, it is difficult to realize the obstacles which had to be overcome by Dr. Rogers and other workers of that day. Fortunately for us, the field chosen was that of the thyroid gland, where substitution therapy gave clear-cut and definite response. To overcome the ridicule of one's fellows in the profession, to work out methods for the extraction and utilization of active principles, to see those products come into general use, to live to see one's work so firmly established that the early days of trial are completely forgotten—that is a gratifying experience granted to but few. The Cornell University Medical College ought to remember that this achievement of establishing the basis of modern organotherapy was in no small measure due to the imagination and the pertinacity of Dr. John Rogers.

From all these varied activities there stands out the man himself. Of tall, commanding presence, a natural leader, the man's most memorable characteristic is his kindness, whether as surgeon or teacher or administrator. If the story of his life could be told with all the human interest that informed his father's sculptures, for an example to

young persons who would study medicine, it would serve admirably to show that before one can become a great surgeon one must be a great physician and before that a great man.