

# GIRL REPORTER, WITH THREE CENTS IN PURSE, BRAVES NIGHT COURT LAWYERS

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*Summary: Her first court assignment is confusing with no sure way of getting home. (DDLW #61)*

But Her Pockets Aren't Picked, Though She's Finger-printed By the Matron and Bowed to By the Judge and Awed By the District Attorney

"This is not a court for fines and punishments," yelled Gerald Van Casteel, District Attorney of the 3d district, at the Jefferson Market night court for women, last night. "It is a court to give moral support and a boost to the people who are brought in."

At which speech the attorney for the defendant began to shout some more of the perfect willingness of his clients to pay the bail or fine or sumpthin, I dunno what. For it was my first court assignment, and I didn't know a thing that was going on and I was scared stiff and I expected to hear myself summoned to stand up for trial any minute.

But, the first thing I knew, Judge Barlow sent out the clerk after me and wanted to know if I didn't want to interview him about sumpthin'. And I said no, that I was just out after a story. And while he put on his dressing gown or sumpthin, he kept telling me things about the court; and when he had to bustle out, he told the District Attorney, afore-mentioned, to show me around, put me in a cell or sumpthin. "But, young lady," he finished, "do not expect to get a story. You can't come in on your first night and pick 'em, as if off a tree."

And I said no, real meek-like. I was taken in to see Miss Smith, who has an article written about her in this month's Pearson's, and she told me to come in again, and some other things I don't quite remember. Then, while the court was in session, I was led across the courtroom, whereat I momentarily expected to be obliged to pay a fine, when I had but three cents in my pocket.

Yes, that was the tragedy of the evening. I had only 3 cents in my pocket, and I was far from home. I spent too much for soup or candy, I guess, so after I got to the night court I kept asking myself how I was to get the money to ride home.

Shall I ask the District Attorney, I thought, but a glance at his burly form cowed me. And all the while the finger-print man took my finger prints together with those of a drunken old woman with a beplumed hat. I thought of picking his pocket. But, though he had a pleasant smile, and I was not at all afraid, the circumstances and the place overwhelmed me, and I desisted.

The copy of the finger prints that were given me I'm going to frame and hang above the table where we keep the group pictures and family Bible. I guess the contrast would be piquant.

Then I took a flying peek into the cell where all the peddlers who preferred a day in jail to paying a fine were put. They were all snoring, except one, who turned over and winked at me. And I looked at the telephone that heard more hard luck stories than any other telephone in the city. That telephone was used by prisoners alone to call their friends, and the desk was worn away where they had stubbed their nervous toes against it, and the desk was worn. It was an interesting relic.

Then to the court some more, where I listened for a while and didn't hear anything. And then, since it was past 11, back to the office in great fear and trembling. Alas, the 2 cents! Or those 3 cent, or can it be them? Should I ask the managing editor for them? He looked not at all formidable, but, then, one never could tell. It's such a petty sum. Well-sigh-I'll hand this in, stand above him while he reads it, and smile appealingly when he starts to tell me how rotten it is. And if he doesn't cough up I'll walk home and feel thugs slooping after me, knives in mouths, all the way.