

Hugh Dorsey's Great Speech Feature of the Frank Trial

By Sidney Ormond.

The Frank trial a matter of history, Solicitor Hugh Dorsey and his wonderful speech, which brought the case to a close, form the subject matter for countless discussions among all classes of folk in all sorts of places—on the street corners, in clubs, newspaper offices, at the courthouse and wherever two lawyers chance to get together for an exchange of words.

Beyond all doubt, Hugh Dorsey is the most talked-of man in the state of Georgia today. The widespread interest in the Frank case caused all eyes from Rabun Gap to Tybee Light to be centered on this young man, who, up to a few months ago, was little heard of outside of the county of Fulton.

The Frank case has been to Atlanta and the state—in fact, several adjacent states—what the Becker case was to New York and the country-at-large.

Made Thorough Probe.

When Rosenthal was killed by a gang of gunmen at the Hotel Metropole, District Attorney Whitman was unheard of outside of New York. Today he is a national figure. The same thing holds true of Hugh Dorsey in a lesser degree.

Incidentally, there is another point of comparison. When Rosenthal was murdered, Whitman plunged into the case and personally directed the investigation which led up to the arrest and subsequent conviction of the murderers. No one criticized him for his activity in the case. Hugh Dorsey did the same thing. The Frank case was one of far too much importance to be bungled. It was worthy of the best efforts of every court official sworn to uphold the enforcement of the law. The city was in a state of mental stress. Lives were closely drawn. It was no time for mistakes of judgment. Dorsey knew this. He felt the responsibility of his position and he entered into the work of clearing up the awful mystery with but one end in view—that justice should prevail. Unlike Whitman, he met criticism in some quarters—a criticism which was unmerited. He did what he felt to be his duty, that and nothing more; and it is certain that, had he felt Frank innocent, he never would have sought his indictment by the grand jury.

During the progress of the Frank trial a close friend of the unfortunate young man said, in a tone that expressed some surprise:

"I actually believe Hugh Dorsey thinks Frank guilty."

Thought Him Guilty.

And he was right. Anyone who knows Hugh Dorsey has never for one instant doubted that all along he has been firmly convinced of Frank's guilt. Hugh Dorsey is no head-hunter—no savage thirsting for the blood of innocent men. He is human, with

human sympathies—tender as a woman at times, but stern as a Spartan when duty calls.

It was the call of duty that caused him to probe the murder of little Mary Phagan; it was the same call which caused him to prosecute the man he thought guilty of the murder.

Don't think for one instant that Hugh Dorsey did not suffer during the progress of the trial. He suffered as seldom a man is called upon to suffer. It is hard enough to call upon a jury to convict a man of murder; it is doubly hard to do so in the presence of the man's wife and mother. During the last half hour of his speech it was nothing short of torture for him to face those faithful, devoted women and ask that the law which condemns men to death be invoked.

When he said afterward that he felt for the wife and mother he meant every word. He is not a man given to the parade of emotion—men who feel deeply seldom are.

But back to the trial of the case. If it is given to one to view the case without prejudice—and there are many such in Atlanta—the heroic task which Hugh Dorsey had before him is apparent.

First, Luther Rosser was employed. Then Rube Arnold entered the lists for the defense. No more formidable array of legal counsel could have been found in the south. Extremes in method, manner and temperament, equally well versed in the law and experienced in its practice, they formed a bulwark that few men would care to attack.

The knowing ones said:

"Well, Hugh Dorsey will get his. They'll chew him up and spit him out!"

Did they? Not so you could notice it. For once Luther Rosser met his match. For once Rube Arnold crossed swords with a man who caused him to break ground.

Fought Them Every Step.

They tried all sorts of tactics. They used sarcasm; they interrupted, they hammered and they hauled, but it was to no purpose. Dorsey met them at every turn, countering here, slamming heads there. He fought them any fashion they pleased to try.

But his speech was the thing that proved him master. It was a masterpiece. No such speech has ever been heard in the Fulton county courthouse, and the words are measured as they are written. It was, as Burton Smith expressed it, worthy of Bob Toombs in the first-flush of vigorous manhood. It was clean-cut, convincing, forceful. It carried conviction with every sentence. It proved, if proof were needed, that Hugh Dorsey is a lawyer of whom any man need have fear. The speech will live long in the memory of those who heard it, no matter what opinion may be entertained of the guilt or innocence of Leo M. Frank.