

DUNGEON AT COURTHOUSE HAS A SECRET ELEVATOR

Sheriff Meining Is Provided With Invisible Accessories to Aid Him in Retaining and Handling Prisoners.

When Duluthians read of dark Siberia, of the Nihilists, of Russian police dragnets; when the war brings to notice the tower of London, of courtmartial and swift executions; when the spy system of all Europe is daily breakfast food for newspaper readers—little do they know, that there are mysteries and secrets in Duluth official life.

Gr-r-r-r, ugh and aha!
This is not a detective story. It is a recital of facts.

There is a dungeon in the \$1,000,000 St. Louis county courthouse.

There is a secret elevator, known to few but Sheriff Meining and his staff—and other court officials and attaches.

There are secret indictments rendered, which never see the light of publicity until the indicted man or woman is gathered into the toils of the law's agents. They are never put on record until then.

The county officers of the law have no spy system. They know lots of secrets about persons which the world never finds out. It is better so. Like the newspaperman—they know much that never gets into print. If it did—the divorce courts might be more crowded than they are.

A News Tribune reporter asked to see the secret elevator at the courthouse yesterday.

It was shown to him. There was no hesitation about it. Sheriff Meining stepped to an innocent-looking oak door opening out of his main office, a door that looked just like several other doors into his big office—opened it and there was a neat little box-like cage, an elevator in full working order.

"Step in and take a ride."

No-sir-ee, not for the reporter. He did not know where it might lead to. It was a nice looking elevator, a well behaved elevator, apparently, and his guide looked trustworthy and friendly, but thank you sir, not today. But he would be glad to know just where that elevator began business and where it ended.

This elevator is for the use of prisoners only. It was built for their special benefit and is never used for any other purposes than to convey the prisoners who are to appear in court, from the sheriff's office below or floor one, upstairs to either Judge Cant's or Judge Dancer's courtroom.

It ends in a little corridor between the two private offices of these jurists and it is but a step from the elevator to either courtroom.

You have been sitting in court, perhaps and have heard a prisoner called to the bar, have seen a deputy sheriff disappear for a moment and return through a door back of the judge's chair—with Mr. Prisoner.

That's the way it is done. That is why the elevator is built.

Begins at the sheriff's office and ends on floor four where the courtrooms are, you ask?

It ends where you think, but the elevator begins way, down deep in the basement where there is a jail, a

perfectly good, sound jail all fitted up with iron bars and things—and a dungeon, dark as midnight—didn't know about that jail now did you?

There is a detaining jail in the \$1,000,000 courthouse where prisoners are kept while awaiting trial; where insane patients are sometimes locked while an examination is pending. There are several cells, a wash-room and the dungeon.

When the new county jail is built next to the courthouse—which it will be one of these days, or years—connection between the cells in the courthouse basement will be made with the jail, and the dungeon will come in handy then for refractory prisoners.

"Want to step into the dungeon and see how it fits?" said the guide to the reporter. The reporter was profuse in his thanks, just as grateful as if he had been invited by President Wilson to have a cup of coffee—not a third cup, mind you, with him in the blue room of the White House—or some other colored room. But this story is about the dungeon at the courthouse. The reporter did not go into it—time enough for these little informalities, he thought to himself.

Secret indictments? Horrors!

Certainly; secret indictments, just like that. Almost every time a grand jury meets it hands down a half dozen or so secret indictments. These never appear on the records in the district court clerk's office until the accused has been located and placed under arrest.

The district county attorney's office knows all about them; so does the foreman of the grand jury, who signs them; so does Clerk J. P. Johnson, who is told to put them aside and not record these secret indictments on his books. Memoranda is kept by the county attorney, a warrant is given to Sheriff Meining, and all is kept dark until the party is caught—it may be days, weeks or months.

Many a man has breathed a sigh of relief when the grand jury report was read out in court or published in the newspapers—but he has another breath coming if he has been doing something shady. The list as made public is not the complete list by long odds. Eventually, these are all made public. But, as the lawyers put it, not until the culprit has been apprehended.

To relieve all readers who may feel that perhaps this is not a republic after all, but that there are methods that are dark as Russia, and courts that are tricky, and torture cells and third degree methods in use right here in Duluth, with ways that are devious and deeds that are dark, it should be said that everything is fair and above board around the courthouse and in all court procedure.

Secret indictments, sealed lips, soft footfalls, dungeons and secret elevators—these are all necessary right hands of justice and the innocent need have no fear whatsoever. What is right for the public to know is given to the public—what might cheat justice, is for a time withheld.